UNIQUE FEATURES OF THE NOMINAL MORPHOLOGICAL SYSTEMS IN THE EASTERN DIALECTS OF KHANTY

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents results of a study aiming at identifying unique features in the system of morphological markers of the noun in four idioms of Eastern Khanty (Vakh, Vasyugan, Surgut and Salym). The analysis focuses on the paradigms of three nominal categories: number, possession, and case. It draws on the linguistic data obtained from various grammars of Khanty written over the period from the nineteenth century to the present time. The analysis also incorporates the field data obtained during research trips to the speakers of the Vakh-Vasyugan idiom. The findings point to the fact that the differences are either morphological or phonological, and are sometimes of debatable nature.

Keywords: Eastern Khanty, morphology, number, possession, case

INTRODUCTION

Our analysis is grounded in the concept that the Eastern cluster comprises two idioms: Vakh-Vasyugan and Surgut-Salym. Each idiom is further subdivided into two dialects, e.g. the Surgut Khanty combines the Surgut and Salym dialects, while the Vakh-Vasyugan encompasses the Vakh and Vasyugan dialects. In accordance with the contemporary view, the Surgut idiom includes Pim, Trom-Agan, Agan, and Yugan varians of Surgut Khanty [1]. The Vakh-Vasyugan idiom is represented by the Alexandrovsk variant. The Salym dialect is considered as a mixed variant that includes some elements of the now not existing southern dialects of Khanty [2].

The sociolinguistic situation of the Eastern Khanty is heterogeneous. The overwhelming majority of the ethnic population speaks Russian, however, speakers of the Surgut dialect of Khanty have lost their native language less than speakers of other Eastern dialects – Vakh, Vasyugan and Salym. According to A. S. Pessikova's estimates of the period from 1992 to 2015, the number of speakers of Surgut Khanty totalled more than 2,000 [1]. The Vakh Khanty use their ethnic language in the remote isolated village of Korliki alone (on the banks of the Korliki river) and nearby ancestral lands. Ethnic speakers of Vasyugan Khanty use only Russian as a means of daily communication. The last fluent speaker of Vasyugan Khanty, P. M. Milimov, died in 2014. The Salym Khanty speakers do not use their ethnic language either.

The nominal morphology of Eastern Khanty has been described in separate studies since the end of the nineteenth century. However, a systemic analysis of unique features of the nominal morphological systems in the Eastern dialects of Khanty has not been conducted.

LANGUAGE DATA

The comparative analysis of the nominal morphological systems of the four Eastern Khanty dialects draws on the data that have been elicited from [1], [3], [4], [5], [6], [7], [8]. This analysis also involves language data presented in the questionnaires that were obtained during field work in the settlements of Korliki and Lariak in 2017–2018. Since Salym Khanty is described worse than other Eastern Khanty dialects and there is no key grammar on this dialect or texts in it, the only sources to elicit examples and vocabulary from are Honti's Khanty reader and Tereshkin's dictionary [6], [9].

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The comparative analysis focuses on the markers that form the paradigms of three nominal categories: number, possession and case. These three nominal categories are represented in the morphological structure of the noun in accordance with two patterns: 1. free number marker + case marker, for example, Sur. *kiriw-ət-nə* vehicle-PL-LOC 'in boats'; 2. bound number marker + possessive suffix + case marker, for example, *kiriw-l-əm-nə* vehicle-PL-POSS.1SG-LOC 'in my boats'. The choice of the second model depends on the presence of a possessive marker which requires using of the bound number marker.

Each nominal category will be described in terms of its paradigm and salient features in a comparative aspect.

The Khanty noun has 3 numbers: singular, dual and plural. Each number has two forms: free and bound. The paradigms of the free and bound number markers in the dialects under the study are illustrated in tables 1–2. Allomorphs of the same morpheme are given after a slash.

