

Extended Abstract

Case marking and case system in Khalaj Turkic common in villages of Qom province

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Introduction

Khalaj language, as the representative of the Arghu Turkic language, is considered an independent branch of Turkic languages (Johansson, 1988: 82-83). It is prevalent in central Iran and, according to Johansson (2021: 19), is one of the most valuable resources for studying early Turkic languages, remaining unknown until the 20th century. Now, the Khalaj speakers live in the Khalajestan region, within the provinces of Qom and Markazi. In the present study, the case marking and case system is examined in the Khalaj language, spoken in the villages of Qom province, based on the research framework.

Case is a system of marking dependent on the type of relationship they bear to their head, which is traditionally referred to as inflectional case marking in grammar. Prefixes, suffixes, and infixes play the role of case markers in the Inflectional case-marking system. In some languages, these markers may also have a zero expression in certain cases. Prepositions can also function as case markers in languages, and such a system is called an analytical marking system. Blake (2004: 31) also argues that a distinction can be made between grammatical (syntactic) and semantic (concrete) cases.

According to the case system, languages are categorized into groups, with the two main groups being nominative-accusative and ergative-absolutive language. Butt (2006: 158) and Plank (1979: 4) believe that an ergative case system is a grammatical pattern in which the subject of an intransitive verb (S_i) and the direct object (DO) are marked similarly, distinguishing them from the subject of a transitive verb (S_t). In contrast, in a nominative case system, the subject of both intransitive and transitive verbs is distinguished from the direct object.

Comrie (1978) introduces five possible case systems in the world's languages by defining three terms: the subject of an intransitive verb (S), the subject of a transitive verb or agent (A), and the direct object or patient (P). He names four linguistic categories: null,

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nominative-accusative, ergative-absolutive, and tripartite. However, he does not assign a name to the fifth linguistic category, believing that this case system does not seem to exist among the world's languages (Dabirmoghaddam, 2023, citing Comrie, 1978).

Materials and Methods

The present study is conducted using a descriptive-analytical method, based on Blake's book (2004) and Comrie's article (1978). For this purpose, sentences relevant to the research topic were extracted from the data available in the Iranian Linguistic Atlas (ILA), which is being compiled and completed at the Research Institute of Cultural Heritage and Tourism. The said data was gathered through a questionnaire containing 105 words and phrases and 36 sentences, along with face-to-face interviews with speakers. The corpus of the present study consists of 480 sentences. The database of the said atlas includes data from 16 villages of Khalaj speakers in Qom Province. The following two paragraphs provide a review of previous studies on the Khalaj language, case marking and case systems.

The first linguistic study of the Khalaj language was conducted by Minorsky (1940). However, he did not consider the Khalaj language as an independent branch of Turkic languages. Later, Doerfer (1968) conducted a study on the Khalaj language. He and his colleagues compiled extensive linguistic data, including about 60,000 Khalaj words. Vashqani Farahani (2012) provided numerous examples of the Khalaj language, offering insights into its phonological, morphological, and syntactic features. Jemrasi (2013) also authored a grammar of the Khalaj language. Bosnalı (2016) discussed many aspects of the history and language of the Khalaj people in an article. Ragagnin (2020), introducing Khalaj as a non-Oghuz Turkic language, studied the language, the influence of Persian on it, and the changes that have occurred in it. Johansson (2021) explored the linguistic features of Turkic languages, including Khalaj, discussing the history and classification of these languages.

Malchukov and Spencer (2009) studied the typology of case systems in languages. According to them, languages are different in case-marking and agreement and word order strategies. Primus (2012) discusses the typology of case marking and various methods of case expression, such as the use of prepositions and inflectional affixes. Tafraji and Ahmadi (2014) examined case markers in the Turkish language. While the specific dialect of Turkish they studied is not explicitly mentioned, it seems likely that they are referring to Azerbaijani Turkish. They believe that the case system in the language they studied is nominative-accusative in both present and past tenses. Mokhtari and colleagues (2021) analyzed the case category in four Turkic languages, including Khalaj. They focused only on the case expression in these languages, describing the case markers in those four Turkic languages. However, it is important to note that, given the different theoretical framework of the present study compared to theirs, the framework for data analysis and the resulting conclusions will naturally differ.

Results and Discussion

According to available data, the cases including, nominative, accusative, dative, comitative, instrumental, ablative, locative, and genitive have been extracted from the sentences in the ILA questionnaire.

The data analysis shows that in the Khalaj language, the nominative case is unmarked. The suffix /-ε/ in Khalaj is the marker for the accusative case, which attaches

to definite noun phrases. The suffix for the dative case (benefactive/indirect object) in this language is *-kæ*. However, in the linguistic data corpus, some sentences were observed in which speakers used the suffix *-a* or *-æ* (depending on the phonological context of the host noun) instead of *-kæ* for the dative case influenced by Azerbaijani Turkish. According to Johansson (2021: 464), the Khalaj language has preserved the suffix *-kæ* from Old Turkic. Therefore, both suffix forms are used in this language, though the latter's frequency in the research corpus is not high. In Khalaj, the suffix *-u(n)* is the genitive (possessive) case marker, which attaches to the "possessor" noun phrase. The semantic cases extracted from the ILA questionnaire for the Khalaj language include the comitative, instrumental, ablative, and locative cases. The postposition *-læ* or *-la* (depending on the phonological context of the noun it attaches to) is used for cases of Comitative and instrumental as a clitic.

Analysis of the linguistic data corpus reveals that the marker *-dæ* is used as the ablative (locative source) case marker in Khalaj. However, in some examples, the influence of Azerbaijani Turkish has led to the use of the marker *-dæn* for this case as well. The locative case suffix in Khalaj is *-fæ* or *-fa* (depending on the phonological context of the host noun). In Azerbaijani Turkish, the locative case suffix is *-da* or *-dæ* (depending on the phonological context of the host noun). In a few instances within the research corpus, these Azerbaijani Turkish locative suffixes were observed to be used under its influence.

By examining the analysis of the research corpus data and closely observing the examples of Khalaj as spoken in the villages of the Khalaj-speaking regions in Qom Province, it is evident that the case system in this language, both in the present and past tense, is nominative-accusative. This is because, in both the present and past tense, the subject of transitive and intransitive verbs is marked with a zero marker, while the object of transitive verbs is marked with the suffix */-ε/* in both tenses. The pattern of the case system in this language, based on the models presented by Comrie (1978) as cited in Dabirmoghaddam (2023: 54), can be represented as follows:

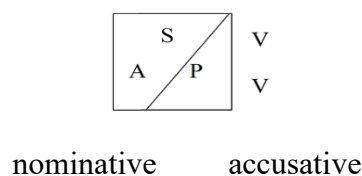


Figure (1)
Nominative-accusative Case System in Khalaj

Conclusion

The data analysis shows that in the Khalaj language spoken in the Khalaj-speaking villages of Qom Province, the nominative case has no marker (zero marking). However, the other cases have distinct markers. The markers for the accusative, dative (benefactive/indirect object), ablative (source location), locative, and genitive cases are suffixes that attach to the end of the noun. In the case of the comitative and instrumental, which share the same marker, the case marker appears as a dependent postposition that functions as a clitic. Therefore, the case marking in the Khalaj language is classified as "synthetic" according to Blake's (2004) classification. This means that both postpositions and suffixes are used concurrently for case marking.

Regarding the case system, the analysis of the research corpus indicates that in the Khalaj language, the case system is classified as nominative-accusative in both present and past tenses, according to Comrie (1978).

Keywords: Case-marking, Khalaj Language, Nominative-accusative languages, Typology, Case system

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