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Implications of case and agreement patterns in three Caucasian dialects spoken in Turkey:
Pazar Laz, Ardesheni Laz and İnegöl (Acharian) Georgian

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The aim of this paper is to introduce two different patterns of morphological leveling observed in case paradigms of İnegöl Acharian Georgian (IG), and Ardesheni Laz (AL), – two closely related Caucasian languages spoken within the borders of Turkey. Based on data from our own fieldwork, we observe that in IG, the suffix –*ma* standardly referred to as the ergative case marker and reserved for agents in Standard Georgian (SG) is extended to the theme subjects of unaccusative and passive verbs, as shown by the contrast in (1b-c) and (2b-c). In AL on the other hand, the zero nominative form, which is reserved for theme subjects and objects is extended to cover agent and experiencer subjects, which normally bear ergative and dative respectively in other dialects of Laz, e.g. Pazar Laz (PL). See (3) and (4). We interpret these case alternations as the morphological reflection of the rise of a more dominant nominative-accusative system in AL and IG in comparison to ST and PL.

Standard Georgian
(1) a. Kal-**ma**   i-tir-a   b. Kal-**i**   mo-kvd-a   c. (Me)   xel-**i**   ga-mi-tq-d-a
       woman-erg prv-cry-3s   woman-nom pv-die-3s   me.dat   hand-nom pv-1o-break-passive-3s
       'The woman cried.'   'The woman died'   'My hand broke'

İnegöl Georgian
(2) a. Kal-**ma**   i-tir-a   b. Kal-**ma/-i**   mo-kt-a   c. (Me)   xel-**ma/-i**   gi-mi-tq-d-a
       woman-erg prv-cry-3s   woman-erg/nom pv-die-3s   me.dat hand-erg/nom pv-1o-break-passive-3s
       'The woman cried.'   'The woman died'   'My hand broke'

Pazar Laz
(3) a. Bere-**k**   i-bgar-s.   b. Bere-∅   do-ğur-u.   c. Bere-**s**   ma g-o-c'ondr-u.
      child-erg   prv-drink-3s   child-nom pv-die-3ps   child-dat me pv-prv-forget-3s
      'The child is crying.'   'The child died.'   'The child forgot me.'

Ardesheni Laz
(4) a. Bere-∅   i-bga-y.   b. Bere-∅   do-ğur-u.   c. Bere-∅   ma g-o-c'ondr-u.
      child-nom   prv-drink-3ps   child-nom prv-die-3ps   child-nom   me pv-prv-forget-3s
      'The child is crying.'   'The child died.'   'The child forgot me.'

In canonical nominative-accusative systems like English at the main clause level subjects are not differentiated from one another in terms of their semantic roles, case morphology or agreement morphology they trigger on predicates. Split ergative systems like PL and SG, on the other hand, differentiate four predicate classes, i.e. Class I for transitives with agents, Class II unaccusatives, Class III unergatives and Class IV psych-predicates, which exhibit different case and agreement patterns across three tense/aspect series (Holisky 1991, Harris 1981, 1982, Anderson 1984, Kocima&Bucak'lişi 2003)

In PL across tense/aspect series I and II subjects bearing agent, theme and experiencer roles appear marked with ergative, nominative and dative case respectively. Number agreement on the verb is only obligatory for agentive subjects (5d-e), whereas it is optional for others (5a-c). Inversion, which is always available for psych-predicates (5b) in all tense/aspect series, is only possible for predicates with agentive subjects in Series III and cannot apply to unaccusatives. For all subjects under inversion 3p default agreement is required in the verb final agreement slot (5b-c). When we turn to AL, we see that number information of subjects of all predicate classes is obligatorily reflected on the verb (6a-e).

