Flagging-drop Typology and its Relevance on Target Word Ordering

This presentation deals with the typology of flagging-drop characteristics and its relevance on word order variation in the languages of Northwest Iran with focus on Target verb constructions. Target verb constructions are syntactic structures with one and/or two place predicates which include Goals of motion and Cause-Motion verbs, Recipients of Give verbs, Addressees of Say verbs, as well as Destinations of CHANGE-of-STATE, SHOW and LOOK verbs. Target is a cover term for the semantic roles that share the same adpositions or cases and they have the tendency to appear in postverbal position (Asadpour 2021, forthcoming).

O(T)V (object-(Target)-verb) is the most frequent attested word order in the corpus of this study. In general, object and Targets can precede or follow the verb and overt expression of these constituents can influence the word order variation for instance, OTV, OVT, TVO, TOV, VTO, and VOT. There are several studies on postverbal arguments in Iranian languages for instance Haig (2015, 2017, 2021), Stilo (2018) to name a few.

Considering the position of Targets, the question is whether the preference of a special word order construction, for instance postverbal Targets (OVT, VTO or VOT) in the languages of Northwestern Iran such as Armenian, Azeri Turkic, Jewish Neo-Aramaic (NENA), Mukri Kurdish, and Northeastern Kurdish (NEK), is due to contact-induced change or internal language development. In Northwest Iran, all of these languages are under the superstratum of Persian as the official language of Iran and they have been in contact with each other for centuries.

Depending on the language Targets can be flagged by an adposition, an oblique or a dative case, or a combination of an adposition plus a case. In addition, Targets can be bare i.e., without flagging. According to the flagging system in the sample languages, two main questions can be asked: Does the position of constituents and more specifically the Target trigger the choice of flagging? Or is there a preference for a specific type of flagging? These questions and their relation to word order, the adpositional system and the oblique or direct case marking in the sample languages will be discussed in this presentation.

In addition, I will discuss several things: the flagging system in the sample languages and the way adposition and case marking express spatial meaning, different word order patterns according to different verb types, flagging of pre- and postverbal Targets and finally, I will compare and contrast the results of word order and flagging of Targets cross-linguistically. The results will be indicated in statistical diagrams to show whether the postverbal positioning of Targets as well as bare form can be candidates of areal features. In addition, the applicability of Target word order will be evaluated in terms of iconicity (cf. Haiman 1983, Givón 1985).

As part of established morphological marking in the sample languages and the attestation of various types of flagging, three stages can be defined for possibility of change in this morphological marking. Stage I is considered to be the early stage of change in the type of flagging, stage II is considered to be change in progress, and stage III is considered to be an established phase.

Keywords: Flagging-drop, Contact-induced change, Iconicity, Word order, Typology

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