

Review on: Uralic essive and the expression of impermanent state, ed. by Casper de Groot. Amsterdam / Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2017. xix + 555 pp.

Abstract: The article provides a review on a recent volume devoted to essive in the Uralic languages. The book embraces the marking strategies of non-verbal main clauses, depictives, resultatives, and some types of adverbials. I summarize the tasks, the methodology, and the main results of the project described in the book, pointing at some possible issues for future research.

Keywords: Uralic languages, essive, syntax, typology, review.

1. Introduction

The syntax of the Uralic languages is analyzed both in papers devoted to individual languages (Rombandeeva 1979; Tauli 1983; Koshkareva 2005, É. Kiss 2010, etc.) and in comparative studies (Tereschenko 1973; Cheremisina 2004; Kuznetsova (ed.) 2012, Miestamo et al. (eds.) 2015, etc.). Still, quite a few phenomena in this area remain underdescribed. The book under review provides a valuable contribution to this research field. It deals with essive constructions in Uralic, which occur in non-verbal main clauses and in secondary predication. The research covers both items with a special marker, (1)-(2), and constructions with other markers used in the same contexts (e. g. the instrumental in non-verbal predication, in (3)). Note that the term “essive” does not refer to any expression of a locative relation in this book (although in some languages the essive form is diachronically related to the Proto-Uralic Locative, see de Groot (2017a: 5)).

FINNISH¹

- (1) Anna o-n **opettaja-na.**
Anna COP-3SG teacher-ESS
‘Anna is (working as) a teacher (temporarily).’ (de Groot 2017a, 3)

HUNGARIAN

- (2) 1944-ben szabadság-os **katona-ként** volt otthon.
1944-INES free-ADJ soldier-ESS COP.PST.3SG at.home
‘In 1944 he was at home as a returnee.’ (de Groot 2017a, 4)

KOMI-PERMYAK

- (3) Starik-yt völ-öma **mel’nik-ön** i straś radejt-öma ćeriav-ny.
oldman-2POSS be-PST2.3SG miller-INS and much love-PST2.3SG fish-INF
‘The old man was a miller and loved fishing a lot.’ (Leinonen & Nekrasova 2017, 289)

2. Discussion of the book

2.1 Contents and methodology

The book consists of a Preface, 21 Chapters and an Appendix. Chapter 1 (“Discovering the assignment: An Uralic essive typological questionnaire”, by C. de Groot) outlines the main research goals, the list of languages under consideration and the methodology. The authors aim to investigate non-verbal predications (in which the essive typically occurs), taking into account the marking of nouns and adjectives, and the use of the copula. Secondary predications (depictives and some similar constructions) fall under the scope of the research as well. Finally, certain kinds of adverbials are taken into consideration, in order to find out what the periphery of the essival domain can be. While these research topics received much attention in the theoretical literature

¹ All the examples come from the book under review if otherwise not stated explicitly. The transcriptions (or examples in some orthographic system), glosses and translations are cited without changes. The chapter in which an example can be found in the book is referred to.

(see the bibliography in the book and some references below), they usually play a background role in Uralic studies (some exceptions are Erelt & Metslang (2003), Kuznetsova (2007), Turunen (2010), Kholodilova (2016), Hynönen (2016), and Abovyan (2017)).

The project team worked out a questionnaire (a version with comments and examples can be found in de Groot (2017a, 12–26), a short version is available in de Groot (2017d)) that was filled in by language experts relying on the range of data sources adequate for each particular case (elicitation, consultations with linguists from a particular community, corpora, and grammatical descriptions). The authors have chosen to remain as theoretically neutral as possible, avoiding any kind of formal syntactic analysis.