Pazar Laz
(5) a. Bere-epe-∅ col-**es/-u**   b. Bere-epe-s ma go-c'ondr-**es/-u**   c. Bere-epe-s   u-bgar-ap-u-**ran/-n**
        child-pl-nom fall-3pl/3s   child-pl-dat me pv-forget-3pl/3s   child-pl-dat prv-cry-s.m-SIII-ppl/3s
        'The children fell.'   'The children forgot me.'   'The child had cried.'

     d. Bere-epe-k u-k'ap'-**es/*-u**   e. Bere-epe-k kart'ali do-t'k'v-**es/*-u**
        child-pl-erg prv-run-3ppl/3ps   child-pl-erg letter   pv-write-3ppl/3ps
        'The children ran.'   'The children wrote the letter.'

Ardesheni Laz

(6) a. Bere-epe-∅ col-**ey/*-u**   b. Bere-epe-∅ ma go-condr-**ey/*-u**   c.Bere-epe-∅ u-bgar-ap-u-**(r)an/*-n**
       child-pl-nom fall-3pl/3s   child-pl-nom me pv-forget-3pl/3s   child-pl-nom prv-cry-SI-SIII-3pl/3s
       'The children fell.'   'The children forgot me.'   'The child had cried.'

   d. Bere-epe-∅ u-k'ap'-**ey/*-u**   e. Bere-epe-∅ kart'ali do-t'k'v-**ey/*-u**
       child-pl-nom prv-run-3pl/3s   child-pl-nom letter pv-write-3pl/3s
       'The children ran.'   'The children wrote the letter.'

We observe a pattern parallel to the asymmetry in PL and AL in SG and IG. While in SG plural agreement of nominative subjects as opposed to ergative marked subjects is optional (7), in IG plurality is obligatorily expressed in the same contexts (8).

Standard Georgian   *İnegöl Georgian*
(7) (Mas)   ga-u-tq'-d-a   satvale-eb-i.   **(8)** Me   satamaş-eb-i/-ma gi-mi-tq-d-en/-*a
    him.dat pv-3o-break-passive-**3s** glasses-pl-nom   me.dat toy-pl-nom/erg   pv-1appl-break-passive-**3pl/*3s**
    'His glasses broke.'   'My toys got broken.'

The asymmetries observed above can be interpreted as the effect of the spreading of a nominative-accusative system. This is further supported by two other pieces of data from AL and IG. One of these is the fact that just like other predicate classes, unaccusatives can also appear in inversion constructions under series III (9a-b). Thus, AL no longer differentiates between predicate classes in terms of the tense/aspect series.

Ardesheni Laz
(9) a. Hako dido bere   u-ğur-ap-u-n.   b. Hako kaltopi u-y-ap-u-n.
       here many child prv-die-s.m.-SIII-3p.modal   here   potato prv-be-s.m.-SIII-3p.modal
       'Here many children have died.'   **'**Here potato has grown.'

The other effect of the nominative-accusative system has to do with the blocking of plural marking on the verb in IG. The dative arguments of the verb, which obligatorily induce a plural marker on the verb form in SG is blocked by the presence of a singular nominative case-marked argument in IG. This difference is shown in (10) and (11). A similar phenomenon is also observed in the case of psychological predicates, this time in reverse: a nominative case-marked object obligatorily blocks the expression of plurality induced by the dative marked subject on the verb in IG (13), but not in SG (12).

Standard Georgian   *İnegöl Georgian*
(10) Me   tkven   g-xed-av-**t**   **(11)** Me   tkven   gi-nax-av-∅
    I-nom   you-pl-dat   2o-look-sf-pl   I-nom   you-pl-dat   2o-look-sf-sg
    'I am looking at you.'   'I am looking at you.'
Standard Georgian   *İnegöl Georgian*
(12) Tkwen   me   g-axsov-var-t   **(13)** Tkwen   me   g-axsov-var**/*-t**
     you.dat.pl me.nom 2o-remember-1cop-pl   you.dat.pl me.nom   2o-remember-1cop/*pl
    'You remember me.'   'You remember me.'

As is well known, the presence of a nominative-accusative system has already been attested in Series I in SG and in some verbal person agreement paradigms. We will discuss our findings in AL and IG in terms of their implications for the spreading of yet further patterns typical to the nominative-accusative system.

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