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Ort: Wiesbaden

Jahr: 2018

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Däbritz, Chris Lasse 2018. On *kim*, *kimne*:- and *kaña*:-. Three placeholder items in Dolgan. *Turkic Languages* 22, 286–302.

The article provides a corpus-based analysis of three placeholder items, *kim*, *kimne*:- and *kaña*:-, in the North-Siberian Turkic language Dolgan. After a brief discussion of the theoretical state of art in the research on placeholder items (Section 2), the named Dolgan placeholder items are investigated regarding their etymological origin (Section 3) as well as their morphosyntactic properties and their functional domains (Section 4). Finally, the outcomes of this analysis are evaluated against the described theoretical background (Section 5).

Keywords: Dolgan, placeholders, North-Siberian Turkic

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1. Introduction

So-called placeholders (also known as “lexical fillers” or “oblitive nouns/verbs”) make up a linguistic category which is not yet fully described and often not even recognized in linguistic research, only in the last few years research on placeholders increased (e.g. Amiridze et al. 2010).¹ Roughly speaking, placeholders are understood as lexical items that replace another lexical item in a clause, and are especially important in spoken discourse (Fox 2010: 1–2). A simple example of a placeholder is the following:

- (1) English
I wanted to know if you found a whatchamacallit, a parking space. (Fox 2010: 2)

The speaker apparently is searching for the right lexical item and fills the arising pause in speech with the lexical item *whatchamacallit*. The placeholder in question can be analyzed here as a lexicalized phrase emerging from *what you may call it* (Fox 2010: 1). English, being a language showing few inflectional morphology, has

1 This publication has been produced in the context of the joint research funding of the German Federal Government and Federal States in the Academies’ Programme, with funding from the Federal Ministry of Education and Research and the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg. The Academies’ Programme is coordinated by the Union of the German Academies of Sciences and Humanities.

no placeholders showing complex morphosyntactic properties. Many languages showing more extensive inflectional morphology, however, exhibit placeholders showing inflectional morphology and more complex morphosyntax, e.g. the Tungusic language Udihe and the Caucasian languages Udi and Georgian (Fox 2010: 3–4). Also Dolgan, a North-Siberian Turkic language,² has three lexical elements, *kim*, *kimne:-* and *kaña:-*, which seem to function as placeholders in the above-mentioned sense, as the following examples (2) and (3) may show.

- (2) *Onno kim-ne:-čči-ler buō kim – part'izansk'ij iti atr'ad.*³
 there PH-VBZ-HAB-3PL EMPH PH partisan this troop
 'There they made this thing—this partisan troop.'
 (ChVD_AkEE_198204_SoldierInWar_nar.019)
- (3) *Onto eder ogo-lor-u kel-em-mit ūōret-e-bit, kañ-ī-bīt [...]*
 then young child-PL-ACC come-CVB.SEQ-1PL teach-PRS-1PL PH-PRS-1PL
 'Then the young people, after we come, we teach [them] and so on: [...]'
 (AkNN_KuNS_200212_LifeHandicraft_conv.077)

In both examples, the speaker apparently inserts some lexical material (*kimne:ččiler*, *kim* and *kañī:bīt*, respectively) in order to keep his speech going, either replacing some other lexical item (2) or repeating it (3). Moreover, these two examples show that *kim* and *kimne:-* on the one hand, and *kaña:-* on the other hand, seem to work in functionally different domains.

This article shall describe the named placeholder items in Dolgan, their origin and their function. In Section 2 the theoretical background for this study is provided; Section 3 deals with the origin of the named items and Section 4 deals with their morphosyntax and functional domains. Section 5 finally draws conclusions and evaluates the language-specific data against a theoretical background. The material used in this study comes from the Dolgan corpus of the research project INEL (Grammatical Descriptions, Corpora and Language Technology for Indigenous Northern Eurasian Languages; carried out by the Academy of Sciences in Hamburg),⁴ which currently consists of 73 glossed texts (both folklore and narrative texts, as well as conversations) with 7,005 sentences and 45,399 tokens.

- 2 Dolgan, together with its closest relative Yakut (Sakha), forms the North-Siberian subbranch of the Siberian branch of the Turkic language family (Boeschoten 1998: 3). Nowadays, it is spoken by approx. 1,000 people (VPN 2010) on the Taymyr peninsula and in adjacent areas in the extreme north of Siberia (Artem'ev 2013a: 3).
- 3 The transcription follows the one developed in Johanson & Csató (1998: xviii–xxii), the only exception being the marking of vowel length. For typographic reasons the IPA symbol <: > is used instead of the macron.
- 4 https://inel.corpora.uni-hamburg.de/?page_id=920, latest access: 23.01.2018.

