48. Person Marking on Adpositions

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1. Defining the values

This map gives a survey of the distribution of languages with person markers on their adpositions. An example of a person-marked preposition is found in (1) from Maybrat (West Papuan; Papua, Indonesia).

(1)   Maybrat (Dol 1999: 88)
       T-ai   *m-kah*   *ara.*
       1SG-hit   3SG.N-with   stick
       'I hit with a stick.'

The 378 languages in the map have been characterized in terms of the four values in the table below.

@	1.	No adpositions		63
@	2.	Adpositions without person marking		209
@	3.	Person marking for pronouns only		83
@	4.	Person marking for pronouns and nouns		23
			total	378

In order to determine whether a language has person marking on its adpositions, we first need to establish whether it possesses the category **adposition** at all. In general, the major function of an adposition is to relate its object, i.e. the noun phrase with which it forms a constituent, to another nominal or a verbal constituent on the basis of a more or less specific semantic relationship, such as location, time, property, instrument or possession. Languages may use several strategies

to fulfill this function, either lexical or morphological. In example (2) below, from Barbareño Chumash (California), we have a verbal construction fulfilling such a function. What is expressed by an adverb and an adposition in the English translation, *across from*, is rendered by a fully inflected verb in this language.

(2)   Barbareño Chumash (Wash 2001: 75)
        Kʰ-ili-ʔetemé.su̎s   hi   lwí.sa̎   hiklé-kén
        1-HAB-be.across.from   DEP Luisa   DEP-1.sit
        hi-ho-̄lamé.sa.
        DEP-DIST-table
        'I used to sit across from Luisa at the table.'

Example (3), from Tauya (Madang; Papua New Guinea), shows a nominal strategy to express the locality relationship rendered by the preposition *beside* in the English version.

(3)   Tauya (MacDonald 1990: 283)
        ya   nai-sa
        1SG   rib-LOC
        'beside me'

Although diachronically forms such as the verb *Kʰiliʔetemé.su̎s* in (2) and the noun *naisa* in (3) may eventually give rise to adpositions, they will not be considered as such here. In general a specific element in a language will be assumed to be an adposition only if it is morphologically independent and displays morphosyntactic behaviour distinct from more clearcut verbal, nominal or adverbial elements in that language.

        In addition to languages such as Chumash and Tauya which encode adpositional meanings via verbs or nouns, there are languages in which the relevant relations are coded by morphological means, typically by a case suffix. The example

from Arabana (Pama–Nyungan; South Australia) in (4) illustrates this strategy. The ablative case is used to express 'away from'.

(4)   Arabana (Hercus 1994: 71)
        Maka-ru   kilta-rnda.
        fire-ABL   pull-PRES
        'He pulls it out of the fire.'

Another type of morphologically dependent expression of nominal relations is via adverbial nominal affixes, as in example (5) from Jaqaru (Aymaran; Peru).

(5)   Jaqaru (Hardman 2000: 21)
        ut-nuri-t"a
        house-within-from
        'from within the house'

Arguably a borderline case between morphological and syntactic expression are clitics which attach to the noun phrase rather than to nouns, as exemplified in (6) from Ngankikurungkurr (Daly; Northern Territory, Australia).

(6)   Ngankikurungkurr (Hoddinott and Kofod 1988: 72)
        Kalla   ngayi   yedi   tye   yeningkisyi   yaga=nide.
        mother   1SG   went   PST   canoe   DEM=LOC
        'My mother came in that canoe.'

In many instances, case affixes as in (4) and clitics as in (6) can be analyzed diachronically as the result of the affixation or cliticization of adpositions. However, taking a rather conservative, strictly syntactic position on this matter, I will not consider such bound forms as true adpositions. A further argument for not doing so may be that since such forms are (syntactic) dependents rather than heads, they are not potential targets for person marking but, to the contrary, may attach

themselves to pronominal forms. As a result of this, all languages which resort exclusively to strategies as exemplified under (2)–(6) are coded as having no adpositions (value 1) on the map. They are by definition irrelevant for the type of person marking under consideration here.

Having established the criteria for what constitutes an adposition, we must now determine what qualifies as **person marking on adpositions**. In order for a potential marker to be considered a person marker it should fulfill two requirements. First, there should be enough differentiation between the relevant forms that a distinction exists either between all three persons or between any combination of first, second or third person. One of the forms may be zero. And secondly, the forms should be affixes rather than clitics.

Languages with only bare adpositions, and those for which markers on their adpositions do not meet the criteria mentioned above irrespective of the nature of the adpositional object, are assigned value 2 (**adpositions without person marking**). English is a case in point, and so is Polish, as shown in example (7a–b).

(7)   Polish (Anna Siewierska p.c.)
　　a.　*Idę　　　do　Kasi.*
　　　　go.FUT.1SG　to　　Kasia.GEN
　　　　'I go to Kasia.'
　　b.　*Idę　　　do　niej.*
　　　　go.FUT.1SG　to　　3SG.F.GEN
　　　　'I go to her.'

When languages do show person marking on adpositions for pronominal objects but not for nominal objects, they are assigned value 3 (**person marking for pronouns only**). Paamese (Oceanic; Vanuatu) has this kind of adpositional marking, as shown in (8a–b) below.