Table №1. Free number markers in Eastern Khanty

Number	Markers		
	Vakh-Vasyugan	Surgut	Salym
SG	Ø		
DU	ɣən/ɣə̆n/ḳən/kə̆n	ɣən/kən/ḳən	ɣən/kən
PL	t/ət/ə̆t	t/ət	t/ət

Table № 2. Bound markers in Eastern Khanty

Number	Markers		
	Vakh-Vasyugan	Surgut	Salym
SG	Ø		
DU	ɣl/ḵ(ə)l/k(ə̑)l	ɣəλ/kəλ/ḵəλ	ŋət
PL	l	λ	t

As it follows from the table, the free markers are identical in all Eastern dialects. The bound number markers of the Vakh-Vasyugan idiom differ from those used in the Eastern dialects geographically located closer to the south. It is known that the distinctive phonological feature of Vakh-Vasyugan Khanty is the vowel harmony, which is nearly absent in the Surgut and Salym dialects. What can be inferred from the data in the tables is that the feature differentiating the dialects is primarily phonological: the Vakh-Vasuygan uses the phoneme [l] – a forelingual, constrictive sonorant, the Surgut – [λ] – a forelingual, noise lateral. In Salym [λ] has changed into to [t].

The category of possession in the Eastern dialects of Khanty is coded by possessive suffixes which differentiate the person and number of the possessor and the number of the possessee. All in all, the declension system of the noun in the four dialects encompasses 27 possessive suffixes [4], [6].

Table 3 presents nominal possessive suffixes in Vakh-Vasyugan and Surgut Khanty. Regrettably, possessive markers of Salym Khanty can hardly be presented and analyzed due to unavailable language data.

Table 3. Possessive suffixes in Vakh, Vasyugan and Surgut

Number and person of the possessor	Dialect	Number of the possessee		
		SG	DU	PL
SG 1	V. Vas.	m/əm/ə̆m/im/ɨm/am/äm	am/äm	
	Sur.	əm/em/am	am	
SG 2	V. Vas.	n/ən/ə̆n/in/an/än	an/än	
	Sur.	ən/en/e/a	a	
SG 3	V. Vas.	l/əl/ə̆l	Ø	Ø/əl/ə̆l/al/äl/lə/lə̆
	Sur.	λ/əλ/iλ		Ø/-əλ/aλ
DU 1	V. Vas.	min/mɨn/mən/mə̆n/əmən/ə̆mə̆n /imə̆n/ɨmən/amən/ämən	amə̆n/ämən	
			amə̆n/ämən/min/mɨn	
	Sur.	mən	mən/əmən/amən	
DU 2, 3 PL 2	V. Vas.	tən/tə̆n/ətən/ə̆tə̆n	in/ɨn	
	Sur.	in/ɨn	ən	ən
PL 1	V.	өɣ/öɣ		
	Vas.	ɣ/əɣ/öɣ/w/əw/ə̆w/iw/ɨw/ow/öw		
	Sur.	ɣ/əɣ/iɣ/əw/ew/iw/uw	əɣ/əw/uw	ɣ/əɣ/iɣ/əw/ew/iw/uw
PL 3	V. Vas.	təl/tə̆l/ətəl/ə̆tə̆l/jil/jɨl/il/ɨl	äl/al	
			əl/ə̆l/äl/al	
	Sur.	iλ/ɨλ	aλ	

It can be observed that the number of forms of possessive suffixes used in each dialect is 15. The reduction in the number of possessive suffixes is caused by the fact that these suffixes are considered without their connection with the bound number markers mentioned above. The exclusion of bound number markers enables us to establish the fact that the suffixes of DU and PL of all persons and numbers of the possessor and DU and PL of the possessee are identical. However, the suffixes of 3SG of the possessor and DU and PL of the possessee are different: DU of the possessee is not materially expressed; Pl of the possessee is marked by V.-Vas. *Ø/əl/ŏl/al/äl/lə/lŏ*, Sur. *Ø/-əλ/aλ*. Besides, the possessive suffixes of the 2DU, 3DU and 2PL of the possessor coincide, which entails a reduced paradigm of the nominal category of possession in Eastern Khanty.

