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**ON THE ARGUMENT STRUCTURE OF THE 'GIVE' VERBS  
IN NGANASAN AND IN SELKUP**

The verb 'to give' belongs to the group of the so-called ditransitive verbs. The verb's behaviour can firstly be investigated based on the argument structure, that is how the recipient and the theme, i.e. the object, are coded by the language. Secondly, this phenomenon can also be studied regarding the form of the verb. This work will focus on this point of view, but the form of the two arguments will also be discussed.

There are two verbs with the meaning 'to give' in the Samoyedic languages. Despite the distinction in meaning there is a strong tendency in the distribution of the two verbs determined by the person of the receiver, which is well reflected in the reconstruction of the verbs. A distribution similar to the one in Nganasan can be detected in the Enets, the Nenets and the Selkup languages.

**Key words:** *Nganasan, Selkup, ditransitive construction*

The verb 'give' belongs to the group of the so-called ditransitive verbs, which have three arguments: agent (A), recipient (R) and theme (the transferred element, T). The use of ditransitive verbs can firstly be investigated based on the argument structure, that is, how the recipient and the theme, i.e. the direct object, are coded by the language (cf. e.g. Malchukov et al. 2010). Secondly, this phenomenon can also be studied regarding the form of the verb. This work will focus on this approach, but the form of the two arguments will also be discussed.

The Samoyed languages dispose of two expressions meaning 'give', which is quite a rare feature throughout natural languages. It occurs in some New-Guinean languages and, in Siberia, in Yukagir (for more details see Comrie 2003).

The fact that all Samoyedic languages feature two 'give' verbs received only marginal attention in the literature, and mainly in etymological studies. Both verbs can be traced back until Proto-Uralic (PU). Based on the verb semantics in the current Uralic languages one can postulate that a meaning differentiation also goes back until the PU stage. The general semantics of both verbs can be described as 'give', however, the specific semantics is different, namely, it is 'sell' for the stem \**mi-*, and 'bring, carry' for the stem \**tə-*, respectively. This holds for contemporan Nganasan, too. The etymologies of the verbs can be described as follows:

*Table 1*

**Etymology of the verb 'give'**

	Proto-Samoyed	Proto-Uralic
Ngan. <i>mi-s'i</i> 'give, hand, deliver' Sel. <i>mi-qo</i> 'give, deliver, pay'	* <i>mi-</i> 'to give, to sell'	PU * <i>miye-</i> 'to give, to sell' (UEW275)
Ngan. <i>tətu.d'a</i> 'bring, give' Sel. <i>tatti-qo</i> 'bring, give'	* <i>tə-</i> 'to bring, to give' (SW 145)	PU * <i>toye-</i> 'to bring, to carry, to give' (UEW529)

As far as we are aware, the use of these verbs has never been subject of investigation. In this article, we don't cover all Samoyedic languages, but concentrate on Nganasan and Selkup. Doing so allows for the fact that both the Northern and the Southern Samoyedic languages are represented. We must note however, that – although both Nenets and Enets are, from areal perspective, strongly related with Nganasan, the use of the 'give' verbs in these languages strikingly differs from those of the Nganasan language. Our observations in this respect will not be the subject of this article, but are to be dealt with in future studies.

The language data analysed so far indicate that the distribution of the verbs in the Samoyedic languages is determined by the person of the receiver (1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person vs. 3<sup>rd</sup> person). The two verbs have identical argument. In the next section we first present the Nganasan data.

### 1. Verbs meaning 'give' in Nganasan

The Nganasan verbs are the following: *tətuḏ'a* 'give', 'carry' and *mis'i* 'give', 'return'. Thus, the meaning of *mis'i* is more specific than that of the verb *tətuḏ'a*. The distribution of the 'give' verbs is summarised in Table 2.

