

Comparative Study of Number and Case Categories in English, Tatar and Arabic

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Abstract

This paper deals with the category of number and case in genealogically far languages: English, Arabic and Tatar as the language of the ethnic minority. It aims at applying Greenberg's linguistic universal number 39 to these very languages. Contrastive typology is the area of this report and expertise. The aims of our research are to draw the isomorphic regularities and the allomorphic singularities in the languages contrasted. The paper exhibits the correlation of case and number in the compared languages has not been studied yet. Greenberg's linguistic universal number 39 is tested on separate inflections of number and case because the position of these categories is stated with respect to each other in order to prove that the expression of number almost comes between the noun base and the expression of case.

Keywords: Number, Case, Isomorphism, Allomorphism, Inflections, English, Arabic, Tatar

1. Introduction

Language is a storehouse of ancient cultures and peoples' history. It changes as time passes whether speakers desire change or not and reflects all the national mentality features and worldview characterizing different peoples throughout their history.

Every language is enormously complex. Despite this enormous complexity, every language is systematic. Language varies systematically from person to person, area to area, situation to situation. Languages are diverse, but despite this diversity, there are a great many universal properties of languages, and characteristics shared by all languages as well as characteristics no languages can have. Linguists have been trying to determine the ways in which all languages are alike and the ways in which they differ. Languages have been studied from various perspectives. As early as in the 18 century the representative of prescriptive grammar R. Lowth in his "Short Introduction to English Grammar" (1775) wrote that the grammar of any particular language can apply common to all languages principles of Universal Grammar. Universal principles helped to settle most disputed points. In this field the linguist Joseph Greenberg was the first who derived a set of forty-five basic universals from a study of thirty languages. And in our research, which deals with comparing three quite different languages, belonging to different language families: English (Germanic branch of the Indo-European language family), Arabic (southern branch of the Semitic language family) and Tatar (Turkic branch of the Altaic language family) in the field of correlation of number and case we follow Greenberg's linguistic universal number 39 that is as follows:

"Where morphemes of both number and case are present and both follow or both precede the noun base, the expression of number almost comes between the noun base and the expression of case."

2. Background

Although the category of case and number, in English, Arabic and Tatar, has been studied by many scholars such as Goddard and Wierzbicka (1994), Grande (1998), Zakiev (1998), Mingazova (2005), the correlation of case and number in genealogically far languages has not yet been fully clarified.

3. Methodology

This paper aims to deal with comparing three different languages in the field of case and number applied to Greenberg's linguistic universal number 39. It aims at defining isomorphic and allomorphic features in this area.

4. The Analysis of Case and Number

Case in the flexional and agglutinative languages is the relation between different parts of speech in the same grammatical construction. The word "case" is derived from Latin and means "falling away" showing that all cases fell away from the Nominative case. Different languages have different numbers of case. For example, in the languages we study: there are six cases in Tatar – the agglutinative language, three cases in Arabic – the flexional language, and the most ambiguous is the case system in English which is of flexional type. The

languages without the category of case have other ways of connecting the words within the same grammatical construction: it is done by word order and prepositions.

There have been different approaches to the problem of English case system that is still disputable. It is due to the fact that English nouns possess no distinctive case endings. So, in William Bullokar's grammar (1585), the first type of grammars in the history of English grammars, there were five cases. In Ben Jonson's and Ch. Butler's English grammars (the 17 century) there were two cases. In J. Wallis's grammar (1653) the category of case is said to be non-existent. In Th. Dilworth's grammar (1749, 1819) the number of cases is said to be six. John Brightland (the 18 century) preferred the two-case system. And in the 19 century a three-case system prevailed. So, Lindley Murray adopted the three-case system for nouns (1813) that was substituted by J.C. Nesfield's five-case system (1920s).

According to J.C. Nesfield's point of view five cases are as follows: Nominative (common case), Vocative (exclamation-case), Accusative (direct object case), Genitive (adjective case) and Dative (indirect object case). Only the Genitive is indicated by case ending, the others are indicated by grammatical relations (Ilyish, 1968).

