

Anna Volkova

Licensing Reflexivity

Unity and variation among selected Uralic languages

This dissertation analyzes the reflexivity patterns in Uralic languages from the point of view of a minimalist approach to binding. The languages under consideration are five Uralic languages spoken in the Russian Federation: Meadow Mari, Komi-Zyrian, Khanty, Besermyan Udmurt, and Erzya. The empirical data were compiled during fieldwork, and are used to test and assess current approaches to binding.

The main focus of the dissertation is on a number of puzzles posed by these languages, namely the locally bound pronominals in Khanty, as well as the binding domains of what I call *semi-reflexives* and their ability to take split antecedents in Meadow Mari, Komi-Zyrian, Besermyan Udmurt, and Erzya. The analysis of reflexive strategies proposed in this dissertation is based on a modular approach to binding (see Reuland 2011). It disentangles the various factors playing a role in establishing interpretive dependencies, including properties of predicates and syntactic chains. The puzzling behavior of reflexive strategies under discussion is accounted for in terms of their morphosyntactic composition in tandem with general properties of grammatical computation. The present approach provides a unified basis for verbal and nominal reflexives. Overall, the study shows that cross-linguistic variation is not random. It demonstrates how descriptive fieldwork and theoretical research can be mutually beneficial and how their symbiosis deepens our understanding of the general principles underlying language, and the way these are rooted in our cognitive system.

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