

Person hierarchy and direct/inverse marking in the Laz verb ‘give’

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It is well known that in certain languages, person-marking in verbs depends on a 1>2>3 person hierarchy. Most often, the person hierarchy determines the marking of the A and O arguments. One exception to have been noticed in the literature in Jamul Tiipay, a Yuman language (Miller 2001:162-163; Siewierska 2004:60), where the person hierarchy determines the marking of the Recipient (R) and Theme (T) of ditransitive constructions: either the R or the T is cross-referenced, depending on which one is higher on the 1>2>3 person hierarchy. This analysis of Jamul Tiipay is called into question by Haspelmath (2007:93-94), who claims that “the rule seems to be that any 1st or 2nd person object (whether R or T) is indexed on the verb, while no 3rd person object is indexed on the verb”. It will be argued that person marking in Jamul Tiipay ditransitive constructions does involve a 1>2>3 person hierarchy.

Laz (South Caucasian) is a further instance of a language where the person hierarchy determines the marking of the R and T arguments. In constructions involving the verb ‘give’, either the R or the T is cross-referenced, depending on which one is higher on the 1>2>3 person hierarchy. In (1), for instance, the 1st person R is cross-referenced (cf. *m-*), to the exclusion of the 2nd person T. In (2), by contrast, the T is cross-referenced, to the exclusion of the R.

- (1) 1st Recipient > 2nd Theme

Baba-skani-k si ma va mo-m-č-ase.
father-POSS2SG-ERG 2SG 1SG NEG PV-II1-give-FUT.I3SG
‘Your father won’t give you to me.’ (own field data)

- (2) 1st Theme > 2nd Recipient

Baba-k var me-m-č-am-s.
father-ERG NEG PV-II1-give-TH-I3SG
‘My father won’t give me to you.’ (Dumézil 1937, text 7)

Forms of the verb ‘give’ in Laz take one of two preverbs: *me-* and *mo-*. Generally, these preverbs mark deictic orientation: *mo-* indicates a movement towards the reference point (*mo-bulur* ‘I am coming’) and *me-* a movement away from the reference point (*me-bulur* ‘I am going’). With the verb ‘give’, the alternation between *me-* and *mo-* is determined by the person of the Recipient: *me-* is used when the R is 2nd or 3rd person (ex.2 and 3) and *mo-* when it is 1st person (ex.1).

- (3) *Hemu-s me-k-č-are.*
DEM-DAT PV-II2-give-FUT.I1/2SG
‘I will give you to him.’ (Žent’i 1938, text 89)

Cross-linguistically, the expected situation in ditransitive constructions is for the R to be higher on the person hierarchy than the T. In Laz, when the R is higher than the T on the 1>2/3 person hierarchy, the preverb *mo-* is used. That is, *mo-* marks the expected situation; it can thus be compared to a direct marker. When the R is lower on the 1>2/3 person hierarchy, *me-* is used, which can thus be compared to an inverse marker.

Another similarity between the preverbs *me-/mo-* and direct/inverse markers is that they reduce the ambiguity of person-marking: in a form such as *me-m-č-am-s* (ex.2), the 1st

person prefix *m-* does not tell whether the 1st person participant is the T or the R. Since the preverb *me-* indicates that the R is 2nd or 3rd person, the 1st person participant can only be the T. Cross-linguistically, orientation-marking expressions, such as *mo-* and *me-*, are one attested source for the development of direct/inverse markers (DeLancey 2001).

Abbreviations

DAT	dative	SG	singular
DEM	demonstrative	TH	thematic suffix
ERG	ergative	1	1 st person
FUT	future	2	2 nd person
NEG	negation	I	Set I cross-referencing affix
POSS	possessive	II	Set II cross-referencing affix
PV	preverb		

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