There were four cases in Old English: Nominative, Genitive, Dative and Accusative. There was a certain tendency of changing case inflections according to the types of substantives in different cases and numbers as well as some root stems differing in its morphological structure. For instance, if the inflection of the Nominative case singular is -e it changes in plural into -as: the changes are as follows:

Nominative singular	-	-	-e	-u	-u	-	-a	-e
Nominative plural	-u	-as	-as	-as	-a	-a	-an	-an

The inflections of the Accusative case in some way were similar to that of the Nominative case:

Accusative singular	-	-	-e	-u	-u	-e	-
Accusative plural	-u	-as	-as	-as	-a	-a	-e

The inflections of the Genitive case were the following:

Genitive singular	-es	-e	-a	-an
Genitive plural	-a	-a	-a	-ena

The inflections of the Dative case were the following:

Dative singular	-e	-a	-an
Dative plural	-um	-um	-um

As it can be seen, in Old English the category of case was interwoven with the category of number and the inflections mentioned above expressed simultaneously both categories. This was a feature typical of synthetic structure. But in the course of time English has changed from synthetic to analytical and now it has few morphological means to express grammatical meanings.

In Middle English the expression of number is separated from that of case. The inflection **-es** expresses number alone and is similar to all cases.

In Modern English there was the two-case system: Nominative and Genitive. The Genitive case was denoted by the use of the apostrophe. In the Genitive singular the apostrophe was first used in the 17 century and became a sign of the Genitive case. So, in English there is only one inflected case (-'s), the Genitive that is significant for our work: *the man's son*.

There are six cases in Tatar: Common, Possessive, Direction, Accusative, Ablative and Locative-temporal. All these cases are included into two groups:

- 1) Spatial that denotes spatial relations: the Direction – as the destination, the Ablative – as the departure point, the Locative-temporal – the lack of movement.
- 2) Grammatical cases denoting grammatical relations: the Common – the position of the subject, the Possessive – the possessiveness, the Accusative – the direct object.

The Common case is not inflected and combines the functions:

1. of the Nominative case as the subject of a sentence: *alma ostəldə jata* “the apple is on the table” or as the predicate: *bu – alma* “this is an apple” where the noun *alma* is not inflected;
2. of the Possessive case in the genitive so called Izafet construction: *kitap tyshy* “the cover of the book” where the noun *kitap* “the book” is not inflected. According to Guilani, Yasin, Kim Hua (2012) this construction, for example in Persian and Farsi (Ezafé), has been studied by many scholars such as Mo'in (1962), Homayunfarrokh (1960), Palmer (1971), Samiiian (1983), and Karimi and Brame (1986). As they say “the Ezafé is not limited to Persian; it can also be traced in some other languages with roughly similar functions” (Guilani, Mohd Yasin, Kim Hua, 2012).

As for the Izafet construction in Tatar it consists of two or more nouns joined to form a relationship of possession or belonging. It is similar to a genitive Ezafé in Persian, which links a noun to another noun in the possessive relation. The Izafet construction in Tatar is a syntactic and / or phonological unit like the Ezafé in the Persian language. This construction can be of three types:

- without inflections: *agach jort* “wooden house”;
- with the Possessive inflection of the third person singular **-y/ -e/ -ty/ -te** in the second component: *kədjə sote* “goat's milk” where the noun *sot* “milk” has the Possessive inflection **-e: sote**;

- with the inflection of the Possessive case **-nyŋ/ -neŋ** in the first component and the Possessive inflection of the third person singular **-y/ -e/ -ty/ -te** in the second component: *jortnyŋ hudjasy* “the owner of the house” where the noun *jort* “the house” is in the Possessive case: *jortnyŋ*, and the word *hudja* “the owner” has the Possessive inflection: *hudjasy*.
- 3. of the Accusative direct object: *balalar kitap ukyjlar* “the children read a book” where the noun *kitap* “a book” is not inflected.

The Possessive case expresses the possessiveness and is inflected with the inflection **-nyŋ/ -neŋ**: *hatyn kyznyŋ maturlygy* “the beauty of a woman” where the noun *kyz* “a woman” is in the Possessive case: *kyznyŋ*.

The Direction case denotes the object where the action is directed. It has the following inflections **-ga/ -gə/ -ka/ -kə**: *balalar urmanga kittelər* “the children went to the forest”. In this sentence the noun *urman* “the forest” is in the Direction case: *urmanga*.

The Accusative case is used when the direct object depends on the affirmative and negative verb. It has the following inflections **-ny/ -ne**: *bu kitapny ukyp chyk* “read this book”. The word *kitap* “book” is in the Accusative case: *kitapny*.

The Ablative case denotes:

- 1) the departure point;
- 2) the material or substance something is made of;
- 3) somebody or something that is afraid of;
- 4) a part that stands for a whole.

