

AN OVERVIEW OF GENDER AGREEMENT AFFIXES IN THE CAUCASUS

Online workshop: Diversity and evolution of gender, noun
class and classifier systems

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Filip Larsson

Doctoral student, Lund University

filip.larsson@ling.lu.se

Gender in the Caucasus

- Gender/Noun classes are found in two non-related Caucasian language families, i.e. Northeast Caucasian (NEC, Nakh-Dagestanian) and Northwest Caucasian (NWC).
 - Found in almost all Northeast Caucasian languages, except e.g. Lezgian and Aghul (Haspelmath 1993; Magometov 1970)
 - Only found in two Northwest Caucasian languages, i.e. Abkhaz and Abaza (Chirikba 2003; Lomtadze & Klychev 1989)

Caucasian genders: General tendencies

- Genders in the Caucasus are usually marked on verbs and adjectives by affixation
- Almost all the languages differentiate masculine and feminine (except e.g. Tabasaran (Babaliyeva 2013)), and they also make a distinction between human and non-human. The core of both the NEC and NWC systems is therefore:
 - Masculine (Class I, in the noun class tradition)
 - Feminine (Class II)
 - Non-human (Class III)
 - + Various inanimate genders

The largest NEC systems have up to six genders, i.e. Chechen, Ingush and Andi (Nichols 1994; Nichols 2011; Salimov 2010).

A typical gender system of Dagestan

- The most basic Dagestani gender systems can be exemplified by Dargwa (Musaev 2002):

<u>Genders in Dargwa</u>	<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
<u>Masculine (Class I)</u>	w-VERB-w	b-VERB-b
<u>Feminine (Class II)</u>	r-VERB-r	b-VERB-b
<u>Non-Human (Class III)</u>	b-VERB-b	d-VERB-d

- These are also the most frequent phonological markers, as gender is mainly marked with either **b**, **r**, **w/v**, **d** and **j**. The plural distinction between human (I & II) and non-human (III and the rest) is also typical.

A typical Nakh gender system

- The gender system in Chechen is described in a slightly different way (Nichols 2011), as the non-human genders are semantically opaque:

<u>Genders in Ingush</u>	<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
<u>Masculine Human</u>	v-VERB-v	b-VERB-b
<u>Feminine Human</u>	j-VERB-j	b-VERB-b
<u>BB</u>	b-VERB-b	b-VERB-b
<u>BD</u>	b-VERB-b	d-VERB-d
<u>DD</u>	d-VERB-d	d-VERB-d
<u>JJ</u>	j-VERB-j	j-VERB-j

Northwest Caucasian gender systems

- Abkhaz and Abaza have highly similar gender systems (Chirikba 2003; Lomtadidze & Klychev 1989). They clearly differ from the NEC systems as they also differentiate person and absolutive and ergative subjects:

Genders in Abkhaz	Singular	Plural
<u>Masculine (Class I)</u>	w-VERB (2SG) d-VERB (3SG, ABS) j-VERB (3SG, ERG)	ʃ ^w -VERB (2PL) j-VERB (3PL, ABS) r/d-VERB (3PL, ERG)
<u>Feminine (Class II)</u>	b-VERB (2SG) d-VERB (3SG, ABS) l-VERB (3SG, ERG)	ʃ ^w -VERB (2PL) j-VERB (3PL, ABS) r/d-VERB (3PL, ERG)
<u>Non-Human (Class III)</u>	w-VERB (2SG) j-VERB (3SG, ABS) a/n-VERB (3SG, ERG)	ʃ ^w -VERB (2PL.) j-VERB (3PL, ABS) r/d-VERB (3PL, ERG)

Caucafix

- My doctoral project, Caucafix, is a database of more than 10,000 nominal and verbal affixes found in 55 languages of the Caucasus from five language families.
- All affixes are collected from previous grammatical descriptions.
- Each affix is coded for grammatical function and phonological form, thus enabling some interesting insights into the gender affixes in these languages.
- I will therefore present some of my preliminary findings from an excerpt of 31 languages.

