

Allomorphy and dialectal variation in Northern Mansi nominal paradigms

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Introduction

- In the case of minor Uralic languages, there is a huge lack of dialectal data
- Most grammars only describe the written standard of these languages, which is usually a constructed and simplified phenomenon
- The variation found in dialects is frequently omitted from such descriptions
- Today, we will present some empirical data from Mansi dialects
- In our talk, we will discuss a few non-trivial cases found in Northern Mansi nominal paradigms and propose our explanations for their attested variation

The Mansi language

- Mansi (Vogul) < Ob-Ugric < Finno-Ugric < Uralic
- An indigenous language of Russia
- Approx. 1000 speakers in Western Siberia, mainly in Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug and Sverdlovsk Oblast
- Earlier there were 4 Mansi dialect groups, today only the Northern group survives
- Our data come from several sources:
 - Grammars, such as [Rombandeeva 1973] and [Murphy 1968]
 - Texts from A. Kannisto's "Wogulische Volksdichtung"
 - Our own fieldwork among the Upper Lozva Mansi in 2017-2018



Nominal categories in Mansi

- Number, case and possession
- In our talk, we will mainly focus on the first two categories:

Case	Marker	Number	Marker
Locative	-t, -ət, -et, -ta, -te	Dual	-ɣ, -əɣ
Lative	-n, -ən, -en, -na, -ne	Plural	-t, -ət
Ablative	-nəl, -əl, -l	Possessive dual	-ɣ, -aɣ
Instrumental	-təl, -t, -əl, -l	Possessive plural	-n, -an
Translative	-ɣ, -iɣ, -iɣiɣ		

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Translative	-γ, -iγ, -iγiγ		

Plural number allomorphy

- Absolute declension: dual **-(ə)ʏ** and plural **-(ə)t**
- Possessive declension: dual **-(a)ʏ** and plural **-(a)n**

xāp-əʏ

boat-DU

‘2 boats’

xāp-ət

boat-PL

‘boats’

xāp-aʏ-um

boat-DU-POSS.1SG

‘my 2 boats’

xāp-an-um

boat-PL-POSS.1SG

‘my boats’

- The dual markers are the same, apart from slight vowel variation: [a] is reduced to [ə] in the final syllable
- The plural affixes, however, look different
- This can be classified as a simple case of morphological allomorphy, where the marker is chosen based on the declension type

Plural number allomorphy

- However, we propose that **-(a)n** is the same as **-(ə)t**
- Mansi 1st and 2nd possessive affixes derive from personal pronouns, most of which begin with a sonorant:
- [Honti 1988: 342] Proto-Vogul personal pronouns:

	SG	DU	PL
1	*äm	*miin	*mään
2	*näy	*niin	*nään

- The linear order of affixes in the possessive declension:
NUMBER – POSS – CASE
- The plural marker precedes the possessive affix

Plural number allomorphy

- The [t] of the original plural marker frequently occurred before [m] or [n] of the possessive affix
- It might have undergone assimilation and transformed into the corresponding dental sonorant [n]: boat-PL-POSS.2SG ‘your boats’

xāp-at-ən → xāp-at-n → xāp-an-n

- In Mansi, schwa is never stressed
- Every odd syllable bears secondary stress
- Schwa is easily dropped to prevent violation of this rule
- Because of this, [t] is adjacent to [m] and [n] and gets assimilated

Plural number allomorphy

- The process of assimilation initially occurred in the 1st and 2nd person, then it has analogously spread to the 3rd person
- 3rd person possessive affixes in Uralic arise from a different origin (demonstrative pronouns) and often exhibit different behaviour, see e.g. [Gerland 2014], so separate development in 1st and 2nd persons is not unusual
- Another proof for our hypothesis is the plural possessive marker in Khanty is -l or -ł, which corresponds directly to the Mansi -t (see [Haidu 1985: 280])
- Thus, a phonetical change triggered a process which resulted into full-fledged morphological allomorphy

Lative & locative case allomorphy

- We shall discuss different vocalic variants of the lative and locative case markers:

Lative	Locative
-n, -ən, -en, -na, -ne	-t, -ət, -et, -ta, -te

- Standard Mansi: lative **-(ə)n** & locative **-(ə)t**
- Variants containing ə regularly occur after consonantal stems to split clusters

Lative & locative case allomorphy

- Dialectal variation, see [Rombandeeva 1973]:

	Lative	Locative
Sygva, Sosva	-en*	-et*
Upper Lozva	-na, -ne	-ta, -te

Lative & locative case allomorphy

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- The -en, -et variants are easily explained: as they only surface in the possessive declension, so we believe that the **e** element originates as a result of reanalysis of the case marker in the vicinity of the 3SG possessive affix -(t)e: boat-POSS.3SG-LAT ‘into his boat’
xāp-e-n → xāp-e-en

