Deverbal Nominalizations In Lak And Case Licensing

Introduction. Case licensing has been a matter of a long-standing debate. In this paper, I argue that case licensing is done configurationally (cf., Marantz 1991, Bobaljik 2008, Preminger 2014, Baker 2015, a.o.), but unlike the previous proposals I show that in Lak all case calculations are done in vP, rather than TP.

Basic Lak facts. Lak is a Nakh-Dagestanian language, spoken in Dagestan (Russia). It is a morphologically ergative language. Consider (1-4). First, subjects of intransitive clauses (unergative, (1), and unaccusative, (2)) pattern with internal arguments of transitive clauses with respect to case marking: they are absolutive. External arguments of agentive transitive verbs have ergative case, (3). Lak experiencer verbs have their external arguments in dative or locative cases, as in (4). Lak finite verbs can be marked for two types of agreement features: 1) gender (prefix or infix, glossed with Roman numerals); 2) person (suffix). Importantly, Lak agreement is always controlled by an absolutive marked argument (see Radkevich & Clemens 2013, Gagliardi et al 2014 for an overview).

Masdars. Lak has a number of deverbal nominalizations, whose properties vary with respect to their degree of noun-ness. In this paper, I discuss only one type –masdars. Masdars are deverbal nouns (El'darova 1999, Abdullaev 2010), which have both verbal (TAM marking, nominal class agreement) and nominal properties (case, gender, number).

Masdar sizes. Lak has two types of masdars, which have two sets of properties –one is formed with the suffix *–awu*, while the other one –with *–šiwu*. The *awu*-masdars are formed by adding the suffix to the verbal root, while the *šiwu*-masdars are formed on the basis of participles (El'darova 1999: 180-181). The *awu*-masdars can express two aspects (perfective and durative), whereas the *šiwu*-masdars can express all aspect and tense specifications (Magomedova 2008). Both masdars can form nouns on the basis of the verbal root 'can'. Interestingly, the two nouns have two distinctive meanings: the *awu*-masdar has a meaning of possibility *buˁx-awu*, whereas the *šiwu*-masdar has a meaning of probability *buˁxan-šiwu*. The two masdars are associated with two types of modal meanings: root/ability and epistemic, respectively. Following Butler (2003, 2006), I assume that the two types of modals correspond to two syntactic structures of different sizes, i.e., the root/ability modals are vPs, whereas epistemic modals are at least TP. Based on the TAM facts and modality differences, I suggest that the *awu*-masdars are vP-nominalizations, whereas the *šiwu*-masdars are TP-nominalizations.

Case in masdars. Lak masdars (*awu* and *šiwu*) are characterized by an interesting property – they preserve the case alignment of verbs they are based on. First, masdars formed on the basis of intransitive verbs have their arguments as absolutive marked, as in (5). Second, masdars derived from transitive verbs with agentive subjects have their external argument bearing ergative case and their internal argument bearing absolutive case, as in (6). Lak has ergative/genitive case syncretism for nouns, thus making it difficult to argue for the ergative case in masdars. This case syncretism is not absolute, however: there is a context, where Lak distinguishes the two cases, namely, personal pronouns, (7). The pronoun in the transitive clause appears in its ergative form rather than genitive, thus proving that external arguments in transitive masdars have ergative case, (8). Finally, transitive verbs with dative marked experiencer external arguments and absolutive internal argument preserve this case distribution in nominalizations, (9). The facts presented above provide strong support for the idea that case domain in Lak is just a vP (cf., Gagliardi et al 2014, Polinsky et al to appear), which requires adjustments to the original case algorithm (Marantz 1991) and its subsequent developments.

Types of cases in Lak. All Lak cases can be divided into three classes: 1) inherent/lexical (dative); 2) structural (absolutive); 3) PPs (spatial cases). Unlike a popular view on ergative being an inherent case, associated with an agent theta role (Woolford 2006, Aldridge 2008, Legate 2008), I argue that ergative is a structural case in Lak based on the following facts. Ergative case has an imperfect association with the agent theta role: 1) not all agentive arguments are ergative: 1) they are absolutive with unergatives (1); 2) some non-agentive external arguments are ergative, as in (10). Furthermore, the ergative case is not preserved in a number of A-movement: raising, (11), biabsolutives, (12), and causatives, (13). The behavior of ergative in (11-13) is different from dative, which is always preserved in these constructions.

