

Extended Abstract

The investigation of the progressive prefix relict in Kalhori Kurdish: A comparative and intralingual approach

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Introduction

Kurdish language can be classified into three branches: Northern (Kurmanji), Central (Sorani and Ardalani), and Southern (Kalhori and Ilami) Kurdish varieties. One aspect worth comparing among these branches is the reality of the progressive prefix in these languages. This prefix is /di-/ in Kurmanji, /da-/ in Sorani, /a-/ in Ardalani, and /də-/ in Ilami. However, this prefix has no realization as a prefix in Kalhori Kurdish and is manifested as a zero morpheme. Comparing different studies, Abbasi (2014) enumerates five conditions for a zero morpheme: 1) the existence of affixes in that language, 2) correspondence with an overt morpheme, 3) distinctiveness, 4) impossibility of reapplication on a single base (if it is a lexical morpheme), and 5) meaningfulness and exclusiveness. The zero morpheme of Kalhori Kurdish in this study meets these conditions. Using a comparative method, this article aims to study the variation of the phonetic forms of this prefix in Sorani, Ardalani, and Ilami, and attempts to find relics of this prefix and investigate the motivation for the elision of the phonetic form of this morpheme.

Materials & Methods

The data in this study were collected from Sorani and Ardalani of Central Kurdish, and from Kalhori and Ilami of Southern Kurdish. To do so, 10 speakers of each of these four varieties were selected through random sampling. The data collection process was conducted through interviews (direct questions and storytelling). The data were then transcribed, and the forms relevant to this study were extracted and analyzed. The comparative analysis of these forms was conducted according to Campbell (2005) and Crowley (1992) steps as follows:

- 1) Collecting similar forms

- 2) Investigating correspondence between the collected sets
- 3) Finding forms that are in complementary distribution
- 4) Reconstructing the proto form
- 5) Analyzing the reconstructed systems and forms typologically

These steps are, of course, for the discovery of the proto forms. This study is not mainly concerned with the precise proto form, but rather tries to shed light on some of the formal features of this prefix by studying the relics.

Results and Discussion

In the following forms, the progressive prefix is annotated with ‘prg’, and it is added to the verb ‘do’, which is in turn followed by the first-person verbal ending annotated with 1S. All these forms mean “I do.”.

- 1) [da-ka-m] (Sorani)
prg-DO-1S
- 2) [a-ka-m] (Ardalani)
prg-DO-1S
- 3) [də-ka-m] (Ilami)
prg-DO-1S
- 4) [ka-m] (Kalhori)
DO-1S

As it can be observed, in the Sorani, Ardalani, and Ilami forms, there is an element functioning as the verbal prefix, but there is no such overt morpheme in Kalhori. However, relics of this prefix can be seen in certain verbal forms such as those of the verbs ‘come’ and ‘bring’. Sentences 5-8 represent the verb ‘come’. Here, they all mean ‘I come.’

- 5) [d- e: -m] (Sorani)
prg-COME-1S
- 6) [d- e: -m] (Ardalani)
prg-COME-1S
- 7) [də- α -m] (Ilami)
prg- COME-1S
- 8) [tja -m] (Kalhori)
COME -1S

According to these forms, the only variety that lacks the progressive prefix is Kalhori. To understand this different behavior, other forms of this verb should also be analyzed. Number 9 shows the same verb of ‘come’, this time with the subjunctive mood prefix. This is also with the first-person verbal ending. The subjunctive prefix is annotated with ‘sbj’.

- 9) [b-α-m] (Kalhori)
sbj-COME-1S

Here, it could be hypothesized that the sequence [tja] in 8 is nothing but a combination of a prefix and a verbal root, since the same verbal root is manifested as [α] in the subjunctive

mood form in 9. It is also expected based on the comparison of forms of different varieties. By comparing this form with those of Sorani, Ardalani, and Ilami and by studying Kalhori forms of 8 and 9, it could be assumed that the consonant [t] in the Kalhori form of [tja] is the devoiced form of the initial consonant of the progressive prefix, and the vowel [a] is a relic of the verb 'come'.

The analysis of the forms of 'bring' shows similar evidence. The forms of 10-13 show the new verb with the same paradigm. They all mean 'I bring.'

- 10) [da-he:n-əm] (Sorani)
prog-*BRING*-1S
- 11) [t-e:r-əm] / [d-e:n-əm] (Ardalani)
prog-*BRING*-1S
- 12) [də-ɑr-əm] (Ilami)
prog-*BRING*-1S
- 13) [tjar-əm] (Kalhori)
BRING-1S

Comparing 13 with the corresponding subjunctive form can elucidate the problem just like the verb 'come'. The form 14 shows the verb 'bring' in the subjunctive mood with the first-person verbal ending.

- 14) [b- ɑr -əm] (Kalhori)
subj-*BRING*-1S

Just like what went with the verb 'come', it is reasonable to assume that [ɑr] is the root of the verb 'bring'. This is confirmed both by interlingual analysis and the interlingual comparison of the progressive and subjunctive forms. Therefore, as in [tja] (come), the initial consonant of [t] in [tjar] could be identified as the relict of the progressive prefix, in which case the [j] should be thought of as an inserted consonant presumably to resolve a vowel hiatus between the missing vowel of the prefix and the vowel of the verbal root.

The evidence from the two verbs 'come' and 'bring' is enough to consider the possibility of the existence of an earlier overt form for the progressive prefix, but this hypothesis could be further supported by analyzing the verb 'see' and the portmanteau negative progressive prefix- the data of which is beyond the scope of this abstract. The full article presents relevant data on these two forms as well.

Conclusion

The present study postulates that the missing progressive prefix in Kalhori Kurdish could still be observed in certain constructions as relics of the previous stages of this language. It is worth mentioning that in Sorani, Ardalani, and Ilami, the progressive prefix makes up an unstressed syllable, which is likely to be reduced. This is confirmed by comparing the full form of [da-] in Sorani with the reduced forms of [a-] and [də-] in Ardalani and Ilami, respectively. This reduction has gone all the way towards complete elision of this prefix in Kalhori Kurdish.

Keywords: Kalhori Kurdish; Present Progressive Prefix; Morph Deletion; Comparative Study

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