

Nanosyntactic Analysis of Spatial Adpositions in Tati

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Abstract

This article investigates the spatial adpositions in Tati, analytically and descriptively, according to nanosyntax approach. Based on this approach, terminal nodes in the syntactic structure are smaller than a morpheme, i.e. one morpheme can lexicalize several terminal nodes in a syntactic tree. Tati is a postpositional language. Spatial adpositions are divided into two groups, Lexical adpositions are under the node of Axial Part Phrase and functional adpositions are in Path Phrase and Place Phrase. Based on nanosyntax approach, the syntactic structure of adpositions is [Route [Source[Goal[Place[Ax Part [KP [DP]]. In Tati, “Goal” is not phonologically expressed. So, the motion verb gives [+orientation] feature to the head of “Goal Phrase” and the morpheme which lexicalizes the head of VP, also lexicalizes the head of Goal P. The adposition for “Place”, “Source” and “Route” is -a(da). One of the principles of nanosyntax is superset principle which determines syncretism in morphemes. In Tati, the syncretism pattern is Goal≠Place=Source, which is a rare pattern among the world languages.

Keywords: spatial adpositions, Tati language, nanosyntax, syncretism

Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

The nanosyntax approach was first introduced by Stark (2009). This approach is based on the results of Minimalism in which final nodes in syntactic structures are smaller than a single morpheme. This is why this theory is called "nanosyntax". In syntactic structures, lexicalization is a post-syntactic operation, and a single morpheme can lexicalize several terminal nodes in a tree diagram. One of the functions of this approach is decomposition of prepositions. Prepositions in Persian are divided into two categories according to the existence of “Ezafe”. The first group includes prepositions which are never accompanied by Ezafe. The second group includes prepositions which are accompanied by Ezafe and are divided into two subgroups: prepositions in which the use of Ezafe is optional, and prepositions in which the use of the

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Ezafe is mandatory. Spatial adpositions are those which indicate “Place” and “Path”.

Among the researches that have studied prepositions in Iranian languages based on anosyntax approach, we can mention Dabir Moghaddam and Naseri (2017) and Moradi et al. (2009). Among the works that have studied prepositions in different languages based on the nanosyntax, we can mention Pantcheva (2006, 2009, and 2011) and Svenonius (2006, 2009, and 2012). Yarshater (1969) and Taheri (2009) are among the works that have studied adpositions in Tati.

In this article, spatial adpositions in Tati are examined based on nanosyntax approach, and two important questions are tried to be answered: “how effective the nanosyntax approach can be in decomposing the prepositional phrase in Tati?”, and “what is the pattern of syncretism in spatial adpositions in this language?”

2. Theoretical Framework

In nanosyntax, lexical prepositions are represented by Axial Part Phrase, and functional prepositions are in the head of Place P and Path P. Path is divided into Goal, Source and Route, which are called “Path expressions”. The head of Path phrase dominates Place phrase and its Source and Goal phrases. The idea of the dominance of Path phrase over Place phrase is derived from languages in which Source and Goal expressions is morphologically contained in a “Place expression”. Also, based on data from Avar and several other languages, now it is known that the “Route expression”, morphologically includes “Source expression”. Therefore, decomposition of the Prepositional phrase is [Route[Source [Goal[Place[Axial Part[DP]]]]]]. These structures are universal, that is, in all languages, Source phrase is dominated Goal phrase, even in languages where this is not morphologically clear. The same is true of Route phrase. One of the results of nanosyntax is superset principle, according to which a lexical element can spell out more than one syntactic structure. This indicates the existence of syncretism in morphemes.

3. Methodology

The present research is descriptive-analytical and has been done through documentary and field methods. Regarding the field method, 10 informants living in Takestan in the age group of 30 to 60 years ,with primary to bachelor education, were interviewed.

4. Results & Discussion

In Tati, most spatial expressions are post-positions, so there is only one preposition (tâ "to"). Post-positions are divided into two categories, depending on whether they are lexical or functional, as well as if they get oblique case. Functional prepositions are group 1 prepositions and lexical prepositions are

group 2 prepositions. Place is lexicalized by two post-positions "-a" and "-da". Also, since the oblique case are indicated by "-e" and Place head₁ is represented by -e / -a, it becomes difficult to distinguish between the two, and in fact they become one.

(1) doktor azire engâ de ve
 doctor yesterday here (Oblique case) in was

Examining considerable data from participants, as well as from Tati language sources, it was concluded that Source expression in this language is not lexically represented.

(2) a mešem dânešgâh
 I go university

Also, Source expression is lexicalized by two post-positions “-a” and “-da”, which sometimes may be represented as "-e (de)". Therefore, like Place head, one concept is lexicalized by two morphemes. In tree diagrams, there are two Source heads, each lexicalized by one post-position. But the head of Source phrase₁ merges with the symbol of the oblique case and seems not to have a phonetic representation.

(3) ketâb=em mez-e sar-a ogo
 book=I table-Ezafe top-from took

In the case of the syncretism pattern in this language, both Route and Source heads are lexicalized by two "-a (da)". On the other hand, Source and Place heads are shown with the same post-positions. Even the optional deletion of the "-da" is the same in the Route, Source and Place phrases. Therefore, the pattern of syncretism in Tati is Goal ≠ place = Source = Route.

5. Conclusions & Suggestions

Based on nanosyntax approach, the decomposition of Prepositional phrase in this language is [Route[Source [Goal[Place[Axial Part [Kase[DP]]]]]]]. Because the head of Goal phrase has no phonetic representation, the motion verb gives the feature of [+ direction] to Goal head, and the morpheme which lexicalizes the head of VP actually lexicalizes the head of Goal phrase as well. Place, Goal and Source expressions are lexicalized by "-a (da)". Since these concepts are represented by two post-positions, they have two heads, based on the nanosyntax, and the second head, "da", is omitted when the head of Axial Part phrase is absent.

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