

## Binding of clitic and non-clitic pronouns in Ossetic

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In my paper, I will describe binding properties of Ossetic pronouns, with main focus on differences between clitic and non-clitic pronouns, and discuss these data in the areal context.

Ossetic<sup>1</sup> possesses 5 classes of pronouns with different binding properties: full personal pronouns, reflexives, and a reciprocal, and, on the other hand, argument enclitics and possessive proclitics. For correct understanding of potential ambiguities in the examples to follow it is necessary to keep in mind that Ossetic lacks grammatical gender.

### 1. Non-clitic pronouns

The behavior of non-clitic pronouns is not particularly remarkable: full personal pronouns are free in an appropriately defined binding domain, whereas reflexives and reciprocals require local (i.e. minimal clause-internal) antecedents (to save space, I don't include examples of the latter two classes).

The binding domain for personal pronouns is the sentence, rather than the minimal clause:

- (1) *Medinə-mv<sub>i</sub> wotv kəsuj [cuma je<sub>\*ij</sub> mv = zərde-mv cəwuj]*  
M-ALL so looks as.if (s)he POSS.1SG=heart-ALL goes  
'Madina<sub>i</sub> thinks that I like him/her<sub>\*ij</sub>.'

### 2. Clitics

2.1. On the other hand, the behavior of **pronominal enclitics** is paradoxical: within a simple clause, pronominal enclitics must be free (2a), however, when the clitic sits in a dependent clause, the preferred binder is the subject of the matrix clause (2b):

- (2) a. *biččew<sub>i</sub> = vj<sub>\*ij</sub> winuj ajdenemv*  
boy=ACC.3SG looks mirror-ALL  
'The boy watches him/\*himself in the mirror.'
- b. *biččew-<sub>i</sub> fənduj [v = xwarv<sub>j</sub> = vj<sub>i/\*j??k</sub>]*  
boy-OBL wants POSS.3SG=sister=ACC.3SG  
*kud fa-wwinə ajden-i] voj*  
COMPL PRV-see.SUBJ.FUT.3SG mirror-OBL COR  
'The boy<sub>i</sub> wants his sister to watch him<sub>i/?k</sub>/\*herself in the mirror.'

Nevertheless, choosing a binder earlier in the discourse is possible when required by the context:

- (3) *ramazan = ni rakurda cəmej = vj*  
R=ABL.1PL asked COMPL=ACC.3SG  
*ra-jjev-ən k'osta-j tala-tv-bəl*  
PRV-change-SUBJ.FUT.1PL K-OBL seedling-PL-SUP  
'Ramazan asked us to change it (the title of a school newspaper) into "Kosta's seedlings".' @

2.2. Although the linear position of **possessive proclitics** is identical to that of full possessive pronouns, namely, the left edge of the respective NP, for a clitic it is a strong preference to find a binder within the clause (observe the contrast between 4a and 4b):

- (4) a. *v<sub>i/\*j</sub> = woš-i mad-i neke<sub>i</sub> warzuj*  
POSS.3SG=wife-OBL mother-OBL nobody loves  
'Nobody<sub>i</sub> loves his<sub>i/\*j</sub> mother in law.'
- b. *voj<sub>i</sub> woš-i made neke<sub>j/\*i</sub> warzuj*  
he/she/it.OBL.3SG wife-OBL mother nobody loves

<sup>1</sup> Digor and Iron Ossetic are all but identical when it comes to anaphora and binding properties. In this abstract, all examples are from Digor. The data have been collected during my stay in North Ossetia in May and June 2010. I thank Saukuy Aguzarov, Sveta Gatieva, Marina Khamitsaeva, Khasan Maliev, and Fedar Takazov for sharing with me their native speaker intuitions. Non-elicited examples, marked with @, are taken from the *Iræf*, the only Digor literary journal.

‘Nobody<sub>i</sub> loves his<sub>j/\*i</sub> mother in law.’

The subject is the preferred binder, (5a). In the absence of one, the sentence will become ambiguous, (5b).

- (5) a. *soslan<sub>i</sub> rustam-en<sub>j</sub> v<sub>i/?\*j/?\*k</sub> = kiwunugv ravardta*  
 S r-DAT POSS.3SG=book gave  
 ‘Soslan<sub>i</sub> gave his<sub>i/?\*j/?\*k</sub> book to Rustam.’
- b. *v<sub>i/j/k</sub> = furt soslan-v<sub>j</sub> rustam-en<sub>j</sub> p’ismo erbaxasta*  
 POSS.3SG=son S-ABL r-DAT letter brought  
 ‘His<sub>i/j/k</sub> son brought a letter from Soslan<sub>i</sub> to Rustam<sub>j</sub>.’

Thus, rather unexpectedly, possessive proclitics share at least some properties with prototypical long distance reflexives (Cole et al. 2001: xiv): they are preferably bound within the clause, but may find an earlier antecedent, and are monomorphemic, whereas ‘true’ reflexives are bimorphemic in Ossetic:

- (6) *dv = xe/\*xe ni-ttas-un = dv kvw-uj*  
 POSS.2SG=self/\*self PRV-shave-INF=ACC.2SGneed-PRS.3SG  
 ‘You should shave<sup>2</sup>.’

As I have argued elsewhere (Erschler 2009), the possessive proclitics in Ossetic is a specifically Caucasian development. Given the vast distribution of long distance reflexivization across Caucasian languages (see, for instance, Nichols 2001 for Chechen and Ingush), such behavior of the possessive clitics may be tentatively recognized as a manifestation of areal tendencies.

The parallel between clitic pronouns in Ossetic and (long distant) reflexives in Caucasian languages can be extended to argument enclitics, when logophoric uses are taken into account: whereas many languages of the Caucasus use reflexives as logophors, in Ossetic this function is reserved for clitics:

- (7) *k’war xat-t-i v-xe ba-xat-ide*  
 group time-PL-OBL POSS.3SG-self PRV-turn-SUBJ.PST.3SG  
*mičurini kosvǝg lǝg-mǝ*  
 M-OBL working man-ALL  
*cǝmǝj = vj v = xecaw-mǝ ba-waǝ-a*  
 COMPL=ACC.3SG POSS.3SG-boss-ALL PRV-let-SUBJ.FUT.3SG  
 ‘He<sub>i</sub> asked (lit. turned himself to) Michurin’s assistant many times,  
 so that he would let him<sub>i</sub> to his boss.’@

Thus, the behavior of clitics in Ossetic demonstrates how a language originally alien to a certain area may use its internal means to imitate areal phenomena (in our case, logophors and long distance reflexives).

## References

- Cole, P., G. Hermon, J.C.-T. Huang. 2001. *Long-Distance Reflexives*. San Diego, Academic Press.  
 Erschler, D. 2009. Possession marking in Ossetic: Arguing for Caucasian influences. *Linguistic Typology* 13 (2009), 417-450.  
 Nichols, J. 2001. Long-Distance Reflexivization in Chechen and Ingush. In (Cole et al. 2001: 255-278).

## Glosses

1/2/3 1/2/3 person; ABL ablative; ACC accusative; ALL allative; COMPL complementizer; COR correlative; DAT dative; FUT future; INF infinitive; OBL oblique; POSS possessive enclitic; PL plural; PRS present; PRV preverb; SG singular; SUBJ subjunctive; SUP superessive

<sup>2</sup> Unlike in the English translation, it is impossible to drop the reflexive in the original Ossetic sentence.