

Investigation of relation of Animacy and Number in Sistani Dialect

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Abstract

How does animacy affect morphological structure and the encoding of it? This paper gives an overview on some notorious questions pertaining to the status of animacy in morphological variation. After brief description of Sistani dialect and briefly discussing the role of animacy in language, this introduction provides summaries of the contributions to this special issue in this dialect. Based on the data obtained, except in some case for instance when they refer to plant, Sistani dialect show animacy by adding special plural suffix to nouns, they add /ø/ to animate nouns and /d/ to inanimate nouns.

Keywords: Animacy; Inanimacy; Morphological variation, Sistani dialect

1. Introduction

Sistani Dialect is member of western Iranian group of languages that is spoken in Sistani as well as Sarakhs in Khorasan, Zahedan, Golestan province of Iran, South of Turkmenistan, parts of Afghanistan such as Nimrooz and Fara and Balochistan Province in Pakistan (Yarshater, 1985:348-365). The Iranian Sistani dialect is spoken by total of about 350000 inhabitants in Sistan region of provinces of Sistan & Balochistan (Ahangar, 2003:4). Although Sistani dialect is under heavier influence of standard Persian but many characteristics for instance, showing animacy in plural form of nouns has been conserved in this dialect.

1.2 Animacy

If there are two ways of expressing 'the same thing' (Labov, 1972), in many cases animacy is one of the factors that determine which construction is more likely to be chosen. "Animacy, or the distinction between animate and inanimate entities, is so pervasive in the grammars of human languages that it tends to be taken for granted and become invisible" (Dahl, 1996:47). Indeed it is the case that where argument features such as thematic role, definiteness, person, number and gender have played a major role in linguistic research and the development of formal theories of language, animacy often had to do with a seat in the back. In particular, the contributions shed light on the interaction of animacy and argument structure and the way it influences argument encoding, the latter understood in a broad sense encompassing both morphological (case, agreement) and syntactic (word order) means. "Number distinction in nouns and pronouns are often restricted to a subset of forms. A typological survey of restriction reveals the following types.

1. First and second person pronouns have a number distinction not found in third person pronouns or common nouns.

2. Pronouns (including third person) have a number distinction not found among common nouns.
3. Pronouns and nouns referring to human beings have a number distinction not found among common nouns referring to nonhuman entities.
4. Pronouns and nouns referring to animate beings (including human beings) have a number distinction not found among common nouns referring to inanimate things. For example, in Kharia example bilio 'cat' biloi-ki 'cats' contrasts with soleg 'stone-stones' (Biligiri, 1965:36). In other words, The impact of animacy on grammar seems to be more direct and straightforward for some grammatical categories than for others. A good example of the former case is the category of number (Corbett, 2000). As noted by Corbett (2000; Smith-Stark, 1974), the possibility of distinguishing number diminishes monotonically as one moves down the animacy hierarchy, from personal pronouns at the top of the hierarchy to inanimate nouns at the bottom (Corbett, 2000:57–64).

In functional typological literature animacy is often characterized as a three-step scale:

human > animals (animate) > inanimate

This animacy hierarchy can be shown to play a role in a wide range of linguistic phenomena (Comrie, 1989; Yamamoto, 1999). In this paper we would like to provide some discussion of the role of animacy in Sistani dialect and to introduce the individual contributions to this issue.

3. Methods

Data are gathered through several written books such as “kowr-nameh-nimrooz”, “kakolak” and “Goj ovaGoj”, by Raeis o Zakerin, contemporary Sistani poet (all these works have audio CD by voice of writer) as well as interviews with 24 male & female

native speakers of Sistani between 25-65 years old. The recent data is recorded by MP3 player. The transcription of all this data is according to International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). Singular and plural nouns are identified and compared with standard Persian.

4. Data Analysis

In Sistani dialect as well as Persian, there are two kind of noun; plural and singular. The formation of plural in Persian can be divided into three cases:

Using the plural suffix -ha

Using the plural suffix - an

Arabic plural form (-at,-an,- un)

Words are normally pluralized with the suffix «ha» e.g. «ketabha» (books). In Persian, usually but not always, The plural suffix «an» («gan» after the vowel «e» and «jan» after other vowels) is specific to human beings, albeit there are many exceptional ,such as: tʃeʃm-an (eye-s). Generally, It can be used instead of «-ha» to designate human beings. For example:

- «sar» means «head», «sar-ha» means «head-s»(part of body) but «sar-an» means «chiefs, heads, leaders»
- «gozaʃte» means «past», «gozaʃte-ha» means «the past things or events» but «gozaʃte-g-an» means «the people of the past»

There are many Arabic loanwords in Persian and many of them have also brought their plural form (that can be regular or irregular) into written Persian. However, they are optional and you can use «-ha» to pluralize any word. In fact, Arabic plurals are

not found in spoken Persian and these words are pluralized with «-ha». Even in written Persian, the use of Arabic plurals has greatly decreased in favor of «-ha».

However, in Persian the plural form –ha- is so generous and even some loan words are pluralized by it.

