Emergence of VO properties in OV structures: Innovations in Caucasian Urum

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Introduction

A change from OV to VO is reported for several languages in contact situations: Quechua in contact with Spanish, Nubian in contact with Egyptian, Romani in contact with various languages of the Balkan, Karaim in contact with Russian and Lituanian, etc. (Appel and Muysken 1987, Csató 2000, Matras 2002). Generalizations on the OV-to-VO change are mostly based on linearization preferences, which is a reasonable observable but not necessarily the transferred entity at issue. The major question of the present contribution is: <u>What is the structural entity of change that underlies changes in linearization frequencies?</u>

This article deals with Caucasian Urum, an Anatolian dialect of Turkish spoken on the Small Caucasus (Georgia) (Ries et al. 2014; Schrötter 2017). In contrast to Standard Turkish (see Kural 1992, Kornfilt 1993 and subsequent research), Urum allows for postverbal bare noun phrases, stress on postverbal arguments, postverbal arguments to be within the scope of preverbal operators. Standard Turkish and Caucasian Urum are two different types of V-final languages: while the right edge of the verb is aligned with the right clause boundary in Standard Turkish, Caucasian Urum has an operation of V-fronting creating new possibilities (compare Yiddish in Haider & Rosengren 2003): the above properties of the postverbal domain are excluded in Standard Turkish because this domain is extra-clausal, which is not the case in Urum.

Current developments

The currently spoken varieties of Caucasian Urum show the emergence of new properties in contact with Russian. Young Urum speakers are competent in two registers: beyond the V-final register of their ancestors, they use a register in which the language is re-analyzed as VO. This development is partially motivated by their exposure to Russian, but the emerged data pattern shows the development of a variety in its own, which syntactically differs from Russian and from Old Urum in several respects.

The general trend can be observed in spontaneous data from speech production. The data in Figure 1 comes from a parallel corpus of 32 speakers of Urum, living in Georgia (10 speakers living in Tsalka; 22 speakers living in Tbilisi). Each speaker produced five narratives according to the same instruction. The fragments in (1) are produced by two different native speakers at the beginning of their narratives on how people make cheese in Tsalka (the referent 'cow' is in both cases new information) and demonstrate that either a OV or an VO order is possible in the same context.

(1)   a. ...   *ineg-i*   *sağ-ier-ler*
                 cow-ACC   milk-IPFV-3.PL
                 '...they are milking the cow'
                 (*Cheese making*, speaker 26; first mention of the referent)

      b. ...   *sağ-ier-ıx*   *ineg-i*
                 milk-IPFV-1.PL   cow-ACC
                 '...we are milking the cow'
                 (*Cheese making*, speaker 33; first mention of the referent)

Figure 1 presents the proportions of OV order (out of total of OV|VO utterances) per speaker. Valid dataset: OV|VO: (a) lexical NPs (pronominal and clausal complements excluded); (b) finite verbs; (c) verbs governing an accusative complement; (d) verbs of native origin, Russian verbs excluded (under

the assumption that heads determine directionality in code-switching; cf. Myers-Scotton 1993). The result demonstrates a change in the frequency of VO in the young generation (speakers born after 1978).
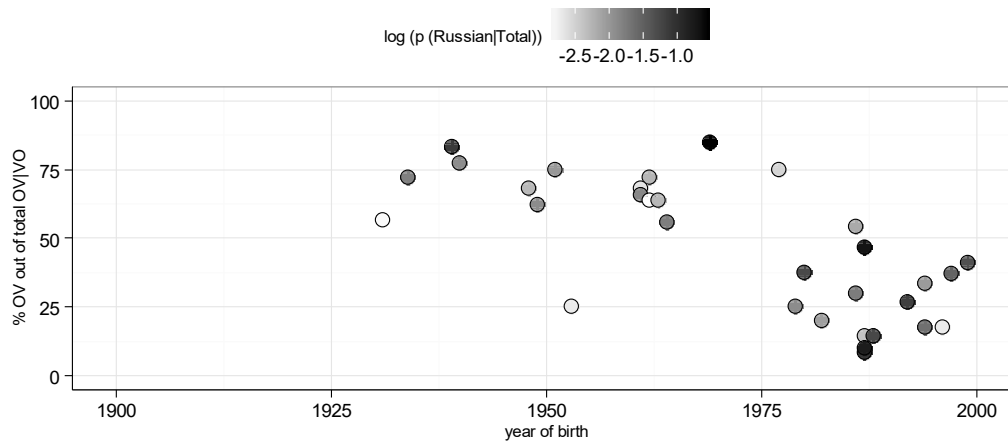

Figure 1. Proportions of OV in corpus: Explanatory variables: points are speakers, year of birth is plotted on the *y*-axis, level of darkness indicates the logarithmized *p* of loanwords per speaker (as indicator of influence form Russian).

