

# Syntax of particles in Northern Khanty: preverbal slot under closer inspection

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0. The current paper<sup>1</sup> aims to explore preverbal elements (preverbs) in Kazym dialect of Northern Khanty and provide evidence for different structures of these elements. The data comes from author's own fieldwork<sup>2</sup>.

Descriptively speaking, preverbs are adverbial elements, mostly with directional and/or aspectual semantics. In this talk, I also look at result particles and predicational elements, since they are also labeled as preverbs in dictionary (Solovar 2014) and occur in the preverbal slot. I describe their distribution and propose that preverbs form a non-homogenous syntactic class. I show that they correspond to a number of different syntactic structures, similar to the existing theoretical accounts for German (Wurmbrand 2000), Hungarian (Suranyi 2009, Farkas & Kardos 2021) and Slavic particles.

1. **Directional particles** (1) are the most typical particles from crosslinguistic point of view. In Northern Khanty, they can be topicalized (1) and used in fragment answers. Semantics-wise, they are preferred with telic verbs and can be used idiomatically. Directional particles can be modified with a comparative modifier *-šək* (ambiguous between comparative and attributive). Since their distribution and other properties are similar to derivate *-li* adverbs, I propose an adverbial structure, which is merged above vP, for these particles (Fig. II).

(1) **nuχ** ma šoš-man təp mǎn-λ-əm  
**up** 1SG walk-CVB only go-NPST-1SG  
'When it comes to going up, I can only walk' {I can't run}

2. ***Nuχ* 'up' (aspectual & vacuous *nuχ*)** (3) is the only preverb that can be used not only as directional particle but also as non-directional telicity marker with scalar verbs (3). Moreover, it has a so-called 'vacuous', free-to-omit use with non-scalar and non-directional verbs. The compatibility of *nuχ* 'up' in a vacuous use with a verb is lexical information, non-predicted by its syntactic or semantic properties.

Aspectual and vacuous uses of *nuχ* differ in syntactic behavior from directional counterparts. They cannot be topicalized (2) or used in fragment answers, although they can be separated from verbal complex by discourse particles and manner adverbs (3). Based on telic properties, I propose that *nuχ* 'up' can spell out an inner Asp head between vP and VP (Suranyi 2009, Farkas & Kardos 2021) (Fig. I).

(2) \***nuχ** amp-eλ jir-s-əλλe  
**up** dog-POSS.3SG tie-PST-3SG>SG  
exp. 'He tied the dog [successfully]' {but he let go deer}

(3) %purməs-λ-an **nuχ jāma** sor-s-ət antə?  
cloth-PL-POSS.2SG **up well** dry-PST-3PL NEG.EX  
'Have the clothes dried well, haven't they?'

<sup>1</sup> The results of the project "Crossmodal interaction in the grammatical theory: modeling grammatical features based on the data of the languages of Russia", carried out within the framework of the Basic Research Program at the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE University) in 2024, are presented in this work.

<sup>2</sup> Data is collected in 2023-2024 during HSE and MSU joint fieldtrip to Kazym village.

**3. Result-modifiers (NP-preverbs)** (4) are in general akin to directional particles, according to syntactic tests. For instance, they can be topicalized and are ungrammatical in predicative position. However, I argue that they form a separate class. Firstly, result-modifiers differ semantically from directional particles as they do not interact with telicity and are hardly ever idiomatic. Secondly, result modifiers can be additionally modified with adjectives, unlike directional particles. This speaks in favor of NP-status of such phrases (Fig. III).

(4) juχ **šop-a** pawərt piłit-man, aj **šuk-a** kuržka-jen šukat-man  
 wood **part-DAT** log saw-CVB small **bit-DAT** cup-POSS.2SG break-CVB  
 ‘The log is sawn to pieces and the cup is broken into pieces’

**4. Predicational elements** (5) can be used predicatively, which is their distinguishable property. They are easily topicalized and used in fragment answers. Moreover, predicational elements surface as arguments of stative verb *tǎjti* ‘hold’ (6), which also distinguishes them from other particles. Like NP-preverbs and unlike directional particles, they never appear as parts of idioms and are not sensitive to inner aspect. Only attenuative, but not comparative semantics is attested with attributive modifier *-šək*.

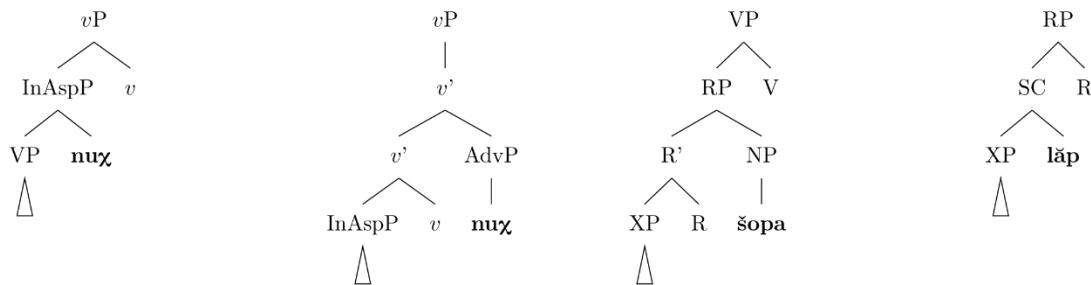
All the facts considered, predicational elements are to be treated separately from above-mentioned particles. Since these elements can be predicated and used as verb arguments (6), I propose that they spell out a small clause structure (Wurmbrand 2000) (Fig. IV).

(5) **pelka** λuw išn-eλ pən-s-əλλe pa **lǎp** ow-eλ təχər-s-əλλe  
**wide** 3SG window-POSS.3SG open-PST-3SG>SG and **tightly** door-POSS.3SG close-PST-3SG>SG  
 ‘He opened the door wide and closed the door tightly’

(6) ma ow-en **lǎp** tǎj-əλ-εm  
 1SG door-POSS.2SG **tightly** hold-NPST-1SG>SG  
 ‘I hold the door tightly shut’

**5.** Summing up, Northern Khanty preverbs are non-homogenous, and I propose different structures for them, respective to their behaviour. In the talk, I will show more data and discuss all the tests mentioned in detail. The structures are depicted in the figures below.

Figure I. Aspectual & vacuous nuχ Figure II. Directional particles Figure III. NP-preverbs Figure IV. Predicational elements



**Literature:** Kardos, É., & Farkas, I. Á. (2022). The syntax of inner aspect in Hungarian. *Journal of Linguistics*, 58(4), 807-845. Solovar, V. N. (2014). Khanty-Russian dictionary:(dialect of Kazym). Khanty-Mansiysk, Tyumen, Format. Surányi, B. (2009). Verbal particles inside and outside v P. *Acta Linguistica Hungarica* (Since 2017 *Acta Linguistica Academica*), 56(2-3), 201-249. Wurmbrand, S. (2000). The structure (s) of particle verbs. Ms., McGill University.