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MANIFESTATIONS OF LANGUAGE ATTRITION AMONG EASTERN KHANTY SPEAKERS¹

The Khanty language represents an extensive dialectal continuum. Not only are the extremes of the continuum mutually unintelligible but the dialects in-between belonging to the same group are mutually unintelligible, too. Our research focuses on the documentation and description of the highly endangered Vasyugan variety of Eastern Khanty spoken in Tomsk region. There are fewer than 10 proficient speakers of Vasyugan Khanty left.

The paper focuses on Vasyugan Khanty complex clauses, which have been syntactically restructured due to the century-long extensive contact with Russian. The clauses have mostly been restructured in terms of constituent order, finiteness/non-finiteness and the use of subordinators which results in grammatical convergence. Vasyugan Khanty synchronizes the constituent order with the surrounding Russian language. The title of the paper implies that grammatical convergence is the manifestation of language attrition among individual speakers.

Key words: *Eastern Khanty, complex sentences, relativization strategies, language contact, grammatical convergence, language attrition.*

1. Typological features of Eastern Khanty morphology

Eastern Khanty is a highly agglutinative, exclusively suffixing language: inflected words have more than one morpheme with clear boundaries between morphemes and grammatical meanings being expressed by a particular morpheme on inflectional words. But peripherally Khanty also exhibits some fusional features. Sometimes a single morpheme expresses two or more grammatical meanings. Such morphemes are predominantly found among 3SG-tense markers and possessive declension affixes. The type frequency of portmanteau morphemes is low but the token frequency is high. This is the case of the possessive declension of nouns where the possessive marker expresses the number and person of the possessor and the number of the possessed.

The locus of marking in possessive NPs is on the head NP. Head-marking in NPs implies that the possessed noun (the head) agrees in person and number with the possessor (Nichols, Bickel 2011):

- 1) mä niŋ-əl intot molont-əyas
1SG wife-1SG food cook-PST3.3SG

My wife cooked the food.

Possessive phrases in Eastern Khanty are often formed by juxtaposition of the possessor and unmarked possessed NP frequently in cases when the possessor is overtly expressed by a full NP.

In Eastern Khanty there is an obligatory agreement between the S/A grammatical roles and the predicate which is called Indefinite conjugation (Gulya 1966). In Eastern Khanty the Definite conjugation is also distinguished: transitive predicates may also agree with the O argument which is triggered by pragmatic factors like definiteness and identifiability of the O referent.

There are no grammatical categories of gender, class or definiteness in Eastern Khanty. The case system (about 10-12 cases in Eastern dialects and 3 cases in Northern) includes zero-marked Nominative and about 8-10 Oblique cases. There is no Genitive in Khanty. Nouns in the Subject and Object grammatical relations show no nominative/accusative distinctions.

- 2) jay jajm-ət wə-s-ət i küm lüyə-s-ət
people axe-PL take-PST2-3PL “and” out leave-PST2-3PL

People took axes and went out.

All the valence-changing operations are performed morphologically. There are no antipassives and no applicatives in Eastern Khanty.

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2. A brief overview of Eastern Khanty clause

Khanty is fairly strictly an SOV language. Subject is clause-initial, verb is clause-final, direct object precedes the verb. Word order is often governed by pragmatic factors. Under the influence of Russian certain variations on word order are possible which will be discussed in paragraph III.

In the SOV Eastern Khanty, the position of the argument in O grammatical relation may vary, licensed by its pragmatic properties, that is, while brand new, inactive, unidentifiable O referents are always rigidly fixed in SOV order clauses, in other cases pragmatically active and identifiable O referents may cause OSV and occasional SVO orders (Filchenko 2012: 121).

As for the Locus of marking in the clause Eastern Khanty manifests double-marking. In the Indefinite conjugation the verb agrees with the subject in person and number as in ex. 3.

- 3) mä nuy wer-ə-ɣl-ə-ɣas-əm
 1SG up wake-EP-REFL-EP-PST3-1SG
 I woke up.

In ex.4 of the Definite conjugation, the verb agrees with the subject (1SG) and object (SG), and their form and position show which is subject and which is object. The words ‘I’ and ‘head’ have no overt marking to indicate their subject and object functions. Thus all the marking of subject and object relations in this clause is on the verb, which is head of the clause (Nichols, Bickel 2011a).