2. Theoretical background

As was mentioned before, linguistic research often has ignored placeholders and similar phenomena. This may be because English and other western European languages often use items like English *uhmm* or German *ähm*, which are probably better analyzed as fillers than as placeholders (Fox 2010: 1) and lack morphological and syntactic marking, or even other strategies that operate in this functional domain. This does not, however, hold true for a number of other languages (see e.g. Fox 2010, Podlesskaya 2010). In spite of the apparently wide occurrence of placeholders in the languages of the world, Hayashi & Yoon (2006) and the volume on placeholder items (Amiridze et al. 2010) are by now the only available theoretical anchoring points for the cross-linguistic investigation of this phenomenon.

According to Hayashi & Yoon (2010: 37) a placeholder is a linguistic unit which, firstly, is a referential expression used by the speaker to replace another lexical item and, secondly, occupies the same syntactic slot as the omitted original lexical item would have done. Placeholder items often are used when the speaker has difficulty finding a lexical item; a central function of placeholders is, hence, to keep the speech going on and signal to the hearer that the speaker is still formulating his utterance (Fox 2010: 5–6). Placeholder items following the relevant lexical item, as in example (3), obviously behave somewhat differently, as the lexical item in question was already mentioned and can, therefore, not be sought for by the speaker. Whether placeholder items following the relevant lexical item nevertheless can be analyzed similarly to those preceding it remains an open question which can only be answered by investigating a wider range of languages (Podlesskaya 2010: 25). Therefore, in this study, I will use the terms “placeholder” and “placeholder item” in a broad sense, i.e. for a linguistic unit serving as a referential expression which substitutes for another lexical item either preceding or following it.

The etymological origins of placeholder items seem to be quite diverse. Nevertheless, some frequent sources can be observed (Podlesskaya 2010: 12–13): pronouns like Russian *eto* ‘this’, semantically bleached nouns like Armenian *ban* ‘thing’, a combination of both like Mandarin *zhe-ge* ‘this-CL’, and lexicalized constructions like English *whatchamacallit* (< *what you may call it*).

Another theoretical issue is how placeholder items are integrated morphologically and syntactically into the utterance in question. English *whatchamacallit*, on the one hand, shows no morphological and syntactic properties, whereas Dolgan *kim*, *kimne:-* and *kaña:-* clearly do. Taking a closer look at placeholders that do have morphological and syntactic properties, one can distinguish between nominal and verbal placeholders. According to Podlesskaya (2010: 13), nominal placeholders, i.e. placeholders which substitute for nominal constituents, are more common than verbal placeholders, i.e. placeholders which substitute for verbal constituents. However, this frequency hierarchy (which also implies that a language showing verbal placeholders obligatorily also has nominal placeholders) is far from proven, though it fits well with the data at present. The next question to arise is whether placeholders—

both nominal and verbal—copy the morphology and the syntactic properties of the substituted lexical item and if so, to what degree. Three examples given by Podlesskaya may give a tentative answer to that:

- (4) Russian⁵
Ja xoč-u et-o ubežat' ot nego.
 1SG want-1SG PH-NOM/ACC.SG.N run.away.INF from he.GEN
 'I want... uhhh... to run away from him.' (Podlesskaya 2010: 19)
- (5) Russian
Ja zanimaj-u-s' et-oj kak=eë tipologi-ej.
 1SG deal.with-1SG-REFL PH₁-INSTR.SG.F PH₂ typology-INSTR
 'I deal with this, whatchamacallit, typology.' (Podlesskaya 2010: 21)
- (6) Udihe
Ñaŋga-da sin-e-we aŋi-nde-ze-mi kese-li-nde-ze-mi.
 little-FOC you-0-ACC PH-SEM-SUBJ-1SG torture-INC-SEM-SUBJ-1SG
 'I will PH [whatchamacallit]... torture you a little.' (Podlesskaya 2010: 15; from Nikolaeva & Tolskaya 2001)

These examples show the three theoretically possible degrees of morphological adaptation of the placeholder to the replaced item: In example (4) the nominal placeholder *eto* (originally a proximal demonstrative pronoun) replaces the infinitive complement clause *ubežat' ot nego*; i.e., it does not mirror the morphosyntax of the replaced item at all—regardless of whether *eto* is analyzed as nominative or accusative. In example (5) the placeholder *et-oj* (instrumental singular feminine form of *eto*) copies the morphology of the replaced item *tipologiej* (instrumental singular of *tipologija*)⁶ exactly. Example (6) finally shows an intermediate degree of copying of the morphology of the replaced lexical item. Whereas person and number marking *-ze-mi*, as well as the semelfactive marker *-nde*, are copied, the inchoative/inceptive marker *-li* is not copied. All this implies that there is no clear-cut pattern for the morphosyntactic behavior of placeholders. However, this also has to be proven by investigating a wider range of languages.

To sum up, one can say that placeholders from quite different etymological sources can occur both preceding and following the substituted lexical item. Furthermore, and according to the linguistic data currently available, nominal placeholders seem to be more prominent than verbal placeholders and the morphosyntactic behavior of both nominal and verbal placeholders varies significantly across languages and even within languages (see examples (4) and (5) from Russian).

