THE PROBLEM OF AGGLUTINATIVE LANGUAGES

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Abstract: The article deals with the agglutinative languages which can exploit fusional morphology just as highly fusional languages. The lexicon and inventory of morphemes of an agglutinative language, unlike those of a fusional language, consist predominantly of readily identifiable morphemes, whose forms are largely invariable.

Keywords: agglutinative languages, affixes, typological, a linguistic relation, fusional, family.

INTRODUCTION

An agglutinative language is a type of synthetic language with morphology that primarily uses agglutination. Words may contain different morphemes to determine their meanings, but all of these morphemes (including stems and affixes) remain, in every aspect, unchanged after their unions. This results in generally more easily deducible word meanings if compared to fusional languages, which allow modifications in either or both the phonetics or spelling of one or more morphemes within a word, usually shortening the word or providing easier pronunciation. Agglutinative languages have generally one grammatical category per affix while fusional languages have multiple. The term was introduced by Wilhelm von Humboldt to classify languages from a morphological point of view [10, 12]. It is derived from the Latin verb agglutinare, which means "to glue together" [10, 13].

The agglutinative and fusional languages are two ends of a continuum, with various languages falling more toward one or the other end. For example, Japanese is generally agglutinative, but displays fusion in otōto (弟 younger brother), from oto+hito (originally woto+pito), and in its non-affixing verb conjugations [10, 22].

Agglutinative languages tend to have a high rate of affixes or morphemes per word, and to be very regular, in particular with very few irregular verbs. For example, Japanese has very few irregular verbs – only two are significantly irregular, and there are only about a dozen others with only minor irregularity; Ganda has only one (or two, depending on how "irregular" is defined); while in the Quechua languages, all the ordinary verbs are regular [1, 111]. In Turkish, there is only one irregular noun (su, meaning water), no irregular verbs other than the copular verbs, and two existential particles [3, 17]. Korean has only ten irregular forms of conjugation except passive and causative conjugations 13, 96]. Georgian is an exception; it is highly

agglutinative (with up to eight morphemes per word), but it has a significant number of irregular verbs with varying degrees of irregularity [13, 97].

Examples of agglutinative languages include:

- Turkic languages namely, Turkish, Azeri, Uzbek, Kazakh, Uyghur, Turkmen, Tatar, Kyrgyz, Sakha (Yakut), Bashkir, Chuvash, Afshar
- many Uralic languages, namely Hungarian, Finnish, Estonian and Sami languages
- Eskimo–Aleut languages, namely Aleut, Inuktitut, and Yupik
- Igboid languages
- Japanese language
- Kartvelian languages
- Korean language
- Mongolic languages
- Muskogean languages
- Northeast and Northwest Caucasian languages
- Quechua languages and Aymara [13, 99].
- Many languages spoken by Ancient Near East peoples were agglutinative [7, 156-157].
- Elamite
- Gutian
- Hattic
- Hurrian
- Kassite
- Lullubi
- Sumerian
- Urartian

Some well-known constructed languages are agglutinative, such as Esperanto, Klingon, Quenya and Black Speech [14, 12].

Agglutination is a typological feature and does not imply a linguistic relation, but there are some families of agglutinative languages. For example, the Proto-Uralic language, the ancestor of the Uralic languages, was agglutinative, and most descended languages inherit this feature. But since agglutination can arise in languages that previously had a non-agglutinative typology and it can be lost in languages that previously were agglutinative, agglutination as a typological trait cannot be used as evidence of a genetic relationship to other agglutinative languages. The uncertain theory about Ural-Altaic proffers that there is a genetic relationship with this proto-language as seen in Finnish, Mongolian and Turkish [2, 126].

Many languages have developed agglutination. This developmental phenomenon is known as language drift. There seems to exist a preferred evolutionary direction from agglutinative synthetic languages to fusional synthetic languages, and then to non-synthetic languages, which in their turn evolve into isolating languages and from there again into agglutinative synthetic languages. However, this is just a trend, and in itself a combination of the trend observable in Grammaticalization theory and that of general linguistic attrition, especially word-final apocope and elision [5, 55].

The Turkic languages are a language family of at least thirty-five documented languages, spoken by the Turkic peoples of Eurasia from Eastern Europe, the Caucasus, Central Asia, and West Asia all the way to North Asia (particularly in Siberia) and East Asia. The Turkic languages originated in a region of East Asia spanning Western China to Mongolia, where Proto-Turkicis thought to have been spoken, according to one estimate, around 2,500 years ago [8, 223], from where they expanded to Central Asia and farther west during the first millennium [9, 25-33].

The Turkic languages are: Gagauz, Uzbek, Kazakh, Uyghur, Tatar, Turkish, Azerbaijani, Turkmen, Qashqai, Kyrgyz, Sakha (Yakut), Bashkir, Afshar Chuvash and etc [4, 100].

Turkic languages are spoken as a native language by some 170 million people, and the total number of Turkic speakers, including second language speakers, is over 200 million [5, 106]. The Turkic language with the greatest number of speakers is Turkish, spoken mainly in Anatolia and the Balkans; its native speakers account for about 40% of all Turkic speakers [11, 203].

Characteristic features of Turkish, such as vowel harmony, agglutination, and lack of grammatical gender, are universal within the Turkic family. There is also a high degree of mutual intelligibility among the various Oghuz languages, which include Turkish, Azerbaijani, Turkmen, Qashqai, Gagauz, Balkan Gagauz Turkish, and Oghuz-influenced Crimean Tatar [6, 65]. Although methods of classification vary, the Turkic languages are usually considered to be divided equally into two branches: Oghur, the only surviving member of which is Chuvash, and Common Turkic, which includes all other Turkic languages including the Oghuz sub branch. Turkic languages show some similarities with the Mongolic, Tungusic, Koreanic, and Japonic languages. These similarities led some linguists to propose an Altaic language family, though this proposal is not widely accepted. Apparent similarities with the Uralic family even caused these families to be regarded as one for a long time under the hypothesis of Ural-Altaic languages [12, 17]. However, there has not been sufficient evidence to conclude

the existence of either of these macro families, the shared characteristics between the languages being attributed presently to extensive prehistoric language contact.

CONCLUSION

Summing up of all what has just been said we can conclude that agglutinative languages are languages in which words are readily or easily segmentable. The ready segmentability of words which characterises agglutinative languages entails that, in an agglutinative language, each morpheme has its own 'meaning', in the sense that 'individual exponents of relational categories are attached one by one to the lexical basis.

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