

Insubordination in the Caucasus

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Languages in the Caucasus, as many other languages in Eurasia, have a rich inventory of what are normally classified as non-finite verb forms: infinitives, masdars, participles and converbs. Nakh-Daghestanian languages fit well into this picture. They make use of non-finite verb forms in subordinate clauses (1) and as part of periphrastic verb forms in main clauses (2). Some of these verb forms can also be used to head an independent main clause (3), which is at first sight unexpected given the widespread assumption of a correlation between finiteness and clause type (independent main clause headed by a finite verb vs. dependent subordinate clause headed by a finite or a non-finite verb). Such phenomena have been discussed from a typological point of view by Kalinina (2001) and Evans (2007) who has coined the term insubordination for ‘the conventionalized main clause use of what, on prima facie grounds, appear to be formally subordinate clauses’. Another term repeatedly used in the literature is desubordination (e.g. Jendrascheck 2009). In this talk I will focus on Avar, Dargi, and the Tsezic languages Hinuq and Bezhta. I will analyze various kinds of non-finite verb forms thereby applying Evan’s characterization of insubordination and test whether it matches the Daghestanian data. I will pay special attention to the semantic side of insubordination and show how the use of non-finite verb forms in main clauses can be functionally explained. In addition, I will embed the analysis into the wider discussion of finiteness by discussing whether the respective verb forms justify the claim of Kalinina & Sumbatova (2007) that Daghestanian languages instantiate a special type of finiteness that is crucially different from finite/non-finite distinction in European languages.

Examples

Avar

- (1) [dur wac-al č’w-ara-j] pačaḥasul jas=gi
2sg.GEN brother-PL kill-PTCP.PST-F king.GEN girl=PTCL
‘the king’s daughter who has killed your brothers’ (Bokarev 1949: 71)
- (2) hesda-san luh-ara-w w-ugo mun
3sg.M.LOC-TRANS happen-PTCP.PST-M M-COP 2sg
‘You were borne from him.’ (Akhlakov & Khalilov 1976: 12)
- (3) ‘arac-mesed-gun ššw-ara-j jas insul roq’o-je
money-gold-CUM return-PTCP.PST-F girl father.GEN house.IN-DAT
‘With wealth the girl turned to her father’s house.’ (unwitnessed evidentiality)
(Charachidzé 1981: 172)

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