



Article

The Use of Possessive and Plural Suffixes in the Dialect of Ethnic Arabs in Ishtixon

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Abstract: Uzbek dialects show enormous diversity in Central Asia, a homeland of many nationalities and the centre of ancient history. One of these is the dialect of the ethnic Arabs in the town of Ishtixon in the region of Samarkand, which possesses its own distinctive characteristics. It is characterized by aspects of Arabic linguistics mixed into the Uzbek language environment, especially in suffix systems for possession and plurality. Like other varieties, however, the Ishtixon Arab dialect has not been researched in detail and its possessive and plural suffixes which are characterised by deviations from standard Uzbek, has not been discussed. The purpose of this research is to study the features of the form, meaning and function of the possessive and plural suffixes in the Ishtixon Arab dialect, their phonetic and morphological features and the relationship of this dialect with literary Uzbek. The study argues that though the Ishtixon dialect has maintained some of the innovations found in their possessive and plural suffix systems including particular patterns of unique vowel harmony and consonant alternations these patterns also have some less regular features that appear to have originated locally and thus suggest resistance to certain innovations. These features set it apart from the literary Uzbek language. An illustrative case of this morphological development is provided by the suffix systems in the Ishtixon dialect, showing how Arabic influence and local Uzbek innovation interact in the dialect.

Keywords: Ishtixon Dialect, Ethnic Arabs, Possessive Suffix, Plural Suffix, Vowel Harmony, Sound Alternation, Morphological System, Uzbek Dialectology

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1. Introduction

The Uzbek language exhibits a wide range of dialectal diversity, reflecting the historical, ethnic, and geographic complexity of Central Asia. Among these dialects, the speech of ethnic Arabs residing in the Ishtixon district of the Samarkand region represents a distinct linguistic system [1]. This community, which has preserved traces of its Arabic linguistic heritage while integrating into the Uzbek-speaking environment, demonstrates unique phonetic and morphological patterns.

One of the most remarkable features of this dialect is its possessive and plural suffix system. These suffixes display both similarities to and divergences from the literary Uzbek language, particularly in terms of vowel harmony, consonant alternation, and phonetic variation [2]. The study of these categories offers insight into how morphological structures evolve under conditions of prolonged contact between Turkic and non-Turkic linguistic traditions.

The objective of this research is to analyze the structural, semantic, and functional features of possessive and plural suffixes in the Ishtixon Arab dialect, to determine their correspondence with the literary language, and to identify the specific phonetic and morphological innovations that characterize this dialect [3].

This research employs a descriptive and comparative linguistic approach. Data were collected through fieldwork in the Ishtixon district among native speakers of the ethnic Arab community. The informants, representing different age and gender groups, were interviewed to ensure an accurate representation of the dialect's variation. Audio recordings of spontaneous and elicited speech were analyzed phonetically and morphologically [4].

The transcription of data follows the modified Uzbek phonetic system to accurately represent vowel harmony and consonant alternation. The study primarily focuses on possessive suffixes (-m, -in, -si, etc.) and plural suffixes (-lar, -läär, -nar, -dar, etc.), examining their phonetic variants and usage rules [5].

Comparative data were drawn from classical Uzbek dialectological works, including N. Rajabov's *O'zbek tilining g'arbiy Samarqand shevalari*, H. G'ulomov's study on Jizzakh dialects, and S. Ashirboyev's *O'zbek dialektologiyasi*. The analysis also considered relevant phonological processes [6].