Case algorithm in Lak. First, inherent/lexical (dative) cases are assigned. Second, if a DP is not case-marked and c-commands another DP in vP, it gets ergative case. Finally, if DP does not have any case, it gets a default case, i.e., absolutive.

Conclusions. In this paper I present novel data from Lak deverbal nominalization, *awu*-masdars, which are vP-size nominalizations. Based on case distribution in *awu*-masdars, I argue that the domain of case assignment is vP in Lak. This paper shows that there is another parametric difference between languages, i.e., the size of case domain.

Data

(1) Na   ∅-izlaj   ∅-ur-∅
     1SG.I.ABS   I-get.up.PROG   I-AUX-3SG
     'I am getting up.'

(2) Ninu   d-awx-un-di.
     Mother.II.ABS   II.SG- fall-PST-3
     'Mother fell.'

(3) But:a-l   ninu   d-uručlaj   d-ur-∅.
     father-ERG   mother.II.ABS   II-protect.PROG   II-AUX-3SG
     'Father protects/is protecting mother.'

(4) T:u-n   ga   k:awk:-un-di.
     1.SG-DAT   he.I.ABS   I.see-AOR-3SG
     'I saw him.'

(5) gaj-nn-al   plan-nu ziaˤ   xun-ni   [na   buč'-aw-ri-š:a-l]
     this.PL-OS-ERG   plan-PL bad.PRTCP   do-PST   you.ABS   come-MSD-OS-LOC-ERG
     'Your coming spoiled their plans.'

(6) Rasul-lu-l   q:ačaɣ   ∅-iwč'-awu
     Rasul-OS-ERG   criminal.I.ABS   I.SG-murder-MSD
     'the murder of the criminal by Rasul'

(7) Lak personal pronouns (partial paradigm)

	1SG	1PL	2SG	2PL
ERG/ABS	na	žu	ina	zu
GENITIVE	t:ul	žul	wil	zul

(8) a. na   q:ačaɣ-tal   buh-awu
        I.ERG   criminal.I-PL.ABS   catch-MSD
        'criminal's capture by me'

     b. *t:ul   q:ačaɣ-tal   buh-awu
        I.GEN   criminal.I-PL.ABS   catch-MSD

(9) Aˤli-n   ninu-p:u   qama   q:a-bit-awy.
     Ali-DAT   mother-father.ABS   memory   NEG-leave-MSDR
     'Ali's not forgetting his parents'

(10) Nuz-a-l   zert'   uwk-un-ni.
     door.IV-OS-ERG   creak.III.SG.ABS   III.SG.say-PST-3
     'The door creaked.'

(11) Aˤli-n   [vP t ku   baχ:i-n]   bah-un-ni
     Ali-DAT   sheep.III.SG.ABS   sell-INF   have.to-PST-3
     'Ali should sell a/the sheep.'

(12) Aˤli-∅   čawaxulu   t'it'laj   ∅-ur.
     Ali-I.ABS   window.III.SG.ABS III.open.PROG   I.SG-AUX
     'Ali is opening a/the window.'

(13) Aˤli-l   [Pat'imat   mašina   b-aχ:i-n]   b-un:-i
     Ali-ERG   Patimat.III.SG.ABS   car.III.SG.ABS III.SG-sell-INF   III.SG-do-PST
     'Ali made Patimat sell the car.'

Selected References: Baker, M. 2015. *Case: its principles and parameters*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Bobaljik, J. 2008. Where's Phi? Agreement as a Post-Syntactic Operation. In D. Harbour, D. Adger, and S. Béjar, eds. *Phi-Theory: Phi features across interfaces and modules*, Oxford University Press, 295-328. Gagliardi, A. et al. 2014. The biabsolutive construction in Lak and Tsez. *Lingua 150*: 137-170. Marantz, A. 1991. Case and Licensing. ESCOL 91: 234-253. Preminger, O. 2014. *Agreement and its failures*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.