31 Languages from Caucaffix

- Northeast Caucasian:
 - Nakh
 - Chechen
 - Ingush
 - Batsbi
 - Avar-Andic
 - Avar
 - Andi
 - Tindi
 - Bagvalal
 - Chamalal
 - Akhvakh
 - Ghodoberi
- Lezgetic
 - Tabasaran
 - Rutul
 - Tsakhur
 - Kryz
 - Budukh
 - Archi
- Dargic
 - Dargwa
 - Kaitak Dargwa
 - Kubachi
 - Itsari Dargwa
 - Sanzhi Dargwa
 - Mehweb
- Lak
 - Lak
- Tsezic
 - Tsez
 - Khwarshi
 - Hinuq
 - Bezhta
 - Hunzib
- Khinalug
 - Khinalug
- Northwest Caucasian:
 - Abkhaz
 - Abaza

Frequency of gender markers

- The most frequent gender markers are, in descending order:
 - B (found in all languages)
 - J (frequent feminine marker)
 - R (frequent feminine marker)
 - W/V (frequent masculine marker, complementarily distributed)
 - D (frequent inanimate marker)
 - L
 - M
 - N
 - H
 - S (only found in Khinalug)
 - F (only found in Khinalug)

NEC Gender markers per branch

	Nakh	Avar-Andic	Lezgian	Dargic	Lak	Tsezic	Khinalug
B	3	7	6	6	1	5	1
J	3	7	2	2	0	5	1
R	0	6	6	5	1	4	0
W/V	3	7	5	6	1	0	1
D	3	2	6	6	1	0	1
L	0	2	1	0	0	1	0
N	0	1	0	0	0	2	0
H	0	0	1	0	0	1	1

NEC Gender marking per branch

	Nakh	Avar-Andic	Lezgian	Dargic	Lak	Tsezic	Khinalug
MASC (I)	v/b	w/b, w/r	r/b, w/b, Ø/b	w/b	Ø/b	Ø/b	j/v, h/f
FEM (II)	j/b	j/b, j/r	r/d, r/b, d/r	r/b	d/b	j/b, j/r	s/f, z/v
NH (III/B)	b/b	b/r, b/j	b/d, v/d, b/r	b/d	b/b	b/r, m/n	v/j, f/h
INAN (IV)	d/d	b/b, d/d	d/d, Ø/d	d/d	d/d	r/r, j/r, j/n	h/h, j/j
V	b/d	r/r, j/j			b/d	r/r, n/n, l/l	
VI	j/j	r/j					

Four atypical languages

- The previous slide showed the most common gender affixes for each group, but there are some languages that stand out due to their atypical gender systems:
 - Rutul (Lezgetic)
 - Akhvakh (Avar-Andic)
 - Lak (own branch)
 - Khinalug (own branch)

Atypical language I: Rutul

- Rutul has a four gender system but with some unexpected patterns (Alekseev 1994a):

Genders in Rutul	<u>Singular Prefixes</u>	<u>Singular Infixes</u>	<u>Plural Prefixies</u>	<u>Plural Infixes</u>
Masculine (I)	h-, j-, r-	-d-, -r-	d-	-d-, -l-
Feminine (II)	r-	∅	d-	-d-, -l-
Non-Human (III)	v-, b--	∅	h-, j-, l-	-l-
Inanimate (IV)	h-, j-, d-	-d-, -r-	h-, j-, d-	-d-, -r-

Atypical language II: Akhvakh

- Akhvakh has a three gender system but with the unusual feature of vocalic gender affixes (Creissels 2020):

Genders in Akhvakh	<u>Singular Prefixes</u>	<u>Singular Infixes</u>	<u>Singular Suffixes</u>	<u>Plural Prefixes</u>	<u>Plural Infixes</u>	<u>Plural Suffixes</u>
Masculine (I)	w-, u-	-u-	-o	b-, m-, o-	-o-	-i
Feminine (II)	j-, i-	-i-	-e	b-, m-, o-	-o-	-i
Non-Human (III)	b-, m-, o-	-o-	-e	r-, e-	-e-	∅

Atypical language III: Lak

- Lak has a five gender system but with minimal differences between the genders (Murkelinskij 1971):

Genders in Lak	<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
Masculine (I)	∅-w-	b-w-
Feminine (II)	d-r-	b-w-
Non-Human (III)	b-w-	b-w-
Inanimate (IV)	d-r-	d-r-
House (V)	b-w-	d-r-

Atypical language IV: Khinalug

- Khinalug has a four gender system and is both a geographical and gender affixation outlier, as it starkly diverges from the rest of the family (Kibrik 1994).

