

Ainu and Tungusic from the perspective of linguistic typology and areal linguistics

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Tungusic is a language family consisting of 10-11 languages spreading across the Russian (Eastern Siberia, Lower Amur River, Primorskii Krai, and Sakhalin Island) and Chinese (Northeastern and Xinjiang Uyghur autonomous provinces) territories. Ainu and Tungusic languages are known to be genetically non-related but geographically closely distributed.

Due to its geographical proximity, there have been some studies concentrating on possible language contact between the two languages at lexical level. However, with regard to grammatical aspect, relevant research is extremely limited.

This presentation is to examine Ainu and Tungusic from the perspective of linguistic typology and areal linguistics. This presentation consists of three parts; 1) a brief typological comparison in grammar between Tungusic and Ainu, 2) previous studies (Ikegami 1980, Tsumagari 1997, 2009, Yamada 2008) on possible language contact between the two language groups, and 3) possibility of forming a linguistic area in the employment of plural suffix.

The main focus of this presentation will be placed on the appearance and function of plural suffixes in Tungusic, Sakhalin Ainu, and Nivkh. Baek (2016) raises a possibility that number distinction between the third person singular and plural in Tungusic shows a clear variation in accordance with its geographical distribution of each Tungusic language, showing remarkable similarities with those of neighboring languages. Nonetheless, this research does not include Ainu and Nivkh in its discussion. The use of plural marker in Sakhalin Ainu (*-hci*), Uilta (*-l*), and Nivkh (*-gun*) is strikingly similar in its appearance and grammatical function. The three plural endings have in common that they can be attached to both nouns and verbs. In addition, they can be commonly employed as the third person plural marker to optionally clarify number difference in the third person subject. Nevertheless, it should be noted that there is an inconsistency in its use as a nominal plural marker surrounding whether it is an obligatory element or not, whereas its employment in verbal predicate in three languages is optional. Still, it deserves an

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attention that Ainu, Tungusic, and Nivkh share a similar syntactic feature in the usage of plural endings and this can be understood as an example of linguistic area at grammatical level in Sakhalin Island.