5 The original glossing and translation are slightly adapted.

6 The gender of the noun is not expressed by the case ending in Russian, but by the lexical item itself. As *tipologija* is a feminine noun, adjectives and demonstratives pronouns have to agree with it.

3. Origin of the placeholder items

Kim is originally an interrogative pronoun meaning ‘who’ (Stachowski 1993: 147–148), which has etymological parallels all over the Turkic languages; cf. Turkish *kim* ‘id.’ (Lewis 1991: 72), Tatar *kem* ‘id.’ (Poppe 1963: 81) and Yakut *kim* ‘id.’ (Xaritonov et al. 1982: 197).

Kimne:- is a verb which is derived from the interrogative pronoun *kim* with the frequent verbalizer *-LA:*,⁷ cf. *albīnna:-* ‘to betray’ < *albīn* ‘lie, deception’ and *ha:majda:-* ‘to speak Nganasan’ < *ha:maj* ‘Nganasan’ (Stachowski 1997: 60–61).

The case of *kaña:-* is more complicated. Dolgan *kaña:-* has the Yakut cognate *χaya:-* ~ *χaŷa:-* which is translated as ‘what do, what be, for what do’ (Pekarskij 1959: 3243). The correspondence of Dolgan *ń* and Yakut *γ* ~ *ŷ* seems to be regular; cf. the lexemes Dolgan *meńi:* ‘head’ (Stachowski 1993: 178) and *ańi:* ‘sin’ (Stachowski 1993: 34) vs. Yakut *meŷi:* ‘brain; head’ (Slepcov 1972: 247) and *aŷi:* ~ *aŷi:* ‘sin’ (Slepcov 1972: 35–36). According to Pekarskij (1959: 3243) the Yakut form can be analyzed as the interrogative stem **χay-* and the verbalizing element *-a:-*. The former most probably traces back to the Proto-Turkic interrogative stem **qa:ń-*, as Proto-Turkic **ń* regularly yields Yakut *γ* ~ *ŷ* (Johanson 1998: 106), and the existence of a nasal in the stem can also be shown by forms like Uyghur *kańu* ~ *kayu* ‘which’ (Räsänen 1969: 232) and Khalaj *qa:ńi* ‘id.’ (Johanson 1998: 106). Hence, the Dolgan form of the placeholder item *kaña:-* has to be regarded as older than the Yakut equivalent *χaya:-* ~ *χaŷa:-*, which is not surprising, as Dolgan is often treated as more conservative than Yakut (e.g. Stachowski 1993: 17). Nevertheless, this is astonishing in so far, as interrogatives themselves, like Dolgan *kaya* ‘what kind of; which’ and *kaydak* ~ *kaytak* ‘how’ (Stachowski 1993: 133), look like the corresponding Yakut forms *χaya* and *χaydaχ* (Slepcov 1972: 474). But bearing in mind that the Dolgan placeholder *kimne:-* (see above) and the Yakut placeholder *tuoxta:-* (Slepcov 1972: 405) also stem from interrogative pronouns, it seems quite plausible that the placeholders *kaña:-* and *χaya:-* ~ *χaŷa:-* in both Dolgan and Yakut also trace back to the combination of an interrogative stem and a verbalizer.

4. Morphosyntax and function of the placeholders

4.1 *kim*

As *kim* is originally an interrogative pronoun and shows no further derivational morphology, it can be assumed that it behaves morphosyntactically like a nominal element. Dolgan nouns are inflected for number, case and possession; pronouns are inflected for number and case, rarely also for possession (Artem’ev 2013b: 137–138). In what follows, it shall be investigated to which extent the placeholder *kim*

7 Due to palatal-velar and labial-illabial vowel harmony as well as consonant assimilations the suffix has got 16 allomorphs; in this case *-LA:* has the surface structure *-ne:*, because it is attached to a stem with palatal-illabial vocalism and a stem-final nasal.

takes nominal morphosyntactic properties, and whether it copies the morphological patterns of the substituted item. Examples (7)–(9) illustrate this.

- (7) *Onton ol kim, Bal'šakov, d-i:-bin, [...]*
 then that PH Bal'šakov say-PRS-1SG
 'Then that, what's his name, Bol'šakov, I say, [the old Nikolaj, he was a very old man.]' (EIBK_KuNS_2004_StorytellersUstAvam_conv.016)
- (8) *[...] illa:-ččī e-ti-bit kim-ŋe iē, onton*
 sing-PTCP.HAB be-PST1-1PL PH-DAT/LOC PTCL then
kolkhoz-ka, kulu:b-ka munn'-us-t-a:ččī e-ti-bit.
 kolkhoz-DAT/LOC club-DAT/LOC gather-RECP/COLL-REFL-PTCP.HAB be-PST1-1PL
 '[...] we sang, in whatchamacallit, then in the kolkhoz, in the club we gathered.'
 (AkNN_KuNS_200212_LifeHandicraft_conv.126)
- (9) *[...] min biēr-bit-im kim-mi-n, hantap-pi-n*
 1SG give-PST2-1SG PH-POSS1SG-ACC parka-POSS1SG-ACC
 'I gave my whatchamacallit, my parka [to the house of culture then].'
 (AkNN_KuNS_200212_LifeHandicraft_conv.112)