The Vakh-Vasyugan idiom and the Surgut dialect differ as far as the forms of possessive suffixes for 2SG, 2 and 3DU and 2 PL of the possessor are concerned. The distinction between these dialects is phonological with regard to the forms of the possessive suffixes of 3SG and 3Pl of the possessor.

The category of case is represented by a different number of markers in Eastern Khanty dialects. The number of markers varies from 7 to 11. The exact number of attested cases in a separate dialect largely depends on the opinion of the given researcher. In this regard, all cases can be divided into two types: mandatory and optional. The first type includes cases that are distinguished by all khantologists: nominative, locative, abessive, lative, comitative, instrumental, and translative. The second type includes cases singled out by several or only by one of the researchers: ablative, allative, comparative, distributive and expletive.

From the semantic and functional perspective, the Eastern Khanty nominal cases fall into three groups. The first includes the nominative case alone, its functional syncretism encompasses nominative, accusative and genitive semantics. The second group includes all core spatial cases: ablative, locative, allative, and lative. The third group comprises all remaining cases: abessive, comparative, distributive, expletive, comitative, instrumental, and translative. Due to the fact that the Khanty language has a reduced case system compared to other Ural languages, many cases are characterized by polyfunctionality in Eastern Khanty. For instance, the locative case is utilized to encode spatial meanings and to mark the logical subject. Tables 4 and 5 present the case paradigm in the Eastern Khanty.

Table 4. Mandatory cases and their markers in the Eastern dialects

Cases \ Dialects	Vakh-Vasyugan	Surgut	Salym
Group 1			
Nominative	Ø		
Group 2			
Locative	nə/nə̄	nə	
Lative	a/ä	a	
Group 3			
Abessive	ləɣ/lə̄ɣ	λəɣ/λə̄ɣ	(tə)
Comitative	nä(ti)/na(tɨ)	nat	(nat)
Instrumental	tə/tə̄/ə/ə̄	at	at
Translative	əɣ/ə̄ɣ/ḳə/kə̄	ɣə/kə/ḳə	ɣə

In the group of mandatory cases, formal distinctive features of case markers both between Vakh and Vasyugan dialects and between Surgut and Salym dialects are not identified. The differences between the Vakh-Vasyugan idiom and Surgut-Salym idiom are observed in the comitative and instrumental cases. The comitative marker is used to incode instrumental and comitative semantics. Its form can be *-na/-nä* or *-nati/-näti* in the Vakh-Vasyugan idiom and *-nat* in Surgut. Some controversy concerns the meaning of the element *ti/tɨ* that is supposed to be added to express the comitative semantics of the maker [4]. This hypothesis requires a further corpus analysis since the field examples provide an illustration to the fact that the marker *-na/-nä* is employed to encode both functions: comitative and instrumental (see example (1)):

> *(1) mä*   *api-**na***   *rit-**na***   *mən-s-əm*
> 1SG   father-COM   boat-INS   go-PST2.-SBJ.1SG
> I went with my father by boat [with a boat].

The form of the instrumental case also differs in the Vakh-Vasyugan and Surgut-Salym idioms (cf. table 4).

Table 5. Optional cases and their markers in the Eastern dialects

Cases \ Dialects		Vakh	Vasyugan	Surgut	Salym
Group 2					
Ablative	marker	oɣ/öɣ ow/öw	oɣ/öɣ ow/öw i/i̧	i	?
	post-positive			P. iwəλ	iwət
Allative	marker	pa/pä apa/apä	–	nam	nam
Group 3					
Comparative	marker	niŋə(t)/ ni̧ŋə̆(t)/	niŋə/ni̧ŋə̆?	—	
Distributive	marker	təltä/tə̆lta	təl/tə̆l	(tə)λta	?
Expletive	marker	—	—	pti	ptə

Within the group of optional cases, the first line of differences lies between the Vakh-Vasyugan and the Surgut-Salym dialects.

