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1. Introduction

The present chapter presents a very brief summary of the mermaid construction ('MMC') of Sive. Details are provided by Kogura and Kubo (2012) and Kubo et al. (2011).

Sive is an endangered language spoken in the Xin-jiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of the Peoples' Republic of China. The number of its speakers is estimated to be not more than 30,000, many of whom are multi-lingual between Sive, Chinese, Uyghur, and, in some cases, Kazakh as well. Sive has the SOV order, like most of the languages reported in the present volume.

2. Nouns

At least two forms are attested in the 'Noun' slot of the Sive MMC: *aliŋe* 'like' and *=ŋe* 'nominalizer'. While *aliŋe* is an independent word, *=ŋe* is an enclitic. Both are grammaticalized to some extent. Nonetheless, they do exhibit their status as nouns, as shown below.

[1] *aliŋe* 'like'
This form is an independent word. It appears in the following two contexts.

(a) Context 1: NP=*i aliŋe* 'like X'
=i is the genitive marker. The fact that *aliŋe* can be modified by a genitive-marked NP shows that *aliŋe* is a noun. An example is (1).

(1) moN=i   **aliŋe** guruN
     1PL.EXCL=GEN like   people
     'the people like us (exclusive)'

(b) Context 2: V-AD *aliŋe* 'It seems that ...'
'V-AD' indicates an adnominal form of a verb. The fact that *aliŋe* can be modified by an adnominal form of a verb also shows that *aliŋe* is a noun. The use (b) of *aliŋe* 'like' provides an instance of the MMC. An example is (4).

[2] *=ŋe* 'nominalizer'
This form is an enclitic. It appears in the following two contexts.

(a) Context 1: NP=*i=ŋe* 'NP's'
=i is the genitive marker. The fact that *=ŋe* can be modified by a genitive-marked NP shows that *=ŋe* functions as a noun. An example is (2).

(2) ere   emkeN   miN=i=ŋe.
    this   one   1SG=GEN=NMLZ
    'This one is mine.'

Sive does not have a copula verb.
    (b) Context 2: V-AD=ŋe
'V-AD' indicates an adnominal form of a verb. The fact that =ŋe can be
modified by an adnominal form of a verb also shows that =ŋe functions as a
noun. 'V-AD=ŋe' can be used in a complement clause, with =ŋe being
followed by an appropriate case marker, e.g. =we 'ACC' in (3).

(3) tere   si   ere   ani   χase'ke   gisuN=we
    3SG   2SG   this   year   Kazakh   language=ACC
    taci-Xe=ŋe=we   sa=qu.
    study-PRF.AD=NMLZ=ACC   know=IRR.NEG
    'He doesn't know that you studied the Kazakh language this year.'

V-AD=ŋe can also be used to form the MMC. Examples are (5-B) and (6-A,
B).

3. Examples of the mermaid construction

As noted in connection with (2), Sive does not have a copula verb.
Consequently, the Sive MMC does not contain a copula.
    [1] The MMC involving aliŋe 'like' indicates inference ('It seems
that ...'), i.e., it has an evidential meaning.

(4) merxenje   da   ji-xe   aliŋe.   kicebu   da
    Merxenje   come-PRF.AD   like   Kicebu
    ji-xe   aqu   aliŋe.
    come-PRF.AD   NEG   like
    'It seems that Merxenje came. [But] it seems that Kicebu didn't
    come.'

(The particle da frequently appears after the subject NP.)
    [2] The MMC involving =ŋe appears to have discourse-related
functions. They are difficult to describe precisely, but one of the functions
appears to be 'assertive' (a kind of modal meaning), in which case the
MMC may be translated as 'It is indeed the case that ...'. Examples follow.

(5) (A conversation between A and B)
    A: si   zuŋ#go   nane   na?
          2SG   China   person   yes/no.Q
          'Are you a Chinese?'
    B: waqe.   bi   zibeN=deri'   ji-xe=ŋe.
          not   1SG   Japan=ABL   come-PRF.AD=NMLZ

'No. I came from Japan.'

(5-B) indicates a correction of the proposition that 'you are a Chinese'. It may be translated as 'It is indeed the case that I came from Japan (so, I am not a Chinese)'.

(6) (A conversation between A and B)
  A: si ai are-maχe=ŋe?
    2SG what do-PROG.AD=NMLZ
    'What are you doing?'
  B: bitke' ta-maχe=ŋe.
    book read-PROG.AD=NMLZ
    'I'm reading a book.'

Abbreviations

ABL - ablative; ACC - accusative; AD - adnominal; EXCL - exclusive; GEN - genitive; IRR - irrealis; MMC - mermaid construction; NEG - negation; NMLZ - nominalizer; PROG - progressive; PL - plural; PRF - perfect; Q - question; SG - singular; 1 -first person; 2 - second person; 3 - third person.

References

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