

The structural properties of Kolyma Yukaghir’s kakarimusubi-like construction

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This paper describes the structural properties of the Kolyma Yukaghir focus construction. Kolyma Yukaghir, a language spoken in Northeast Siberia, has a focus construction similar to the so-called *kakarimusubi* in Old and Middle Japanese. In this construction, the focused constituent is marked like a nominal predicates and appears clause-initially or medially, while the main predicate takes a non-conclusive inflection. There is a strong constraint whereby only intransitive subjects and direct objects can be marked as focused; the focused constituent triggers the form of the main predicate, the action nominal for intransitive verbs and the passive attributive for transitive verbs. The nominal predicate marking on the focused constituent and the nominal/attributive form of the main predicate suggest that the construction probably emerged from a cleft construction with a postposed relative clause corresponding to the presupposition in the cleft.

The transitivity constraint in the focus construction parallels the tendencies of the relativized constituent in relative clauses: the action nominal is generally used for intransitive subject relativization, while the passive attributive is generally used for direct object relativization. However, both forms are also used in relativizing other constituents. The focus construction therefore cannot be simply treated synchronically as a cleft construction. Instead, the syntactic and morphological properties (e.g., word order and tense marking) suggest that it was grammaticalized as a main clause construction. In this respect it is distinct from the focus-neutral construction with conclusive verb forms.