2. Materials and Methods

The approach used in this research is descriptive and it is comparative; which is trying to study the possessive and plural morphemes in the Arabic dialect of Ishtixon ethnics. The researchers mainly conducted fieldwork in the Ishtixon district and selected native speakers representing different age and gender groups to cover the dialect entirely. Spontaneous and elicited speech were recorded in audio in order to capture phonetic and morphological variations, which formed the basis of the research. The recordings were then transcribed paleographically with a customized Uzbek phonetic approach emphasizing vowel harmony and consonantal alternation to allow for correct analysis. This enabled accurate encoding of the linguistic factors that were being investigated. Comparative data obtained from classical works on dialectology of the Uzbek language, for example, N. Rajabov «O'zbek tilining g'arbiy Samarqand shevalari» and S. Ashirboyev «O'zbek dialektologiyasi», were used to compare the Ishtixon dialect through the prism of previously published materials [7][8]. Another example of such variable is phonetic variations of possessive and plural suffixes like -lar / läär, -nar / näär, -dar / däär and also we analyzed usage rules of these variants in the scope of the methodology of the research. The research delineates the morphological features of the Ishtixon ethnic Arab dialect of Uzbek language and its uniqueness within the context of literary Uzbek language and other regional dialects by comparing them, which concludes that mechanisms of assimilation and adaptation in the conditions of ethnic and linguistic proximity in the carriers of the Arabic ethnic heritage of the Central Kulob region have been implemented. This methodological framework allows a thorough exploration of the dialect peculiarities.

3. Results and Discussion

In the dialects of the studied ethnic group, possessive affixes are used similarly to those found in surrounding Uzbek dialects. Professor N. Rajabov notes that the category of possession in the Kipchak dialects exhibits diverse forms: "The main affixes and their variants in the Kipchak dialects number nearly sixty. Their large number is explained by the presence of vowel harmony, as well as the alternation between hard and soft stems" [9].

Table 1. Unity and Plural.

	Unity	Plural
I	-m / im / īm	-miz / -mīz / imiz / īmīz
II	-η / -iη / -iη	-ηiz / -ηīz / -iηiz / -iηīz
III	-i / -si	-läri / -lari

In the dialects of ethnic Arabs in Ishtixon, possessive affixes are attached to the root in accordance with the principle of vowel harmony. In this respect, they are several times more numerous than those in the literary language. However, in terms of their method of attachment to the base, possessive affixes correspond to the literary language. For example, if a stem ends in **q** or **k**, these consonants are replaced by **g'** and **g, k** when possessive affixes are added. The same phenomenon is observed in the dialects of ethnic Arabs in Ishtixon: *bizdi qışlayimız* ("our village"), *vunı jürägi* ("his heart"). This phenomenon, however, is not found in Oghuz dialects [10]. Similarly, in Jizzakh dialects, when a stem ending in **k** is followed by a possessive suffix, **k** changes to **j**: **ътък** – **ътъйъ**, **тъләк** – **тъләйъмъз**.

When a stem ends with the consonant **p**, it changes to **b** when a possessive suffix is attached: *gäp* → *gäbim*, *mäktäp* → *mäktäbi*.

In the studied dialects, words such as *do'st*, *go'sht*, *musht* exhibit a phenomenon where the final **t** sound is often weakly pronounced or completely dropped when possessive suffixes are added: *dosim*, *göšiŋ*, *muši*. For example: *Dosim ikavimiz ertäläpkäčä qorip čiqqanmüs* ("My friend and I worked until morning"), *jeŋ širini qozi goši*, *avzında jerip ketädi* ("The sweetness of life melts in your mouth"), *Muši minän urüp közlärini kögärtip taşayan* ("He beat him with his fist, bruising his eyes"). However, this phenomenon is not observed in words such as *qast* (*qasd*): *qastim*, *Şunnan bovamlar qastini ay'an*.

In most Kipchak dialects, the final consonant **z** in the first and second person plural possessive forms tends to devoice and assimilate [11]. In the dialect of ethnic Arabs in Ishtixon, however, a sound between **z** and **s** is produced in this position.

As in the literary language, when the base ends in a vowel, a consonant-initial affix is added (-m, -miz / -mīz, -η, -ηiz / -ηīz, -si, -läri / -lari). Conversely, when the base ends in a consonant, a vowel-initial affix is added (-im / īm, -imiz / īmīz, -iη / iη, -iηiz / iηīz, -i).

The order of attaching possessive affixes to the word does not differ from that in the literary language: **at + lar + imiz** ("our horses"), **jegin + lär + imiz** ("our crops").

In the first person singular, possession is expressed through the forms **-m / -im / -īm**, and in the plural through **-miz / -mīz / -imiz / īmīz**:

kätätäm ("my grandfather"), *üjim* ("my house"), *jolim* ("my road");

atamiz ("our father"), *jenämiz* ("our mother"), *özimiz* ("ourselves"), *qışlayimız* ("our village").