- 4) mä ittən oɣ-əm luɣujt-ə-ɣas-im
 I in.the.evening head-1SG wash-EP-PST3-1SG/SG
 I washed my head in the evening.

According to Nichols, Bickel 2011 in ex.5, ‘I’ and ‘he’ have case endings to indicate their syntactic functions, and the verb has the affix agreeing with both. Thus subject and object are marked twice, once on the subject and object themselves and once on the verb, which is double marking locus in the clause (Nichols, Bickel 2011a).

- 5) mä jüɣ-ə jävəl-l-im tim juɣ-nati
 1SG 3SG-ACC await-PRS-1SG/SG DET stick-COM
 I am awaiting him with the stick.

Khanty shows the nominative-accusative case-marking system in general. The type of alignment is accusative. Nominative in Khanty is not overtly marked. The core argument S of a canonical, one-place intransitive predicate in ex.6 and A argument of a canonical, two-place transitive predicate in ex.7 are coded identically.

- 6) werəɲot wojəmt-əs
 child sleep-PST2.3SG
 The child fell asleep.
- 7) Ana kaɣna qotl qul qatɣəm jəɲk pəntɣaltə-wəl
 Anna “every” day fish hot water cook-PRS.3SG
 Anna cooks fish soup every day.

There are two types of participles in Eastern Khanty: Non-past Participle -tə (NPP), and Past Participle -əm (PP), which are used productively for a variety of functions.

- 8) puɣl-a qat wer-tə jaɣ je-s-ət
 village-ILL house do-NPP people come-PST2-1PL
 The builders came to the village.
- 9) niɲ-äm wer-əm intot i-l-əm
 wife-1SG do-PP food eat-PRS-1SG
 I eat the food my wife made.

Eastern Khanty employs Participles to form relative (ex. 8,9), adverbial and rarely complement clauses (ex.10). They form subordinate clauses of condition (ex.9). When the subjects of wanting and

the subject of desideratum are not coreferential, a different type of construction (participial) is used:

10) mä	qoj-l-əm	nuŋ	tʃaj	in-t-ən-a
1SG	want-PRS-1SG	2SG	tea	drink-NPP-2SG-ILL

I want you to drink tea.

In the adverbial clauses participles are marked for Locative, Illative, and are often followed by postpositions. Participial complement clauses can be sentential subjects and objects. Differently from infinitival complement clauses, participial complement clauses need not to be controlled by the matrix subject as in ex.10. The latter example demonstrates the tendency for participles in object complement clauses to take an agreement affix that cross-references the embedded clause subject.

The converb is formed with the suffix -min/-min and denotes the simultaneous action with the matrix verb:

11) ala-l-əm	noməysə-l-əm	wertolet	säjäy-min	mən-wəl
lie-PRS-1SG	think-PRS-1SG	“helicopter”	rattle-CNV	go-PRS.3SG

I am lying and thinking if this is a helicopter flying rattling.

The subject controls the converbs.

The types of clauses described above are rarely subject to any significant structural change. Under the influence of Russian it is complex sentences that undergo severe grammatical restructuring.

3. Grammatical convergence in complex sentences.

To differentiate the notions of code-switching, grammatical convergence and borrowing, which are sometimes confusing in terms of interpreting the linguistic data, we define code-switching as a free, often inconsistent, alternate use of two languages in a single discourse, while grammatical convergence is understood as the contact-induced recurring similarity in grammatical structure of one language under the influence of the other. In most cases the occurrences of code-switching are unconscious and the result of bilingualism as there is no need to intentionally switch codes to be identified as a particular ethnic group. Moreover, most of the examples of code-switching have counterexamples of lexical and grammatical items in Khanty which are easily elicited. The particular item the speakers choose from the dominant language (Russian) is probably more frequent in the Russian language of an individual bilingual speaker and he/she switches to Russian although he/she knows the Khanty equivalent. Not to confuse the terms borrowing, code-switching, code-copying and grammatical convergence, I define borrowing as a lexical borrowing from Russian which conforms to phonological and morphological rules of Khanty (distinctly from code-switching). Code-switching is the use of the Russian items in the Khanty language with original morphology, i.e. there is an alternation of two languages within the same discourse. The examples of code-switching in our field data is probably the result of the interaction with Russian-speaking linguists (Galyamina 2012: 96).

