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## Person marking and information structure in Nakh-Daghestanian

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### 1. Introduction

#### What is the function of person indexing?

- reduplicating 'redundant' information
- reference tracking in discourse
- highlighting the grammatically privileged participant

#### Characterization of person indexing

- trigger of the person indexing
- position of person indexing

#### Person indexing in Nakh-Daghestanian

- Nakh-Daghestanian (or East Caucasian or North-East Caucasian) languages are spoken in Northern part of the Caucasus (Russia, Azerbaijan, Georgia)
- salient grammatical feature: gender/number agreement on verbs, partially on adjectives, adverbs
- person indexing is not very frequent in Nakh-Daghestanian
- overviews: Helmbrecht (1996), Schulze (2007a)
- among the languages that have it are: Dargi, Lak, Tabasaran, Batsbi, Udi, and to a lesser extend Hunzib, Akhvakh and two Avar dialects
- generally viewed as a relatively young category (in contrast to the pervasive and probably older gender/number indexing)
- only one person is indexed (with the exception of Tabasaran)
- indexing is regulated by various hierarchies
- in Dargi, Lak, and Udi (Harris 2002: 44-63) person markers express term focus
- focus (Dik et al. 1981) "what is relatively the most important or salient information in the given setting"
- term focus (or constituent focus or argument focus): whenever the scope of focus is not on the predication as a whole, but on some part of it
- **two types of term focus:**
- complete (or presentational or information focus): the focus fills a gap in the pragmatic information of the addressee; new information (e.g. answers to WH-questions)
- **contrastive** (or identificational): a reply to the addressee's contrary belief of information (e.g. correction by replacing, restricting or expanding), characterized by exhaustiveness (i.e. it implies that the predication holds only for the focused element out of a set of elements given in the context) (e.g. cleft constructions, prosodic prominence, focus particles)

### 2. Dargi languages

- a group of dialects/languages that are at least partially mutually unintelligible
- a total of around 500,000 speakers in eastern and central Daghestan

- person indexing usually consists of an enclitic set and two suffix sets that co-occur with full pronouns or NPs (cf. van den Berg 1999, Sumbatova 2011, Sumbatova 2013)
- only first and second persons are indexed, the third person is unmarked or marked otherwise
- (almost) only finite verb forms can be indexed

## 2.1. Sanzhi Dargwa

- enclitics and suffixes
- hierarchy of person marking: 2>1>3

### Person enclitics

|   | SG  | PL  |
|---|-----|-----|
| 1 | =da | =da |
| 2 | =de | =da |
| 3 |     |     |

### Person suffixes

|   | SG    | PL    | SG   | PL     | SG | PL     |
|---|-------|-------|------|--------|----|--------|
| 1 | -d(i) | -d(i) | -lle | -lle   | -a | -a     |
| 2 | -t:e  | -t:a  | -t:e | -t:a-l | -e | -a(ja) |
| 3 |       |       |      |        |    |        |

### Person enclitics

- used with verbs, nominal, prepositional phrases, adverbs, adjectives, etc.
- 2sg =de is homophonous with the past enclitic (in Sanzhi and probably in all other Dargi varieties)
- used with many of the indicative verb forms
- for the third person usually the copula ca- is used, but in certain copula clauses the copula itself can take a person marker
- the origin is unknown (proposed origins: pronouns, auxiliaries)

(1) d-erč-ib-le                      pojezd-le    či-ka-d-at-ur=**da**                      da<sup>s</sup>rɣa<sup>s</sup>lla  
 1/2pl-lead.PFV-PRET-CVB    train-SPR    SPR-down-1/2pl-let.PFV-PRET=1    evening  
 ‘(They) took us and sat us on a train in the evening.’

(2) u            šupir=**de**  
 2sg          driver=2sg  
 ‘You are a driver.’

- in the default case they are attached to the verb, but they can also be attached to nouns, pronouns, adverbs, adjectives, etc.

-> term focus

- the verb must take a special form (non-finite) when the person marker is encliticized to another constituent

(3) du-l            hana      t’ala<sup>s</sup>h-ne      ic-ul=**da**  
 1sg-ERG    now      dishes-PL      wash.IPFV-ICVB=1  
 ‘Now I am washing the dishes.’

(4) du-l            hana      t’ala<sup>s</sup>h-ne=**da**      ic-an,              c’il ...  
 1sg-ERG    now      dishes-PL=1      wash.IPFV-OBLG    then  
 ‘Now I am washing THE DISHES, ...’ (e.g. later I will clean the windows).

(5) du-1 hana=**da** t'ala<sup>h</sup>-ne ic-an  
 1sg-ERG now=1 dishes-PL wash.IPFV-OBLG  
 'NOW I am washing the dishes.'

(6) du-1=**da** hana t'ala<sup>h</sup>-ne ic-an  
 1sg-ERG=1 now dishes-PL wash.IPFV-OBLG  
 'It is ME who is washing the dishes now.'

