Composite word formation in the Nakh languages

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Abstract. The article examines the processes of formation of complex words in the Nakh languages, which include the Chechen, Ingush and Batsbi languages. The study focuses on the structural and semantic features of compound words, as well as the mechanisms of their formation. Particular attention is paid to the typology and classification of compound words, including various patterns of combination of roots and affixes, as well as the role of syntactic and morphological factors in these processes.

Examples from various areas of vocabulary, such as everyday, technical and scientific terminology, are analyzed in order to identify general patterns and specific features for each of the Nakh languages. Historical and comparative aspects are also considered, showing the influence of contacts with other languages on the formation of complex words. The study is based on modern data on the morphology and syntax of the Nakh languages, as well as on materials from field research.

The article emphasizes the importance of studying compound words for understanding the general structure and dynamics of Nakh languages, as well as for the further development of theoretical models of composition in Caucasian languages. The results obtained can be useful for linguists involved in comparative studies, morphology and typology, as well as for teachers and students studying Nakh languages.

1 Introduction

When engaging in labor and intellectual activities, there is often a necessity to specify, elaborate, and classify objects and phenomena. Language generally does not invent new symbols for these purposes but instead utilizes its existing resources by either endowing existing words or phrases with new meanings or forming new combinations of lexical elements based on established patterns. Linguists often highlight the language’s inherent capacity to produce new nominative tools from its existing resources. As V.M. Solntsev explains: “In contemporary language systems, we see not only the creation of new signifiers (signs) to convey particular meanings but also the enrichment of existing sign complexes with new meanings through the combination of already established sign elements” [2, p.136].

The language of the perestroika and post-perestroika eras, including Chechen, also exhibits notable processes of linguistic expansion, manifested particularly through a neological explosion, especially in the media. In her study of the semantic processes in the...
Singh Kiran observes: “The advancement of science and technology, the growth of economic connections, and the lifting of ideological constraints have all influenced the development of complex words. Established methods such as compounding and abbreviation have been revitalized, and new methods like compound names and truncation have emerged. These processes, characterized by their compact forms, semantic clarity, and ease of perception and reproduction, are increasingly employed across various domains of communication—business, professional, and conversational speech”.

“Word formation is driven not only by the need to express new concepts and phenomena but also by other factors. Beyond societal and extralinguistic motivations, word formation serves additional functions, with one of the most significant being the creation of new words to organize meanings more rationally and express ideas more precisely. As G. Vinokur noted, “The desire to form complex words is a natural response because it allows for the creation of a single word” [3, p. 45]. Determinative compound nouns thus offer a succinct means of naming complex phenomena or events.

I.A. Andreev also notes that the frequency of use plays a significant role in this process: “The more frequently a compound term is used, the more likely it is to evolve into a simple sign or a single word” [1, pp. 89-90].

2 Materials and methods

In Nakh compounds, connecting vowels and consonants are mostly absent, except for rare cases where the first component retains fossilized vowel and consonant elements such as n, r, (a), l (a), a, which are remnants of grammatical cases. Examples include kyinhyegam (from kyin ← kya “labor”, n–gender formant, hyegam—”trial”) meaning “labor”; Tsierakiema “steamboat” (Tsie—”fire” + ra (original case formant) + kiema—”ship”).

Nakh compounds typically consist of two components, though there are some rare instances of three-component compounds, such as Tsietsayokkhurg—”weasel” (Tsiε—”name” + ca (negative particle) + jokkhurg “extracting; calling”). Such three-component compounds are less common in modern Vainakh languages, particularly in naming conventions.

3 Results and Discussion

The goal of our research is to explore the word-formation characteristics of adverbs in the Ingush language. The scientific novelty of this study arises from the specific aims and objectives set forth, providing a comprehensive overview of adverbial word formation in Ingush based on factual material. Our practical sources include the “Ingush-Russian Dictionary” [2] and examples from everyday Ingush speech. The word formation processes for adverbs in Ingush are distinct compared to those for other parts of speech. Notably, there is a scarcity of dedicated affixes for adverbs. Instead, the linguistic data reveals a considerable number of adverbial forms created through affixation, predominantly through suffixes. Additionally, case endings from nominal parts of speech serve as active affixes in the synchronous formation of adverbs.