Chapters 2–20 deal with essive constructions in each of the Uralic languages included in the sample. Chapters 2–7 are devoted to the Finnic² languages: Chapter 2 “The essive in Finnish” (by E. Hynönen), Chapter 3 “The essive in Estonian” (by H. Metslang and L. Lindström), Chapter 4 “The essive in Votic” and Chapter 5 “The essive in Ingrian” (both by E. Markus and F. Rozhanskiy), Chapter 6 “The essive in Veps” (by R. Grünthal), and Chapter 7 “The essive in Karelian” (by V. Koivisto). In Chapters 8–10 the Saami languages are considered: Chapter 8 “The essive in South Saami (by F. Siegl), Chapter 9 “The essive in North Saami” (by J. Ylikoski), and Chapter 10 “The essive in Skolt Saami” (by T. Feist). Chapter 11 (“The Mari essive and its functional counterparts”, by S. Saarinen) describes the essive in Mari. Chapters 12–13 are focused on the Permic languages: Chapter 12 “The Komi answer to the essive question” (by M. Leinonen and G. Nekrasova), and Chapter 13 “The Udmurt essive and its functional counterparts” (by S. Edygarova). Chapter 14 (by C. de Groot) is called “The essives in Hungarian”. Chapters 15–16 deal with the Ob-Ugric languages: Chapter 15 “The ‘essive’ in Eastern Khanty” (by A. Filchenko), and Chapter 16 “The essive-translative” in Mansi (by K. Sipőcz). In Chapters 17–20 the Samoyedic languages are discussed: Chapter 17 “The essive-translative in Tundra Nenets” (by L. Jalava), Chapter 18 “The essive-translative in the Enets languages” (by F. Siegl), Chapter 19 “The essive-translative in Nganasan” (by S. Szeverényi and B. Wagner-Nagy), and Chapter 20 “The essive-translative in Selkup and Kamas” (by B. Wagner-Nagy). As can be seen from this list, the research relies on a substantial amount of data and shares all the advantages of intragenetic typology. The latter has proved to be highly important for clarifying subtle distinctions between languages with close morphosyntactic structures further relevant for broader typological studies and for putting forward hypotheses related to diachronic changes (see the discussion in Kibrik (1998; 2003), Croft (2003, 247–249), and Agranat (2016)). The language data are laid out quite clearly, although some more ungrammatical examples (marked with an asterisk) could make the text a bit more precise.

Chapter 21 (“The typology of the essive in the Uralic languages”, by C. de Groot) summarizes the findings on the typology of the essive in the Uralic languages. The Appendix (by C. de Groot) contains the typological questionnaire on the essive.

2.2 Main results

For reasons of space, I will further concentrate on the conclusions from Chapter 21, adding illustrations from Chapters 2–20, where necessary.

The starting point in the research under consideration is the use of the essive in **non-verbal predication** in comparison to other ways of marking this kind of syntactic structure. Quite a few Uralic languages distinguish between the **essive**, referring to a state, and the **translative**, referring to a change of state, cf. (4)-(5).

INGRIAN

- (4) miä ol-i-n häne-le tovariššā-n.
1SG be-PST-1SG 3SG-ALL friend-ESS
‘I was his friend.’ (Markus & Rozhanskiy 2017b: 118)

² In this review I follow the classification of the Uralic languages used in the volume under consideration (de Groot 2017a, 2).

INGRIAN

- (5) nast'a noiž-i häne-n **naižē-kš** konž häne-l ol-i
 Nastya become-PST.3SG 3SG-GEN wife-TRA when 3SG-ADE be-PST.3SG
 kakš-kümmend vōtta
 twenty year.PAR
 'Nastya became his wife when she was twenty years old.' (Markus & Rozhanskiy 2017b: 119)

The most frequent option is, however, that a language has one marker that combines the contexts of state and change of state. It can be a cognate of a special essive or translative marker from other languages (see e. g. the details on Veps dialects in Grünthal (2017, 135–143)). In some languages (Mari, Komi, Udmurt, Kamas) there is no special marker for non-verbal predicates. Note, however, that a non-verbal predicate can require special agreement markers, like a special plural affix in the Permic languages, which marks primarily adjectives (see Leinonen & Nekrasova (2017, 290) on Komi and Edygarova (2017, 313) on Udmurt) and does not mark nouns, but it probably needs a more thorough examination with respect to other parts of speech (cf. a brief mention of numerals marked with this affix in Komi (Leinonen & Nekrasova 2017, 290)).

An important distinction in non-verbal predications is drawn between **an impermanent state** and **a permanent state**. In some languages (e. g., in Finnish) the former is encoded with the essive, whereas the latter requires the nominative. Compare example (6) with example (1).

FINNISH

- (6) Anna o-n **opettaja**.
 Anna COP-3SG teacher.NOM
 'Anna is a teacher (by profession).' (de Groot 2017c, 501)

There are other morphosyntactic strategies that can reflect this semantic distinction as well, e. g. the inessive case (encoding location in its primary meaning) in Komi dialects for an impermanent state, as opposed to the nominative case used for a permanent state. In some languages, however, this opposition has not been attested, see e. g. the analysis of Votic and Ingrian data provided in the volume.