Table 2

Distribution of the 'give' verbs in Nganasan

agent \ recipient	1 <sup>st</sup> person	2 <sup>nd</sup> person	3 <sup>rd</sup> person
1 <sup>st</sup> person	<i>tətuḏ'a</i>	<i>tətuḏ'a</i>	<i>mis'i</i>
2 <sup>nd</sup> person	<i>tətuḏ'a</i>	<i>tətuḏ'a</i>	<i>mis'i</i>
3 <sup>rd</sup> person	<i>tətuḏ'a</i>	<i>tətuḏ'a</i>	<i>mis'i</i>

The data indicate that two verbs show complementary distribution depending on the person of the agent. This phenomenon is illustrated by the example sentences below. First, examples for the use of the verb *mis'i* are provided. In the first line, we indicate the arguments, or, the elements on which they are marked, respectively. Those arguments, that are only expressed by morphological means, but not lexically, are provided in paranthesis.

- A T (R) (A)
- (1) *mənə kŋiga-ḏə-mtu mi-s'iə-m*  
 I book-DST-ACC.3SG<sub>PX</sub> give-PST-1SG  
 'I gave him/her the book.' (KNT<sup>1</sup>, 1998)
- R T (R) (A)
- (2) *siti kŋiga-ḏə-mtu mi-s'iə-ŋ*  
 (s)he book-DST-ACC.3SG<sub>PX</sub> give-PST-2SG  
 'You gave him/her his/her own book.' (KNT, 1998)
- A (A) T (R)

<sup>1</sup> The abbreviations refer to the monograms of the informants, the dates indicate the year of collection. The example sentences marked by an asterisk were elicited with the help of a questionnaire by Valentin Gusev.

- (3) *siti mi-tə-ti kúiga-ǰə-mtu*  
 (s)he give-IPF-CO.3SG.O book-DST-ACC.3SG  
 ‘(S)he usually gives him/her a book.’ (KNT, 1998)

Before we describe the distribution of the verb *mis’i*, some comments have to be made. Examples (1) and (3) illustrate that in Nganasan sentences, the recipient does not need to be expressed by lexical means. Thus, formally, these clauses could even be regarded monotontransitive structures<sup>2</sup>. This is due to the fact that the so-called (pre)destinative already refer to the recipient. This is however only possible in case the recipient is expressed by a pronominal element. The theme, i.e. the direct object is tagged with the destinative suffix as well as a possessive suffix, referring to the number and the person of the possessor<sup>3</sup> (which is the recipient), in the accusative case. If the receiver is expressed by a noun, it may not be omitted. The theme of the sentence is, likewise, marked with the possessive suffix and the destinative suffix. This is illustrated by the following sentences:

- R (T) (A)
- (4) *ɲuə-ntə maa maǰajs’iüə-ǰə-mtu mi-təŋi-m*  
 god-LAT what gift-DST-ACC.3SG<sub>PX</sub> give-INTFUT-1SG  
 ‘What a gift do I give the Tsar?’ (K-06\_korova 416<sup>4</sup>)

As the personal suffix of the verb may also indicate the direct object, the theme may under certain circumstances be omitted, as in the following sentence:

- R (A)(T)
- (5) *kobtua-t mid’i-ŋi-č’i*  
 girl-LAT give-CO-3PL.OPL  
 ‘(S)he gave them to the girl.’ (SY-08\_3filles 171)

Sentences (4) and (5) show that the receiver is coded with the lative suffix. Only in sentence (2) the receiver is expressed by a pronoun. In this case, the recipient is unmarked. Other data show pronominal recipients that are marked by the lative suffix, as e.g. sentence (9).

As already mentioned, the verb in Nganasan may indicate the direct object of the sentence, consequently, the realisation of the recipient by lexical means is not obligatory, as showed in sentence (5). Likewise, the destinative suffix may also be omitted, which means that the theme doesn’t need to be lexically overt if there is an option of marking it by morphological means, e.g. by objective conjugation. It must be added, however, that the destinative can not only be omitted if the theme is an overt or an elliptically omitted pronoun, but also if it is a lexical word and appears in the sentence. This may include cases in which the actual possessive relation is expressed, like in sen-

<sup>2</sup> Daniel (2009) does not even regard clauses with a ‘give’ verb ditransitive. Below we will show however, that in some contexts the recipient must be lexically overt, and thus, the underlying structure cannot be regarded monotontransitive.

