

## CHAPTER V GRAMMATICAL RELATIONS

In our discussion of the core grammatical relations, we will use the abbreviations S, A, and O, in which S is the single argument of an intransitive clause; A is the argument of a transitive clause that corresponds most closely with the semantic role of agent; and O is the argument of a transitive clause that corresponds more closely with the role of patient.<sup>1</sup>

The non-core grammatical relations, or obliques that are distinguished by adpositions, were already discussed in Chapter III. In this chapter we will discuss the obliques that are marked with the *-i* case suffix, the same case suffix that is used to mark A, O, and S core arguments.

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<sup>1</sup> The SAO model was developed by Dixon (1979) and also by Comrie (1981b:64) (who uses the abbreviations S, A, and P) and developed further by Dixon & Aikhenvald (2000:2). Dixon & Aikhenvald give this definition for S, A, and O: “There are two universal clause types: intransitive clause, with an intransitive predicate and a single core argument which is in S (intransitive subject) function; transitive clause, with a transitive predicate and two core arguments which are in A (transitive subject) and O (transitive object) functions. That argument whose referent does (or potentially could) initiate or control the activity is in A function. That argument whose referent is affected by the activity is in O function.”

## 1. CORE VERB ARGUMENTS

Yaghnobi has a nominative-accusative system of grammatical relations with Differential Object Marking<sup>2</sup> (DOM) (Bosong, 1991). In addition, it has a split in the system of grammatical relations on aspect. When progressive aspect<sup>3</sup> is not marked in the verb complex, the system is just DOM, while in phrases with progressive aspect it has a quasi-tripartite system of grammatical relations in which the A and S arguments are also marked.

Grammatical relations are distinguished by case marking, agreement of the pronominal verb suffixes, and word order.

### 1.1. CASE MARKING

There is only one case marker, *-i*. This case marker has the same distribution as the “marked case” forms of pronouns and demonstratives as described in Chapter III. Case marking is split on aspect, but animate definite O arguments are marked, regardless of aspect. In clauses with verbs that are not inflected for progressive aspect, the system of grammatical relations is nominative-accusative with DOM. In clauses

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<sup>2</sup> Differential Object Marking is described by Bosong (1991) as an object marking system in which the grammatical case and semantic content of an object (O argument) NP interact to determine case marking. Bosong identifies three semantic dimensions which typically affect object marking: inherence (animacy hierarchy), reference/definiteness, and to a lesser degree constituency in the verbal predicate (participation in the semantic frame of the verb). The evolution of DOM is a virtually universal phenomenon. It typically develops in a language which has lost a well developed case system through phonetic erosion. Its occurrence is widespread and has been observed in language families as disparate as Semitic, Romance, Slavic, Iranian, and Turkic.

<sup>3</sup> The split appears to be on progressive aspect vs. non-progressive aspect rather than on imperfective vs. perfective since imperfective sentences like the one below show nominative-accusative marking. More data needs to be analyzed for different types of imperfectives before establishing whether the split is just on progressive aspect or on the broader category of imperfective aspect.

with progressive aspect, the system is quasi-tri-partite, meaning that the S, A, and O arguments may potentially all be in the marked case, or, if the O argument is not definite and animate, only the A and S arguments will be marked.

#### 1.1.1. CASE MARKING WITHOUT PROGRESSIVE ASPECT

The S argument of intransitive clauses is not marked with the *-i* case suffix in clauses without progressive aspect morphology, as can be seen in example 1, where *karim* ‘Karim’ does not have the *-i* suffix, even though ‘Karim’ is animate and definite.

- (1) *karim a- tir*  
 Karim PST -go  
 ‘Karim left.’

The A argument of intransitive clauses is not marked, but the O argument is marked if it represents a definite, animate entity, as shown in example 2. This pattern, in which the O argument is distinguished from the S and A arguments, is a nominative-accusative system of grammatical relations.

- (2) *nahav safed sutur -i kuf*  
 that.very white sheep -ACC kill.2S  
 (ACC)  
 ‘Kill exactly that white sheep.’

