

From Subordinator to Topicaliser: the Case of *hansı ki* in Spoken Azeri

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Right-branching subordinated clauses featuring the subordinator *ki* (often followed by a resumptive pronoun) have been attested in Azeri since the earliest written records. Having emerged as a result of contact with Iranian languages, these constructions quickly came to compete with the inherited left-branching participial constructions (BELLÉR-HANN 1995: 119–123).

- (1) *o adam-lar qalib gəl-ə bil-ər [ki*
 that person-PL winner come-CVB know-EVT:3 SUB
on-lar həm iradəli həm vicdanlı ol-sun-lar].
 that.OBL-PL also_α determined also_β conscientious be-JUS:3-PL
 ‘Only those people who are both determined and conscientious can win.’ (ŞIRALIEV & SEVORTJAN 1971: 389)

BABALIYEVA (2014) mentions a right-branching subordinating strategy using a “relative pronoun” *hansı ki*, originating in the interrogative word *hansı* ‘which’, inflected accordingly, and the subordinator *ki*. The strategy is said to be typical of spoken Azeri and explained by Russian influence.

- (2) 25 *kitab [hansı-lar-ı ki sən bir il ərzində oxu-yacaq-san]*
 25 book which-PL-ACC SUB you one year during read-PROSP-2SG
 ‘the twenty-five books that you will have read in one year’ (op. cit.)

In recent decades, younger speakers of Azeri have shown uses of uninflected *hansı ki* as a relative pronoun (3) and as a particle with topicaliser functions (4).

- (3) *bir çox workshop-lar, təlim-lər var*
 one many workshop-PL training-PL EXIST
[hansı ki biz iştirak ed-ir-ik və
 which SUB we participation do-IMPF:PRS-1PL and
bilik-lər-imiz-i art-ır-ır-ıq].
 knowledge-PL-POSS:1PL-ACC increase-CAUS-IPFV:PRS-1PL
 ‘There are a number of workshops and trainings sessions, in which we participate and increase our knowledge.’

- (4) *düşərgə-lər-in bu dəfə format-ı-nı dəyiş-ib*
 camp-PL-GEN this time format-POSS:3-ACC change-CVB
Bakı-dan bölgə-lər-ə get-məy-i fikirləş-ir-ik
 Baku-ABL region-PL-DAT go-INF-ACC think-IMPF:PRS-1PL
[hansı ki təhsil mütəxəssis-lər-i ekspert-lər –
 which SUB education specialist-PL-POSS:3 expert-PL
on-lar-ı biz apar-acağ-ıq kənd-lər-ə].
 that.OBL-PL-ACC we carry-PROSP-1PL village-PL-DAT
 ‘This time, we are thinking of changing the format of the camps and going from Baku to the provinces. (TOPIC) We are going to take education specialists and experts to the villages.’

The goal of this presentation is to use a spontaneous oral corpus from 12 Azeri speakers to analyse the extent and the manifestations of this development, as well as its exact path and triggers. The hypotheses of Russian influence will be examined closely: unlike in other Turkic languages, where such constructions have come to exist under Russian influence, in Azeri, they seem to be emerging at a time when contact with Russian has been waning.

Abbreviations

ABL = ablative, ACC = accusative, CAUS = causative, CVB = converb, DAT = dative, EVT = eventual, EXIST = existential copula, GEN = genitive, IMPF = imperfective, JUS = jussive, OBL = oblique stem, PL = plural, POSS = possessive, PROSP = prospective, PRS = present, SG = singular, SUB = subordinator

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