Manifestations of grammatical convergence can be described in terms of L. Johanson (2002) as code-copying which is also called grammatical replication in some literature. Replication (in terms of Heine, Kuteva 2005) is the transfer pattern from model language (which is Russian in our case) to replica language Khanty. Code-switching facilitates code-copying or grammatical replication.

Eastern Khanty has always revealed the tendency towards the avoidance of complex sentences: often sentences resemble a succession of clauses, loosely linked, without any overt indication of subordination (Potanina 2005: 409). Simple clauses and parataxis are much more common in the unwritten Eastern Khanty language.

The examples below represent **prototypical relative clauses** (RCs) in Eastern Khanty – the result of nominalization, when the matrix clause has a finite syntax while the subordinate relative clause is nominalized.

- 12a) mǎ apa-m wer-ǎm qa-nə wəl-l-əm
 1SG father-1SG make-PP house-LOC live-PRS-1SG
 I live in the house my father built.
- 12b) noŋ mən-t-ǎn lök qoγ wəl-wəs
 2Sg go-NPP-2SG way long be-PRT.3SG
 The way along which you go is long.

Most of the texts we analyzed reveal the tendency in Eastern Khanty towards the use of nominalized (embedded) subordinate clauses as in ex. 12 a,b. In Eastern dialects RCs the subject and the object of the nominalized predicate are coded as the arguments in the finite independent clause. The subject agreement, which is marked by a personal possessive marker, is on the nominalized predicate (ex. 12b) while in Northern dialects it is on the head noun (Nikolaeva 1999: 77). Possessives are known to convey a wide variety of meanings in languages of the world (possession proper is just one of them). Possessive constructions in Khanty are often optional and are conditioned pragmatically. This is the case of non-ownership possessives, the so-called associative possessives. Associative possession involves permanent or temporary ownership by right of occupancy, it denotes something belonging to or located by association with the possessor (cross-references with the possessor). The pragmatic associative possessives are quite common in colloquial speech, because they are situational and the semantic interpretation of the relations is actualized in a particular context (Nikolaeva 1999: 82-84). The recent Eastern Khanty data gives a lot of examples of the so-called “pragmatic associative possessives” which mark the dependent predication according to the prototypical strategy of the RC formation:

- 13) aj qu kütʃkül-tə tayi-l-oy joy-pa ju-wəl
 little man hunt-NPP place-3SG-ABL home-LAT come-PRS.3SG

The young man came home from the place where he hunts (the place where he regularly hunts).

The prototypical Eastern Khanty RCs demonstrate the gap strategy which does not allow any overt indication (case-marking) of the role of the head within the RC (Comrie 1981: 144). Eastern Khanty allows relativization on subjects, direct objects, non-direct objects and possessors. The same gap strategy is employed regardless of which grammatical relation is relativized.

The data on complex sentences collected in the field in recent years reveals various manifestations of language attrition in the speech of the last speakers of Vasyugan Khanty. In modern sociolinguistic context Vasyugan Khanty reveals some **recent tendencies** formed under the influence of Russian which can be described in terms of grammatical convergence.

3.1. One of the recent tendencies is the use of the interrogative pronouns to introduce relative clauses. This “relative pronoun” strategy of relative clause formation was copied from the contact Russian language and the structure of the Eastern Khanty clauses has been modified. The examples found in the earlier grammars (Gulya 1966) illustrate that this strategy cannot be defined as a frequent one: the only attested examples of the relative pronoun strategy were the translations of Russian proverbs. This relative clause forming strategy places the relative clause at the beginning of a sentence and introduces it by an interrogative pronoun, which may be case marked and cross-referencing the function of the head in the embedded clause. All clausal arguments tend to precede the verb. These relative clauses are headless. The term “headless” is sometimes applied to relatives (co-relatives) meaning “the one who”, “whoever”.

- 13) qoji ǎntə ropiltə-wəl, ǎntə li-wəl
 who NEG work-PRS.3SG NEG eat-PRS.3SG
 Whoever does not work, does not eat (Gulya 1966: 86).

Probably in ex. 13 the missing head has no specific semantic content and sentences are more general (generic statements).

