

Vedic bitransitive verbs: Semantic classes and referential hierarchies

Leonid Kulikov – Leiden University

This paper concentrates on a particular subtype of transitives in Vedic Sanskrit, called ‘two pattern’ verbs (see Delbrück 1897; Haudry 1977; Hettrich 1990). This subclass comprises the verbs which can be constructed with two kinds of accusative objects, referred to as first (proximate) and second (distant) objects (the Indian tradition uses the terms *pradhāna-karman* ‘principal object’ and *apradhāna-karman* ‘non-principal, secondary object’). The second object (‘recipient’ or locative direct object; see Givón 2001: 98ff.) typically denotes the goal or addressee – as, e.g., is the case with *yuj* ‘yoke, join’, constructed with the accusative of horses (as in RV 8.98.9 *yuñjánti hári ... ráthe* [LOC] ‘they yoke **two fallow** [horses] to the chariot’) or with the accusative of chariot (as in RV 7.23.3 *yujé rátham ... háribhyām* [INS] ‘in order to yoke **the chariot** ... with two fallow [horses] ...’). Usually, only one of these two participants surfaces in the accusative; the first object can alternatively appear in the instrumental and the second object in the dative or locative. The passivization test can determine whether both types of accusative nouns behave as direct objects or not and thus to distinguish ‘two pattern’ verbs (bitransitives) from other verbs with multiple accusatives.

The two main semantic groups of ‘two pattern’ verbs in Vedic are verbs of speech (with the accusative of speech or with the accusative of the addressee of the speech [= second object]: ‘X_{NOM} sings Y^{prayer}_{ACC}’ or ‘X_{NOM} praises Z^{deity}_{ACC}’) and verbs of putting / spraying (with the accusative of movable things or substances or with the accusative of the goal: ‘X_{NOM} sprinkles Y^{oblation}_{ACC}’ or ‘X_{NOM} besprinkles Z^{altar}_{ACC}’), such as *yuj* ‘yoke, join’ or *vap* ‘sow, scatter’ (see, for instance, Levin 1993: 50ff.).

The choice of syntactic pattern is determined both by the semantic class of the verb and by the referential status of the arguments as well as by the contribution of the participants of to the corresponding situation described by the verb in question. The present paper will be focused on the basic principles of the interaction between the semantic classification of verbs and referential values of its participants.

References

- Delbrück, B. 1897. *Vergleichende Syntax der indogermanischen Sprachen*. Strassburg.
- Givón, T. 2001. *Syntax: an introduction*. 2 vols. Amsterdam.
- Haudry, J. 1977. *L'emploi des cas en védique. Introduction à l'étude des cas en indo-européen*. Lyon.
- Hettrich, H. 1990. Rektionaler und autonomer Kasusgebrauch. In: H. Eichner & H. Rix (eds) *Sprachwissenschaft und Philologie. Jacob Wackernagel und die Indogermanistik heute*, 82-99. Wiesbaden.
- Levin, B. 1993. *English verb classes and alternations*. Chicago.