

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT AND DIALECTAL VARIATIONS OF THE PLURAL CATEGORY IN TURKIC LANGUAGES

Roya Nadir kizi Gahramanova

ASPU, FLC, teacher
omerqehreman@mail.ru

Abstract. The quantitative differentiation of nouns in Turkic languages is considered one of the most stable and ancient grammatical categories of the language. The concept of plurality is not only a semantic category that emerged from communicative needs, but also a structural element that has played an important role in the formation of the morphological system.

Keywords: plural category, suffix -lar/-lär, phonetic variation, Turkic dialects, morphological integration.

Introduction. The morphological expression of the concept of quantity in Turkic languages can be observed from the earliest written monuments. At the earliest stage, one of the main means of forming the plural form of nouns was the suffix -lar/-lär. Parallel variants such as -an/-ən were also used, but in later stages some of them became lexicalized and lost their productivity. For example, in the work *Divanü-lügät-it-türk*, non-standard plural forms formed by -an/-ən alongside -lar/-lär are recorded, and it is noted that they do not represent a normative pattern [1, p.353].

In Old Turkic, it is noteworthy that the semantics of plurality was expressed not only by suffixation but also through reduplication. The nuance of collectivity and multiplicity created through the repetition of words has also been preserved in modern Azerbaijani. In addition, at different historical stages, morphological elements such as -t, -z, -aq, -ar also expressed collective or dual meanings; however, in most cases these markers underwent semantic weakening during the historical development of the language [2, p.210].

The stability of the -an morpheme should be emphasized in particular. Research shows that this marker has not undergone significant phonetic changes. The -an component observed in words such as *aran* dates back to ancient periods and has remained in the same phonetic form in various Turkic languages [3, p.116]. This fact proves that, unlike the suffix -lar/-lär, the -an morpheme has a conservative character.

In modern Turkic languages, however, the suffix -lar/-lär demonstrates rich phonetic variation. For instance, in the Bashkir language the initial consonant of the suffix may change to l, d, z, or t depending on the preceding sound [4, p.1038]. In Kazakh and Kyrgyz languages, similar assimilative processes have resulted in forms such as -dar/-der and -tar/-ter [4, p.1050]. These changes are purely phonetic in nature and do not affect the meaning of plurality. In Tatar, the variant -nar/-när occurs after nasal consonants, creating a parallel pattern within the system [4, p.1089].

Similar processes are also observed in the dialects and subdialects of the Azerbaijani language. In the Western dialect group, forms such as -dar/-där, -nar/-när, and even -rar/-rär have been recorded depending on the final consonant of the word. This fact shows that assimilation and dissimilation phenomena observed across the Turkic linguistic area are also widespread in Azerbaijani. In the studies of M. Huseynova, numerous types of these phonetic adaptations have been identified [5, p.381]. Traces of the ancient suffix -t have also been preserved in some Turkic

languages. Mahmud Kashgari noted that this morpheme formed plural meanings in certain tribal languages [1, p.353].

Thus, comparative analysis shows that the suffix -lar/-lär, which is the main morphological marker of the plural category in Turkic languages, has historically maintained a stable semantic function. Its various phonetic variants are connected with the internal developmental patterns of languages and dialects. The materials of the Oghuz and Kipchak language groups prove that the differences appear mainly at the phonetic level, while the semantic content remains unchanged. This once again confirms the strong morphological integration among Turkic languages.

Conclusion. The research shows that the plural category in Turkic languages was systematically formed from ancient times and eventually stabilized mainly around the morphological marker -lar/-lär. Although other elements such as -an/-ən and -t, -z expressed plural or collective meanings at certain historical stages, some of them later became lexicalized or archaic.

At the modern stage, various phonetic variants of the suffix -lar/-lär (-dar/-där, -tar/-tär, -nar/-när, etc.) are widely found both in the literary forms of Turkic languages and in their dialects and subdialects. These changes represent phonetic adaptation and do not create any difference in the semantic load of the suffix. Materials from the Oghuz and Kipchak language groups show that although the differences are superficially phonetic, the morphological basis remains the same. Therefore, the development of the plural category clearly demonstrates the historical continuity, internal systemic integrity, and morphological integration of Turkic languages.

References

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