According to B. Heine, T. Kuteva (2007), the evolution from question words to relative markers is most centrally found in European languages and in a number of languages having a history of contact with IE languages. Contact-induced grammaticalization is not the only means whereby a language may acquire a new grammatical category via language contact – a much better-known way is by borrowing a grammatical form-meaning unit from another language. But in case with interrogative pronouns grammaticalized into relative markers we observe the case of grammatical replication: the category arose via replication, i.e. contact-induced grammaticalization (Heine, Kuteva 2007: 229). As for modern Eastern Khanty a lot of examples of grammatical convergence are attested whereby the whole complex sentence is restructured under the influence of the contact language. In example below the order of constituents and the use of the relative pronoun harmonize with the Russian relative clauses:

- 14) *juɣ* *wəl-wəl* *qa-nə* *qo* *mä* *wəl-m-äm*
 3SG live-PRS.3SG house-LOC where 1SG live-PP-1SG
 He lives in the house where I lived.

This example does not fully conform to the definition of the relative pronoun strategy proposed by Comrie (1981: 142) as the relative pronoun is usually not case-marked in Eastern Khanty thus not indicating the role of the head in the relative clause. So, for WALS B. Comrie, T. Kuteva do not consider such examples as illustration of the relative pronoun strategy (Comrie, Kuteva 2011).

3.2. The second recent tendency is the introduction of the RCs by the resumptive pronoun *tʃu* that refers to an antecedent or is exclusively used to mark the return to the matrix clause (see example 15a). Eastern Khanty uses a demonstrative pronoun in the resumptive function. Unlike interrogative pronouns used to introduce RCs, which have different forms and may be case-marked, the resumptive pronoun remains uninflected.

- 15a) *mä* *amə-ɣal-əm* *qat* *tʃu* *qaŋən-nə* *aməs-wəl*
 1SG sit-PST-1SG house DEM bank-LOC sit-PRT.3SG
 I built the house which is on the riverbank.

This pronoun-retention strategy is not used in Russian and the source of it is unknown.

In prototypical examples we find no trace of the missing head noun while in the one below this position is occupied by the demonstrative pronoun *tʃu* which corresponds to the highly-referring and definite head noun. Probably the head has very specific semantic content and requires this argument that is referentially identical to it and introduces the relative clause.

- 15b) *mä-nə* *onəl-l-əm* *tʃu* *qu* *tʃu* *qat* *qaŋən-nə* *aməs-wəl*
 1SG-LOC know-PRS.1SG DEM man DEM house bank-LOC sit-PRS.3SG
 “I know the man whose house is on the riverbank”.

The combination of the first and the second type is possible. E.g. 15c:

- 15c) *möyöl’i* *mä-nä* *mas-wəl,* *tʃu* *məjiyilə-ɣäs*
 what 1SG-LAT must-PRS.3SG DEM give-PST.3SG
 He gave me what I need (Gulya 1966:86).

Example 15c is more specific in comparison to 15a and the use of the Past Tense requires this argument *tʃu* that is referentially identical to the interrogative pronoun that introduces the relative clause.

Under the influence of Russian the use of demonstrative and deictic particles as an argument of one clause to refer to another whole clause became an important device for indicating some relationship among sentences. The presence of such highly referring arguments is not obligatory.

3.3. The third recent tendency is illustrated by occasional examples showing posthead and postmatrix finite relative clauses with no relativizer. Increasingly in the recent data there are examples of the relative clauses not only following the head but also coded by the finite “dependent” (there are no markers of subordination) clauses. In the examples like 16a of the finite relative clauses their syntactic and semantic features show that these clause-size nominal modifiers bear systematic identity to full-fledged independent clauses (Potanina 2008: 83).

16) mä wer-käs-im kötfəy ti ni öyö-wəl nän’
 1Sg do-PST-1SG/SG knife DEM woman cut-PRS.3SG bread

I made the knife which that woman cuts the bread with.

This recent strategy has formed in Eastern Khanty under the influence of Russian which has SVO constituent order, forms postmatrix RCs, and has finite syntax in both clauses. However, Eastern Khanty still preserves natural tendency towards parataxis and the absence of any overt markers of subordination. Such postnominal RCs like 16a are not sensitive to the grammatical role that is relativized and are very unlikely to be nominalized.

This tendency is not persistent either as it allows rare occurrences of posthead but prematrix embedded RCs, which in this case can be nominalized:

16b) jay mən-əm-ən qat-ət jəm qat-əw
 people go-PP-2PL house-PL good house-ATTR

People, whose houses you have left, have good houses.

