Expression of Some Meanings of the Mongolian

Ablative Case in English

Narangarav Khangaisaikhan[54]

There is a need to investigate and describe the capacity of different grammatical cases to express a variety of meanings. "Grammatical case" is a means of expressing how one word is related to the other words in a sentence, making use of specific affixes or signs. In traditional lingustics, the inflection of a word (declension) is known as "case".

The Mongolian term *тийн ялгал* (*tiin yalgal*) corresponds to the English term "case", which itself derives from the Latin *casus*, derived from the Proto-Indo-European *cadere*, meaning "to fall". In other words, the nominative case expresses the original or root meaning of a word, while the remaining cases split away—or "fall off"—from the nominative.

There are many scholarly writings on the topic of case meaning in Mongolian linguistics, including notably the works of Sh. Luvsanvandan, Choi Luvsanjav, and M. Bazarragchaa, which have contributed to identifying the root and secondary meanings of Mongolian cases. Sh. Luvsanvandan (1964) summarized the meanings of the Mongolian grammatical cases as follows:

Although each case expresses a separate, unique meaning, it is clear that the genitive, dative-locative, and *ablative* cases generally convey indirect, abstract meanings such as the symbolism of the subject person or thing, or the time, cause, or origins of an event, while the nominative, accusative, instrumental, and comitative cases generally express concrete meanings that directly indicate an object of phenomenon, such as the subject, object, or instrument of an action or condition (*emphasis added*).

Further, linguist M. Bazarragchaa(1991) has noted that the meanings expressed by each case in Mongolian can vary considerably, depending on the context provided by the words following or preceding it, pointing out that nominative, accusative, genitive, and comitative cases express meanings other than time and place, in contrast to the instrumental, dative-locative, and elative-orientative cases.

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[54] Department of Mongolian Linguistics National University of Mongolia

In contemporary Mongolian linguistics it is important for us to consider grammatical case not only in terms of its inflective role, but also how the noun itself, transformed by declension, specifically relates to the connecting words in the sentence, and the various types of semantic relations that arise as a consequence. This issue is more fundamentally related to the semantic interrelation of words and cases, which indicate phenomena and their relations, and the ways that such relations (i. e. , the role of cases) is assumed by words, which gradually evolve from distinct words into case endings or particles.

In this short paper we take the example of the Mongolian ablative case, making an attempt to describe the core semantic meaning of this case, but further to identify and describe several of the supplementary meanings that arise in its use contexts. In exploring how these meanings of the ablative case create compounds connecting objects and actions, or **noun + verb** relations, we have attempted to describe how, and in what conditions, the different semantic relations arise. Further, we have attempted to describe how these meanings can be expressed or translated into English. Our discussion is structured as a functional classification of the Mongolian ablative case, in which we identify seven basic roles or meanings expressed by this case.

In English, the semantic relations expressed by the Mongolian ablative case are typically conveyed using the prepositions *from, off,* and *out of.* These prepositions can be described as "separation" and "source" prepositions, insofar as they represent the spatial relations of "separation from a point of orientation" (*from*), "separation from contact with a line or surface" (*off*), and "separation from the inside of a landmark" (*out of*) (Dirven 1993). The spatial meaning of English prepositions operates to structure abstract, non-spatial relations (Lindstromberg 2010; Tyler and Evans 2003).

Similar relations can be observed involving the Mongolian ablative case.

1. Expression of a relationship describing origin.

(1) *эх-ээс   төрө-х*
    mother-ABL   be. born-INF
    "to be born"

(2) *Хүн   эх-ээс   төр-дөг .*
    Human mother-ABL   be. born-PRES .
    "Each person is born from their mother. "

(3) *зөгий(н)-өөс   гара-х*
    bee-ABL   exit-INF
    "to come from bees"

(4) *Зөгий(н)-өөс бал   гар-даг .*
    Bee[s]-ABL   honey exit-PRES .
    "Honey comes from bees. " OR "Bees make honey. "

(5) *үнээ(н)-ээс   гара-х*
    cow-ABL   exit-INF

"to come from cows" OR "to come from a cow"

(6) *Үнээ(н)-ээс   сүү   гардаг* .
 Cow[s]-ABL   milk   get-PRES .
 "We get milk from cows. " OR "Cows give milk. "

(7) *үнээ(н)-ээс   ава-х*
 cow-ABL   get-INF
 "to get from cows"

(8) *Тахиа(н)-аас   өндөг гар-даг* .
 Chicken-ABL   egg[s] exit-PRES .
 "Chickens lay eggs. " OR "Eggs come from chickens.

(9) *тахиа(н)-аас   гара-х*
 chicken-ABL   exit-INF
 "to come from chickens" OR "[eggs] to be laid by chickens"

In the above examples the English preposition *"from"* matches the Mongolian ablative case suffix *-aas*[4], signifying a linear movement from one place to the next.