In example (7) both the placeholder (*kim*) and the replaced item (*Bal'šakov*) behave morphosyntactically like nominal; i.e. they are inflected for case and number (zero-marked nominative singular),⁸ syntactically they both function as the element expressing the subject. In examples (8) and (9) the placeholder *kim* copies the morphosyntactic properties of the substituted lexical item completely. According to the analyzed material, this pattern seems by far to be the most frequent one. To put it differently: If a nominal lexical item in Dolgan is inflected for number, case and/or possession, and is replaced by the placeholder *kim*, then the placeholder mostly reflects the morphological properties of the substituted item exactly. This also holds true for derivational morphology, as example (10) shows.

- (10) *Kim-ne:k e-ti-bit, prijomnik-ta:k, [...]*
 PH-PROPR be-PST1-1PL receiver-PROPR
 'We had, whatchamacallit, a receiver [...]'
 (EIBK_KuNS_2004_StorytellersUstAvam_conv.142)

While the examples (7)–(10) are quite straightforward to analyze, the following three examples show some peculiarities which are not that easy to analyze.

8 It should be mentioned here that the nominative singular is not indicated in glossing. Nominal elements that are not glossed for case and/or number are therefore to be regarded as zero-marked for nominative singular.

- (11) *Ba:gī sar* *buōllagīna*, *kim buōllagīna*, *kuka:ki:*
 that rough.legged.buzzard however PH however, Siberian.jay
buōllagīna [...]’
 however
 ‘That rough-legged buzzard, however, the whatchamacallit, the Siberian jay [...].’
 (UkET_2002_FoxJayBuzzard_flk.064)
- (12) [...] *kim-iŋ* *na:da*, *īāld’-im-īāk-kī-n*
 PH-POSS2SG have.to be.sick-NEG-PTCP.FUT-POSS2SG-ACC
na:da.
 have.to
 ‘[The most important thing is] one has to whatchamacallit, one must not be sick.’
 (AkNN_KuNS_200212_LifeHandicraft_conv.116)
- (13) *Ontoniti kim, kak=ego Jarockij Konstantin* [...]’
 then that PH PH Jarockij Konstantin
 ‘Then that, whatchamacallit, what’s his name, Jarockij Konstantin [...]’
 (EIBK_KuNS_2004_StorytellersOfUstAvam_conv.036)

On first glance, example (11) looks like example (7), i.e. consists of a bare noun phrase *kuka:ki:* with the preceding placeholder *kim* replacing it. However, this case is complicated by the fact that *ba:gī sar buōllagīna* is a false start by the speaker: The story is about the rough-legged buzzard (*sar*) who is fooled by the fox. The Siberian jay (*kuka:ki:*) laughs about that, but now the jay himself is fooled by the fox. So the speaker starts accidentally talking about the buzzard here, remarks on this, and starts the sentence again, using *kim* as a placeholder for the sought-for lexical item *kuka:ki:*. Thus, the placeholder *kim* apparently has not only the function to keep the speech going in case of word-finding trouble, but also to repair a false start, which is, obviously, a very similar functional domain. Example (12) shows, how complex the syntactic contexts can be where the placeholder *kim* can be used. The particle *na:da* ‘need to; have to’ is a loan from Russian, and can have both a noun phrase and a non-finite construction as complement. In the second clause of the example, *na:da* takes a non-finite complement clause as complement. This is not, however, mirrored by the form of the placeholder, which forms a noun phrase here. Nevertheless, in both clauses the person-number reference coincides: Both complements of *na:da* show the possessive suffix of the second person singular.⁹ So, in the one case the placeholder copies the morphosyntactic properties of the substituted item here (person-number reference), but in the other case it does not (noun phrase vs. complement clause), although the choice of a nominal placeholder could maybe

9 It should be remarked here that the possessive suffix of the second person singular does not necessarily refer to a second person singular in Dolgan. It can also be used as a device marking given and/or accessible referents (cf. Siegl 2015).

be explained by the existence of a participle taking nominal categories in the complement clause. Thus, the placeholder *kim* does not necessarily behave uniformly within one and the same occurrence. Finally, in example (13) *kim* interacts with the Russian placeholder *kak=ego* (cf. also example (5)), which shows its deep anchoring in the structure of language. Even in the context of massive Russian interference (another Russian placeholder used, Russian name) the Dolgan placeholder is kept, and is not fully replaced by a Russian one.

