**Secondary predicates in Vedic Sanskrit –**

**On the challenge of identifying syntactic categories in a "non-configurational" language**

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In this talk, we will explore the category of secondary predicates in Vedic Sanskrit, a topic that has not received much attention. Delbrück's (1878) remarks seem to remain the most detailed to date. One of the reasons for this situation is certainly the fact that we are dealing with a so-called non-configurational language, where constituent order is syntactically mostly unconstrained, arguments are often unexpressed, and nominal elements forming a complex construction may stand discontinuously. An added challenge which Vedic shares with other strongly non-configurational language is its very weak noun-adjective distinction in terms of morphological inflection and syntactic distribution. As a consequence of these syntactic and morphological factors, it can be rather difficult to discern the syntactic function of a given nominal element. We demonstrate in this talk that it is nonetheless often feasible to identify the syntactic function in question. Clues may come from a variety of sources including context, word formation, semantics, and information structure (cp. also Lowe 2015 on participles).

The construction type that we focus on in this talk are secondary predicates (Himmelmann & Schultze-Berndt, eds, 2005) such as *sweet* in *I drink my tea sweet*. In this example, *sweet* describes the state of the referent *tea* in the temporal frame set by the main verb, *drink*. *Sweet* is here not part of the referring expression, in contrast to its use in *I drink my sweet tea.*

Word order being rather free in Vedic Sanskrit, and there being no difference in inflection between nominal elements, how to tell whether a particular nominal element is used, for instance, as an attribute or as a secondary predicate (i.e. how to distinguish between the two uses of *sweet* in the two examples above)? At first glance, there seems to be a preference for secondary predicates to follow the noun. However, this should not be taken for granted given the word order flexibility that we see otherwise. Thus, we draw on multiple, independent sources of evidence in this talk. A particularly important source are contextual clues which tell us that a certain state only holds during the time frame set by the main predicate. In other cases, pro-forms which target the state of a referent during the event disambiguate the usage, such as *yáthā* and *evám* in the following example.

(1) Vedic Sanskrit

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *tấ* | *yáthā* | *dhenávó* | '***dugdhā*** | *apakrā́manty* |
| DEM.NOM.PL.F | as | cow.NOM.PL.F | un_milked.PPP.NOM.PL.F | walk_away.PRS.3PL |
| *evám* | *asmād* | *āśíṣó* | '***dugdhā*** | *ápakrāmanti* |
| that_way | DEM.ABL.SG.M | wish.NOM.PL.F | un_milked.PPP.NOM.PL.F | walk_away.PRS.3PL |

'As the cows walk away **un-milked**, that way wishes walk away from him **un-milked**' (MS I 4,5(6))

Based on a corpus analysis of data from the Rigveda as well as from the Vedic prose text *Maitrāyaṇī-Saṁhitā*, which we annotate based on the GRAID annotation standard (Haig & Schnell 2011), we will show that secondary predicates can in fact be identified in many cases. One result that stands out is that – while word order is very flexible on the clausal level and even discontinuity is allowed – ordering options are highly constrained when it comes to secondary predicates. We will contextualize our findings in the research landscape on other non-configurational languages, in particular Australian ones (e.g. Simpson 2005, Schultze-Berndt & Simard 2012), both regarding the specifics of secondary predicates, but also more generally regarding the challenge of how to identify syntactic functions in a non-configurational language.

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