2. Identification of the subject of an action and expression of its responsibility for the action.

(10) *Өнгөрсөн   долоо хоног-т   улс-ын*
 Past   seven day-LOC   state-GEN

 их   хур[а]л-аас ийм   шийдвэр   гар-га-жээ .
 great   meeting-ABL such   decision   exit-CAUS-PST .

 "Last week the Parliament issued such a decision. "

(11) *Улс-ын   их   хур[а]л-аас гар-га-х*
 State-GEN   great   meeting-ABL exit-CAUS-INF
 "to be issued by the Parliament"

(12) *хур[а]л-аас   гар-га-х*
 meeting-ABL   exit-CAUS-INF
 "to be issued from the meeting"

(13) *Над-аас   чам-д   илгээ-в* ,
 me-ABL   you-DAT   send-PST ,
 "I sent it to you,

 Навч(н)-аас   цэц[э]г(эн)-д   дамж-уул(а)-в .

leaf-ABL   flower-DAT   transmit-CAUS-PST .

"from the leaf to the flower. "

(14) *над-аас   илгээ-х*
      me-ABL   send-INF
      "sent by me"

(15) *навч(н)-аас   дамж-уул(а)-х*
      leaf-ABL   transmit-CAUS-INF
      "transmit from the leaf"

3. Expression of part-of-a-whole relationship.

(16) *хоол(н)-оос   идэ-х*
      food-ABL   eat-INF
      "to taste the meal" OR "to eat some of the food"

(17) *цай(н)-аас уу-х*
      tea-ABL   drink-INF
      "to taste the tea"

(18) *гэр-ээс   бари-лца-х*
      yurt-ABL   hold-PLUR-INF
      "to hold on to the yurt"

(19) *зовлон(г)-оос хуваа-лца-х*
      suffering-ABL share-PLUR-INF
      "to share in suffering"

4. Expression of a sense of distancing from something, or by extension of being tired of something and not wishing to repeat it.
Further, the examples below show that an item from which someone is distancing herself or himself may continue to change. Thus on the one hand the individual is tired of, and creates distance from, a material item or phenomenon, while on the other hand abstract understandings are generated by this relationship.

(20) *Аж[и]л-аас   уйда-х /   залха-х*
      work-ABL   be. bored-INF /   tire-INF
      "to be tired of one's job"

(21) *хүн-ээс   уйда-х /   залха-х*
      person-ABL   be. bored-INF /   tire-INF
      "to be tired of someone"

(22) *эхнэр-ээс /   нөх[ө]р-өөс уйда-х /   залха-х*
      wife-ABL /   husband-ABL be. bored-INF /   tire-INF

"to be tired of one's wife/husband"

(23) *мөнгө(н)-өөс уйда-х /   залха-х*
     money-ABL   be. bored-INF /   tire-INF
     "to be bored of money"

(24) *амьдрал-аас уйда-х /   залха-х*
     life-ABL   be. bored-INF /   tire-INF
     "to be bored of life"

Of the following two sentences, only the first reflects actual usage:

(25) *амин-аас-аа   уйда-х*
     soul-ABL-POSS   be. bored-INF
     "to be bored of (one's own) life"

(26) ! *амин-аас-аа   залха-х*
     soul-ABL-POSS   tire-INF
     "to be tired of (one's own) life"

While it is not correct to use the formulation "tired of (one's own) life", the structure "tired of oneself" may be used:

(27) *өөр-өөс-өө   залха-х*
     self-ABL-POSS   tire-INF
     "to be tired of oneself"

This distinction reveals that the verb *залхах* ("to tire [of]") is used in connection with words denoting concrete, physical phenomena, whereas the word *амь* ("soul") may refer to abstract phenomena.

5. Expression of a transition from one state to another, or transformation.

(28) *ор(н)-оос   босо-х*
     bed-ABL   rise-INF
     "to get out of bed"

(29) *нойр(н)-оос   сэрэ-х*
     sleep-ABL   wake-INF
     "to wake up"

(30) *зовлон(г)-оос гэтлэ-х*
     suffering-ABL overcome-INF
     "to overcome suffering"

(31) үх[э]л-ээс   ангижра-х
     death-ABL   separate-INF
     "to escape [a brush with] death"

6. Expression of the interior features of something.

(32) туйл-аас   хүсэ-х
     pole-ABL   wish-INF
     "to wish [for something] in the extreme"

(33) үнэн-ээс-ээ   баярла-х
     truth-ABL-POSS   be. happy-INF
     "to be truly happy"

(34) сэтгэл-ээс-ээ   горьдо-х
     spirit-ABL-POSS   desire-INF
     "to expect [something] deeply"

(35) гол-оос-оо   гомдо-х
     core-ABL-POSS   be. offended-INF
     "to be deeply offended"

7. Expression of the cause of an action or event.

(36) залхуу(г)-аас боло-х
     lazy-ABL   become-INF
     "caused by laziness"

(37) нойр(н)-оос   боло-х
     sleep-ABL   become-INF
     "due to sleeping in"

(38) чам-аас   хоцро-х
     you-ABL   lag. behind-INF
     "to be slower than you" OR "to be behind you"

(39) аалз(н)-аас   ай-х
     spider[s]-ABL fear-INF
     "to be afraid of spiders"

8. The ablative case, when used in generating compounds consisting of a declined noun+verb structure, can express an intermediate meaning drawing on the other case.
Such types of meaning are a significant area for ongoing study.