All the examples discussed until now showed both a form of *kim* and the replaced lexical item in the sentence. However, there are some examples where only a form of *kim* can be found:

- (14) *Kim, kim kula:k-tar di: di:-l-ler [...]*
 PH PH kulak-PL EMPH say-PRS-3PL
 ‘Uhhh, “they are kulaks”, they said [and took them away].’
 (BeES_1997_HistoryOfKatyryk_nar.053)

At least the first occurrence of *kim* cannot be connected to other lexical material in the sentence. Hence, *kim* can also be used as a placeholder, when the replaced lexical item is not part of the sentence anymore. This in turn implies the question whether *kim* can be inflected for number, case and possession in these environments too. The following examples show instances of such environments:

- (15) [...] *horok kihi-ler-iŋ küren-ette:-bit-ter iti kimîe-ke.*¹⁰
 some human-PL-POSS2SG flee-FREQ-PST2-3PL that PH-DAT/LOC
 ‘[...] some people¹¹ fled to that whatchamacallit...’
 (BeES_1997_HistoryOfKatyryk_nar.070)

- (16) “*Öl-lü-büt agaj, kim-ŋi-n kiste:*”, [...].
 die-PST1-1PL just PH-POSS2SG-ACC hide.IMP.2SG
 ‘“We are dying, hide the whatchamacallit”, [she said to me].’
 (LaVN_KuNS_1999_MusicRepressions_conv.056)

In both (15) and (16), there is apparently an inflected form of the placeholder *kim* without the replaced lexical item. Hence, it seems not to be obligatory in Dolgan that the replaced lexical item occurs in the same sentence as the placeholder *kim*. Finally, examples (15) and (16), as well as all the other examples, clearly show that *kim*, originally meaning ‘who’ and, thus, referring to animate referents, does not differentiate between animate and inanimate referents anymore. Neither are there instances of the interrogative pronoun *tuök* ‘what’, i.e., the inanimate counterpart of

¹⁰ *Kimîe-* is an allomorph of *kim* and is regularly used in the dative-locative case.

¹¹ As it was mentioned above, the possessive suffix of the second person singular can be used as a referential device; this is the case here, too.

kim, operating in this functional domain. Hence, it can be concluded that *kim* loses its animacy-related markedness when occurring as a placeholder item

All in all, one can say that the nominal placeholder *kim* can occur in sentences both with and without the lexical item which it replaces. Regardless of whether the replaced lexical item is overtly present in the sentence, *kim* nearly always mirrors its morphosyntactic properties; however, in the latter case it remains questionable whether this can be called mirroring, as there is no overt material to mirror. Moreover, *kim* occurs even in quite complex syntactic contexts (example (11) and (12)) and also in interaction with massive Russian interference (example (13)).

4.2 *kimne:-*

Regarding the fact that *kimne:-* is formed by *kim* and the verbalizer *-LA:* (see above), it seems obvious to see *kimne:-* as the verbal counterpart of *kim*. As expected, *kimne:-* indeed behaves morphosyntactically like a verb:

- (17) *Onton buōllagīna kīmn-i:r iti ūčūgej bagaj-dīk huruj-ar.*
 then however PH-PRS.3SG that good very-ADVZ write-PRS.3SG
 ‘Then, however, he, whatchamacallit, writes very well.’
 (ErTS_AkPG_1994_AAPopov_nar.087)

So, *kimne:-* shows person-number and tense marking here (third person singular, present tense) and it mirrors the morphosyntax of the replaced lexical item *hurujar*. In what follows it shall be investigated to what extent this morphosyntactic copying of the respective lexical item is obligatory and, if not, which categories are copied and which are not. There are quite many examples where a complete copying can be observed, even in very complex morphosyntactic environments like the negated habitual mood in the past tense:

- (18) [...] *kim-i da kimne:-čči-te huōk e-ti-lerē, huruj-a:čči-ta*
 who-ACC NEG PH-HAB-3SG NEG be-PST1-3PL write-HAB-3SG
huōk e-ti-lerē urut.
 NEG be-PST1-3PL before
 ‘[No, I did not hear that somebody should sing in radio], they didn’t whatchamacallit anybody, they didn’t record.’ (EIBK_KuNS_2004_StorytellersUstAvam_conv.098)

Even in complex discourse contexts, as in example (19a)–(19c), this holds true:

- a. PoPD: *A bihigi ogonñor-bu-n gītta užē*
 and.R 1PL husband-POSS1SG-ACC with already
texnikum-tan kimne:-bit...
 technical.school-ABL PH-PTCP.PST
 ‘And my husband and I, already from the technical school we whatchamacallit...’

- b. KuNS: *Bil-s-ibik-kit?*
 get.to.know-RECP/COLL-PST2-2PL
 ‘You got to know each other?’
- c. PoPD: *Bul-s-ubut* *e-ti-bit, [...].*
 find-RECP/COLL-PTCP.PST be-PST1-1PL
 ‘We have found each other, [...].’
 (PoPD_KuNS_2004_Life_conv.047–049)

The first speaker (PoPD) apparently has trouble finding the words, and uses the non-finite form *kimne:bit*. The second speaker (KuNS) interrupts and proposes the finite form *bilsibikkit*, but PoPD continues his sentence with a complex verb form where the form *bulsubut* has the same morphosyntactical shape as *kimne:bit*.

