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THE DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF URALIC LANGUAGES

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ABSTRACT

In this article, so many features of Uralic languages such as presence of front rounded and back unrounded vowels, phonetics, phonology, and vowel harmony will be learned and analyzed. Moreover, some information about grammatical structures of Uralic languages will be given in this article.

Keywords

Voiced, unvoiced, palatal, non-palatal, sonorants, vowel harmony, sibilants, frikatives, affricates, counterparts.

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INTRODUCTION

Obviously, there are a lot of various features of Uralic languages like other languages. These sides of this languages cause to stand out other ones. So, the Uralic languages include Hungarian, Finnish, and Estonian which with the most native speakers, as well as less widely known languages like Udmurt, Komi and Khanty, although these languages belong to a family, however each of them has distinctive features. Now we will introduce with them one by one.

PHONETICS AND PHONOLOGY

There are three European languages that are members of the Uralic Family. The family is named from the Ural Mountains. The people speaking these languages originated from the Siberian side of the Urals. Over 1500 years ago they migrated to Europe and have become entirely Europeanized. Their languages tell the story of their migrations.

The Uralic languages are spoken today in a vast geographical area stretching from Dalarna County in Sweden to Dudinka, Taimyr, Russia. There are currently approximately 50 languages in the group, the largest one among them being the state languages Finnish, Estonian, and Hungarian; other Uralic languages covered in the book are South Saami, Skolt Saami, Võro, Moksha Mordvin, Mari, Udmurt, Zyrian Komi, Mansi, Khanty, Nganasan, Forest and Tundra Enets, Nenets, and Selkup [1,p. 39].

Uralic languages are agglutinative languages and so most Uralic languages have a lot of consanants and less vowels which these consonants are considered the opposition of voiced and unvoiced, palatal and non-palatal consanants, while the long and short opposition is typical for quantity. For instance, voice and voiceless consonants (p-b, t-d, k-g), but these ones some Uralic languages do not have such as Finnish, Khanty and Mansi. However, there is the opposition of this language in the Permic languages (e. g. ker "taste"-ger " plough") and Hungarian, as well as in North Saami and Nunets. So there are a series of sibelants (e.g. s, s') and fricatives per se (e. g. f, y,), as well as a series of affricates (e. g. c, c'). But some Uralic languages do not have affricates, for example, there is a sibilant in the Finnish languages (e. g. s). So, every Ural language, sonorants include nasals(e.g. n. m),liquids (e.g l. l'. r) and glides (e.g. w. f).

A p in the beginning of a Finnish word corresponds to f in Hungarian (puu: fa); a Finnish k is matched

by Hungarian h before a back vowel (a, o), otherwise by k; within the word, Finnish t is matched by Hungarian z, and nt by d; Finnish initial s sometimes corresponds to Hungarian sz and sometimes to no consonant at all (syli: öl). In most of these instances, Finnish has retained the consonants of the Proto-Uralic consonant system.

A palatal series of consonants is in all Uralic languages except, Finnish with Mordva, having palatal counterparts of almost all its consonants. (c-c', d-d', l-l', n-n', r-r', s-s', t-t', z-z').

Modern Finnish has a much smaller inventory of consonants, having lost the palatalized alveolar sounds and *č, *š, *ð, and *ŋ. Hungarian, on the other hand, has a larger number of consonants by virtue of a newly introduced distinction between sounds made with and without vibration of the vocal cords (voicing), such as voiceless p, t, s as opposed to voiced b, d, z; e.g., dél ‘noon’: tél ‘winter.’ Other Uralic languages, such as Komi, have also acquired a voicing contrast (e.g., doj ‘pain’: toj ‘louse’), but the geographic distribution of those languages in which the voicing contrast plays an active role leaves little doubt that it originated under the influence of Indo-European and Turkic languages [2,p. 52].

The distinction of quality, that is long vs short opposition consonants (e. g. p-pp, t-tt, k-kk) is present in all Uralic languages. Some Saami languages and Estonian deserve special mention in this regard as they have 3 types of consonant length (short, long and overlong).

Perhaps, one of the best distinctive features of Uralic languages is the presence of front rounded and back unrounded vowels (e. g. o'-e, u'-i) in a number of the languages, like Udmurt, Komi, Khanty, Mansi etc. Most Uralic languages distinguish between 3 vowel heights, high, mid and low. Erzya Mordva has the smallest inventory of vowels among Uralic languages with its 5 vowel system (a, e, i, o, u). There are 2 types of vowel harmony in Uralic languages, backness harmony (e. g. Hungarian kert-ben, garden-in=in the garden ” vs fal-ban” wall - in=in the wall”) rounding harmony (e. g. Fo'ld-ho'z”earth-to=to the earth” vs. kert-hez”garden-to=to the garden), [3,p.84].

Vowel harmony is among the more familiar traits of the modern Uralic languages. Although most Uralic scholars trace this feature back to Proto-Uralic, there is good reason to question this view. Vowel harmony is said to exist when certain vowels cannot occur with other specific vowels within some wider domain, generally within a word. For example, of the eight vowels of Finnish, within a simple word, any member of the set ü, ö, ä prohibits the use of any member of the set u, o, a, but i and e may occur with either set. That is, within a word, vowels that are either rounded (such as ü, ö, u, o) or low (such as ä, a) must agree with each other in frontness or backness.

In addition to, the Uralic languages have many suffixes, Finnish has 15 noun keys. Hungarian has 17 noun keys, Mordvin has complex verbs verified subject and object over 4 tenses and 7 moods [4, p. 40].

Agglutinative Uralic languages:

- ha'z(uy)
- ha'zam(uyim): ”am” possessive suffix
- ha'zak(uylar): plural suffix:”ak”
- ha'zamban(uyimda): possessive +locative suffix:”ban”.

The grammatical structures of the various Uralic languages, despite numerous superficial differences, generally indicate a basic Early Uralic sentence structure of (subject) + (object) + main verb + (auxiliary verb)—the parenthesized elements are optional, and the last element is the finite (inflected) verb, which is suffixed to agree with the subject in person and number.

CONCLUSION:

The Uralic languages stand out for their unique phonological features like vowel harmony, rich consonant systems, and the presence of palatalization. Their agglutinative morphology, extensive case systems, and the absence of grammatical gender further distinguish them from neighboring language families. Despite internal diversity and external influences, Uralic languages maintain a common structural foundation, emphasizing their shared heritage within one language family.

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