

Diathetic Ambivalence of Participles in the Uralic Languages

Though diathetic i.e. voice ambivalence is present in other languages too, it is highly characteristic of Uralic languages that their participial suffixes, and sometimes even given participles, can have both active and passive meaning. In this talk, this ambivalence will be exemplified in eleven Uralic languages, further analyzed from the points of view of both human language evolution and typology. The main statements to be argued for are: primordial participles were predicates rather than attributes; participles in the Uralic protolanguage must have been neutral as regards voice; diathetic neutrality of participles is a relic from ancient periods of human language evolution that preceded the birth of transitivity as a constructing principle for sentences.