For example:

(40) *залуу(г)-аас-аа*   *сура-лца-х*
     youth-ABL-POSS   learn-PLUR-INF
     "to study from a young age"

     ~ *залуу(г)-аар-аа*   *сура-лца-х*
     youth-INS-POSS   learn-PLUR-INF
     "to study at a young age"

The following examples concerning the structure "*food + eat*" illustrate several distinct meanings. Applied to the word for *food*, he ablative case describes the consumption of part of a meal or portion of food; the accusative case denotes a specific meal or food (i. e. , "to eat *the* food" or "to eat *this* food"); and the non-declined form provides a general meaning, which can be glossed simply as "to eat".

(41) *хоол(н)-оос*   *идэ-х*
     food-ABL   eat-INF
     "to taste the meal" OR "to eat some of the food"

     ~ *хоол-ыг*   *идэ-х*
     food-ACC   eat-INF
     "to eat the food"

     ~ *хоол*   *идэ-х*
     food   eat-INF
     "to eat"

(42) *гол-оос*   *гара-х*
     river-ABL   exit-INF
     "to leave the river"

     ~ *гол-оор*   *гара-х*
     river-ABL   exit-INF
     "to cross the river"

     ~ *гол-ыг*   *гара-х*
     river-ACC   exit-INF
     "to cross the river" (mainly colloq.)

(43) *мөр(н)-өөс-өө*   *зүүх*
     shoulder-ABL-POSS   suspend
     "to carry [a bag, etc.] on one's shoulder"

~ мөрө(н)-д-өө   *зүүх*
shoulder-LOC-POSS suspend
"to put [a strap, etc.] on one's shoulder"

A further point in this regard, as noted by linguist M. Bazarragchaa (1991), is that different cases can combine to generate oppositional meanings, directed by the sense of the word being declined.

In presenting the above examples we have attempted to show how, and in what conditions, the Mongolian ablative case suffix (*-aas/-ees/-oos/-өөs*) creates different types of semantic meanings through construction of noun-verb relations. We believe that it is of current importance in our field to study how meaning is created through the connecting of words by grammatical suffixes and declensions. We believe that such research is of value to contemporary applied linguistics. In our view, this research will be of value in improving methods for learning Mongolian language by native English speakers; the teaching and learning of English by native Mongolian speakers; language teaching methodology; methods for developing textbooks, handbooks, and bilingual dictionaries, and by extension Mongolians' preparation for TOEFL, IELTS, IBT and other English language tests; enhancing Mongolian language abilities of English speakers; and the development of instructional materials.

SUMMARY

Бид энэхүү бяцхан өгүүлэлдээ монгол хэлний нэрийн гарахын (–аас-оос-ээс -өөс) тийн ялгалын зарим утгаар жишээлж, түүний үндсэн утгаас гадна үүсэж байгаа өөр бусад утгыг нарийвчлан илрүүлж, тайлбарлахын зэрэгцээ тэдгээр утга нь **нэр+үйл** гэсэн бүтэцтэй холбоо үгийг үүсгэхдээ ямар тохиолдол, нөхцөлд хэрхэн өөр өөр утгазүйн харьцааг үүсгэж байгааг тайлбарлахыг оролдлоо. Мөн тэдгээр утгыг англи хэлэнд хэрэглэхэд, орчуулахад хэрхэн оновчтой дүйж байгааг ажиглалаа.

Ер нь орчин цагийн монгол хэлшинжлэлд тийн ялгалыг зөвхөн хувилгах үүрэгтэй бус тийн ялгалын нөхцөлөөр хэлбэржсэн нэр үг нь холбогдож байгаа үгтэйгээ хэрхэн, яаж холбогдохоос шалтгаалж ямар ямар, өөр өөр утгазүйн харьцаа үүсгэж байгааг нарийвчилж, нэгтгэн үзэх чухал байна. Энэ төрлийн судалгаа монгол хэлшинжлэлд цөөнгүй ч, өнөө цагт дагавар, нөхцөл зэргийн нэг үгийг нөгөө үгтэй холбоход үүсэж байгаа утгын зүй тогтол хийгээд өөр өөр тийн ялгалын нөхцөлийн утга саармагшиж дундын утга илэрхийлж байгаа тохицол(co-relation)-ыг ажиглаж, улмаар өөр хэлний ийм үзэгдэлтэй харьцуулан үзэж, тайлбарлах нь судлаачдын сонирхол татсан асуудал хэвээр байна.

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