2.   On adjectivalizers in Rig-Vedic Sanskrit

Luca Alfieri

Università Telematica G. Marconi

This talk focuses on "adjectivalizers" in Rig-Vedic Sanskrit. The basic idea is that any study on "categorizers" cannot but set up from a clear definition of the lexical categories of the described language (noun, verb, adjective, etc.). Still, the definition of these categories in RV Sanskrit is far from trivial, especially when it comes to the adjective.

It is well-known that many languages lack adjectives (Dixon & Aikhenvald 2004). However, it is also well-known that the criteria whereby a language is said to "have" or "lack" adjectives are problematic, if not inconsistent (Dryer 1997, Croft 2001: 67ff., Haspelmath 2012). The best proof for the inconsistency comes from the paradox of *inconsistent category assignment* that is, the situation in which a same language is classified as "without" or "with" adjectives by different scholars on the basis of almost the same empirical data. The definition of the adjectival class in Sanskrit perfectly exemplifies the paradox. Indian native grammar ignores the adjective class (Pontillo & Candotti 2011). Traditional European grammars of Sanskrit usually teach that Sanskrit indeed "has" adjectives, but these adjectives are not as sharply distinguished from nouns as Latin adjectives. Speyer (1896), followed by Joshi (1967) and Bhat (1994), claimed that Sanskrit is a language "without" adjectives or "with noun-like adjectives" that is, with adjectives totally merged with nouns. Alfieri claimed that in RV Sanskrit can better be seen as a language "with verb-like adjectives" or with quality concepts merged with verbal roots in the lexicon, since the most typical Quality Predicate is a verbal form (e.g. *módate* 'is delighted') or, at least, a derived adjective built on a verbal root and added to an optional copula (e.g. *tapús* (*asti*) 'is hot' < *tap-* 'heat, become hot', see Alfieri 2020); and since the most typical Quality Modifier is not a simple adjective, as in Latin; it rather is a derived adjective built on a verbal root of quality or nearly quality meaning (e.g. *śubʰrá-* 'beautiful' < *śubʰ-* 'beautify', see Alfieri 2016, 2021).

The methodology whereby the last conclusion was reached is relevant for our topic. In Alfieri (2016, 2021) a sample of 51 hymns of RV was gathered and all the Quality Modifiers in the sample were collected: on 1003 "adjectives" therein found, 42.6% are deverbal adjectives such as *tapú-* and *śubʰrá-* (see above), 24.8% are compound adjectives (that is, the *bahuvrīhi* type termed by Indian grammarians) such as *híraṇya-pāṇi-* 'having gold hands', 13.7% are prefixed adjectives such as *su-vīra-* 'heroic' < *vīrá-* 'hero', 9.8% are denominative adjectives such as *pítriya-* 'paternal' < *pitŕ-* 'father', 7.8% are simple adjectives such as *kṛṣṇá-* 'black', and 2.1% are prepositional adjectives such as *paramá-* 'most distant' < *párā* 'away'. In the talk the corpus in Alfieri (2016, 2020, 2021) is taken up and further elaborated upon, by discussing all the affixes that convert nouns, verbal roots and preposition into adjectives. The aim of the research is: a) to provide a corpus-based description of the different adjectivalizers in RV Sanskrit; b) to show that a typologically informed definition of the adjective class can contribute to our understanding of adjectival-forming morphology in RV Sanskrit and its PIE origin.

References

Alfieri, Luca. 2021. Parts of speech comparative concepts and Indo-European linguistics. In *Linguistic categories, language description and linguistic typology*, 313-366. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

———, 2020. The lexicalization of the adjective as an innovative feature in the Indo-European Family. *Poznań Studies in Contemporary Linguistics* 56(3): 379-412.

———, 2016. The typological definition of the (apparently historical) notion of root. *Archivio Glottologico Italiano*, 102(1): 129-169.

Bhat, Shankara D.N. 1994. *Adjectival Categories*. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Croft, William. 2001. *Radical Construction Grammar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Dryer, Matthews. 1997. Are grammatical relations universal? In *Essays on Language Function and Language Type dedicated to T. Givón*, 115-144. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Dixon, Robert M.W. & Aikhenvald Alexandra Y. (eds.), *Adjective Classes: A Cross-linguistic Typology*, 1-50. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Haspelmath, Martin. 2012. How to compare major word-classes across languages. In *Theories of Everything in honor of Edward Keenan* (UCLA Working Papers in Linguistics 17), 109-130.

Joshi, Shivaram D. 1967. Adjectives and Substantives as a Single Class in the Parts of Speech. *Journal of the University of Poona*, *Humanities Section* 25: 19-30.

Pontillo, Tiziana & Candotti, Maria P. 2011. Discriminare tra aggettivo e sostantivo: appunti sulla tradizione pāṇiniana. *Atti del Sodalizio Glottologico Milanese* (n.s.) 6: 66-84.

Speyer [~ Speijer], Jakob S. 1974 [1896[1]]. *Vedische und Sanskrit Syntax*. Graz: Akademische Druck.