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MANCHU-CHINESE SYNTACTICAL PARALLELS

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The Manchu language, as compared with other languages belonging to the Altaic linguistic community, is the most analytical one and its morphological apparatus is developed rather weakly. It is very difficult to divide all Manchu words into parts of speech because the notion "parts of speech" itself requires the existence of well-developed morphological devices corresponding to certain grammatical functions. As a result of weak differentiation of the parts of speech we can speak about great importance of the parts of the sentence for the organization of the Manchu utterance.

The Manchu language and Chinese as amorphous language have some similar characteristics participating in formation of structural-functional sentence positions (parts of the sentence).

There are a number of important syntactic characteristics common to both languages, in spite of the fact that they belong to different typological classes of languages.

Firstly, word-order is an important grammatical mode of distinguishing parts of the sentence. In the Manchu language the principal word-order rules are to the effect that the subordinate component of a syntactical unit always stands before the governing one, and the subject stands before the predicate. Therefore, if the subject and the predicate have the same syntactic structure, their word-order is the only possible way of distinguishing them.

Example:

Sain ehe be yabure=ngge, dorgici tucirakū=ngge
good harm (accus.) he who makes on the inside he who guided
"He who makes good (or) harm is he who is guided by inner causes"
(Pashkov, D., p. 25)

In the Chinese language in the predicative syntagma the subject is always placed before the predicate. The subordinate syntagma allows both preposition and postposition of the subordinate component to its governor.¹

¹ E. I. Shutova, *Syntax of the Modern Chinese Language*. Nauka, Moscow, 1981, p. 50.

Secondly, in the sphere of the nominal type of predication there exist special predicative copulae which are obligatory structural components of the predicate in certain cases.

In the Chinese language there exists a special word 是 *shì*, possessing the affirmative modal semantics. Some scholars believe that this word has non-verbal nature. The word *shì* can be used as an autonomous one in some syntactic structures, but it can also function as a synsemantic element. This universal predicative copula is an obligatory structural component of the nominal predicate. It is combined with a noun or a functional analogue of nouns to produce the actual attribute of the subject i.e. the attribute being ascribed to the subject in the utterance².

Examples:

Chinese:

他是老師

tā shì lǎoshī

“He is a teacher”

你們是什麼時候去的

Nǐmen shì shénma shíhòu qù de

You are what time those who came

“When did you come?”

(You are those who came at what time?)

我是從法國來的

Wǒ shì cóng fǎguó lái de

I am from France the one who arrived

“I arrived from France”

(I am the one who arrived from France) (New Chinese 300, pp. 22, 247, 333)

The copula *bùshì* is the negative analogues of the copula “*shì*”.

Example:

我不是一個人來的

Wǒ bùshì yīge rén lái de

I am not one person the one who came

“I did not come alone”

(I am the one who came not alone) (New Chinese 300, p. 21)

In the Manchu language the copula *bi* has a role similar to the Chinese copula *shì*. The copula *bi* should not be identified with the Manchu verb *bi*=“to

² E. I. Shutova. *Problems of Syntactic Theory*. Nauka, Moscow 1984, p. 194.

On the other hand, these are constructions where a given event (or object) is characterised through correlation with the categories of human thought. This semantic type includes two groups of constructions: construction of classification, where the given object is being put into correlation with a certain class of objects, and constructions of identification, where the objects are being identified with each other. From the logic point of view the identification is a particular case of classification.

Examples:

Manchu:

2. *muse niyalma bi*
we people are
"We are people" (Pashkov, D., p. 44)

ere niyalma sain akū
this man good is not
"This man is not good" (Orl., p. 212)

tere jidere=ngge men'i mama kai
the one who is coming our old woman is
"The one who is coming is our old woman" (S. K.)

Thirdly, in the Manchu and the Chinese languages there exist special markers which can take part in the organization of pronominal complexes functioning as noun analogues.

In the Chinese language this is the syntactical element *de*, the primary function of which is the attributive one. In the attributive constructions the element *de* forms attributes independently of the grammatical nature of the word by means of which this attribute is expressed. On the basis of this primary function there appears a secondary one which forms pronominal complexes functioning in the sentences in the nominal positions, i.e. as noun analogues.⁶

Examples:

Chinese:

你们是坐什么来中国的
Nimen shì zuò shénma lái zhōngguó de
you are go by what the one who arrived in China
"By what means of transportation did you arrive in China?"
(You are the one who arrived in China by what?)

⁶ E. I. Shutova, *Syntax of the Modern Chinese Language*, pp. 51–53.

