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Morphological markers of the noun in Eastern dialects of Khanty

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Abstract

The research presents findings resulting from a comparative analysis of the system of nominal inflection in four dialects of the Khanty language (Vahk, Vasyugan, Surgut, Salym). The analyzed idioms belong to the Eastern cluster that is opposed to the Western one according to the contemporary classification of dialects of the Khanty language [Solovar, Nakhracheva Shiyanova 2016]. Khanty is one of the minority languages in Siberia whose dialects differ in terms of their preservation as well as in the number of speakers who use them in daily communication. Of the four dialects under analysis the Vasyugan and Salym are hardly used by the ethnic speech community.

In the analyzed dialects the noun has three inflectional categories: number, case and possession. In the morphological structure of the word these categories occur in the following order: Number marker + Possession marker + Case marker. For example, 1. Vas. *k̄riw-l-əm-nə* vehicle-PL-POSS.1SG-LOC ‘in my boats’; 2. Vas. *k̄riw-ət-nə* vehicle-PL-LOC ‘in boats’. The focus of the comparative analysis is similarities and differences in the system of nominal markers in the four dialects.

The noun has 3 numbers: Singular, Dual and Plural. Each number has two forms: absolute and dependent. Their use depends on the presence or absence of the possessive markers in the word structure. In example 1 above the number marker *-l* is used in the dependent form and the marker *-ət* – in the absolute one.

The system of possessive markers includes numerous forms which originate from pronominal stems [Honti 1986: 38]. Possessive markers simultaneously encode the number of the possessed and the person and number of the possessor. The analysis of the dialectal forms of possessive markers, for instance, reveals the fact that in all Eastern dialects with the 1SG of the possessor forms of the dual and plural number of the possessed tend to coincide. It is illustrated by the following examples: V. *k̄öy-kəl-äm* stone-DU-POSS.2SG ‘my two stones’ and *k̄öy-l-äm* stone-PL-POSS.2SG ‘my stones’; Sur. *p̄än-γəl-am* string-DU-POSS.2SG ‘my two strings’ and *p̄änə-λ-am* string-PL-POSS.2SG ‘my strings’.

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The category of case includes a significant number of cases in Eastern dialects. Most of the cases are omnipresent. These cases are Nominative, Lative, Locative, Comitative, Instrumental, Abessive, Translative, Ablative, and Approximative. Case markers for Ablative and Approximative differ in the analyzed dialects, compare V. *wont-apa* forest-APP ‘to the forest’ and TjY. *imi-näm* woman-APP ‘to a woman’. The Comparative case is represented not in all case paradigms of the analyzed dialects. The question whether the Distributive and Expletive cases exist in the Eastern dialects remains open.

All in all, the system of nominal inflection in all Eastern dialects is for the most part similar. Although such categories as number, possession and case are shared by all dialects, the comparative analysis of their paradigms in four dialects reveals some controversial issues regarding forms and presence of morphological markers.

Keywords: case, nominal inflection, number, possession.

Abbreviations of dialects

Vas. – Vasyugan dialect,

V. – Vakh dialect,

Sur. – Surgut dialect,

TjY – Trom-Yugan variant of Surgut dialect.

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