ON THE ROLE OF THE LANGUAGE CONTACT FACTOR IN THE PROCESSES OF TYPOLOGICAL MODIFICATION TAKEN PLACE IN NOUNAL AND VERBAL PARADIGMS OF THE TURKIC LANGUAGES: FROM THE “UYGHUR UMLAUT” TO THE REDUCTION OF POSSESSION AFFIXES

Ayten Hajiyeva
Azerbaijan University of Languages

The fact that the agglutination index in the vast majority of the Turkic languages still remains high enough, in concrete terms, the factors that have not changed for centuries, namely the one of the “immunity” of the Turkic root and the one of the monosemy of affixes, has allowed linguists to come to the right conclusion that the Turkic model of agglutination is quite conservative [Серебренников 1963]. It is due to its conservative nature, namely the endurance of the leading typological tendency (the determinant) against recessive elements, the thought has formed that the Turkic agglutination embodies, so to say, “the golden standard” of agglutination. However, some inflectionalization tendencies happening even in the Turkic languages (though not so actively as in the Finno-Ugric ones) allow stating that certain typological deviations are intensifying in them. As Humboldt already stated, there is no “the ideal type of language”, i.e. mechanisms and elements that any language has are intrinsic to various language types to a greater or lesser degree, and this idea has been proven by the material of various languages.

Accordingly, as the Turkic languages are not exceptions, there are facts both of incorporation (e.g., in Azerbaijani: topraqbasdi (vergisi), ayaqaça / ayaqaçdi (aditi), etc.) and isolation (e.g., in Azerbaijani: Na xoş xabar?; Na xoş xabar!; daş divar (literally “stone + wall”), qızıl saat (literally “gold + watch”); Gözəl tələbəm mahnı oxudu (My nice student sang a song) / Tələbəm gözəl mahnı oxudu (My student sang a nice song) / Tələbəm mahını gözəl oxudu (My student sang the song nicely), etc.) in them. At the same time, we can claim that the Turkic languages have also elements both of the internal inflection (cf., e.g., the facts of phonosemantic loading of interconsonant position in Azerbaijani: burmaq // bürmək / bürümək; tik / tx / tox, cz(maq)/ cz(gi) / ciz(mək) / cər-(maq), sız / sız, or the facts of enantiosemic sound alternations in roots: az / uz, etc.) and of “the external inflection” (e.g., fusion in word formation in Azerbaijani: gö-l, gö-tdə, gö-dən; gö-z, gö-r; qi-zmaq, qi-zarmaq, qi-zəl // qi-rənzəl və s.). We will also note that the large part of typological recessives mentioned above are characteristic for the Proto-Turkic language. Thus, as a clear proof of Schleicher’s well-known thesis that “language development is inversely proportional to society development”, one can note that the amount of typological changes in the structure of the languages that developed writing culture relatively later is massive while such changes get kind of “frozen” when writing culture and education develop further. At the same time, one can observe inflectional processes in the morphological system of the Turkic languages that cover a later period. Although those facts have quite a different nature, the feature they have in common is related to the decisive or supportive role of the principle of economy. To name a few, Potseluevskij has revealed that fusion mechanisms carry a large weight in Turkmen dialects; facts similar to umlaut have been discovered by Radlov and Räsänen in the Turkic languages spoken in the Volga Region, by Borovkov in Uzbek dialects, by Tenishev et al. in Uyghur (e.g., in Uyghur: at + i > eti, instead of «ati»; baş + im > beşim, instead of «başım»). The latter fact is interesting in regard to the claim made by most of researchers (Aganina, etc.) that such phenomena are manifestations either of the Iranian substrate (Baskakov, etc.) or of extralinguistic factors. In our view, although there is no doubt that an extralinguistic factor played a trigger role, it is for certain that assimilative processes were conditioned by morphonological properties of the Turkic languages. Thus, the primary core of umlaut-like processes in Uyghur and Uzbek dialects is formed by the loss of differentiation between [i] and [ı] sounds and, accordingly, the undermining the vowel harmony characterizing the Turkic languages. If we proceed from the fact that regressive assimilation takes place in other
bilingual environment, namely in the Turkic languages spoken in the Volga Region (Tatar and Bashkir), we will see that the “Uyghur umlaut” is totally natural in the situation of active close bilingualism due to the direct impact of another language. Thus, the concussion of the Turkic vocal order, i.e. the “coincidence” of a front vowel with a back vowel, weakens the base of the vowel harmony, which harms its ability to produce affixal variants. The limitations of affixal variability could violate harmony both in the case paradigm of the noun and in verbal paradigms. E.g., *barib (“have gone”) but peculiar “rehabilitation” of the vowel harmony between the root and the affix happens and it produces the “Uyghur umlaut”: berip. One can see that the loss of differentiation between [i] and [ı] conditioned by an extralinguistic factor results, through the mechanism conditioned by inner regularities of development of the Turkic languages, in interference in the “opposite” direction (from the affix to the root). In other words, the dominance of the vowel harmony and the actual fact that it has structurally typological nature has also formed in the Turkic languages the aptitude for the reverse vowel harmony, i.e. (through the interference into the “untouchable” border between the root and the affix) morphonological processes that are able to shake the base of agglutination.

As for the reversing the direction of the vowel harmony within the “Uyghur umlaut”, it is caused by the fact that the stress has moved from the root outwards. That is to say, when the vowel harmony was at the early stage of its forming, the stress fell at the root and, accordingly, determined the sounding of the affix but the “Uyghur umlaut” formed at a later stage is characterized by the “dictate” of the last syllable (i.e. affix). The root deprived of the stress has no power to shape variants of an affix, whereas the latter becomes “powerful” after receiving the stress and causes the regressive assimilation. As a result, the similarity of timbre is restored. By comparison, the similar phenomenon takes place in some compound words of modern Turkic languages (e.g., in Azerbaijani, bayin(mak) + dur(maq) > Bayandur).

However, the fact does not testify that grammatical paradigms in the Turkic languages are open for interference caused by language contacts. Despite the fact that it is the conservative nature of the Turkic agglutination that is persistent against such interference, some researches attempt to explain processes conditioned by inner development regularities intrinsic to the Turkic languages through extralinguistic factors. For instance, Serebrennikov claims that in the examples like the ones from Chuvash (pirĕp yal «our village») and Tatar (biznin avıl «our village»), the reduction of the possession affix is caused by the collaboration of intralinguistic and extralinguistic factors and notes that the influence of an external factor (the Russian language) on the languages at hand has enabled avoiding pleonasm (biznin avıl+ıb > biznin avıl) [Серебренников 1968: 94]. However, first of all these facts can be considered within the principle of economy. The occurrence of similar facts (e.g. bizim köy «our horse») in modern Turkish, the language that lacks any opportunity to establish not only active close bilingual environment but also passive distant one with Russian, and also in other related languages allows stating that they are “simplification” of pleonastic phrases caused by the principle of economy. Interestingly, Dmitriyev who noted the similarity of how possession is expressed in phrases like benim at «my horse», senin at «your horse», bizim at «our horse» in modern Turkish with their Russian equivalents (мои конь, твой конь, наш конь) did not interpret them as a result of language contacts.

The facts presented allow objective evaluating the interference potential of other languages into processes that happen in verbal and nounal paradigms in the Turkic languages, and they also let think that the typological modifications can be realised directly within the limits of the Turkic agglutination.

References
