

Experiencer marking in East Caucasian: from space to arguments

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East Caucasian languages have been described as languages with semantic alignment, i.e. with a strong association between semantic roles and flagging (Kibrik 1977). One - probably the most transparent - manifestation of this property is expression of the role of experiencer - for most subjects of perception, emotion, volition or possibility - in a way which is consistently different from both A and P (Ganenkov 2006).

While the tendency to encode experiencers separately from other subjects is consistent (but see Ganenkov 2013 on the evolution of Dargwa), there is a variation in strategies employed in different languages, including datives, directionals and dedicated “affective” forms. In this paper, we are going to argue that it is possible that, behind this morphosyntactic diversity, there lies a single diachronic path of evolution.

Our starting point is that most languages use the dative encoding, and in many of them this is the only strategy available. But with certain verbs, most Andic languages feature the affective case, which, at least in some languages of the branch, is described as flagging dedicated to experiencers - a cross-linguistically rare phenomenon (cf. Seržant and Kulikov 2013).

A closer look at the Andic branch, across which the “affective” markers seem to be cognate, shows that there is a certain variation within the branch level, with some markers having a wider scope of spatial uses (e.g. Tukita; Magomedbekova 1971), while in others the affectives seem to be mostly limited to experiential contexts. However, even in the latter, the affective may show peripheral spatial uses of the suffix (e.g. the directional use of the affective on a limited number of place names in Bagvalal; Daniel 2001). We believe that the most likely scenario - not only in typological terms but also in terms of internal reconstruction (see Alekseev 1988) - is that the original function of the marker was directional, which then acquired more abstract uses with experiencer verbs, partly displacing the dative from this domain. The fact that experiencers may develop directly from directionals provides an important addition to the cross-linguistic inventory of their diachronic sources (cf. Luraghi 2014). Interestingly, there is also a difference as to whether Andic affectives contain a gender agreement slot (Tukita, Andi), or this slot has been frozen (in most cases, with the neuter gender exponent -b-, while in Godoberi it is -r-, an exponent of another gender).

Note that, unlike most spatial forms in Andic and more generally East Caucasian, the affective does not formally make part of the spatial subparadigm of nominal declension - it

is not bimorphemic in the sense of (Kibrik 1970, Comrie and Polinsky 1998). At the same time, the directional nature of the experiencer marking remains clear in Mehweb Dargwa, where the two competitors include the dative, as in Andic, and a directional form, which, unlike Andic, is part of the spatial subparadigm and has retained directional functions in most (or all?) languages of the branch. (Other Dargwa languages show a competition between the dative and the ergative, which Ganenkov 2013 explains as transitive alignment; for Mehweb, Ganenkov explains the unusual “backward” evolution from the dative towards directional uses by contact with Avar).

Turning back to the dative option of experiencer flagging, we suggest that this strategy, too, may have directional origins. In other words, we suggest the same logic as Daniel (2014) who argues that apparently identical marking of recipients and addressees of speech verbs may result not from the extension of the dative (by the metaphor of information transfer) but as two independent parallel extensions from the directional meaning.

While the East Caucasian dative is not a typical case of dative-(al)lative homophony (cf. Turkic languages), we believe there is the following empirical evidence for its directional origins. Firstly, in some Lezgian languages, including Lezgian, Aghul, Tabassaran and Udi, the dative is widely used in directional contexts (e.g. Haspelmath 1993, Ganenkov 2008). It is not immediately clear whether this is a retention or innovation (thus, Lezgian underwent strong influence of Azerbaijani, where the same marker is robustly installed in both dative and directional domains). However, secondly, in two other branches, Lak and Tsezic, the marker of the dative, which is used on both recipients and experiencers, is identical to the directional suffix in the spatial sub-paradigm. The last argument in favor of spatial origins of the dative is the use of the dative as the flag for the Goal with verbs of contact (‘hit’, ‘throw at’) attested in various languages of the family (Daniel et al. 2010). We hypothesize that the dative here originates from spatial uses in a way similar to how directional has developed to affective in Andic, and its experiential uses are not part of the dative domain (extension of the recipient as at least seems to be implied by e.g. Haspelmath 2003) but independent evolution of the directional meaning, as in Andic.

Finally, Tsakhur affective marker, which is formally more similar to a Source than to Goal, remains an unexplained outlier (Kibrik et al. 1999, see also Ganenkov 2013).

In this talk, we plan to maintain the following claim: dative flagging of the experiencer can be understood as originating from directional uses, and all three strategies - the dative, the affective and the directional - may be viewed as three waves of grammaticalization of spatial to experiencer marking (Dative the Oldest, Affective the Middle, Directional the Youngest). We are also going to test the following hypotheses:

- specification of the Andic affective to experiential uses leads to the gender slot being frozen

- synchronic division of experiencer flagging between directive and dative strategy can be generalized across branches where such split is observed, indicating parallel evolution or recurrent change

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