Genders in Khinalug	<u>Singular Prefixes</u>	<u>Singular Infixes</u>	<u>Singular Suffixes</u>	<u>Plural Prefixes</u>	<u>Plural Infixes</u>	<u>Plural Suffixes</u>
Masculine (I)	j-, h-	∅	-j, -h, -d	b-, v-, f-	∅	-v, -f
Feminine (II)	s-, z-, ts-	-s-	-s, -z	b-, v-, f-	∅	-v, -f
Non-Human (III)	b-, v-, f-, p ^h -	∅	-v, -f	j-, h-	∅	-j, -h
Inanmiate (IV)	j-, h-	∅	-j, -h	j-, h-	∅	-j, -h

Affixation patterns

- Five affixation patterns can be discerned:
 - Only prefixing
 - Prefixing-infixing
 - Prefixing-suffixing
 - Prefixing-infixing-suffixing
 - Only infixing (Budukh)

	Number of languages	Language(s)
Only prefixing	9	Tsez (Alekseev & Radžabov 2004)
Prefixing-infixing	3	Lak (Murkelinskij 1971)
Prefixing-suffixing	10	Chechen (Nichols 1994)
Prefixing-infixing-suffixing	8	Andi (Salimov 2010)
Only infixing	1	Budukh (Alekseev 1994)

Affixation patterns per branch

	Nakh	Avar-Andic	Lezgian	Dargic	Lak	Tsezic	Khinalug
PREF	0	2	0	1	0	4	0
PREF-INF	0	0	2	0	1	1	0
PREF-SUF	2	2	1	3	0	0	0
PREF-INF-SUF	1	3	2	2	0	0	1
INF	0	0	1	0	0	0	0

The smallest system: Tabasaran

- Tabasaran (Lezgic) can be described as solely having a human/non-human distinction (Babaliyeva 2013), which is only true for the singular however. The system is also phonologically minimal with only three markers: **D**, **R** and **B**.

<u>Genders in Tabasaran</u>	<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
<u>Masculine (Class I)</u>	d-VERB-r, r-VERB-r	d-VERB, r-VERB
<u>Feminine (Class II)</u>	d-VERB-r, r-VERB-r	d-VERB, r-VERB
<u>Non-Human (Class III)</u>	b-VE-b-RB-b	d-VERB, r-VERB

Trimorphemic gender systems

- Could the smallest system of Tabasaran suggest that fewer phonological markers can predict the number of genders?
- Firstly, the Nakh languages only employ **V**, **J**, **B** and **D**, but they do still have 5-6 genders (Nichols 1994; Nichols 2011)!
- Could trimorphemic gender systems behave differently?
- We shall therefore investigate:
 - Tsez
 - Budukh

Tsez

- Tsez is a Tsezic language which only employs the three most frequent markers of **B**, **J** and **R** (Alekseev & Radžabov 2004).

<u>Genders in Tsez</u>	<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
<u>Masculine (Class I)</u>	∅-VERB	b-VERB
<u>Feminine (Class II)</u>	j-VERB	r-VERB
<u>Non-Human (Class III)</u>	b-VERB	r-VERB
<u>Inanimate (Class IV)</u>	r-VERB	r-VERB

- Tsez has a four gender system in the singular, which is made possible by the zero-morpheme, which is shared by all Tsezic languages (Khalilova 2009; Forker 2013; Kibrik & Testelets 2004; van der Berg 1995).

Budukh

- Budukh is another Lezgian language which also has a trimorphemic gender system, and it is interesting as it only makes use of infixation (Alekseev 1994b).

<u>Genders in Budukh</u>	<u>Singular</u>	<u>Plural</u>
<u>Masculine (Class I)</u>	VE-∅-RB	VE-b-RB
<u>Feminine (Class II)</u>	VE-r-RB	VE-b-RB
<u>Non-Human (Class III)</u>	VE-b-RB	VE-d-RB
<u>Inanimate (Class IV)</u>	VE-d-RB	VE-d-RB

- Budukh also has a four gender system, which is also enabled by a zero-morpheme infix. Another important similarity between Tsez and Budukh is the retention of an explicit Feminine marker.

Preliminary discussion

- The gender systems of the Northeast Caucasian languages have a rather defined inventory of gender affixes, which makes it interesting to study the interaction between loss and retention of genders in relation to their phonological markers. These processes are poorly understood, but the possibility of phonological factors being crucial to changes in nominal classification is worth considering. It is however difficult to discuss the causality and chronology of these changes with any greater certainty.
- What can these preliminary findings tell us about gender marking in general? Is it possible to find similar patterns in other language families?

Conclusions

- Gender systems are in my opinion inevitably intertwined with their morphological and phonological manifestations, as explicit and salient marking is a potentially important factor in gender retention.
- The importance of the different types of affixation shall not be underestimated as it affects gender marking.
- The variation of the Northeast Caucasian gender systems in both phonological markers and affixation types deserves further investigation, particularly in connection with the affiliated lexemes.
- The categorization of Northeast Caucasian genders is not adequately solved, as the gap between Nakh and Dagestanian is apparent.

Thank you for your time and attention!

- Questions?
- Comments?
- Reflections?

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