Research question

Starting with these observations, the current study tackles the following question:

(2)   OV and VO are observables. Is the OV-to-VO change part of a larger change in the directionality of V-projections?

Method

The speakers were presented the items in a power point presentation. Since most speakers do not read the language, a native speaker was performing the utterance during the session. She was instructed to use a neutral intonation, without expressing focus on any constituent. The target items were run in the same section, mixed with filler items. Speakers were instructed to evaluate the appropriateness of the sentence in an acceptability scale from 1 (=bad) to 7 (=good).

Participants

- Two age groups of Urum speakers: Old (born before 1978); Young (born after 1978).
- Control groups: speakers of Standard Turkish and Russian.

Factorial design

In order to get insights about the linearization preferences of the Urum speakers, we examined the <u>acceptability of different orders out of context</u>. In particular, we examined the linearizations in Table 1: the possible orders of the subconstituents of a higher projection αP and an embedded projection βP (note that these do not include all permutations of three syntactic entities α, β, γ).

Table 1. Linearizations of $_{αP}[α \, _{βP}[β \, _{γP}[γ \,]]]$

subconstituents of αP	subconstituents of βP	
	$_{βP}[β \, _{γP}[\,]]$	$_{βP}[_{γP}[\,] \, β]$
$_{αP}[α \, _{βP}[\,]]$	$α \prec β \prec γ$ (head-initial)	$α \prec γ \prec β$ (head-final with α-fronting)
$_{αP}[_{βP}[\,] \, α]$	$β \prec γ \prec α$ (head-initial with βP-fronting)	$γ \prec β \prec α$ (head-final)

Note that 'β ≺ γ ≺ α' violates the *Final-over-Final Condition*, containing a V-initial projection (*to take a pear*) nested within a V-final one ([[*to take a pear*] *want*]); see Holmberg 2000, Cinque 2005, Biberauer et al. 2007).

The acceptability of these linearizations was tested in two types of syntactic construction: heads over heads in (3) and specifiers over specifiers, see (4). The heads-over-heads configuration was tested with a construction involving a VP with a V and an object constituent embedded within the projection of a higher V. The linearizations illustrated in the following were translated in Urum, Standard Turkish and Russian (for the respective target group) in four different lexicalizations (experimental items).

(3)   Heads over heads: $_{VP}[V_1 \; _{VP}[V_2 \; DP]]$

      a. $V_1 \prec V_2 \prec DP$: want to take a pear

      b. $DP \prec V_2 \prec V_1$: a pear to take want

      c. $V_1 \prec DP \prec V_2$: want a pear to take

      d. $V_2 \prec DP \prec V_1$: to take a pear want

The second configuration examines the linearization of lower adverbs for time and manner. We assume that the phrasal projections of these adverbs are specifiers of adjoined V projections:

(4)   Adjuncts over adjuncts: $[_{Vmax} [_{V'} V \; MannerP] TimeP]]$

      a. $V \prec MannerP \prec TimeP$:   *run quickly yesterday*

      b. $TimeP \prec MannerP \prec V$:   *yesterday quickly run*

      c. $V \prec TimeP \prec MannerP$:   *run yesterday quickly*

      d. $MannerP \prec TimeP \prec V$:   *quickly yesterday run*

Results

The results of the acceptability studies reveal:

(5)   Heads over Heads:

      Old Urum speakers significantly prefer $DP \prec V_2$: (3b-c).

      Young Urum speakers also accept (3a), which is also the preferred option in Russian (possible transfer).

(6)   Adjuncts over adjuncts:

      Old Urum speakers significantly prefer $TimeP \prec MannerP$: (4b-c).

      Young Urum speakers also accept (4a), which is not preferred in Russian.

Conclusions

The difference between generations does not display a shift towards a different directionality but an expansion of the array of acceptable linearizations. The Old Urum pattern is structurally simple and can be reduced to a grammar with V-final and optional V-fronting. The Young Urum pattern is mixed, adding to the configurations of their ancestors the options that are expected to be acceptable in a V-initial structure (expanding rightwards through adjunction). This pattern involves: (a) parallel grammars and (b) a genuine innovation towards head-initial that is not reducible to transfer from Russian.

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