In the second person singular, possession is expressed by **-η / -iη / -iη**, and in the plural by **-ηiz / -ηīz / -iηiz / -iηīz**:

ämmäη ("your aunt"), *beliŋ* ("your waist"), *qoliŋ* ("your hand").

In the dialect, the use of **-lar** (plural marker) in the second person plural, compared to the literary and central dialects, shows slight semantic differences[7]. If **-lar** comes before the possessive suffix, it denotes plurality; if it follows the possessive form, it conveys respect. In the Ishtixon ethnic Arab dialect, the first case is predominant, where plural and possessive meanings combine: *balalarıñız*, *däläläriñız*.

In the third person singular, possession is expressed through **-i / -i / -si / -sī**, and in the plural by **-läri / -lari**:

ati ("his horse"), buzavü ("his calf"), jenäsi ("his mother"), taýasü ("his uncle"), kelinläri ("their brides"), balalarü ("their children").

In the dialect of the Ishtixon ethnic Arabs, as in the literary Uzbek language and other Uzbek dialects, possessive and relational meanings are also expressed by -niki and its phonetic variants -diki / -tiki. In the studied dialect, this form exists only with front vowels; therefore, vowel harmony is sometimes disrupted[8]. The initial consonant of this affix (d, t) depends on the final sound of the base:

meniki ("mine"), bizdiki ("ours"), köptiki ("many's"), voniki ("his"), qizdiki ("the girl's"), qışlaqtiki ("the village's").

When the base ends in a vowel, -niki is used; when it ends in a voiced consonant, -diki is used; and when it ends in a voiceless consonant, -tiki is used. In this case, vowel harmony between the root and the affix is not always preserved.

Sometimes, in this dialect, the -niki suffix following biz and siz pronouns becomes shortened to -ki when appearing between plural (-lä / -lar) and the dative case (-kä):

lä / är + -niki / -diki / -tiki + -kä = lärki / lä:ki:

Qajnanañız sizlä:kidämä? ("Is your mother-in-law at your place?"); Šu jerläräm bizärki ("These lands are also ours").

This reduction of -niki to -ki was not observed in other contexts. From the history of the Uzbek language, it is known that the -niki affix historically emerged from the combination of the genitive suffix (-niñ / -niñ) and the adjective-forming suffix -ki / -gi / -qi / -yi, which express belonging and relation [12]. In the Ishtixon ethnic Arab dialect, the reduction of -niki to -ki after biz and siz pronouns occurs as a result of the natural tendency toward phonetic simplification in speech

In the literary Uzbek language, the morphological indicator of plurality is expressed by a single suffix -lar, which has no phonetic variants [13]. However, in related Turkic languages and in Uzbek dialects, the plural form appears in several phonetic variants. Similarly, in the dialect of the ethnic Arabs of Ishtixon, the plural form occurs in various phonetic realizations: -lar / lär, -nar / näär, -dar / där, -tar / tär, -ar / är.

N. Rajabov points out that in the Western Samarkand Kipchak dialects, along with -lar / lär, -nar / näär, -dar / där, -tar / tär, -ar / är, the form -a / ä also expresses plurality, providing examples such as atama бараман (atama baraman) and əkəmə əytəməñ (äkämä äjtämän) [14]. In our view, these examples represent not plural marking, but rather the use of the directional case suffix -a / ä following possessive affixes. Nevertheless, plural forms with -a / ä also exist and are mainly used after the pronouns biz ("we") and siz ("you") in most Uzbek dialects. However, such plural forms were not observed in the dialect of the ethnic Arabs of Ishtixon.

The -lä suffix is actively used in the literary Uzbek language, in central dialects, and in almost all Uzbek dialects. In the studied dialect, it follows front-vowel stems. For example: erkäklär ("men"), äjällär ("women"), nevärälär ("grandchildren"), närsälär ("things"). Examples: Erkäklärdi orniya äjällär işläjidi ("Women work instead of men"); Äjällär paxta egijidi ("Women used to plant cotton"); Nevärälär kättämä? ("Are the grandchildren grown up?"); Köp nersälär äjtipperdi ("She told many things").