It has the following inflections **-tan/ -tən/ -dan/ -dən/ -nan/ -nən**: *bala urmannan kilde* “the child came from the wood”. The word *urman* “the wood” has the inflection **-nan**: *urmannan*.

The Locative-temporal case denotes the place or time of staying and is inflected with **-da/ -də/ -ta/ -tə**: *məktəptə dəreslər sigezdə bashlana* “The classes at school start at eight” where the noun *məktəp* “school” is in the Locative-temporal case: *məktəptə*, and the noun *sigez* “eight” is in the Locative-temporal case: *sigezdə*.

So, all the cases in Tatar are inflected except for the Common case and they are in the focus of our research. (Gatiatullina, 1979).

There are three cases in Arabic: Nominative, Genitive and Accusative. All cases have the endings in the form of alternate vowels.

So, the Nominative case has the ending **-un** َ (tanuin damma) in the indefinite state and the ending **-u** ُ (damma) in the definite state. The function of the Nominative case is the subject of a sentence: *الْبِنْتُ كَبِيرَةٌ* *albintu kabiratun* “the girl is big” etc.

The Genitive case has the ending **-in** ِ (tanuin kesra) in the indefinite state and the ending **-i** ِ (kesra) in the definite state. The Genitive case is used in the iDaafa or the construct phrase

(in all nouns of this construction except for the first): **بَيْتُ طُلَّابٍ** *baitu tullaabin* “students’ house” and when a noun is an object of a preposition: **فِي الْبَيْتِ** *fi albaiti* “at home”. The iDaafa is one of the fundamental structures of Arabic that consists of two or more nouns strung together to form a relationship of possession or belonging. The iDaafa in Arabic is similar to the Izafet construction in Tatar.

The Accusative case has the ending **-an** **ـَ** (tanuin fatha) in the indefinite state and the ending **-a** **ـَ** (fatha) in the definite state. This case marks the direct object of a verb or adverbs: **أَكَلْتُ سَمَكًا** *akaltu samakan* “I ate fish”, **صَبَاحًا** *sabaahan* “in the morning” etc.

Along with the three-case system, there is a two-case system for the words without tanuin. Such words have the Nominative case with the ending **-u** **ـُ** (damma): **مَكَاتِبُ** *makaatibu* “desks” and the Objective case with the ending **-a** **ـَ** (fatha): **فِي مَكَاتِبٍ** *fi makaatiba* “in desks”. Mostly it’s a sign of the Broken Plural form. But in the definite form they become three-case words.

So, the three-case declension is as follows:

feminine		masculine		
definite	indefinite	definite	indefinite	
الرَّسَالَةُ arrisaalatu “the letter”	رِسَالَةٌ risaalatun “a letter”	الْقَلَمُ alkalamu “the book”	قَلَمٌ kalamun “a book”	nominative
الرَّسَالَةَ arrisaalata	رِسَالَةً risaalatan	الْقَلَمَ Alkalama	قَلَمًا Kalamana	accusative
الرَّسَالَةِ arrisaalati	رِسَالَةٍ risaalatin	الْقَلَمِ Alkalami	قَلَمٍ Kalamini	genitive

The Dual and Plural forms of words have their own system of two-case declension. So, the Nominative case of the Dual has the ending **-aani** **ـَانِ** *kitaabaani* “two books” in the indefinite and definite state, and the Objective case has the ending **-aini** **ـَيْنِ** *fi kitaabaini* “in two books”. And the Nominative case of the Human Sound Masculine Plural has the ending **-uuna** **ـُونَ** *mudarrisuuna* “teachers” and the Objective case has the ending **-iina** **ـِينَ** *limudarrisiina* “for teachers”. The Nominative case of the Sound Feminine Plural has the ending **-un** **ـُنَّ** (tanuin damma): **مُدَرِّسَاتُ** *mudarrisaatun* “teachers” and the Objective case has the ending **-in** **ـِنَّ** (tanuin kesra): **لِمُدَرِّسَاتٍ** *limudarrisaatin* “for teachers” and etc. As it’s clear, the category of case in the Dual and the Human Sound Masculine Plural is interwoven with the category of number. And only in the Sound Feminine Plural these categories are separated.

The category of number is a characteristic of nouns almost in all languages. It reflects the quantitative relations between words. The idea of plurality is reflected in the mind of different people in the many-sided way.