However, there are many instances where the morphosyntax of the replaced lexical items is not completely, or even not at all, mirrored. As it was observed for the nominal placeholder *kim*, there are examples where the replaced lexical item is not visible at all:

- Ol ihin gini kepset-i-n kimne:-bit-tere buolla itigirdik.*
 that because.of 3SG story-POSS3SG-ACC PH-PST2-3PL EMPH so
 ‘Therefore they whatchamacallit his stories like this.’
 (PoNA_AkPG_1994_MPXarlampiev_nar.060)

For this example (20) the context is the following: the speaker tells about a radio journalist who came from Yakutia to the Dolgans and brought Yakut material to broadcast. In the sentence at hand, he is about to explain what was done with this material, but apparently does not find a proper expression for it. Neither in the following sentences does it become clear what was meant, as the person conducting the interview asks something different. The next examples (21)–(22) show various complex instances of partial copying of the morphosyntax of the replaced item:

- (19) *Ilim ütt-e kimne:-tek-ke, kömölös-tök-püne, [...].*
 net place-CVB.SIM PH-PTCP.COND-DAT/LOC help-TEMP-1SG
 ‘When I whatchamacallit help them placing the nets, [I am helping the old men].’
 (KiMN_19900417_Milkmaid_flk.019)
- (20) *Imit-e:ri gïn-nak-tarïna, de kimn-i:l-ler, kïh*
 soften-CVB.PURP make-TEMP-3PL well PH-PRS-3PL girl
ogo-loru-n ïgïr-a:ččï-lar togo ere.
 child-POSS3PL-ACC call-HAB-3PL why INDEF
 ‘When they are about to soften [it], they whatchamacallit, they call their daughters for some reason.’ (BeES_2010_HidePreparation_nar.033)

Example (21) can be interpreted in two different ways. Either *ilim ütte kimne:tekke* and *kömölöstökpüne* are two different, independent clauses, in which case the placeholder would function like in example (20); i.e., the lexical item which it replaces would not be overtly realized. Or it is possible to regard *kömölöstökpüne* as the lexical item which is replaced by *kimne:tekke*. From my point of view, the latter alternative is more likely, as there is clearly no pause between the two word forms in the audio file. That means that the morphology of the replaced item is not completely mirrored by the placeholder; *kömölöstökpüne* is a finite form (temporal mood, first person singular) which is built up of the (deep) morphemes *-TAK* and *-BInA*. *kimne:tekke* in turn is a non-finite form (conditional participle, dative-locative case) which is made up of the (deep) morphemes *-TAK* and *-GA*. Indeed, *-TAK* is etymologically the same item, and the two constructions have a similar reading, namely a temporal and/or conditional one. In either case, it can be stated that the placeholder does not copy the morphosyntax of the replaced item completely here. In example (22), finally, the person-number markings of the replaced lexical item and the placeholder are identical. However, the placeholder does not show the mood marking, which is seen at the replaced item.

To sum up, it can be stated that the placeholder *kimne:-* behaves very similarly to the placeholder *kim*. It can occur in contexts both with and without the corresponding lexical item being overtly realized and it often, but not necessarily mirrors the morphosyntactic properties of the replaced item. Hence, *kimne:-* can be both formally and functionally regarded as the verbal counterpart of the nominal placeholder *kim*.

4.3 *kaña:-*

First of all, it must be stated that *kaña:-* occurs far less often in the corpus (22 tokens) than *kim* or *kimne:-* (244 and 123 tokens). *kaña:-* is a verb and, hence, should be expected to show verbal morphology. The following examples show the contexts in which *kaña:-* occurs.

- (21) [...] *prav'it'elstva d'e ehie-ke ücügej-dik kömölöh-üö, kañ-ie.*
 government well 2PL-DAT/LOC good-ADVZ help-FUT.3SG PH-FUT.3SG
 '[...] the government, well, will help you and so on.'
 (BeES_1997_HistoryOfKatyryk_nar.081)

- (22) *Taņn-a-güt, kañ-i:-güt.*
 dress-PRS-2PL PH-PRS-2PL
 'You dress yourselves and so on.'
 (ChSA_KuNS_2004_ReindeerHerding_conv.077)

- (23) *Ba ogo-lor-u utu-t-um-a:rī-lar, kaña:-m-a:rī-lar [...]*
 this child-PL-ACC sleep-CAUS-NEG-CVB.PURP-3PL PH-NEG-CVB.PURP-3PL
 ‘In order not to let their children sleep and so on, [our fathers and their fathers had this tale, a tale especially for children.]’ (UkET_2002_FoxJayBuzzard_flk.003)

Apparently *kaña:-* behaves in all three examples uniformly. It occurs directly after the lexical item to which it belongs, and it reflects the morphosyntactic properties of the latter completely, even in complex verb forms like in example (25). According to the translations given by native speakers, *kaña:-* has the rough meaning of ‘and so on’ (the original translations given by the speakers are in Russian, hence its equivalent *i tak dalee*, *i tak prochee* etc.). In almost all other instances in the corpus *kaña:-* behaves exactly the same. One example stands out, but can be explained anyway.