<sup>3</sup> Some author like e.g. Daniel (2009) regard destinative constructions as possessives. Although this conception is supportable too, it doesn’t belong to our core theme, and will not be dealt with in this paper.

<sup>4</sup> This type of source indication refers to texts and sentence numbers, collected by Valentin Gusev.



ent, too, as in sentence (7). On the other hand, as shown in sentence (8), the recipient may be lexically overt in the sentence and be marked with the lative (*nantə*), even though it is expressed by a pronoun. However, as illustrated in sentence (2), the lative marking is not obligatory. The construction of the type illustrated in sentence (8) is quite rare, and is used to emphasise the person of the recipient. In Nganasan, the personal pronouns don't have a full paradigm of local cases, and so, in the recipient function, the lative postposition *na*, attached with the respective personal suffix is used. The lative suppletive forms are presented in the table below.

Table 3

**lative suppletive pronouns**

	SG	DU	PL
<b>1</b>	( <i>mənə</i> ) <i>na-nə</i>	( <i>mi</i> ) <i>na-ni</i>	( <i>mij</i> ) <i>na-nuʔ</i>
<b>2</b>	( <i>tənə</i> ) <i>na-ntə</i>	( <i>ti</i> ) <i>na-ndi</i>	( <i>tij</i> ) <i>na-nduʔ</i>
<b>3</b>	( <i>siti</i> ) <i>na-ntu</i>	( <i>siti</i> ) <i>na-ndi</i>	( <i>sitij</i> ) <i>na-nduʔ</i>

Those cases where the agent and the recipient are of the same number and person, need special attention. Given this, only the verb *tətuɖ'a* can be used, in the meaning 'bring'. This is illustrated by the following sentences.

(12) *mənə təða-ʔa-m kümaa-ðə-mə*  
 I bring-CO-1SG knife-DST-ACC.1SG  
 'I brought myself a knife.' (KTT, 2008\*)

(13) *tənə təða-ʔa-ŋ kümaa-ðə-mtə*  
 you bring-CO-2SG knife-DST-ACC.2SG  
 'You brought yourself a knife.' (KTT, 2008\*)

We can see that the structure remains the same: the destinative and the possessive suffixes refer to the recipient, while the theme, carrying the possessive suffix, is marked with the accusative case and represents the direct object of the sentence. The verb *mis'i* cannot be used in this sense, i.e. the sentences *mənə mid'iʔəm kümaaðəmə* 'I brought myself a knife' and *tənə mid'iʔəm kümaaðəmtə* 'I brought yourself a knife' are ungrammatical according to our informants.

Although informants translate sentences of the type *I gave myself a book* (with some variation regarding the choice of the verb), they reject this sentence when they have to describe the situation and generally state that they do not use sentences like these.

(14) *mənə na-nə mis'i-ʔə-m kümaa*  
 I P<sub>LAT</sub>-OBL.1SG give-CO-1SG knife.ACC  
 'I gave myself a knife.' (PZCh, 2008\*)

(15) *tənə na-ntə mis'i-ʔə-ŋ kümaa*

you PP<sub>LAT</sub>-OBL.2SG ad-Co-2SG knife.ACC  
 'You gave yourself a knife.' (PZCh, 2008\*)

We can conclude that the construction with the verb *tatud'a* and the destinative suffix in case of a subject and an object of the same person and number is associated with the meaning 'bring', the meaning 'give' is coded by a recipient expressed by a postpositional structure.

## 2. The 'give' verbs in Tas Selkup

The Tas<sup>5</sup> dialect of Selkup also shows two 'give' verbs. The verb *miqo* means 'give, transfer, sell', whereas the verb *tattiqo* like its counterpart in Nganasan, means 'give, bring'. This verb only very rarely occurs in the meaning 'give', and its use is restricted to the 3rd person. The distribution of the verbs is summarised in the table below.

