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## Linguistics of Kurdish and Related Languages

Erik Anonby<sup>1</sup>, and Amer Gheitury<sup>2</sup>

1. Professor of Linguistics and French, School of Linguistics and Language Studies, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada. E-mail: [erik.anonby@carleton.ca](mailto:erik.anonby@carleton.ca)
2. Associate Professor of Linguistics, Department of English Language and Linguistics, Faculty of Literature and Human Sciences, Razi University, Kermanshah, Iran. E-mail: [amer@razi.ac.ir](mailto:amer@razi.ac.ir)

The land of Iran boasts a rich historical, cultural, and linguistic heritage. This journal, *Research in Western Iranian Languages and Dialects*, is dedicated to the documentation, analysis and, ultimately, recognition of the languages of Iran, with a dual focus on the languages of western Iran, and languages in the Western division of the Iranian language family in particular.

In this first English issue, the broad mandate of the journal is in evidence through a series of articles which are geographically and typologically expansive in their coverage. The languages featured here trace a path from the northernmost province of West Azarbaijan, through Kordestan, Kermanshah, Lorestan, Khuzestan, and beyond. The theme of this issue builds on the increasingly robust body of linguistic description and analysis of Kurdish (Gündoğdu et al., 2019; Haig & Öpengin, 2022; Sheyholislami et al., 2025), but the contributions also embrace other languages related to Kurdish.

This volume opens with an article on the /-æɫ/ plural marker in Māhshahri, a Southwestern Iranian dialect spoken in Bandar-e Māhshahr on the coast of Khuzestan Province, at the north end of the Persian Gulf. The study, carried out by Reza Amini and Yazdan Choobsaz, is a welcome contribution to the documentation of this little-known Iranian variety. Māhshahri has anecdotally been grouped with Khuzestani Persian (Bozorgmehr et al., 2024). However, as the authors establish through a review of the literature and a corpus assembled from questionnaire data as well as oral texts, it shows similarities to other varieties, particularly Southern Lori, and Southwestern Fars varieties spoken in other cities of southern Khuzestan, through to the provinces of Bushehr and Fars. The article then concentrates on the /-æɫ/ plural marker, considering its patterning from perspectives of phonological variation, combinatorial possibilities, typology, grammaticalization, and language contact.

In the second study, contributed by Iraj Mehrbakhsh and Gholamhosein Karimi Doostan, the focus shifts to a theoretical treatment of agreement in Northern Kurdish (Kurmanji) spoken in West Azarbaijan province. The authors argue for a symmetric approach to analysis of agreement in direct arguments, showing that that the key

distinction between local pronouns and unmarked arguments lies in the specification of relevant  $\phi$ -features. Direct unmarked arguments enter the derivation as underspecified for these features, establishing a relation of “subset control” in agreement and acquiring their interpretation by spreading features from the agreeing head at the LF (Logical Form) interface. This study also reveals that agreement in Northern Kurdish linking (*ezafe*) constructions and pro-drop sentences involves subset control, with agreement as the only possible way to license  $\phi$ -features such as gender in inanimate arguments and person in R-expressions. Thus, a symmetric approach to agreement in Northern Kurdish is not only more economical, but necessary.

The next article treats patterns of negation in Central Kurdish (Sorani) within the typological framework proposed by Miestamo (2005). In Miestamo’s original work, where negation patterns are categorized as symmetric, asymmetric, and symmetric/asymmetric, no Kurdish varieties were represented. The study carried out here by a team of scholars – Roya Tabei, Shoja Tafakkori Rezayi, Amer Gheitury and Mostafa Hasrati – therefore fills an important cross-linguistic gap. Drawing on a data corpus from radio and television broadcasts in the Ardalani dialect of Central Kurdish, spoken in and around Kordestan’s capital city Sanandaj, the authors demonstrate that this variety exhibits a symmetric/asymmetric typology of negation. Specifically, negation is symmetric in past verbal constructions, whether perfective or imperfective, but is asymmetric in non-past constructions. Such a typologically-oriented approach can serve as a starting point for analyses of negation in other Kurdish varieties, which show significant variation in this component of the grammar.

The linking particle (*ezafe*) in Hawrami deverbal noun phrases is the topic of the following article, written by Jabar Mirani, Hiwa Weisi, Farogh Mirani and Rafiq Shwani. Hawrami, a West Iranian variety strongly associated with Kurdish but with highly distinctive linguistic patterning, is spoken in large pockets of the mountainous areas where Kordestan, Kermanshah, and eastern Iraq come together. While previous research on this linking particle in Hawrami has accounted for syntactic features in simple noun phrases, its semantic profile is more intricate in deverbal noun phrases. Much of this complexity stems from artifacts of the language’s ergative/absolute verbal system, which persist in the deverbal noun phrases. To tackle this descriptive puzzle, the authors make use of a Distributed Morphology (DM) framework, appealing to the idea of syntactic movement to account for patterning of the deverbal phrases in host sentences.

A further study, contributed by Parisa Najafi, Seyed Najm al-din Shahrokhi and Seyed Mohammad Hosseini, explores equative constructions in the Laki dialect of Nur Abād-e Dolfān in north-east Lorestan. Within the typological framework put forward by Haspelmath (2017), the authors first inventory different types of linguistic constructions that can be used cross-linguistically, and in Laki, to communicate

comparative functions. They argue that, among various construction types, equative and similitive constructions exhibit the greatest semantic and structural similarity to each other. Concerning equative constructions specifically, there are seven recurrent strategies used for conveying equality and, while there is a preference for omitting the standard marker, the degree marker is generally retained.

The geographic and typological coverage of the volume comes full circle in Ali Pirhayati's engaging article on phonological interpretation of glottal stops in Persian, a Southwestern Iranian cousin of Kurdish. As the author aptly notes, the phonemic status of word-initial glottal stops in Persian continues to be a subject of controversy. Interestingly, the author revives the idea that the glottal stop is phonemic in all positions, regardless of whether a word is inherited or is borrowed from, for example, Arabic (where word-initial glottal stop can be phonemic) or English (where it is not phonemic). Readers are urged to consider evidence beyond acoustic analysis, which on its own is inconclusive. It is worth noting here that in contrast to many other languages in Iran, psycholinguistic representations of written Persian – where, following Arabic conventions, it is graphically impossible to write a vowel-initial word – persist as a dominant factor in native speaker assertion of the reality of word-initial glottal stop in the spoken language, and this observation may provide some insight into the passion with which this article defends an interpretive position which is at least partially philosophical.

To conclude, we are pleased to offer this collection of articles as a celebration of the linguistic heritage and diversity of Iran. We trust that these substantial investigations into the structural patterning of Kurdish and related languages in western Iran will serve as a springboard to further research in this area of the world and, in doing so, will return new insights to the descriptive, typological, and theoretical traditions that have provided a forum for this work in the first place.

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