

## **Grammaticalization in Lezgian languages (East Caucasian), with special reference to Agul**

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The Lezgian languages spoken in the southern part of Dagestan (Russia) and northern part of Azerbaijan constitute the southern branch of the East Caucasian (Nakh-Dagestani) family. Like other languages of the family, they are predominantly ergative in syntax and predominantly agglutinative in morphology, and are well-known for their elaborate consonant inventories, extraordinarily rich case systems, nominal gender agreement (an archaic feature, lost in a few languages) or personal agreement (an innovative feature). There are nine languages in this group, namely Lezgian and Tabassaran (the two major languages with the developed literary standard), Agul, Tsakhur and Rutul (the three languages which became written only in 1990s), and the smaller languages Kryz, Budugh, Archi and Udi. It has been proved that Udi is the closest living relative to the (now extinct) Caucasian Albanian language, which is the only East Caucasian language with ancient written tradition. Apart from this (the available written records of Caucasian Albanian are very few), not much is known about the history of the Lezgian languages before the 19th century, when the first grammatical sketches and recorded texts were published. This is why the grammaticalization sources and the evolution scenarios of such old and prominent phenomena of the Lezgian languages as locative cases or gender agreement markers are not clear, although the attempts to discover their origins have been undertaken in works on comparative reconstruction (esp. by the late Mikhail Alekseev). Still, there are plenty of examples of more recent grammaticalization phenomena, not necessarily common to all languages of the group, and there are both typologically well-established cases and *rara/rarissima* among them.

In the present talk, I will give examples of some grammaticalization paths that are typical of the Lezgian languages and are also widely known from the cross-linguistic research, cf. ‘do’ > causative, ‘say’ > quotative, ‘one’ > indefinite article-like marker, or conditional/concessive affix > indefinite pronoun series marker. I will also mention some cross-linguistically uncommon paths which are nevertheless typically Lezgian, e.g. ‘say’ > ordinal numeral marker.

I will then survey in more detail the structure of the basic tense and aspect forms, which are mainly periphrastic, consisting of participles, converbs, or infinitives and postpositional auxiliary verbs. It is interesting that although similar source patterns are used in different Lezgian languages (e.g. Equation Schema “X is a Y”, the Manner Schema “X stays in a Y manner”, or the Purpose Schema “X acts in order to Y”, in Bernd Heine’s terms), the individual markers are not necessarily cognate, and hence probably do not go back to the Proto-Lezgian. The variation between languages is also manifested in that structurally similar forms cover different ranges of uses along the paths like ‘present > old present/habitual > future’ or ‘resultative > perfect > non-witnessed past’.

Finally, I will present the data on a (probable) typological *rarissimum*, attested in two languages of the Lezgian group, namely Agul and Archi. This is the rise of the morphologically bound form – or, strictly speaking, series of forms – meaning ‘to find out the truth value (or the

unknown variable) of the proposition'. As I will argue, these "verificative" forms, available for lexical verbs, have probably originated in the construction with the embedded interrogative clause (indirect question) immediately preceded the once autonomous matrix verb 'see'. The difference between the plausible source patterns of the Agul and the Archi verificatives, and even the dialectal variation in Agul alone, clearly show what this form is not of a very old origin; it is thus a bit mysterious why it appeared exactly in these two (not very closely related and not geographically adjacent) languages. At the same time, some other Lezgian languages seem to possess syntactic constructions which might represent the "pre-grammaticalization" stage of the morphologized verificatives.