Radijo – ha(radios)

Kampjuter-ha(camputers)

But there are some exceptions for instance, for example, some words are only pluralized with -an.

Aqa-j-an (men) → *aqa-ha

The plural form –an is used for animate and pair of body.

Pasb-an(whatchmen) , tʃeʃm-an(eyes) , gosfand-an(sheep) , lab-an(lips) , morq-an(hens)

But there are two kinds of exceptions; first some animate won't be pluralized by /an/ suffix. For Instance:

ʃate(Aphis), halazun(Snail), lakpoʃt(Tortoise),

Some pairs of human body won't be pluralized, too; such as: ʃane(Shoulder), gune(Cheek).

In Sistani dialect, Single nouns have no special suffix such as Persian. The formation of plural in can be divided into two cases:

Using the plural suffix – o for animate nouns

Using the plural suffix - a for inanimate nouns

Table 4-1: Animate nouns

Singular nouns in Persian	Plural nouns in Persian	Singular nouns in Sistani	Plural nouns in Sistani	Singular nouns in English	Plural nouns in English
ḡoḡeh	ḡoḡeh-ha	ḡuḡa	ḡuḡa-g-o	chicken	Chicken-s
rubā	rubā-ha	ro:ba	ro:ba-g-o	Fox	Fox-es
morq	morq-ha	marq	Marq-o	Hen	Hen-s
gāv	gāv-ha	gow	gow-v-o	cow	Cow-s
xorus	Xorus-ha	xros	Xros-o	Rooster	Rooster-s
doxtar	Doxtar-ha	kendḡa	kendḡa-k-o	girl	Girl-s

For making plural form of the name of tribes should be added o suffix such as animate nouns.

Table 4-2: Nouns of tribes

Persian (singular)	Persian (plural)	Sistani (singular)	Sistani (plural)	English (singular)	English (plural)
Irani	iran-i-ha/-j-an	Ironi	iron-i-g-o	Iranian	Iranian-s
zartoḡti	zartoḡt-i-ha/-j-an	gabr	gabr-a-k-o	Zoroastrian	Zoroasterian-s

Tork	tork-ha/an	tork	tork-o	Turk	Turk-s
bonḡari	bonḡar-i-ha/- j-an	bonḡari	bonḡar-i-g-o	Bonjarian	Bonjarian-s

plants and part of humans' body are normally pluralized with the suffix «â» such as inanimate nouns

Table4-3: inanimate nouns

Singular nouns in Persian	Plural nouns in persian	Singular nouns in sistani	Plural nouns in sistani	Singular nouns in English	Plural nouns in English
ketab	ketab-ha	ketab	Ketab-a	book	books
dastan	dastan-ha	aso:ka	aso:ka-a	story	Stories
bijaban	bijaban-ha	Bijavon	bijavon- a	desert	Desert-s
ḡujbar	ḡujbar-ha	paḡn	paḡn- a	stream	Stream-s
nan	nan-ha	no:n	no:n-a	bread	Bread-s
Sib	sib-ha	se:b	se:b-a	apple	Apple-s
Sang	sang-ha	Seng	seng-a	stone	Stone-s
dahan	dahan-ha	da:n	da:n-a	mouth	Mouth-s
ḡeḡm	ḡeḡm-ha	ḡa:ḡ	ḡa:ḡ-a	eye	Eye-s
ḡab	ḡab-ha	ḡow-v	ḡow-v-a	night	Night-s
mah	mah-ha	ma-ḡ	ma-ḡ-a	moon	Moon-s

In Sistani dialect when the single nouns are ended to consonant sound, in other word, close syllable, plural suffix is immediately appeared after these nouns. But when it is ended to vowel sound, open syllable, special consonant called—hiatus—is placed before plural suffix. Depending to the context, this consonant can be g- , -k-, -v-; for instance, when the single noun is ended to –ow- , the consonant –v- is appeared.

In ancient Persian has been used many different morpheme for making plural form in order to show case and gender. Only male plural form in genitive case, -anam- , has reminded. During the middle Persian this morpheme has been tolerated deletion of final syllable, -an, (Dusti, 1379: 97). Today this suffix, usually, is used for animate nouns in persian, albeit there are many exception, as mentioned above. As well as this suffix, the plural suffix -ha- is used for animate and inanimate nouns. In Persian conversation, in stead of both of them, a- is used. Moreover, in Persian, some Arabic plural suffixes usually and normally added to Arabic word, sometimes is appeared with Persian word.

5. Conclusion

To briefly summarize, we have seen that the showing animacy in Sistani and Persian are defined by a combination of universal and language- particular information. As you can see from the example above, the structure of the Plural in Persian has a logical pattern, that usually use the plural suffix -ha for inanimate nouns, the plural suffix - an for animate nouns and Arabic plural form (-at,- an,- un) for Arabic loan word; nevertheless there are many exception, therefore they need very special attention. In Sistani dialect, the plural suffix – o for animate nouns and the name of tribes is used whereas inanimate nouns, plants and part of humans' body is normally pluralized by using the plural suffix - a. This rule is exceptional in Sistani so that plural form in Sistani correctly show animacy.

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