The sentences in example 3 illustrate the types of O arguments that do and do not take the *-i* case suffix. In sentence a, the O argument, *tup* ‘ball’, does not take the *-i* suffix because it is both indefinite and inanimate. In sentence b, the O argument, *tup* ‘ball’, is now definite but does not take the *-i* suffix because it is inanimate. In sentence



- d. With a definite, animate O argument

*safar*            *naxfir -i*        *miltik -i -pi*        *a- deh*  
 Safar            **deer** -CS        rifle -CS -with        PST- hit  
 A                O        (ACC)        (GEN)  
 ‘Safar shot (hit) the **deer** with his rifle.’

- e. With a mechanical definite, animate O argument

*av -i*            *mo fn -i*            *man*        *a- xirin -im*  
 3Per -CS        **vehicle** -CS        I            PST- buy -1S  
                   (GEN) O        (ACC) A        V  
 ‘I bought his **car**.’

#### 1.1.2. CASE MARKING WITH PROGRESSIVE ASPECT

In intransitive clauses with progressive aspect, S is marked with the *-i* case suffix, as shown in example 4. It doesn’t matter whether the S argument is indefinite and inanimate, as in sentence a, or definite and animate, as in b.

#### (4) Intransitive sentences with progressive aspect

- a. With an indefinite, inanimate S

*sank -i*            *harra -i*        *vi*            *-ak*        *ast*  
**stone** -CS        rolling -CS        become -Part        AUX  
 S        (NOM)        V  
 ‘A **rock** is starting to roll’

- b. With a definite, animate S

*karim -i*            *tir -ak ast*  
**Karim** -CS        go -Part is  
 S        (NOM)        V  
 ‘Karim is going.’

In transitive clauses with progressive aspect, the A argument is also marked with the case suffix *-i*, as in example 5. Just as with the S argument, the A argument has the -

*i* case suffix whether or not it is animate or definite, as can be seen in each of these sentences. These sentences also show that the *-i* case suffix does not appear on inanimate O arguments, as in a, but does appear on the animate O arguments,<sup>4</sup> as in b and c.

(5) Transitive sentences with progressive aspect

- a. With a definite, inanimate A argument and an inanimate O argument

*zamin -i kat dzunbon -ak -f ast*  
**earth -CS house** rock -Part -3S AUX  
 A (NOM) O V  
 ‘The **earth** is shaking the house.’<sup>5</sup>

- b. With an indefinite, animate A argument and an animate O argument

*i morti -ji xar -i kor -ak -f ast*  
 a **man -CS donkey -CS** look -Part -3S have  
 A (NOM) O (ACC) V  
 ‘A **man** is taking care of the **donkey**.’

- c. With a definite, animate A argument and an animate O argument

*safar -i xar -i kor -ak -f ast*  
**Safar -CS donkey -CS** look -Part -3S have  
 A (ACC) O (NOM) V  
 ‘**Safar** is taking care of the **donkey**.’

The system of grammatical relations in progressive aspect is almost a tripartite system, since S arguments and A arguments are always marked with the *-i* case suffix in

<sup>4</sup> No examples were elicited for indefinite, animate O arguments in progressive aspect, but it is expected that the O argument would not take the *-i* case suffix, just as with non-progressive aspect.

<sup>5</sup> This sentence was elicited from the Yagnobi language consultant as grammatical, but he said that this isn’t the usual way to say that an earthquake shook the house.

progressive aspect clauses, and the O argument is marked when it is animate (and probably definite).

## 1.2. VERB AGREEMENT

The subject usually agrees with the verb in person and in number. In clauses without progressive aspect, the pronominal suffix on the verb corresponds to A or S argument in person and number. In the transitive clause in example 6a the verb *axiʃoi:* ‘bit’ has no suffix, which indicates third person singular. This agrees with the A argument, *kut* ‘dog’. Verbs in transitive clauses may also have two pronominal suffixes, the first corresponding to the A argument, the second corresponding to the O argument, as shown in example 6b.

