CLALLAM AS AN EVENT-DOMINATED LANGUAGE

O. Ikonnikova, Candidate of Philology
Southern Federal University, Russia

In the article the author presents the sentential units of the Salishan language Clallam as a representative of an event-dominated language type. The author concludes that the event-dominated structure of the language with the predication was prior to the object-dominated structure of the language with nominals in the diachrony of the language.

Keywords: Clallam, predicate, event-dominated language, sentential unit, diachrony.

Conference participant,
National championship in scientific analytics
Участник конференции,
Национального первенства по научной аналитике

CLALLAM AS AN EVENT-DOMINATED LANGUAGE

C allam is a language in a large family of Native American languages called Salishan languages spoken in Washington, British Columbia, Oregon, Idaho, and Montana.

We consider Clallam to belong to the event-dominated type according to Capel’s typology. He suggests the existence of two language types – 1) “object-dominated” languages with a complicated noun system and 2) “event-dominated languages” with an elaborate verb system. In the first language type the interest lies in objects rather than in events; in the second language type the interest obviously lies in what happens rather than in the people or things it happens to [see Wetzer, 1995, p. 53-54].

Capel argues that each linguistic type in his typology reflects a particular way of looking at the world: “Of course it’s impossible to say why a language chooses to use one or another method of expression, it’s quite obvious that these methods do exist, and it can hardly be held that they are purely formal, but reflect a way of looking at the world” [cit. Wetzer, 1995, 53-54].

As far as Clallam is concerned Thompson distinguishes two types of words in Clallam: full words and particles. All full words are basically predicative. Predicates are accompanied by one or more particles belonging to a number of different categories. Clauses contain predicates as heads. Roots are also expanded in the creation of stems by a large stock of suffixes carrying lexical rather than grammatical significance [Thompson, p. 260].

To make up with the language-in-action we’ve analyzed 38 sentential units from two Clallam stories “Two deaf fishermen” and “The flood” [see references]. Let’s draw some examples from the Clallam texts.

1) It seems two deaf men were going fishing


   “go” (root) – “apparently” (speech enclitic) – “troll for fish” (root) – “the, that” (demonstrative proclitic) – “two people” (root: ča?sa?two with aʔp’person” (infix)) – “deaf people” (prefix s – root qâ’wi? with aʔ’plural” infix + m’ear” suffix)

2) And the other one spoke

   súčáyu - qá’áy - ča - ndáčulí?

   so he again (prefix s-, prefix u- “so, then” (discourse connector) – “say, speak” (root) – demonstrative proclitic – “one person, another” (nucu”one” – aʔ”person” (infix))

3) Oh, I thought you were going fishing

   Q̕ - náčxẹn - to - ᵈəʔ - či - nášhiyá? - Khácu

   interjection – I thought, my mind (prefix no “my”, root xč is “know” – suffix “gun” instrument) – on the contrary – oblique prep. – non-specific determiner – you go (prefix n - “your” – prefix s – root hipya”go”) – troll for fish (root)

4) When the flood went all over these lands, that flood also went over far-away land.

   ᵈəʔ - kʷi - stáyaq’q’q’a - yá -
   tla - stáyaq’tos - Kháy - ᵈəʔ -
   ní - ᵈəʔ - kʷi - stáyaq’q’a


5) The one that was called Noah was spoken to by God. He was a good person; he was a good white man. He was religious.

   q̕’uʃi’k’q’ uyá - n̕? - či - cí - sít’ámí -
   k’i - ča’ntاك’ - ᵈəʔ - či - snáwxás - ᵈəʔ - ᵈəʔ - x’anítom -


6) Noah told them “Build a big ship, an ark.”

   súčəń’látak - ᵈəʔ - nəwx̕ - čáyá -
   – či - čaq - sčək’q’áyáuls

   “be told” (čəń’látak – t - -ŋ (tell/do – trans. – pass.)) – oblique prep. – “Noah” – “work, build, make” – oblique prep. – “apparently” (speech act enclitic) – “the, that” (demonstrative proclitic) – “their means of transportation” (s - ča’k’q’áyáuls - s (s – conveyance – 3 poss.)).

As we infer from the sentential units of Clallam there are predicates accompanied by particles (personal enclitics marking primary personal reference, proclitics expressing aspectual meanings, suffixes, prefixes, infixes i.e.) that relate the predication to the situation in which utterance occurs. For example in sentential units 4 and 5 a special invisible determiner k’i points out that reference is made to someone remote (i.e. Noah),
but established in context whereas in sentential units 1, 2 the speech enclitic č’ə“apparently” emphasizes the category of evidentiality.

As far as the designation of entities in Clallam is concerned, the prefix s- can be treated as a nominalizer. It indicates that a situation or activity is viewed as an entity, notion or fact (see in the examples above), although there are forms without s-, for example xʷanítəm “the white man”. So we suppose that designation of entities in Clallam is to be affixes or adjuncts to the predicative stems like in pronominal-argument languages.

We noted Thompson’s observation and conclusion that in Clallam language the universe is viewed as autonomous and dynamic. Entities – persons and things – are apart of the general scheme, but they are only incidentally responsible for situations arising, so there is a special “responsibility system” for introducing responsibility of entities in situations. The basic predicative force of all full words is a logical part of this organization. We concluded this due to the fact that the universe of the native speakers of Clallam was viewed as a dynamic phenomenon like the universe at the early stage of the language [see Ikonnikova, 2013, p. 198-200]. Our conclusion is in line with Capel’s speculations that each linguistic type in his typology reflects a particular way of looking at the world.

So the linguistic source of Clallam confirms the fact that Clallam is an event-dominated language type due to the special perception of the world of the native speakers. In our opinion Capel’s typology of “concept domination” can be viewed as two diachronic stages of thinking and language respectively. The linguistic source of the Salishan Indian languages, namely Clallam throws light on the supposition that event-dominated structure of the language with the predicate was prior to the object-dominated structure of the language with nominals in the diachrony of the language.

References:

Information about author:
1. Olga Ikonnikova - Candidate of Philology, Southern Federal University; address: Russia, Rostov-on-Don city; e-mail: iconolga@mail.ru