As A.I. Khalidov points out, “for synchronous word formation, adverbs that exhibit derivational characteristics are especially significant, as they reveal active word-formation relationships with other words that can be identified without relying on historical etymological analysis”.
derived (motivated) adverbs. Non-derivative adverbs lack internal structure, and their original meanings are difficult to explain since the forms of these lexemes have not been preserved in contemporary language. Synchronously, these adverbs are treated as indivisible units, although historically they may not have been so. In this context, Z. Kh. Khamidova’s perspective is particularly noteworthy: “Non-derivative adverbs are those that, from the standpoint of the modern language, cannot be decomposed into their component parts and are used in a fixed form. They function in the language without having any active morphological elements. However, this does not imply that historically, ‘primitive’ adverbs were not derived from certain categories of words”.

Word formation plays a significant role in enriching the vocabulary of modern Nakh languages. This process is particularly active today, driven by the rapid advancements in science and technology that introduce numerous new concepts and ideas, resulting in the creation of complex words in our languages. Many of these new formations borrow (either fully or partially) from corresponding Russian and international models. These compounds appear across different parts of speech and various domains of vocabulary. For instance, in Chechen, we find words like khalk-khetuoran (buolkh) meaning "political-mass (work)" or literally "people's educational work", khetosh-khior for "education", yukyarallin-politically for "socio-political", khartz-Iilmancha for "false scientist", cle-escarcho for "red army-ec", telehyazharcho for "viewer", radioladogiarcho for "radio listener", among others. Russian "simple" words often transform into complex ones in these languages, where the second component might serve as a "translation" of a Russian suffix (e.g., examiner-exhotturg) or even as a translation through a compound word of a "simple" noun with a procedural meaning (sabotage//sabotage-sabotage).

In contemporary literary Vainakh languages (Chechen and Ingush), vocabulary is dynamically enriched through both direct borrowings from other languages, mainly Russian, and through calquing methods. We have already explored how several Russian compounds have been borrowed into the Nakh languages, especially in the areas of scientific and technical terminology and branding. Examples of such borrowed terms include cosmodrome, cosmonaut, motorway, car, dealership, auto service, airline, gas pipeline, commander-in-chief, movie, actor, cinematographer, battleship, aircraft carrier.

Alongside these borrowed compounds, complex adjectives and nouns are also translated or traced from Russian. Additionally, parallel formations can occur where one element of the borrowed term is translated into Chechen, such as in the case of the term co-commanders. Despite these examples, it is debatable whether we should categorize these cases as examples of a prefixal-suffixal word formation method in Chechen and other Nakh languages. In the given examples, such as dukha-deza, the compound consists of two existing word forms, where dukha and deza each had their own structures before being combined. Whether these compounds represent a true example of a fusion of word composition with affixation is a matter of scholarly debate, which we will address further (likely, this is an instance of fusion).

In modern Nakh and Caucasian languages, many researchers argue that basic composition is a primary method for forming names and verbs. However, while asserting that “word formation ... is characterized by the following main methods: basic composition for names and verbs, suffixation exclusively for names, and prefixation only for verbs” [3], it is crucial to recognize that the scope of basic composition is broader and extends to other parts of speech. M. S. Musaev further clarifies that "the most active method of derivation in the Darginian language is word composition, which is used to form lexemes for nearly all parts of speech" [5].
4 Conclusion

The author identifies two main types of inflection: 1) sequentially correlative and alternative inflection, which represents a pure form of inflection clearly distinguished from word formation, and 2) inconsistently correlative and derivational inflection, which demonstrates features of a shift towards non-inflectional (classificatory) building. This framework illustrates that the boundary between these types of formation is often blurred. Furthermore, the data from the Ingush language supports this theory, revealing that there are complex, gradual transitions between inflectional and derivational processes within the language, particularly evident in aspects such as aspect and voice in Ingush verbs. Despite this, it is important to acknowledge that the Ingush language has a well-established word formation system, with a defined set of word-forming morphemes and established norms for their application.

References

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