In the intransitive clause in example 6c, the verbs have the suffixes *-im* ‘I’, and *-om* ‘I’, which agree with the S argument *man* ‘I’. Notice that unlike all other pronominal suffixes, the past tense pronominal suffix *-im* on the verb *avovim* ‘I/we came’ only indicates person, not number.

### (6) Verb agreement with perfective aspect

#### a. Transitive

<i>kut</i>	<i>safar -i</i>	<i>a-</i>	<i>xifoi:</i>
<b>dog</b>	Safar -CS	PST-	bite - <b>3S</b>
A	O (ACC)	V	

‘A dog bit Safar.’

## b. Transitive verb with two pronominal suffixes

asp -t -i    vor -ak    v    -oʃt    atrat -t    ven -oʃt -    ʃint  
 horse -P -CS    load -NOM    become -3P.PRS    soldier -P    see -3P.PRS -2/3P  
 O    (ACC)    A    V

‘The soldiers see the horses that have been loaded.’

## c. Intransitive clause

*man*    *a- vov -im*    *taw -pi*    *maslihat*    *kun -om*  
 I    PST- come -1    you -with    consultation    do -1S.PRS  
 S    V    V

‘I came to consult with you.’

In clauses with progressive aspect there is no person or number agreement, since the main verb is non-finite and the AUX is *ast*, which does not inflect for person or number, as shown in example 7.

(7) *mox*    *tʃi*    *pijon*    *vor -ak*    *ast*  
 we    from    yesterday    look -Part    AUX  
 S    V

‘We have been watching since yesterday.’

## 1.3. WORD ORDER

Basic word order is SV in intransitive clauses and AOV in transitive, as discussed in Chapter II, section 2.2. Grammatical relations are often not apparent from verb marking, nominal marking, or context and are resolved by word order. In examples 8 and 9 the S and O arguments both have the *-i* case suffix and are only distinguished by word order and context. (Donkeys don’t usually wield canes, and humans don’t have hooves.)

- (8) *safar -i xar -i tijoq -i -pi deh -ak -f ast*  
 Safar -CS donkey -CS cane -CS -with hit -Part -3S have  
 A O OBL V  
 ‘Safar is hitting the donkey with a cane.’
- (9) *xar -i safar -i lakat -i -pi deh -ak -f ast*  
 donkey -CS Safar -CS hoof -CS -with hit -Part -3S have  
 A O OBL V  
 ‘The donkey is hitting Safar with its hoof.’

But word order in transitive clauses is somewhat flexible when the O argument is the only argument with marked case. This is shown in example 10, where the O argument precedes the A argument but the O argument is distinguished by the *-i* suffix.

- (10) *av -i kut a- xifoj*  
 he -CS dog PST- bite  
 O A V  
 ‘The dog bit him.’ (lit: ‘Him the dog bit.’)

## 2. OBLIQUES

Since the same case marker, *-i*, is used on both oblique verb arguments and core arguments, it does not serve the function of differentiating the obliques from the core verb arguments. One way obliques are differentiated is by use of adpositions.<sup>6</sup> The oblique can be identified by collocation with the adposition, as shown in example 11, where the phrase *aspi rugah* ‘top of the horse’ follows the preposition *tji* ‘from’.

<sup>6</sup> Although the *-i* suffix is used in conjunction with adpositions, it doesn’t seem to have any semantic content of its own. The meaning is provided by the adposition.

- (11) *ax tʃi asp -i rugah a- divi:*  
 3Per **from** horse -CS top PST- fall  
 (GEN)  
 ‘He fell off a horse.’ (lit: ‘He fell **from** on top a horse.’)

When there are no adpositions, obliques can usually be differentiated from core arguments by word order, since the obliques normally follow the core arguments, as shown in example 12, where *Safar*, *tup* ‘ball’, and *Karim* follow the default word order for transitive sentences of A, O, oblique.

- (12) *safar ax tup karim -i a- tifar*  
**Safar** that **ball** **Karim** -CS PST- give  
 (LOC)  
 ‘**Safar** gave that **ball** to **Karim**.’

