The Sumerian head

Sara Manasterska

University of Warsaw, Faculty of Oriental Studies, PhD student

astragalizo@gmail.com

Paulina Pikulska

University of Warsaw, Faculty of Oriental Studies, MA student

pikulska.p@gmail.com

Sumerian is one of the oldest known languages and the analysis of its linguistic features could therefore prove invaluable to the study of the earliest recoverable forms of human speech. A large part of surviving sources, however, was written down when the language most likely in the process of ceasing to be used by anybody other than scribes working for temples and royal administration. Before that, for a long time Sumerian was spoken alongside Akkadian, the language by which it was

in the end replaced. Modern scholars also deciphered and comprehended Sumerian within the large framework of learned Sumerian and bilingual Akkadian-Sumerian literary compositions and lexical lists, many of which were in antiquity used in scribal schools. It is also in this context that Sumerian texts need to be carefully interpreted and evaluated even now.

In the various and multifaceted genres of Sumerian texts the word for "head", *saĝ*, apart from its main meaning, is most often attested in the metonymic meaning of "person". However, it is also featured as a part of compound verbs denoting position, movement, gestures, and emotions. In many cases, the meaning of the compound verb is clearly the meaning of the sum of its parts, such as in *saĝ-du* ("to beget", "head" + "to build"), and such meanings can be without doubt classified as embodied, transferring concepts across different semantic domains, whereas in others the connection seems much less obvious, as in *saĝ-gid* ("to be angry", "head" + "long"). The following paper will attempt to classify the meanings of *saĝ* "head" in compound verbs and as an independent noun. The attestations will be searched in the ETCSL, Electronic Corpus of Sumerian Literature, and when necessary further examples will be drawn from EPSD and other sources. When necessary and/or beneficial, the examples will be furnished with a suitable Akkadian translation or interpratation, which will further elucidate the meaning as understood by the acients.

Ebeling, J. and Cunningham, G. (ed.)

Analysing Literary Sumerian. Corpus-based Approaches

The Electronic Corpus of Sumerian Literature (ETCSL)

http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/

Karahashi, F.

2000. Sumerian Compound Verbs with Body-Part Terms. PhD Dissertation, University of Chicago

The Pennsylvania Sumerian Dictionary (EPSD)

http://psd.museum.upenn.edu/epsd1/index.html