

The case clitic -o in Northern Talyshi: morphology, semantics and origin.

Northern Talyshi is one of the dialectal groups of the Talyshi language, probably, the largest one, whose speakers are divided by the border between Iran and Azerbaijan.

Northern Talyshi has two cases, direct and oblique, although vowel-final words do not regularly show the oblique case ending, as well as plural nouns have one for both cases.

	Direct	Oblique
Singular	∅	-i/-ə
Plural	-on/-un/-ün/-ân ¹	

The functions of the direct case are mostly restricted to the subject and indefinite direct object marking in nominative-accusative clauses and the object marking in ergative clauses. The oblique case ending marks definite direct objects in nominative constructions, subjects in ergative constructions and possessors in nominal groups. Other syntactic relations are served by adpositions, the category which in Northern Talyshi includes prepositions and postpositions.

Even though the adpositional category and the case system of Northern Talyshi were investigated in detail by the previous researchers (see D.Paul 2011 and Budalalu 2005 for Anbarani; Pireiko 1976 and Miller 1953 for Azerbaijani Talyshi), the origin, the morphological peculiarities and the semantics of some of the markers are still unclear. My talk is devoted to the marker -o (Azerbaijani Talyshi)/-u (Anbarani, Iranian Talyshi). The data was collected during my fieldwork in Ardabil province of Iran (for Anbarani Talyshi) in 2016 and Saint Petersburg for Azerbaijani Talyshi in 2015 and 2016.

Miller considers -o to be a single polysemantic suffix, derived from the Old Iranian ablative *āt. However, his grounds do not sound convincing. In the talk, I will show that the case clitic -o/-u in Northern Talyshi is better analyzed as two different markers, both distinct in origin and semantics: one is the dialectal variant of the postposition -ro, while the other one is probably the reduced form of the postposition -ku.

One of the arguments for suggestion that the latter has a postpositional origin, is the fact that it apparently used to be attached after possessive clitics (even though there seems to be only a few examples of possessive clitics in modern Talyshi, mostly in poetic texts, severely influenced by Persian, and in the idiomatic expression *moə-m-o biə* 'to be born (lit. 'to come from my mother', where -o is an ablative marker, and -m is a possessive clitic). There is a strong tendency of the marker -o/-u to be attached to direct forms of nouns, if it has the spatial semantics (mostly ablative) (1), whereas the oblique case is needed to combine with the -o in the non-spatial (mostly benefactive) meaning (2).

¹ Although functions and origin of the oblique case endings are absolutely the same in all the Northern Talyshi dialects, there is a slight phonetic variation among them. The same is right for the plural ending.

1) *Təvə kum-o bi-yə*

axe barn-POST IMP-bring

Bring an axe from the barn.

2) *Az bo iştə dust-i-o həmmə bə-kə-m.*

I for RFL friend-Obl-POST all FUT-do-1Sg

I will do everything for my friend.

Of course, *-o* is not the only ablative and benefactive marker; there are also postpositions *-ku* and *-ro*, that I have mentioned above. The general meaning expressed by the postposition *-ro*, is benefactive, while *-ku* is mostly an ablative postposition. I see a strong relation between *-o* as a non-spatial marker and a postposition *-ro*, on the one hand, and *-o/-u* as an ablative marker, and *-ku* on the other hand, due to some syntactic and semantic features.

The benefactive *-o* is fully identical to *-ro*, except for the fact that speakers often consider postpositional groups with *-o* and *-ro* to be dialectal variants, but sharing the same meaning (3). Both non-spatial *-o* and *-ro* agree with the oblique form of nouns. Moreover, both of the postpositions can be used to form a supine verbal forms and are used in the same circumpositional constructions (2).

3) *Az bo hovə-jo kukla-m sa./ Az bo hovə-ro kukla-m sa.*

I for sister-POST doll-encl.Erg1Sg buy.

I bought a doll for my sister.

The ablative *-o* seems to be completely interchangeable with *-ku*, at least, in the aspect of semantics, , but there is still a significant syntactic difference between them: *-o/-u* agrees with the direct form of nouns and also tends to be used with consonant-final nouns (although there are many examples of the *-o* being attached to vowel-final words), whereas the postposition *-ku* agrees with the oblique case of nouns and does not seem to have phonological restrictions, by contrast with the ablative *-o/-u*. Even though speakers often claim *-o/-u* to be a reduced form of *-ku*, one might consider otherwise given the fact that *-ku* and *-o* show different case agreement. In Anbarani, which belongs to the Northern Talyshi dialectal group, as well as Azerbaijani Talyshi, D.Paul and Budalalu consider the ablative *-u* in Anbarani to be the reduced form of the postposition *-ku*, used mostly after consonant-final words (there is no evidence of the benefactive *-o* in Iranian Northern Talyshi). So there seems to be a common tendency in Northern Talyshi for the postposition *-ku* to develop into *-o/-u*, especially after consonant-final nouns. I would consider the ablative *-o* to be a new case affix derived from the postposition *-ku*, despite the fact that it does not regularly receive word stress like the oblique case affix. This phenomenon seems to be a part of the common tendency in North-Western Iranian languages, which are reported to develop new case systems from postpositions (see Rastorgueva, Edelman 1975). The benefactive *-o* seems to preserve its postpositional status, at least

regarding its oblique case agreement. With all the data considered, I conclude that the benefactive *-o* and the ablative *-o* are different markers with distinct origin and morphology; the former is a regular enclitic, whereas the latter seems to present a new case suffix.