Table 4

Distribution of the 'give' verbs in Selkup

agent \ recipien	1 <sup>st</sup> person	2 <sup>nd</sup> person	3 <sup>rd</sup> person
1 <sup>st</sup> person	no data	<i>miqo</i>	<i>miqo</i>
2 <sup>nd</sup> person	<i>miqo</i>	<i>miqo</i>	<i>miqo</i>
3 <sup>rd</sup> person	<i>miqo</i>	no data	<i>miqo/ tattiqo</i>

A comparison with the Nganasan verbs reveals that the distribution of the two 'give' verbs is totally different in Nganasan and Selkup. While in Nganasan, the person of the recipient is relevant for the choice of the verb, in Selkup, the *mi-* stem is clearly more frequent. Alternating forms are only observed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> person. However, in these sentences the verb *tattiqo* generally means 'bring', as it is shown in following examples.

R T (A)  
 (16) *il'ta-nti-nik meešak-ti mi-ŋi-ti.*  
 grandfather-OBL.3SG<sub>PX</sub>-LAT sack-ACC.3SG<sub>PX</sub> give-CO-3SG.O  
 '(S)he gave his/her grandfather the sack.' (Kuznetsova 1980: 387)

T R (A)  
 (17) *qopi-m əsi-nti-nik tattī-mpɔɔ-tit.*  
 fur.coat-ACC father-3SG<sub>PX</sub>-LAT bring/give-PST-3PL  
 'They brought/gave the fur coat (for) their father.' (Kuznetsova 1980: 178)

In the following section, the argument structure of the 'give' verb in Selkup is described. Sentences (16) and (17) illustrate that in Selkup, too, the agent does not obligatorily have to be

<sup>6</sup> The Tas dialect belongs to the Northern dialects of Selkup and has the most speakers among the Selkup dialects.

lexically overt, and may be referred to with the personal suffix of the verb. However, the recipient is always lexically overt, as opposed to Nganasan. If the recipient is expressed by a noun, it is always coded by the lative in Selkup, while the direct object (which is the theme) is marked by the accusative (cf. sentences (16) and (17)).

If again the recipient is expressed by a pronoun, it is generally marked with the accusative marker, although, very rarely, the lative may also occur. Depending on the coding of the recipient, the coding of the theme alternates as well. This is to be discussed in more detail below.

Before providing examples for the respective structures, the system of the personal pronouns in Tas Selkup is presented. The pronouns have numerous suppletive forms. The majority of the pronouns in accusative are derived from the stem *ši-*. Following table presents the paradigms of the personal pronouns for nominative, accusative and lative.

Table 5

### Personal pronouns in Selkup

	Nominative	Accusative	Lative
1SG	<i>man</i>	<i>šim ~ mašim</i>	<i>mäkkä ~ matqäk</i>
2SG	<i>Tan</i>	<i>šinti ~ ta šinti</i>	<i>tänti ~ täntini ~ tatqänti</i>
3SG	<i>təp</i>	<i>təpim</i>	<i>təpiniŋ ~ təpitkinu</i>
1DU	<i>mee</i>	<i>šimu ~ meešimu ~ šinu ~ meešinu</i>	<i>meeqińu</i>
2DU	<i>tεε</i>	<i>šintu ~ tεεšintu</i>	<i>tεεqicu</i>
3DU	<i>təpääqi</i>	<i>təpääqum</i>	<i>tεεpääqutkinu</i>
1PL	<i>mee</i>	<i>šimīt ~ meešimīt ~ šinīt ~ meešinīt</i>	<i>meeqińit</i>
2PL	<i>tεε</i>	<i>šintit ~ tεεšintit</i>	<i>tεεqińcit</i>
3PL	<i>təpit</i>	<i>təpitim</i>	<i>təpititkinu</i>

First, an example for the lative coding of the recipient is presented. The theme of the sentence is in this case regularly marked with the accusative.