The authors claim that there is a difference between nominal and adjectival predicates lying in what concerns marking an impermanent state and a permanent state. They make a prediction that "if a language has differential marking in adjectival predications, it will also have the same for nominal predications" (de Groot 2017c, 506). Besides, "adjectival predicates have the same set or less markers available than nominal predicates" (ibid.). These generalizations are a bit challenging, since it is not quite clear what is actually an adjective in the Uralic languages. Many of them can use nominals, participles or stative verbs in those syntactic positions where other languages can have adjectives (see the discussion in Ludykova (2010), Shitz (2012) and a broader typological overview in Dixon (1977); Dixon, Aikhenvald (2004), Volodin (2013), etc.). The examples I have found in the book include prototypical adjectives. However, it would be interesting to find out what properties of items would be that are sometimes treated as adjectives in descriptive work but have the nominal or verbal morphological nature like Komi *jugyd* 'light (noun); light (adjective)' (Bubrikh 1949, 73), Moksha *kevən* 'made from stone' (lit.: stone-GEN; Serebrennikov et al. (1998, 242)), Nenets *wəsejmī* 'old (about a man), elder (lit. a participial form of *wəsejmž* 'to get old', (Burkova et al. (2010, 19)). Can the behaviour of a word in non-verbal predication serve as a criterion for its part-of-speech classification in lexicography and in other practical tasks? It would be interesting to get the answer to this question from future research.

One more issue discussed in the book is the use of **a copula** in non-verbal predications. According to de Groot (2017c), a copula is obligatory in the past tense. In the present tense a copula is required as well in most of the Uralic languages, but some languages (South Saami,

Erzya, Mari dialects, Mansi, Nenets) allow its omission. In Mansi and Nenets it is possible only with the essive and the translative, but not with the nominative. Note that the generalizations in de Groot (2017c, 512, 545) do not cover the variation among person forms sometimes touched upon in the descriptions of individual languages (consider e. g. Saarinen (2017, 266–267) on Mari, where a copula is not needed in the third person singular present, while it must be used in the other finite verbal forms). In contexts where a change of state is meant the Uralic languages typically use a semi-copula (i. e. a verb meaning ‘become’). A curious point related to copulas is the grammaticalization of the verb ‘be’ into various kinds of essive / translative markers in the Northern Samoyedic languages and in Udmurt (see more details and references in de Groot (2017c, 516–517)).

The properties of **depictives** in the Uralic languages are discussed in the book in a rather detailed way. This is obviously valuable, since this class of constructions usually receives little attention in descriptive grammars. At the same time, this part of the project provokes some questions. The essive typically marks nouns and adjectives in depictives. Consider the data from Votic where the essive and the nominative vary in non-verbal predication, but depictives are always marked with the essive:

VOTIC

- (7) a. *tämä on jo terve.*
 3SG be.PRS.3 already healthy[NOM]
 ‘She is already healthy.’ (Markus, Rozhanskiy 2017a, 98)
- b. *minu sisarê on terve-n.*
 1SG sister be.PRS.3SG healthy-ESS
 ‘My sister is healthy.’ (Markus, Rozhanskiy 2017a, 98)

VOTIC

- (8) *tämä tul-i kotto läsive-n.*
 3SG come-PST.3SG house.ILL ill-ESS
 ‘He came home ill.’ (de Groot 2017c, 522)

The difference between **subject-oriented** and **object-oriented** depictives is sometimes relevant in the Uralic languages, cf. in Komi the nominative or the instrumental is used in the former, but usually the instrumental (or sometimes the accusative) in the latter. In some languages (such as Selkup and Kamas) depictives are usually **avoided**.

The analysis of depictives suggested in some chapters of the book is a bit problematic, since many distinctions requiring syntactic argumentation are in fact drawn with reference to semantic criteria, sometimes not quite self-evident. Thus, it is argued in Leinonen & Nekrasova (2017, 299–300) that depictives are differentiated from manner adverbials in Komi, which is illustrated in (9)–(10)³.

KOMI

- (9) *Bat’ lokt-i-s muž, kod / muž-ön, kod-ön.*
 father come-PST-3SG tired drunk tired-INS drunk-INS
 ‘Father came and was tired, drunk.’ = depictive (Leinonen & Nekrasova 2017, 299)

KOMI

- (10) *Bat’ lokt-ö muž-a.*
 father come-PRS.3SG tired-ADV

³ The glosses for these two examples are mine, since they are absent in the book.

‘Father is coming tired / in a tired manner.’ = adverb of manner (Leinonen & Nekrasova 2017, 299)

However, no verifiable syntactic arguments for this analysis are put forward. For instance, in the example concerned the authors do not discuss restrictions on the linear position of a depictive (or an adverbial), its position in the constituent structure, its interaction with the scope of negation or ellipsis etc., see the discussion of such diagnostics in Schultze-Berndt & Himmelmann (2004), Heringa (2009), and Motut (2010). Some of these tests sporadically occur in the book, but the analysis would benefit from their being used more systematically.

In Eastern Khanty, according to Filchenko (2017), the “depictive meaning” is typically encoded by non-finite constructions (like those in (11)-(12)) which “manifest the type of secondary predicates with depictive sense” (ibid., 363). Again, it is not clear on what syntactic grounds converbial or participial constructions can be analyzed as depictives.

