

The spread of oblique marking in Taleshi: a cross-dialectal account

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Taleshi is an Iranian language (North-Western, Tatic) spoken in highly divergent varieties along the Caspian coastline on the border between Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan.

Taleshi tout court displays a two-term noun declension (direct vs. oblique). The division of labour between the direct and oblique case in the marking of grammatical relations depends on several factors (TAM features, lexical hierarchy, information structure) and interacts with a number of morphosyntactic features (verbal agreement, word order, pronominal clitics in subject reference). Marking complexity reflects in a broad range of possible combinations both within and across Taleshi dialects.

Within the Taleshi continuum, southernmost dialects present a remarkable typological peculiarity shared with neighbouring Tati vernaculars: under certain circumstances, all of the NP-heads in a clause may be oblique-marked, as illustrated in the following example:

Bâbak-i xərdan-i əştan kətâb-i cap=a das-i=na muallem-i â-du=a
Babak-OBLs child-OBLs REFL book-OBLs left=LK hand-OBLs=CCM teacher-OBLs DCT-give/PST=3s
'Babaki's child_j gave his own_j book to the teacher using the left hand'

On the basis of the data collected during my fieldwork in various Taleshi-speaking areas, I will endeavor to account for the spread of oblique marking by (a) defining the different but related functions conveyed by the oblique, (b) sketching a profile of the possible historical development of case marking in Taleshi, (c) assessing some of the consequences of this development for the grammatical framework in terms of syntactic and semantic interpretation.