Verb raising in Kazym Khanty[1]

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In this study I intend to show that in Khanty (Finno-Ugric) verb moves to the highest projection, whose features it checks. Position of the verb in the structure does not only have an isolated theoretical value, but is relevant for at least those operations, which are argued to take place after the narrow syntax, e.g. ellipsis, morpheme ordering and morphological realization of agreement. However, in an SOV, left-branching language, as Khanty, head movement of the verb is undetectable in the linear word order. It was argued based on the behavior of the negation marker in some other Finno-Ugric languages, namely Mari and Udmurt (Georgieva et al. 2020), that in these languages verbs do not raise to the T.

In this talk I will not address the theoretical question about timing of the verb movement, and will be concerned with the question, if verbs move at all. The study is run on the material of Kazym dialect of Khanty. The data were collected during the fieldwork in the summer 2019 and subsequent online consultation with native speakers. Since this study was focused on the Kazym dialect, all results are relevant for this dialect only. Whether they hold for other dialects of Khanty is a matter of further research.

To detect the position of the verb, which in an SOV language is always clause final, two tests were used: 1) topicalization of idiomatic VP-internal material, and 2) behavior of clausal, phrasal and contrastive negation markers. Since direct objects do not always stay in situ (Smith 2020) and therefore do not allow to detect position of the VP, I primarily focus on semantically non-transparent (aspectual) preverbs as VP-internal elements. It was shown for German verbal particles that, whenever these are not semantically compositional, they are much less independent, cannot be interpreted separately from the verb, they belong to, cannot be modified and cannot leave VP (Trotzke and Quaglia 2016).

The possibility of topicalization of aspectual preverbs depend on the finiteness of the lexical verb. (1a) can be only explained, if the verb, leaves VP and raises high enough.

(1) a. ?Nik$_i$ in imi-leŋke-n [λitəp jiŋk]$_j$ put
   PREV_riverward now woman-DIM-POSS.2SG caviar water cauldron

   păte-λ t$_j$ t$_i$ xošməλ-s-əλλe
   bottom-POSS.3SG heat-PST-3SG>SG
   'The woman heated caviar broth in a cauldron.'

b. ?? Nik$_i$ in imi-leŋke-n λitəp jiŋk t$_i$ xošəm-ti
   PREV_riverward now woman-DIM-POSS.2SG caviar water warm-NFIN.NPST
wutś-ijλ-əs
want-IPFV-PST
'Now the woman wanted to warm up the caviar soup.'

The second test deals with the position of negation markers. Khanty has two lexical items to mark negation: 'ăn(tө)' for phrasal and clausal negation, and 'xөn' for emphatic negation (Kaksin 2010). Both these markers can be linearized before the finite verb, separating it from the aspectual preverb.

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(2) I   xɵj-əλ   **nux**   **ănt**   λoλ'-əs .
     one man-3SG.POSS PREV_up   NEG   stay-PST
     'That man didn't stand up. '

Clausal negation in Khanty can survive ellipsis (3), can occur independently with a zero copula, can be separately modified by e.g. a conditional clitic 'ki' (4), and be prosodically prominent. Based on this, I assume that clausal negation is not a clitic and is not lowered to a V- or Asp-head, as is has been proposed for Udmurt and Mari (Georgieva et al, 2020). If it is true that clausal negation stays in the Neg-head, finite verb should be moved higher than Neg projection, i.e. at least to T.

(3) Ańaj-en   kašaj-en   λɛsλe,   Vaśaj-en   ăntɵ /
*ăntɵm.
      A.-POSS.2SG porridge-POSS.2SG eat-PST-3SG.SG   V.-POSS.2SG NEG
EX.NEG
      'Anja ate the porridge, and Vasja didn't.'

(4) toxλ-ɛm   nox   [ănt ki] wɛr-λ-ən ...
     wing-POSS.1SG   PREV_up   NEG   if   do-NPST-2SG
     'If you only don't heal my wing...'

    In clauses with modal finite verbs, negation can be linearized before either the attitude or the embedded verb, leading to scope alternation. In the second case this is a phrasal negation, scoping over the VP only (5). In resultative constructions, however, clausal negation can only surface immediately before the finite verb (6). This contrast is easily explicable, if participle is raised out of the VP as well as V$_{fin}$, whereas converb stays in the V-head. Since participle is marked for aspect, I assume that the participle is raised to Asp-projection.

(5) Ikɛ-ŋən   wɵn   jiŋk   woj   (ănt) weλ-ti   (ănt)   wutś-ijəλ-s-aŋən.
   man-DU   big   water animal NEG   bag-NFIN.NPST   NEG   want-IPFV-PST-
3DU
'The two men wanted to not bag the big beaver/ didn't want to bag the big beaver.'

 (6) Năŋ ɵpət-λ-an   wan-a   (*ănt) λurt-man   (ănt)   tăj-əλ-əλan.
   you hair-PL-POSS.2SG short-DAT   NEG   cut-CVB   NEG   have-NPST-
2SG>PL
lit: 'You (usually) don't have your hair cut short.'

Emphatic negation 'xɵn' can either precede or follow the finite verb. Crucial, however, is again the contrast, that it can separate a finite verb from aspectual preverb, but not a converb. This shows the same pattern, as the behavior of 'ăntɵ'.
    As the data shows, both topicalization pattern, and position of negation markers prove that verb is raised out of the VP in all cases, except when it is a converb. Clausal negation, staying in the NegP, provide evidence for an even higher position of the finite verb.

Selected references:
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Western Khanty Corpus