

Title: Do Vocatives Constitute a Separate Part of Speech? A Comparison of Russian and North Saami Data

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Abstract:

Andersen (2012) argues that the so-called “new vocatives” in Russian formed by truncation of a final *-a* (as in *mam!* ‘mama!’, *Saš!* ‘Sasha!’, cf. Daniël 2009) cannot be considered case forms of nouns. Based on typological comparisons and Russian corpus observations, he suggests that a vocative is instead a distinct lexical derivative. Both functional and distributional evidence support this. Vocatives do not perform any of the sentential syntactic functions associated with the case forms of nouns. Unlike a case form, a vocative is not a sentence constituent. Every case form in the nominal paradigm is in principle available to every noun in the language. However, vocative forms are attested only for a pragmatically defined group of lexemes that can be used in direct address, primarily names and kinship terms, especially in association with diminutive forms. No nominal case has such a pragmatic restriction.

According to Andersen, a vocative is a distinct transcategorial lexical derivative, with a relationship to the source noun similar to the relationship of a deverbal noun to its source verb; however, in the case of vocatives their syntactic properties are entirely alien to the source noun.

Should vocatives be considered a separate part of speech? Our answer is yes. We compare the Russian data with a database of 195 North Saami examples (all relevant examples from 0.53M words of literary texts plus a New Testament translation of 136,522 words) of 1st person possessive suffix on nouns, which in combination with the Nominative case (N.NOM.PX.1) arguably functions as a vocative in the majority of uses, as in (1).

- (1) *Gula*, *mánážan*. [KP2: 6]
listen.IMPER.2S *child*.DIM.NOM.SG.PX.1s
‘Listen, **my little child**.’

Like the Russian “new vocative” the North Saami N.NOM.PX.1 in this function is restricted to lexemes that refer to human beings, primarily names and kinship terms. 88% (53 out of 60 examples) of First Person Singular vocative uses in literary texts involve the diminutive suffix, *-žan* (DIM.PX.1S) “my dear/little”, which may be functioning as a unit for deriving vocative forms. In fact all examples of N.NOM.PX.1 with personal names involve *-žan*. This form fulfills the same syntactic functions as those described by Andersen for Russian vocatives.

We suggest that North Saami possessive suffix may well be undergoing a morphological reinterpretation as a vocative derivational morpheme. This development further undermines the paradigmatic integrity of the Noun+possessive suffix construction, which is being lost in favor of an analytical possessive construction.

References:

- Andersen, Henning. 2012. The new Russian vocative: Synchrony, diachrony, typology. *Scando-Slavica* 51. 122-167.
- Daniël', M. A. 2009. "Novyj" russkij vokativ: istorija formy usečennogo obraščeniya skvoz' prizmu korpusa pis'mennyx tekstov. In K. L. Kiseleva, V. A. Plungjan, E. V. Raxilina, S. G. Tatevosov (eds.), *Korpusnye issledovanija po russkoj grammatike*, 224-244. Moscow: Probel 2000.