Interpretation of the functions of *-i* on obliques is dependant on context, especially on the semantics of the verb.<sup>7</sup> Assignment of the functions of *-i* to traditional categories like locative and genitive is admittedly subjective, since the grammatical construction in each case is identical. The traditional case names are used purely for the purpose of describing the functions in terms that will be readily understood. The following sections enumerate the functions of the *-i* case suffix on obliques.

## 2.1. LOCATIVE

There are at least two functions of the *-i* case suffix that can be classified as types of locative: concrete locations and recipients.

Concrete locations such as destinations and points of departure usually occur with a verb of motion (intransitive) or caused motion (transitive), as in example 13.

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<sup>7</sup> Since there is only one case suffix, it might be more accurate to say that these are functions of the verb and the only function of the *-i* suffix is to indicate a general association between words.

(13) Use of the suffix *-i* to mark concrete locations

- a. *virot -im fahr -i a- fav / a- vov*  
 younger.brother -1S city -CS PST- go / PST- come  
 (LOC)

‘My younger brother went / came **to** the city.’

- b. *Man zamin -I sar -I a- nid -im*  
 I earth -GEN top -CS PST- sit -1  
 (LOC)

‘I sat **on** the ground.’

- c. *rufka kuti -i fun -om -ift*  
 pen box -CS put -1S.PR -PRS  
 (LOC)

‘I put the pen **in** the box.’

- d. *ɣajk -t maktab -I a- fav -or*  
 girl -P school -CS PST- go -3P  
 (LOC)

‘The girls went **to** school.’

Recipients can be regarded as abstract locations. Recipients that occur with a verb of caused motion (ditransitive) are marked with the suffix *-i*, as shown in sentence 14, where the *suturt* ‘sheep’ are the recipients of the *vef* ‘grass’.

- (14) *if sutur -t -I vef tifar*  
 this sheep -P -CS grass give  
 (LOC)

‘Give grass **to** these sheep.’

## 2.2. PURPOSE

Participles that are the purpose or goal of another verb are marked with the suffix *-i*; as shown in sentence 15, where reason the person went to Yaghnob was to get a sheep.

- (15) *ax i sutur -i nos -ak -i baxfa jaynob a- fav*  
 1Per a sheep -CS take -Part -CS for Yaghnob PST- go  
 (ACC) (PUR)  
 ‘He went to Yaghnob **to** get a sheep.’

## 2.3. GENITIVE

The functions of the case suffix *-i* that can be classified as genitive are relationships or associations like possession, shown in example 16a; part to whole shown in example 16b, where the *tfilik* ‘finger’ is part of the *dast* ‘hand’; association by use, as shown in example 16c, where the *kat* ‘house’ is associated with the *kalit* ‘key’ that is used to unlock it; and type, as shown in 16d, where *zavak* ‘drinking’ describes a type of *op* ‘water’.

(16) Genitive functions of the suffix *-i*

- a. Possessor to possessed relationship<sup>8</sup>

*if safar -i kat xast*  
 this **Safar** -CS house be  
 (GEN)

‘This is **Safar's** house.’

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<sup>8</sup> Note that the copula *xast* denotes equation, not possession. Possession is indicated by the suffix *-i*.

## e. Whole to part relationship

*av -i dast -i tʃilik -ʃdaxʃ -∅ -tʃi:*  
 he -CS **hand** -CS digit -3S hurt -3S -PRS  
 (GEN) (GEN)  
 ‘His finger hurts.’ (lit: ‘His **hand**’s digit hurts.’<sup>9</sup>)

## f. Association by use

*ijʃ kat -i kalit xast*  
 this **house** -CS key be  
 (GEN)  
 ‘This is the key to the **house**.’

## b. Association by type

*axtit tʃidoka ʒav -ak -i op ʒavar -oʃt*  
 they from.here drink -Part -CS water take.out -3P.PRS  
 (GEN)  
 ‘They are getting drinking water from here.’

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<sup>9</sup> The genitive in this sentence could also be interpreted as indicating type rather than a part-whole relationship, since both toes and fingers are called *tʃilik* and it is necessary to say *dast -i tʃilik* to distinguish fingers from toes.