- (24) a. *I tam ja kōmōlōh-ō:ččü-bün [...]* *razdelivaj-d-ī:*
 and.R there.R 1SG.R help-HAB-1SG fillet.R-VBZ-CVB.SIM
kañ-ī:
 PH-CVB.SIM
 ‘And there I help [with the cutting of the fish] filleting and so on.’
- b. *Kañ-ī:*
 PH-CVB.SIM
 ‘And so on.’ (BeSN_2009_Family_nar.051-052)

So in (26a) *kaña:-* shows the same behavior as in the previous examples. In (26b) the form of *kaña:-* seems to stand alone, however, it is probably a simple repetition of the same form in (26a). Hence, the form *kañī:* in (26b) refers to the lexical item *razdelivajdī:* in (26a), and remains as an anaphoric instance of the former element.

At this point, so-called co-compounds (cf. Wälchli 2005) should be mentioned, as some Turkic languages exhibit them and some of them seem to work similarly to *kaña:-*; cf. e.g. Turkish *doktor-moktor* ‘doctor or the like’ (Wälchli 2005: 168). In Dolgan, co-compounds are formed by combining two semantically similar lexical items which then take on a more general meaning (Stachowski 1997: 86). An example of the usage of these co-compounds is the following.

- (25) *Hogotogun ūōske:-bit, iñe-ti-n-aga-ti-n*
 lonely arise-PTCP.PST mother-POSS3SG-ACC-father-POSS3SG-ACC
ōjdō:-bōt La:jku dīe-n it olor-but
 remember-PTCP.NEG Laajku say-CVB.SEQ dog live-PST2.3SG
 ‘There lived a dog named Laajku, which grew up lonely and did not remember its parents.’ (BeVP_1970_Laajku_flk.001)

In this example, the combination of the lexemes *iñe* ‘mother’ and *aga* ‘father’ apparently means ‘parents’ in a more general sense. From a formal point of view, these

co-compounds do indeed behave like the placeholder *kaña:-*, as they are also built up of two lexical items which show the same morphosyntactic properties. Functionally, however, they seem to fulfill different purposes than *kaña:-* does. Most often two lexemes are combined in order to express a semantically more general lexeme (*mother* and *father* for *parents* or *brother* and *sister* for *siblings*). Moreover, both components—at least in Dolgan—are always full lexical items, whereas *kaña:-* is lexically empty. Constructions like the Turkish one mentioned above do not occur. Therefore, it can be said that co-compounding is a phenomenon in Dolgan which is formally similar to the use of the placeholder *kaña:-*, but operates in different functional domains.

To sum up, *kaña:-* occurs far less often than *kim* or *kimne:-*; it always stands after the lexical item to which it belongs and shows the morphosyntactical properties of the latter completely. Though *kaña:-* is formally a verb, its meaning is hereby close to the English phrases *and so on*, *et cetera*.

4.4 Similarities and differences in usage

From a formal point of view, it has to be mentioned that *kim* is a nominal placeholder, whereas *kimne:-* and *kaña:-* are verbal placeholders; i.e., the former one replaces nominal lexical items and the latter ones replace verbal lexical items. The most striking difference between *kim*, *kimne:-*, on the one hand, and *kaña:-*, on the other hand, is apparently their position in the clause. The former ones precede the lexical item they belong to, while the latter one follows it directly. (This does not, of course, hold true for the instances where *kim* and *kimne:-* occur without belonging to any lexical item.) Furthermore, *kim* and *kimne:-* often reflect the morphosyntactic properties of the replaced lexical item, but not obligatorily. (Partial mirroring, or no mirroring at all—which mostly can be explained then—is also observed.) *kaña:-*, however, does it consistently in every instance. Moreover, *kaña:-* occurs strikingly less often (21 tokens) than *kim* and *kimne:-* (244 and 123 tokens).

Regarding the functional domains of the placeholders under investigation, it also has to be stated that *kim* and *kimne:-* behave quite uniformly, and differ from the usage of *kaña:-*. The former are used in contexts where the speaker has trouble finding words but apparently wants to use lexical material in order to signal to the hearer that s/he is working on his/her utterance. *kaña:-*, in contrast, does not occur in those contexts, but always follows a lexical item with full meaning and is equivalent to English ‘and so on’. That means that the speaker makes up an open amount of lexical items which can be connected to the already named item.

The following table sums up the formal and functional characteristics of the three placeholders.

