

The Uralic causative marker and cognate suffixes

The paper offers a hypothesis on the origin of several Uralic suffixes. The discussion is based on published sources and the author's field materials.

1. Almost all Uralic languages have a causative marker that contains *t* (or *d*), e.g. Estonian *söötma* 'to feed' ← *sööma* 'to eat'; Finnish *päästä-* 'to let in/out' ← *pääse-* 'to get into/out'; Votic *kazvottema* 'to grow sth.' ← *kazvoma* 'to grow'; Saami *port* 'to feed' ← *porr* 'to eat'; Mari *urgaktaš* 'to make sb. sew' ← *urgas* 'to sew'; Udmurt *vuritini* 'to ask/make sb. sew' ← *vurini* 'to sew'; Zyrian *gžed* 'make him write' ← *gž* 'write!'; Hungarian *iratni* 'to tell sb. to write' ← *írni* 'to write'; Khanty *taŋəttəta* 'to bring in' ← *taŋta* 'to enter', Nenets *xaada* 'to kill' ← *xaa* 'to die', etc.

2. Most of Finno-Ugric languages have a suffix that derives verbs from nominals and is either fully or partially identical with the causative suffix mentioned above (Kiefer & Laakso 2014: 478): Estonian *töötama* 'to work' ← *töö* 'work', Saami *vinkt* 'to whiten' ← *vil'k'es* 'white', Mari *lümdaš* 'to name' ← *lüm* 'name', Udmurt *čindini* 'to emit smoke' ← *čin* 'smoke', Mansi *pastuŋkve* 'to put a border mark' ← *pas* 'border', etc.

3. A number of Finno-Ugric languages use a suffix containing *t* for adapting verbs borrowed from Russian: Votic *strojttema* 'to build' ← Russian *stroj* 'build.IMP.2SG', Zyrian *doprašivajtni* 'to interrogate' ← Russian *doprašivaj* 'interrogate.IMP.2SG', Mansi *kupitaŋkve* 'to buy' ← Russian *kupi* 'buy.IMP.2SG'.

I suggest that the three listed suffixes have a common origin: they derive from a grammaticalized verb with the meaning 'to do'. This hypothesis is supported both by the structural resemblance (the consonant *t/d* is present in all three suffixes), and functional similarity that can be traced not only in the Uralic languages but also in a broad typological context.

In particular, causative constructions with the verb 'to do/make' are typical for English, French, Korean, Tamil, etc. (Moreno 1993; Kulikov 2001: 886), and this verb is often grammaticalized (Lehmann 2015: 169). Generally, causative suffixes often develop from lexical verbs through formal reduction (Song 1996: 80-90). Causative suffixes derived from the verb 'to do' have been attested in many languages (Shibatani & Pardeshi 2002).

Suffixes that derive verbs from nouns clearly have the 'to do' component in their meaning: 'to work' means 'to do work' (for example, compare this verb in closely related Estonian and Votic languages: Estonian *töötama* 'to work' – Votic *tüü tetšemä* 'to work' (lit. 'to do work')).

The verb 'to do' serves as an auxiliary that introduces borrowings in many languages, e.g. Udmurt *atakovat karini* 'to attack' from the Russian *aťakovat* 'to attack' + Udmurt *karini* 'to do'.

I will also put forward a second hypothesis and speculate on the verb **teke-* as a possible source of the grammaticalized suffixes. This verb is present in many Finno-Ugric languages (Finnish *teke-*, Estonian *tege-*, Saami *dâkkâ-*, Erzya *teje-*, Hungarian *töv-/të-/tész-*, etc., (Rédei 1988: 519)). Along with the causative suffix, this verb has been traced back earlier than in Proto-Uralic (Ruhlen 1994: 238, The Tower of Babel). The grammaticalization of the **teke-* verb into a causative suffix had probably taken place in Proto-Uralic or even earlier.

References

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