## 2.2. Examples from other Dargi languages

- can be reinforced by other focus markers that follow the person markers

- Xajdakov (1986: 88) mentions two characteristics of such focus construction in Standard Dargi:

- constituents focused by means of person markers occur more often at the beginning of the clause (i.e. the non-focused material follows the focus) than at the end
- when the focused constituent follows the predicate, the alignment changes (ergative is replaced by absolutive):

(7) Standard (Akusha) Dargwa (Xajdakov 1986: 88)

a. huša-**ni=ra**=gu kaʁur-ti d-elk'-un-ti  
 2pl-ERG=2=EMPH letter-PL NHPL-write-PRET-ATTR  
 'It was YOU who wrote the letters.'

b. kaʁur-ti d-elk'-un-ti huša=**ra**=gu  
 letter-PL NHPL-write-PRET-ATTR 2pl=2=EMPH  
 'It was YOU who wrote the letters.'

- also within an infinitival clause

(8) Tanti (Sumbatova 2013: 252)  
 dam [χ:ink'-e=**da** d-erč:-iž] b-ik:-u-se  
 1pl.DAT khinkal-PL=1 NHPL-eat.PFV-INF N-want.IPFV-PRS-ATTR  
 'I want to eat KHINKAL.'

## 3. Lak

- around 100,000 - 150,000 speakers living in central Daghestan next to the Dargi area
- person indexing via two sets of enclitics that co-occur with full pronouns or NPs (Helmbrecht 1996, Schulze 2007a, b)
- set I is used with all TAM categories, set II only with a few verbal forms
- person indexing is usually governed by the absolutive argument (S/O) (with some exceptions)
- person enclitics occur on the verb, but also on nouns, pronouns, etc.
- only finite verb forms can be indexed, and the indexing is obligatory
- maybe they originate from an auxiliary (Helmbrecht 1996: 131)

Person enclitics, set I

|   | SG       | PL       |
|---|----------|----------|
| 1 | =ra      | =ru      |
| 2 | =ra      | =ru      |
| 3 | =r(i)/=∅ | =r(i)/=∅ |

Person enclitics, set II

|   | SG   | PL   |
|---|------|------|
| 1 | =jaw | =jaw |
| 2 | =jaw | =jaw |
| 3 | =ja  | =ja  |

- (9)  $\kappa$ aj t'ij u=**ra** kan-a-j=gu u=**ra**  
 a. plow QUOT COP=1/2sg eat.DUR-PRS=ADD COP=1/2sg  
 'I am plowing and I am eating.' (Xalilov 1976: 208)
- b. t:ul du Sulejman=**ni**. žu x:uj:s:a dus-tal=**lu**  
 1sg.OBL-GEN friend Sulejman=3 1pl good friend-PL=1/2pl  
 'My friend is Sulejman. We are good friends.'  
 ([http://www.lakkumaz.narod.ru/russko-lakskiy\\_razgovornik\\_digiev.html#glava14](http://www.lakkumaz.narod.ru/russko-lakskiy_razgovornik_digiev.html#glava14))

- person enclitics express term focus
- the verb must bear a participle suffix

- (10) na q:at:a b-uw-s:a-r  
 a. 1sg.ERG house(III) III-build.PST-PTCP-3  
 'I have built a house.' (Kazenin 1998)
- b. na=**ri** q:at:a b-uw-s:a  
 1sg.ERG=3 house(III) III-build.PST-PTCP  
 'It is me who has built the house.' (Kazenin 1998)
- c. na q:at:a=r b-uw-s:a  
 1sg.ERG house(III)=3 III-build.PST-PTCP  
 'It is a house that I have built.' (Kazenin 1998)
- d. [Context: correction in a newspaper. In the preceding newspaper was written that a holiday took place on the kutan of Karasha.]  
 ga mažlis K'amaqalla-l q:utandalij=**ja** b-i<w>k'-s:a  
 that party(III) Kamkal.OBL-GEN kutan.SPR=3 III-be.PST<III>-PTCP  
 'The party was on the kutan of KAMKAL.' (Kazenin ms: 224)

- the person marker can be encliticized to a part of the predicate (in addition to its normal position on the auxiliary), e.g. the nominal part of a compound verb or the non-finite verb in a periphrastic verb form
- this leads to term focus on the predicate as a whole

- (11) bijals:a laqšiwrijn haz.âxu-nu=**ru** b-u-s:a  
 sufficient height.SPR.LAT get.up-PST.CVB=**1/2pl** HPL-be.PRS-PTCP  
 '(We) GOT UP to a sufficient height.' (Kazenin ms: 225)

- the person markers can be followed by other focus markers
- the focus construction is restricted in its word order in a way which is not attested for neutral clauses, since non-focused constituents cannot occur between the verb and the focus
- in general, focused material can follow the verb

- (12) ga-na-l b-ul-u-s:a=**r** t:u-n ču  
 a. 3sg-OBL-ERG III-give-PST-PTCP=3 1sg.OBL-DAT horse(III)  
 'He gave me a horse.' (Kazenin 2002: 298)

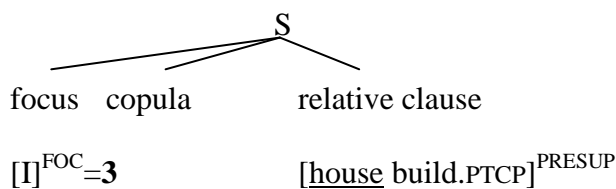


- (15) Tanti Dargi (Sumbatova 2013: 272)  
 hit:a-c:ele ag-ur-se ζu sa-j=di?  
 3pl.OBL-COMIT go.pfv-PRET-ATTR 2sg COP-M=2sg.Q  
 ‘Did YOU go with them?’