Table 1. Formal and functional characteristics of the placeholders

	<i>kim</i>	<i>kimne:-</i>	<i>kaña:-</i>
Nominal/verbal	nominal	verbal	verbal
Place in the clause (with respect to the relevant lexical item)	before	before	after
Possibility of standing alone	yes	yes	no
Copying/mirroring of morpho-syntax	yes, but not obligatorily	yes, but not obligatorily	yes
Context	trouble finding words	trouble finding words	adding possible similar lexical items

5. Conclusion and further discussion

First of all, it can be stated that the Dolgan material supports the impression that placeholders in many languages are more complex in terms of both form and function than, e.g., English *whatchamacallit*. The investigation of the Dolgan material supports the definition of a placeholder made by Hayashi & Yoon (2010), as all three placeholders are referring entities and are integrated into the syntactic structure of the relevant clause like the substituted lexical item is, or would have been (see also discussion below). Three theoretical issues were pointed out in Section 2 which need more research in a wider range of languages: position of placeholders wrt. the lexical item, possible hierarchy of nominal and verbal placeholders, morphosyntactic behavior of placeholders. In what follows, these issues shall be discussed on the basis of the investigated Dolgan material.

In Dolgan there are two placeholders, *kim* and *kimne:-*, preceding the respective lexical item and one placeholder, *kaña:-*, following it. The former ones obviously satisfy Hayashi & Yoon's definition of a placeholder (see above); even if they do not reflect the morphosyntactic properties of the substituted lexical item, they take the same syntactic slot, a good example being (12). *kaña:-* behaves in the same way, however, it remains to be determined whether it really is a referential expression. Obviously, *kaña:-* does not refer to the same entity as the relevant lexical item does, as it does not replace the latter; nevertheless, it makes up an open number of similar items; i.e., it is a referring entity. Therefore, also *kaña:-*, as a placeholder following the lexical item, is to be analyzed as a placeholder in *sensu stricto* according to Hayashi & Yoon's definition. Nevertheless, it obviously functions differently than *kim* and *kimne:-*. Whether this is a language-specific feature or a universal tendency remains an open question.

Regarding a possible hierarchy of nominal and verbal placeholders, the investigated Dolgan data is not unambiguous. On the one hand, the verbal placeholder *kimne:-* is derived from the nominal placeholder *kim*, which strongly supports Podlesskaya's (2010: 3) claim in favor of a hierarchy. On the other hand, the verbal placeholder *kaña:-* lacks—at least synchronically—a clear nominal counterpart. Whether the interrogative stem **qa:ń-* can be interpreted diachronically as such a counterpart remains an open question, and needs more cross-linguistic investigation.

Hence, on the basis of the investigated material, no final conclusion can be drawn about whether there is a hierarchy of nominal and verbal placeholders. *kimne:-*, being derived from *kim*, and *kim*, occurring twice as often as *kimne:-*, however, point in the direction that Podlesskaya is right in claiming that nominal placeholders are more common and, hence, higher within a frequency hierarchy than verbal placeholders.

The morphosyntactic behavior of the three placeholders in Dolgan obviously displays great variation. For all of them the tendency towards complete copying of the morphosyntax of the substituted lexical item has been observed. This holds especially true for *kaña:-*, where all instances show complete copying. *kim* and *kimne:-* also often show complete copying, but obviously not obligatorily (cf. examples (14) and (22) respectively). When the latter ones mirror the morphosyntax of the substituted item only partly, this seems to be independent from certain grammatical categories; e.g., *kimne:-* can be marked for the habitual mood (example (18)) or not (example (22)) without any obvious reason for choosing one of the options. Altogether, that implies that the morphosyntactical behavior of placeholders is not necessarily consistent in one language, but can show considerable variation.

Finally, I hope this article increases the understanding of this phenomenon from both a language-specific and a theoretical-typological point of view. Language-specifically it may clarify some peculiar features of the complex Dolgan morphosyntax, and from a typological and theoretical point of view it may shed some light on the nature and status of placeholder items in general. Nevertheless, it has to be mentioned that the research on placeholder items calls for more cross-linguistic investigation—this study may have done its bit for Dolgan.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers and—in alphabetical order—Alexandre Arkhipov, Florian Jark and Beáta Wagner-Nagy for their valuable comments on an earlier draft of this article. Without them the article would not be the same as it is now. It goes without saying that any remaining mistakes and obscurities are my sole responsibility.

Abbreviations

1	first person	COLL	collective
2	second person	COND	conditional
3	third person	CVB.PURP	converb of purpose
ABL	ablative	CVB.SEQ	sequential converb
ACC	accusative	CVB.SIM	converb of simultaneous action
ADVZ	adverbializer		
CAUS	causative	DAT	dative
CL	clitic	EMPH	emphatic

F	feminine	PL	plural
FOC	focus	POSS	possessive
FREQ	frequentative	PROPR	proprietary
FUT	future	PRS	present
GEN	genitive	PST	past
HAB	habitual	PTCL	particle
IMP	imperative	PTCP	participle
INC	inceptive ~ inchoative	R	Russian item/code-switch in(Dolgan) discourse
INDEF	indefinite	RECP	reciprocal
INF	infinitive	REFL	reflexive
INSTR	instrumental	SEM	semelfactive
ITER	iterative	SG	singular
LOC	locative	SUBJ	subjunctive
N	neuter	TEMP	temporal (mood)
NEG	negative	VBZ	verbalizer
PH	placeholder		

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12 Hayashi & Yoon 2010 is a shorter reprint of Hayashi & Yoon 2006.

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