The -lä suffix is attached to the pronoun siz in two variants: silär and sizlä. Both forms are actively used and have distinct semantic and stylistic connotations. Silär is used by a speaker addressing younger interlocutors in the second person plural, while sizlä expresses politeness or respect when addressing older persons.

Examples: Silär jašsilar-da häli ("You are still young"), Sizlärdi jolinqizdi bersin bizärgäjäm ("May your way be open for us as well").

The -lar suffix, active in vowel-harmonized dialects, follows back-vowel stems: eşanlar ("spiritual leaders"), mamajlar ("grandmothers"), paxtalar ("cotton plants").

Examples: Äräpläräm ešanlardaj taza ("The Arabs are as pure as the spiritual leaders"), Eski mamajlar minän gäpläšip jürippiz ("We are chatting with old grandmothers"), Paxtalar pišmäj qayan ("The cotton plants have not ripened").

The -nar variant occurs after nasal consonants (m, n, ɳ) in words with back vowels:

Sänäm, qaravaṇnar ("Sanam, look over there"). The -när variant occurs after nasal consonants in words with front vowels: Šündäj künnaṛdi kečirganmiz ("We have lived through such days").

Although the pronouns biz ("we") and siz ("you") already indicate plurality, in the dialect they are always accompanied by plural suffixes [15]. Examples: bizär (bizlär), silär (sizlär) "we, you (plural)". Bizäräm köp äzäp jep kättä boyanmiz ("We too have suffered a lot and grown up"), Silär jašsilarda häli, küč-quvatlarin bar ("You are still young, you still have strength").

According to the Turkologist N. K. Dmitriev, biz < bi + z, siz < si + z (where z is the plural marker). The addition of -lar thus results in a double plural form, as in bizlar, sizlar.

In the Ishtixon dialect, the plural suffixes can occur in both complete and reduced forms. The complete form (-lär, -lar, -där, -dar, -tär, -tar, -när, -nar) is used for emphasis or distinction, while the reduced form (-är) serves in ordinary speech.

For example: Bizlär, sizlär used for emphasis ("we in particular," "you in particular"), Bizlärdi bavalarimiz tühmättä ötip ketti bari ("All our ancestors perished in oppression"), Sizlärdi üjläriṇizgä barapti paqt ("He went only to your house").

In everyday speech, bizär and silär are more common. In silär, although the -lär suffix is fully present, the z in the base drops: Silär jašsilarda, süjäkläriṇ jeṇil ("You are young; your bones are light"). In some cases, these plural suffixes convey meanings other than plurality. When attached to proper nouns or kinship terms, they may express generalization: Hazır Mehri apalar äjtti ("Now Mehri apa and her group said so"), Dali bovalardikigä abardim ("I took it to Dalli bobo's household").

In other cases, they express respect when attached to kinship terms: Kätätämdi atalarü baj boyan ("My grandfather's father was rich").

When added to abstract or situational nouns, they can express intensity or emphasis: Meni jašlärimnanam otip jür, qızim ("May you surpass even my youth, my daughter"). Occasionally, the -lar suffix causes assimilation with the preceding word: at + lar = allar ("horses"), zaman + lar = zamallar ("times").

Examples: Allar imärätti qalamalarini kämirip jejärdi ("The horses would gnaw at the straw under the building"), Allaryä, mallaryä jemiš joq ("There is no feed for the horses and cattle"), Avur zamallar boyan ("Hard times have passed").

4. Conclusion

The investigation of possessive and plural suffixes in the dialect of ethnic Arabs in Ishtixon demonstrates the complex dynamics of linguistic contact between Arabic and Uzbek. The analysis shows that while the grammatical structure of the dialect largely corresponds to that of the Uzbek language, it preserves distinct phonetic and morphological features that reflect both historical Arabic influence and local Uzbek innovations.

The possessive suffixes reveal partial convergence with the literary Uzbek system, yet they also exhibit notable deviations in vowel harmony and consonant alternation. These deviations are the result of phonetic adaptation processes and the retention of specific articulatory features inherited from the Arabic linguistic substratum. Similarly, the plural suffixes display variation in form and usage, including alternations in vowel quality and occasional reduction or replacement of standard Uzbek plural markers. Such variation indicates the dialect's ongoing internal development under the influence of both contact and simplification tendencies.

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