There are two number forms in English: singular and plural. The only inflection of the plural is suffix **-s/ -es**, the singular is not marked: a book – books. In addition to the standard plural form there are isolated plural forms that have preserved their plural forms. So, the nouns *man*, *foot*, *goose* and others form their plural by change of their root vowels: *men*, *feet*, *geese*. The nouns *sheep*, *deer* and others aren't changed in the plural. Besides, there are two special groups: Singulalia Tantum that occurs only in the singular: *butter*, and Pluralia Tantum that occurs only in the plural: *scissors*.

There are two number forms in Tatar: singular and plural. The only inflection of the plural is suffix **-lar** with its variants: **-lär/ -nar/ -när**, the singular is not marked: *kitap* “a book” – *kitaplar* “books”.

There are three number forms in Arabic: singular, dual and plural. The plural is divided into Human Plurals and Non-Human Plurals (including animals) which is significant for the agreement rules. Human Plurals are of three categories: Broken Plurals, Sound Masculine Plurals and Sound Feminine Plurals. Non-Human Plurals are of two categories: Broken Plurals and Sound Feminine Plurals. So, according to the form there are three types of the plural: Broken Plurals, Human Sound Masculine Plurals and Sound Feminine Plurals. The inflections of the Dual and Human Sound Masculine Plural are interwoven with the category of case and they are mentioned above. The inflection of the Sound Feminine Plural is **-aat** مُدَرِّسَاتٍ *mudarrisaatun* “teachers”. The Broken Plural has different forms. It's formed by shifting the consonants of the singular stem into different vowel patterns so that the syllabic structure of the word changes. The singular is not marked (Grande, 1998).

The graphic style of thinking of the Arabs penetrates the grammar of Arabic and is reflected in the category of number. The special attitude of the Arabs towards the category of number can be noticed in the formal interpretation of the concept “singularity – plurality”. On the one hand, the singular, dual and plural forms are distinguished. On the other hand, the special rules of the number agreement exist. Arabic hasn't almost changed grammatically in the course of time and now it has a lot of morphological means for expressing different grammatical meanings.

5. Conclusion

So, English nouns are inflected with the plural and possessive suffixes **-es** and **-s**.

Tatar nouns are inflected with the plural suffix and its variants: **-lar/ -lär/ -nar/ -när** and with a lot of case inflections: **-y/ -e/ -ty/ -te; -nyñ/ -neñ; -ga/ -gä/ -ka/ -kə; -ny/ -ne; -tan/ -tän/ -dan/ -dän/ -nan/ -nän; -da/ -dä/ -ta/ -tä**.

Arabic nouns are inflected with the pure plural suffix: **-aat** and case endings: **-u/ -un/ -a/ -an/ -i/ -in**, and interwoven inflections of the number and case: **-uuna/ -iina/ -aani/ -aini**.

Greenberg's linguistic universal number 39 can be tested only on separate inflections of number and case because we have to state the position of them with respect to each other to prove that the expression of number almost comes between the noun base and the expression of case.

In English this Universal works with the modern standard plural: *student's room* – *students' room* – the expression of the plural *-s* comes between the noun base *student* and the expression of case *'*.

In Tatar this universal works completely: *balanyñ kitaby* “child’s book” – *balalarnyñ kitaby* “children’s book” – the expression of the plural *-lar* comes between the noun base *bala* and the expression of the Possessive case *-nyñ*, the same in *urmanga bar* “go to the wood” – *urmannarga bar* “go to the woods” where the expression of the plural *-nar* comes between the noun base *urman* and the expression of the Direction case *-ga*.

In Arabic this universal works with the Sound Feminine Plural with its inflection *-aat* اَتَات: مُدَرِّسَة *mudarrisatun* “a teacher” – مُدَرِّسَاتٍ *mudarrisaatun* “teachers” where the expression of the plural *-aat* اَتَات comes between the noun base مُدَرِّس *mudarris* and the expression of the Nominative case *-un* اَتَات, and – مُدَرِّسَاتٍ *limudarrisaatin* “for teachers” where the expression of the plural *-aat* اَتَات comes between the noun base مُدَرِّس *mudarris* and the expression of the Objective case *-in* اَتَات. As for the Broken Plural the expression of it is interwoven with the noun base and formed with the help of the root vowel change and the expression of the case follows them both. In this respect it only partly corresponds to this Universal. The other inflections of number and case are interwoven, as well as it was in Old English.

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