我是坐飞机来的

Wǒ shì zuò fēijī lái de

I am go by air the one who arrived

"I arrived by air" (I am the one who arrived by air)

这个人是昨天来的

zhège rén shì zuótiān lái de

this man is yesterday the one who arrived

"This man is the one who arrived yesterday"

In these three examples the element *de* forms the predicative constructions functioning as nominal predicatives.

谈的

是钱

tán de

shì qián

what they are speaking about is money

"What they are speaking about is money"

我买的是—本书

Wǒ mǎi de shì yī běn shū

I what bought is a book

"What I bought is a book"

The element *de* puts the verbs *tán* 'to speak' and *mǎi* 'to buy' in the subject position.

In the Manchu language such universal elements as *de* are absent, but there exists a number of markers which following a word of a certain grammatical class, place this word in a noun position (we can name this process substantivization or nominalization).

The marker =*ngge* can be used with two Manchu participles, perfect and imperfect (forms in *-ha/-he/-ho* and *-ra/-re/-ro* correspondingly). This marker following a single participle or a subordinate predicative construction with a participle as a head permits both of them to play the part of a subject or an object.

The absence of case markers after participles denotes the direct case which expresses the subject. The accusative marker, added to participles, expresses the object.

Examples:

Manchu:

1. =ngge

age i jombure=ngge aisin go i gese gisun kai
 elder (genet.) what he said gold jasper (genit.) like words are
 "The elder brother's words are comparable to gold and jasper"
 (What the elder brother said are the words like gold and jasper) (Pang., p. 94)

men'i yabuha=ngge yarg'an'i tondo akū
 our what we did indeed honest is not
 "Our action (what we did) is not honest indeed" (S. K.)

Ere be muke seme omiha=ngge gemu arki bihebi
 that (accus.) water thinking what he drank everything wine was
 "Everything that he drank thinking it was water was wine" (S. K.)

ama jui be tantara=ngge jui be gosira=ngge kai
 father child (accus.) who punishes child (accus.) who loves is
 "The father who punishes the child is the one who loves him." (Pashkov, p. 57)

In these sentences the subordinate predicative constructions are introduced into the noun positions – subject and object – by means the markers =ngge.

In the Manchu language the syntactical element *ba* can also substantivize participles.

*Examples:*2. *ba*

sinde ai guniha ba bi?
 you (dative) what you have thought (accus.) have?
 (= your thoughts)
 "What thoughts have you got?" (S. K.)

t'e usin veileme geneci ai ojurakū sere ba bi
 now arable land to cultivate going what impossibility talking (talk) (accus.) is
 "How can you talk now about impossibility of going to cultivate the arable land?" (S. K.)

The element *ninge* can be attached to the Manchu adjectives to substantivize them. In that case the whole complex denotes some object which is the carrier of the corresponding attribute.

Examples:

3. *ningge*

gasha bethe foholon ningge dedure mangga, bethe golmin ningge elere mangga
 birds legs short=their lie usually legs long=their fly usually
 "Birds that have short legs usually lie, those that have long legs usually fly"
 (Orl., p. 181)

Considerably fewer similarities between the Manchu and the Chinese languages can be found in the sphere of syntactic devices supplying the functioning of certain grammatical word classes in the positions of various parts of the sentence.

In this field Manchu and Chinese use only postpositions which are common to both languages. In Chinese the postpositions ensure the syntactical functioning of nouns and verbs, in Manchu the postpositions do the same for nouns and participles that function as predicates of subordinate predicative constructions.

In both languages most postpositions are formed on the basis of nouns having time, place or cause semantics. In Chinese, postpositions correlate with prepositions, while in Manchu they combine with case markers.

Examples:

Manchu:

sourin'i dergi de emu šain meihe hayafi deduhebi
 throne (genetive) on (dative) one white snake coiled up lied
 "One white snake was lying, coiled up on the throne" (S. K.)

ahun jihe turgunde, geo genehe
 elder bother went away because younger brother came
 "Because the younger brother went away, the elder brother came (instead of him)" (Pashkov, p. 60)

Chinese:

桌子上 有 盒子
zhuózi shàng yǒu hézi
 table on there is box
 "There is a box on a table"

正 在 他 说 话 时 候 我 走 进 屋 子 里 来
zhèng zài tā shuō huà shí (hou), wǒ zǒu jìn wūzǐ lǐ lái
 at the moment he was saying at that time when I came into the room
 "At the moment when he was saying, I came into the room"

Source texts

New Chinese 300 – *Xīn hàn yǔ sān bǎi jù. Běijīng, Yǔ yán xué yuàn*, 1984.

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