**Kazenin (2002)**

- the person markers serve the function of copulas in nominal predicate clauses and in verbal predicate clauses (→ finiteness markers)
- it cannot be shown that the person markers are of pronominal origin (for Dargi and Lak)
- focus constructions with person markers are cleft constructions
- the person marker is the head of the focus construction
- it has two dependents: the focused element and the presupposition (which has the form of a relative clause)
- the focus cleft can occur to the left of the presupposition, to its right, or in situ:
- focus extracted to the left:

- (16) na=ri q:at:a b-uw-s:a  
 1sg.ERG=3 house(III) III-build.PST-PTCP  
 ‘It is me who has built the house.’ (Kazenin 1998)



- focus in situ: this is a somewhat abnormal construction because in this case the presupposition (the relative clause) is interrupted by the focused material

**Problems** (Sumbatova 2013: 459-460)

- the focus construction does not seem to be bipartite or biclausal, i.e. it cannot be obviously divided into two parts, so its analysis is unclear
  - the focused element gets its case assigned from the lexical verb, not from the copula (or person marker)
  - the focus can occur in any position in the clause, it does not need to occur sentence-initially or sentence-finally

**More questions**

- Why is in Standard Dargwa in a construction such as (7a), but not in (7b) ergative case marking on a focused agent allowed?
- How can we handle the agreement? (12), (17) (long-distance agreement?)
- What about other types of corrective focus, can they also be expressed via person markers?

- (17) Tanti (Sumbatova 2013: 464)  
 Pat'imat-li hit:u-d=sa-r/=sa-d niš:ala q'wa'l-e ic:-ob-se  
 Patimat-ERG there-NHPL=COP-F/COP-NHPL 1pl.GEN cow-PL milk-PRET-ATTR  
 ‘Patimat milked our cows THERE.’  
 -> two possibilities for gender/number agreement

## 5. Typological parallels

- in **Paez** (isolate; Columbia) person markers can also be used as focus markers (see Gerdel & Slocum 1976: 269-270, 442)

- Paez has person/number/gender markers indicating the subject, normally added to the verb  
- with certain TAM forms the person markers can be added to other constituents than the verb which is then in focus (object, time/manner/location adjuncts)

- question: Does the verb in (18b) have a non-finite form?

(18) Paez (Maas 2004: 378)

a. xuʔna        ʃxamb-na    uʔx-ue-ts-**txu**        juʔ  
yesterday    village-to    go-IPF-PRG-FAC.1sg    them  
'Yesterday I went to the village.'

b. nenga-su-**tx**                                    uʔx-ue-ts        juʔ        saʔ        tja-xu        paʔx  
Belcazar-through-FAC.1sg    go-IPF-PRG        THEM    and        DEM-from    come

jaʔ-**tx**

already-FAC.1SG

'I passed Belcazar and I am already back from there.'

- in **Somali** (and probably other East Cushitic languages) focus markers also index person (and negative polarity) (cf. Appleyard 1989)

- the verb form in these constructions is reduced (i.e. expresses less categories than normal)

- it is the same form that also occurs in relative clauses

- the focus markers derive from an original copula verb that showed person indexing, so the focus constructions have the structure of clefts (Frascarelli & Puglielli 2003)

(19) Somali (Appleyard 1989: 295)

a. Cali    ninkii        **ayuu**        lacagtii        siiyey  
Ali    man.DEF    FOC.3sg    money.DEF    give.PST.3sg  
'Ali gave the money TO THE MAN.' or 'It was to the man that ...'

b. Cali    ninkii        lacagtii        **ayuu**        siiyey  
Ali    man.DEF    money.DEF    FOC.3sg    give.PST.3sg  
'Ali gave THE MONEY to the man.' or 'It was the money which ...'

- **Malayalam** (Dravidian; India): focus constructions by means of clefts (Kazenin 2002)

- in right-extracted focus constructions accusative case marking on the object is omitted, but not in case of in-situ focus (similar to (7b))

## 6. Conclusion

- there are a few languages that employ person markers for the expression of contrastive term focus (though which types of contrastive focus still needs to be investigated)

- this type of focus construction is particularly common in the Nakh-Daghestanian languages

- the term focus constructions in Nakh-Daghestanian share some features with cleft constructions

- diachronically as well as synchronically the cleft analysis poses a number of problems

- Are there more such languages?

- Can person markers only mark contrastive focus?

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