Lative & locative case allomorphy

- A. Kannisto's "Wogulische Volksdichtung" contains texts from various Mansi dialects, recorded during his trips to various Mansi dialects in the early 1900s
- In Kannisto's transcription system
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ length is only possible for phonologically short vowels
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ length is possible for long vowels as well as for short ones
- There are recordings of Sosva, Sygva and Upper Lozva dialects among his materials, so they might be useful for our analysis

Lative & locative case allomorphy

- [Steinitz 1955: 40]: in the Sosva dialect, only $\frac{1}{4}$ vowel length is possible in open syllables for phonologically short vowels
- In the Upper Lozva dialect, phonologically short vowels in open syllables may be half-long
- Thus, short vowels in word-final position are dropped in the Sosva dialect
- In the Upper Lozva dialect, vocalic elements of the lative and locative case markers are retained, as these vowels are longer

Lative & locative case allomorphy

- However, why do these vowels emerge at all?
- Vocalic endings are uncommon for Mansi morphonological word structure
- However, the following process is plausible:
- Standard Mansi:

xāp-ət

boat-LOC

xāp-ən

boat-LAT

- In some phrase positions it is possible for the speaker to drop ə
- However, consonant clusters are not possible (see [Rombandeeva 1973], [Riese 2001] etc.) at the end of a syllable, so a new syllable appears

Lative & locative case allomorphy

- The vocalic element cannot arise to the left of the case marker, because of the mental representation of ə in the mind of the speakers
- So, it arises in the right context, resulting in the following structure:

xāp-[ə]ta xāp-[ə]na

boat-LOC boat-LAT

- The newly added vowel is full because the syllable is odd (due to the “trace” left by schwa)

Ablative & instrumental case allomorphy

- Now we will briefly introduce the ablative and instrumental case

Ablative	Instrumental
-(ə)l, -nəl	-(ə)l, -təl

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Ablative & instrumental case allomorphy

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Ablative	Instrumental
-(ə)l, -nəl	-(ə)l, -təl

Upper Lozva
dialect

Only in the
possessive declension

- Standard Mansi:
 - ablative -nəl,
 - instrumental -(ə)l
 - instrumental possessive -təl

Ablative & instrumental case allomorphy

- A considerable number of Upper Lozva speakers pronounce the ablative marker as **-(ə)l**, so it becomes homonymous with the instrumental affix:

xāp-əl / xāp-nəl

boat-ABL

‘from the boat’

xāp-əl

boat-INSTR

‘with the boat’

- The two cases can sometimes be distinguished only in the possessive declension, where the **-təl** variant of the instrumental case appears:

xāp-um-əl / xāp-um-nəl

boat-POSS.1SG-ABL

‘from my boat’

xāp-um-təl / *xāp-um-əl

boat-POSS.1SG-INSTR

‘with my boat’

- Is this homonymy simply a coincidence?

Ablative & instrumental case allomorphy

- [Majtinskaya 1979]: **-təl** < *t locative + *l ablative
- [Liimola 1951]: **-nəl** < *nä ‘near’ (postposition) + *l ablative
- Both affixes originally contain the Proto-Ugric ablative *l
- The first element of the instrumental affix is only retained in the possessive declension
- The first element of the ablative affix **-nəl** is also dropped in the Upper Lozva dialect (as well as in some extinct Southern Mansi varieties, see [Liimola 1951])

Ablative & instrumental case allomorphy

- In Upper Lozva Mansi, instrumental forms of personal pronouns are lost
- The following forms found in [Rombandeeva 1973] for standard Mansi are deemed ungrammatical:

***anum-təl** ***tawe-təl**
me-INSTR he.OBL-INSTR

- The instrumental case is often used in the comitative function
- The comitative construction requires a possessive marker, so the instrumental allomorph there is **-təl**:

mēn **āji-men-təl** / ***āji-men-əl**
we.DU daughter-POSS.2DU-INSTR
'Me and my daughter'.

Ablative & instrumental case allomorphy

- Moreover, a frequent strategy of denoting an instrument in Mansi is the postposition **jot** ‘with’:

sajrap jot


axe with

‘with an axe’

- We believe that the instrumental case is gradually being pushed away into its comitative function
- Because the allomorph surfacing there is **-təl**, the ablative case can be shortened to **-(ə)l** without causing confusion
- Case loss in Mansi is not unusual: since the proto-Vogul state, the Northern dialect group has lost the accusative and comitative cases

Conclusions

- The Mansi possessive plural marker has undergone a phonetic transformation which resulted in morphological allomorphy
- The variants of the lative and locative cases are conditioned by rules of word structuring which differ depending on the dialect
- In the Upper Lozva dialect, the instrumental case seems to be losing its instrumental function as well as the allomorph $-(\text{ə})\text{l}$
- The ablative case takes $-(\text{ə})\text{l}$ as its variant
- In Mansi, we find various reasons for allomorphic variation:
 - Phonetic change
 - Rhythmic structure
 - Rearrangement of grammatical categories



Thank you for your attention!