The only feature that supports the convergence analysis is a syntactic preposition of the head.

3.4. The fourth recent tendency allows the overt presence of the head noun both in the subordinate and the matrix clause and is another important device for indicating interdependence of clauses. The head NP of the matrix clause is repeated explicitly in the relative clause. In Eastern Khanty this innovative non-reduction strategy can be identified as correlative (Comrie, Kuteva 2011). The constraint in Khanty is that it is not possible to have a coreferential pronoun in the dependent clause instead of the repeated NP. For example 17a and 17b:

17a) mä il-l-əm intot tʃu niŋ-əm wer-äm intot
 1SG eat-PRS-1SG food DEM wife-1SG do-PP food

I eat the food my wife made.

17b) jüy wə-ɣal jop qul wel-m-äl jop
 3SG take-PST.3SG fishing rod fish kill-PP-3SG fishing rod

He took the fishing rod he caught fish with.

The interdependence of clauses in ex. 17a and 17b is marked not only by overt presence of the head in the matrix clause and RC but also by a nominalized (participial) subordinate clause. Insubordination (i.e. the use of structurally subordinate clauses as independent) is not common in Eastern Khanty. The latter type of RCs is pragmatically marked and the overt presence of the head NP in the RC has to do with the definiteness of NPrel.

In ex. 17b the subjects of the matrix clause and the subordinate clause are coreferential and the subject is omitted in the subordinate clause which requires personal marking on dependent predication coreferential with the omitted subject. In example 17a the subjects of the matrix and RC are not coreferential, but the overt presence of the subject in the RC does not require obligatory personal marking on the dependent predication.

According to B. Comrie, T. Kuteva 2011, the non-reduction is the second major relativization strategy in the languages of the world whereby the head noun appears as a full-fledged noun phrase within the relative clause.

4. Conclusion

So, according to the presence or absence of the head NP in the RC we can single out the native gap strategy and new innovative strategies: “relative pronoun” (ex.13,14), pronoun-retention (ex. 15a,b,c), non-reduction (ex.17a,b).

Complex clauses in Eastern Khanty are illustrative of language attrition in the language of individual speakers: under the influence of dominant Russian there appeared new tendencies in relative clause formation. The language is not persistent in ‘copying’ relativization strategies, as there is free variation within the employment of a particular relativization strategy. There is a continuum between prototypical Khanty RC and prototypical Russian RCs: there are intermediate stages at which various deviations from the prototype are possible. The strategies are not sensitive to the positions being relativized.

List of Abbreviations

1, 2, 3 – first, second, third person; ABL – ablative; DEM – demonstrative; LAT – lative; LOC – locative; NEG – negation; NPP – non-past participle; PL – plural; PP – past participle; PRS – present tense; PST – past tense; SG – singular.

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ПРОЯВЛЕНИЯ ЯЗЫКОВОЙ АТТРИЦИИ В РЕЧИ НОСИТЕЛЕЙ ВОСТОЧНЫХ ДИАЛЕКТОВ ХАНТЫЙСКОГО ЯЗЫКА

Хантыйский язык представляет собой диалектный континуум. Не только носители диалектов, находящихся на противоположных и наиболее удаленных друг от друга точках континуума, но также носители диалектов одной диалектной группы не понимают друг друга. Представленная исследовательская работа направлена на документацию и описание находящегося на грани исчезновения васюганского диалекта хантыйского языка, на котором говорят ханты Томской области. В настоящее время насчитывается менее десяти носителей данного диалекта, свободно владеющих родным языком.

Представлен анализ сложных предложений в васюганском диалекте, которые подверглись синтаксической реструктуризации под влиянием длительного и интенсивного языкового контакта с носителями русского языка. Изменения синтаксиса сложных предложений наблюдаются в порядке слов, финитном/инфинитном придаточных предложениях и в использовании средств подчинительной связи, что представляет собой случаи грамматической конвергенции. Название статьи предполагает, что грамматическая конвергенция является проявлением языковой аттриции в речи отдельных носителей васюганского диалекта.

Ключевые слова: *восточные диалекты хантыйского языка, сложное предложение, стратегии образования определительных придаточных предложений, языковой контакт, грамматическая конвергенция, языковая аттриция.*

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