EASTERN KHANTY

- (11) n'al **wer-min** aməs-wəl.
arrow do-CVB sit-PRS.3SG
‘S/He is sitting making arrows.’ (ibid., 363)

EASTERN KHANTY

- (12) **qant'-tə** **pit-tə**, päni puyol-pa ärki persəy je-s-i.
sick-IMPP become-IMPP and village-ALL1 many strange become-PST2-PASS.3SG
‘I am getting sick, and there are more strangers in the village.’ (ibid., 364)

The distinction between depictives and **resultatives** (such as ‘painted the door green’) is also considered in this volume. Whereas in some languages from the sample there is no difference in surface marking in these two constructions, other languages provide evidence supporting this distinction, consider example (13) from Hungarian, where the sublative affix can encode resultatives, but not depictives. On the whole, resultatives tend to receive translative marking, which follows quite transparently from the semantic invariant of the translative as the expression of a changing state.

HUNGARIAN

- (13) *János* **rongyos-ra** *táncol-ta* *a* *cipő-jé-t*.
PN ragged-SUB dance-PST.3SG.2f the shoe-3SG.POSS-ACC
‘Janos danced his shoes to pieces.’ (de Groot 2017c, 529)

The authors of the volume distinguish depictives from **predicative complements**, although sometimes this is done in a bit contradictory manner. Thus, according to the definition in de Groot (2017c, 519), the depictive is not an argument of the main verb, but some examples of depictive constructions include the verb ‘to work (as a representative of some profession)’ having such an argument⁴, see e. g. (Markus & Rozhanskiy 2017a, 104; Ylikoski 2017, 222; de Groot 2017c, 522). As regards predicative complements, they can be divided into two sets depending on whether they form a construction with verbs of considering (‘consider’, ‘see’, ‘keep’, ‘use’, ‘accept’) and verbs of appointing (‘name’, ‘call’, ‘take’, ‘divide’). Depictives and predicative complements adopt different marking strategies in some languages. Thus, in Hungarian, depictives are usually encoded with the essive-formal (*-ként*), the essive-modal (*-ul / -ül*), the adverbial marker (*-n / -an / -en*) or with the marker *mint* ‘as’ (see de Groot (2017b, 332–339) for details). The preferred option for predicative complements in Hungarian is the dative case (*-nak / -nek*), with the essive-modal and the sublative (*-ra / -re*) being possible variants, while the essive-formal is usually impossible

⁴ See e. g. FrameNet data (frame Being_employed available on the list at <https://framenet.icsi.berkeley.edu/fndrupal/frameIndex>).

(although some counterexamples do occur, see de Groot (2017b, 339–340) for details). The difference between the two groups of verbs taking predicative complements is also found in Uralic, cf. in Finnish essive arguments with verbs of considering and translative arguments with verbs of appointing (de Groot 2017c, 533).

The authors have taken into account **some types of adverbials** that were expected to take the same marking as essive constructions, in particular as depictives (manner, temporal, circumstantial, and locational adverbial phrases; comparatives and simile expressions). However, the adverbials from this list tend to be encoded in other ways, or, as in the case of temporal and circumstantial adverbial phrases, they have different syntactic properties (e. g. they remain outside the scope of negation in contrast to prototypical depictives).

Last but not least, the authors make some generalizations on the **word order** in the Uralic languages, in particular on the major pattern in each language (SOV, SVO, or the possibility of both), the focus position, and the position of the depictive (Table 6 in de Groot (2017c, 539)).

3. Conclusion

To sum up, the book under review is a valuable contribution to research on the Uralic syntax. It is a thought-provoking volume, which provides a vast amount of reliable new data on non-verbal predications, depictives, resultatives, and various kinds of adverbials. The questions that have arisen in Section 2 could be interesting points for future research. The volume is thoroughly edited, with some minor technical inconsistencies, which are not worth mentioning in such a review. The book will be useful for specialists in the Uralic languages, syntactic theory and typology, and intragenetic typology.

Abbreviations

1 – first person; 2 – second person; 2f – second form conjugation; 3 – third person; ADE – adessive; ADJ – adjective; ADV – adverb; ALL – allative; COP – copula; CVB – converb; ESS – essive; GEN – genitive; ILL – illative; IMPP – imperfective participle; INES – inessive; INF – infinitive; INS – instrumental; NOM – nominative; PAR – partitive; PASS – passive; PN – proper name; POSS – possessive; PRS – present tense; PST – past tense; PST2 – second past tense; SG – singular; SUB – sublativ; TRA – translative.

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