

Up in the mountains: Spatial categories in East Caucasian revisited

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The hallmark of the East Caucasian languages is the bimorphemic structure of their spatial forms (Kibrik 1970, 2001; Comrie & Polinsky 1998). With very few exceptions, all languages of the family share the same makeup of spatial nominal forms, with one category (traditionally called localization) designating the spatial area defined with respect to the landmark, and the other (traditionally called orientation) expressing the motion of the trajector. The static location (essive) is usually zero-marked, while the Goal (lative, but sometimes identical to the essive) and Source (elative) are expressed by special morphemes following the suffix of the localization. This encoding is apparently similar to the English *from under the table*; what makes East Caucasian structures special is that, apparently, they employ suffixes rather than complex prepositions. In my talk, I will show that at least in some of the languages of the family the orientation marker does not have exactly the same morphological status as the localization marker, making these forms less exotic typologically but at the same time more interesting from the morphosyntactic point of view. My data comes primarily from Mehweb, a lect of Dargwa branch; but I also show that the relevant constructions are observed in languages of other branches of the family in northern Dagestan, including Tsez (Tsezic), some Andic languages, Archi (Lezgian) and, to some extent, also in Rutul, a Lezgian language of southern Dagestan. This data suggests that the morphosyntax of these forms in East Caucasian shows a range of variation that has not been previously observed and has non-trivial theoretical implications.