(8)   Paamese (Crowley 1982: 182)

    a.   *Mail   Ham   sān   lēta   min-nau*
        Mail   Ham   3SG.send   letter   to-1SG
        ranaut   Vīla.
        from.place   Vila
        'Mail Ham sent me a letter from Vila.'

    b.   *Kai selūs   min tāta   ven   mane onak.*
        3SG 3SG.speak to   father about money POSS.1SG
        'He spoke to father about my money.'

Typically, in these languages the adposition has no separate independent pronominal object apart from the person marker itself, although there may be one under certain conditions, such as contrastive stress. Hence, more often than not, the person marker on the adposition is the only element representing the pronominal object. In this group are also included languages for which only a subset of the adpositions have person marking. In Burushaski (isolate; Pakistan or India) the postposition *pači* 'with' in (9a) occurs with a prefixed person marker; the postposition *gʌnɛ* 'for' in (9b) does not.

(9)   Burushaski (Lorimer 1935: 96, 97)

    a.   *Ja   aˑ-pʌči   huruˑt.*
        I   1SG-with   stay
        'Stay with me.'

    b.   *ja   gʌnɛ.*
        I.GEN   for
        'for my sake.'

The occurrence of person marking may also be subject to other constraints. For instance, in Kiribati (Oceanic) there is person marking only when the referent is animate, as shown in (10a–b).

(10)   Kiribati (Groves et al. 1985: 65)

    a.   *nako-ia   mooa*

           to–3PL   chickens

           'to the chickens'

    b.   *nakon taian nii*

           to   ART   coconut.trees

           'to the coconut trees'

However, borderline cases such as Spanish, which has bound pronominal forms for just one preposition, *con* 'with', and only for the first and second person singular forms, were coded as showing value 2.

Finally, there are languages which have **adpositional marking with both pronominal and nominal objects**. Abkhaz (Northwest Caucasian; Georgia) is a case in point, as shown in (11).

(11)   Abkhaz (Hewitt 1979: 103)

    a.   *a–jə̀ɣas   a–q'nə̀*

           DEF–river   3SG–at

           'at the river'

    b.   *sarà   s–q'ənt°'*

           I   1SG–from

           'from me'

Such languages are assigned value 4. Like value 3, this value includes languages which do not normally use a full pronoun in constructions such as (11b).

In my sample there were no languages of the other logically possible type, which would have person marking on adpositions for nominal but not for pronominal objects.

2.   Geographical distribution

The phenomenon of person marking on adpositions is not distributed evenly over the world. First, the languages of North America and Australia lack adpositions much more often than the other areas. Of the North American languages in the sample,

48% are adpositionless; for Australia the percentage is as high as 73%. The overall figure for adpositionlessness is around 17% in the current sample.

If we look only at languages with adpositions, then the following may be observed. Person marking on adpositions is non-existent in Australia, and rare in Southeast Asia (3 out of 30 languages, all belonging to the Austronesian family). For Southeast Asia this does not come as a surprise, given the general lack of person marking in this area. In Australia, on the other hand, person agreement on the verb is found in the majority of the languages, which may be an indication that the two types of person marking are not necessarily closely related to each other. In Mesoamerica and the Pacific, person marking on adpositions is clearly abundant. These are the only areas where a majority of the languages have this kind of marking: over 60%.

Other striking figures are the relatively frequent occurrence of languages of type 4 (person marking for pronouns and nouns) in Mesoamerica. It is above all the Mayan and Uto-Aztecan languages which have this property. In Africa, although this area has a relatively high amount of type 3 languages, none of the languages show type 4. Eurasia, New Guinea and South America are all close to the overall distribution. Of the 20 Indo-European languages in the sample, only the two Celtic languages Irish and Welsh and the two Iranian languages Persian and Kurdish have any marking at all; they all show type 3.

3.   Theoretical issues

Due to the fact that linguists differ in the criteria that they use in determining the existence of adpositions in a language, there may be considerable discrepancies in the percentage of languages which are seen to lack adpositions altogether. My figure of 17% is close to that of Hawkins (1983), and also Tsunoda et al. (1995). By contrast, Matthew Dryer (chapter 85 of

this atlas) is more liberal in his interpretation of what constitutes an adposition and treats in some cases as adpositions what I have considered to be case clitics.

A second point that deserves a word of comment is that it is not always possible on the basis of the information presented in grammars to decide what the precise grammatical status of a specific person marker is, i.e. whether it is indeed an affix attached to the adposition, or a clitic, or even a more or less independent pronominal form. Apart from morphosyntactic information, the phonological form of the person marker may be an indication, as well as the amount of (dis)similarity to other person markers, notably independent and possessive pronouns.

A final issue which needs to be briefly mentioned is the diachronic status of the markers. They may be relatively recent, and introduced after adpositions were formed in the language. In these cases they are often phonologically related to the actual personal pronouns of the language, typically in their object or oblique form. This is the case in about 12% of the languages that display some form of person marking on their adpositions. Or the markers may be relatively old, and already present on the verbal or nominal precursor of the adposition. If there is similarity to any other person marker in the language at all, similarity to subject or object agreement markers on the verb may (but need not) be an indication of the verbal origin of the adposition. This seems to be the case in about 13% of the relevant languages. Similarity to possessive markers, which was attested in about 24% of the relevant languages, may point to a nominal origin. In around 41% of the cases, person markers on adpositions bear a similarity to both verb agreement and possessive markers in the language concerned. In the remaining 11% no clear similarities could be detected.