In the declension of the Vakh and Vasyugan noun, a number of distinctive features reveal themselves in the ablative, allative, and distributive cases. One of the contemporary researches of the Vasyugan Khanty dialect, A. Filchenko, distinguishes two sets of markers for the ablative: *-oɣ/-öɣ/-ow/-öw* and *-i/-i̧* [7]. If this is the case, then it can be assumed that the marker *-i/-i̧* is identical to the Surgut Khanty case marker. However, it is that it is still questionable whether the allative, ending in *-nam* and in *-pa/-pä*, should be identified in Vasyugan Khanty since it is not supported by any language data. All examples with the allative case of the noun obtained from the texts collected by either L. Kalinina or A. Filchenko involve *joɣ-pa* 'home-ALL' (see example (2)), which may be glossed or be given as a solid word form V., Vas. *joɣpa* 'home' as seen in the dictionary [4], [9].

(2) ḳollə   joɣ-**pa**-ti/joɣ**pa**-ti   mən-s-əw
       all   home-ALL-PRTC/home-PRTC   go-PST2-SBJ.1PL
       'We all went home.' Vas. [7]

It should be noted that all attested examples with the form ending in *-pa/-pä* are based on the root *joɣ-* 'home'. This fact enables us to argue that the declension system of Vasyugan Khanty does not possess the allative case.

Besides, in the nominal case paradigms of Vakh-Vasyugan idiom, the distributive case is attested by only one researcher L. Honti [6]. He differentiates marker *-təltä/-tälta* for Vakh dialect and *-təl/-täl* for Vasyugan dialect. Our own field data do not support the existence of the distributive case in the Vakh dialect, so the example of its use is the one borrowed from Honti's chrestomathy:

(3)   ĕj   wăɣ-ət-**təltä**   tintə-s-i
        one   animal-PL-DISTR   pay-NPST-PASS.3SG
        'Everyone's payment was an animal'. [6]

The peculiarity of the case system of Salym Khanty is that the ablative meaning is expressed not synthetically, for example, by means of markers, like in the Surgut dialect, but encoded analytically by means of the postposition *iwət*. The Pim variant of the Surgut dialect uses postposition *iwəλ* to express ablative semantics.

Discrepancies in the group of the optional cases between the Vakh-Vasyugan and the Surgut-Salym idioms are identified in the forms of the ablative, allative, comparative and expletive cases. The ablative and allative case markers have different stems, cf. Table 5. The comparative case is a distinctive feature of the Vakh-Vasyugan idiom and predominately of the Vakh dialect. The existence of the distributive case marked by *-pti/-ptɨ* was attested in Surgut Khanty by K. F. Karjalainen in the early twentieth century and illustrated by numerous examples [10]. Unlike him, L. Honti divided the distributive into two cases: the distributive per se and the expletive. The former is used to mark the object immediately following the predicate with *-təλtä/-täλta*, the latter can mark any object functioning as a complement or an adverbial with *-pti/-ptɨ*. As said above, L. Honti attested only the distributive case in the Vakh-Vasyugan idiom. Example (4) illustrates the use of the distributive case in Trom-Yugan variant of Surgut Khanty.

(4)   ĕj   λäŋki-**təλtä**   urt-ətəɣ
        one   squirrel-DISTR   divide-PST.SBJ.1PL:OBJ.SG
        'Each of us was given a squirrel.' [6]

CONCLUSION

This analysis of the nominal system of the Eastern Khanty idioms allowed us to identify some unique features in the morphology of the noun in the Eastern Khanty dialects. Three nominal categories: number, possession and case shared by all analyzed dialects were studied. Both the Vakh-Vasyugan and Surgut-Salym idioms possess some unique features that separate them, however, some distinctive features can be found within each idiom as well.

Generally speaking, the nature of specific features attested within the possession and case paradigms is morphological, while in the number paradigm the distinctions are mostly phonological. What accounts for the distinctive features attested in each Eastern Khanty dialect is the chronological or areal aspect of the studies conducted by various researchers. It is expected that this study of the morphological system of

the noun in Eastern Khanty will be further complemented by an analysis of the functional aspect of numerical, possessive and case markers.

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