- A R T  
 (18) *kekkisä mat təpinik<sup>7</sup> cətä-m mi-s-ap, təp*  
 when 1SG 3SG.LAT reindeer-ACC give-PST-1SG.O 3SG  
*millä laqaltεε-s-i.*

instantly go.away-PST-3SG

'As soon as I gave him/her the reindeer, (s)he went away.' (Kuznetsova 1980: 327)

<sup>7</sup> In Selkup, *k* may regularly alternate with *ŋ*, as well as *m* with *p*. For more details regarding the sound changes see Kuznetsova et alii 1980: 141–144.





not clarified so far. However, it seems to be evidenced, that it not primarily depends on the definiteness of the direct object, but rather on the information structure of the sentence. In our opinion the use of the two different ditransitive constructions may behave on similar principles, but there is not enough evidence for this on the basis of the data analysed so far.

### Summary

To sum up, regarding the ditransitive constructions in Nganasan, we can state that besides the semantic differences between the two verbs meaning ‘give’, there is a clear distribution in their usage depending on the person of the recipient. A similar pattern can be observed in Enets as well in Nenets, and probably, it could be found in the extinct Samoyedic languages, too, but there is not sufficient data to demonstrate this. In those cases, where all thematic roles are lexically overt (as e.g. in sentence (6)), we have a construction of the dative type, i.e. the theme of the ditransitive sentence is coded similarly to the direct object of the transitive sentence, while the recipient is coded differently (T=P R). There is however another type of ditransitive in Nganasan, where the recipient is not lexically overt, but it is only referred to by a possessive suffix and a destinative suffix. This construction was called by Malchukov et al. (2010: 11) adnominal ditransitive.

Likewise in Selkup, two ditransitive constructions can be used. On the one hand, the dative construction is used, and on the other, the so-called primary-object-construction, which codes the recipient in the same manner as direct objects in transitive sentences.

The following table summarises the constructions analysed in this paper.

*Table 6*

#### Ditransitive constructions in Selkup and Nganasan

	Dative construction	Adnominal construction	Primary object construction
Nganasan	R <sub>LAT</sub> [T=P] <sub>ACC</sub>	(R) <sub>DST</sub> [T=P] <sub>ACC</sub>	—————
Selkup	R <sub>LAT</sub> [T=P] <sub>ACC</sub>	—————	T <sub>INSTR</sub> [R=P] <sub>ACC</sub>

### Abbreviations

ACC	accusative
ACT	nomen actionis
CO	copula
DST	(pre)destinative
INFER	inferential
INSTR	instrumental
INTERFUT	future interrogative
IPF	imprefective suffix
LAT	lative
O	objective conjugation indicating direct object in singular
OPL	objective conjugation indicating direct object in plural
OBL	oblique case
PL	plural
PP	postposition
PS	Proto-Samoyedic
PST	past tense

PU	Proto-Uralic
PX	possessive suffixe
RES	resultative
SG	singular
SUP	supine
SW	Janhunen 1977
TRL	translative
UEW	Rédei 1986

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## **ОБ АРГУМЕНТНОЙ СТРУКТУРЕ ГЛАГОЛОВ 'ДАВАТЬ' В НГАНАСАНСКОМ И СЕЛЬКУПСКОМ ЯЗЫКАХ**

Глагол, 'давать' относится к группе так называемых двухобъектных переходных глаголов. Описать характеристики глагола можно, во-первых, базируясь на его аргументной структуре, каким образом адресат и тема, то есть объект, кодируются в языке. Во-вторых, может быть изучена сама форма глагола. Данное исследование сосредоточено прежде всего на аргументной структуре глагола, однако будет затронут и вопрос, касающийся формы аргументов.

В самодийских языках есть два глагола со значением 'давать'. Несмотря на различие в их значении наблюдается сильная тенденция в дистрибуции этих двух глаголов, обусловленная личностью адресата, что хорошо отражается в реконструкции глаголов. Дистрибуция, подобная той, которая встречается в нганасанском языке, может быть обнаружена в энецком, ненецком и селькупском языках.

**Ключевые слова:** *нганасанский язык, селькупский язык, конструкции с двухобъектными переходными глаголами.*

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