

LOCATIVES ARE NOT CASES: EVIDENCE FROM LAK

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1. INTRODUCTION

Two generative views on case:

- (i) Case as a reflection of an (agreement) relation between the case-marked NP and another element in the structure (a functional head in a certain configuration for structural cases, the theta-assigner for inherent cases)
- (ii) Case as (the morphological reflection of) a functional projection on top of an NP (e.g., Toman 1994, Watanabe 2006) or a cluster of such projections (e.g., Caha 2007, 2008, 2010). There is no case-feature assignment, there is selection for a certain KP

Whereas (i) does not predict semantic cases, (ii) fails with structural ones and uninterpreted obliques, and both have problems with locative cases

This talk: an attempt to argue that “locative cases” in at least one language are not cases at all

Caveats

I know very little about Caucasian languages, so my transliterations of examples given in Russian grammars in Cyrillic may be doubly flawed. Should anyone spot a typo or a mistake, please let me know.

The names of locative cases are subject to a lot of variation and one and the same author may be inconsistent from one paper or language to the next. I use the following conventions: “essive” for stative locatives indicating position, “lative” for locatives indicating movement. Given that “ablative” is used for one of the putatively non-spatial cases in Lak, I will use “elative” to denote movement from and “allative” to denote movement to the location, with “translative” indicating movement through and “versative”, movement towards. I will also avoid naming the more complicated “near” and “next to” relations, given the existence of the “approximative marker” distinct from both and the fact that the literature has been known to use the prefixes *ad-* (as in “adessive”) and *apud-* for both them and other relations. If you know how to disentangle this confusion in a better way, tell me.

1.1. Lak locative cases

Lak (Zhirkov 1955, Murkelinsky 1971, Testeleets 2019, Kazenin 2013, etc.): locative cases are constructed by the combination of a “series” marker (indicating the spatial relation) and a “mode” marker (indicating the type of movement or lack thereof):

(1) Lak locative cases

Radkevich 2010

	essive I	allative II	elative III	translative IV	versative V
a. <i>-v(u)</i> ‘in’	∅	<i>-n</i>	<i>-a(tu)</i>	<i>-x</i>	<i>-maj</i>
b. <i>-j</i> ‘on’	∅	<i>-n</i>	<i>-a(tu)</i>	<i>-x</i>	<i>-maj</i>
c. <i>-lu</i> ‘under’	∅	<i>-n</i>	<i>-a(tu)</i>	<i>-x</i>	<i>-maj</i>
d. <i>-x</i> ‘behind’	∅	<i>-n</i>	<i>-a(tu)</i>	<i>-x</i>	<i>-maj</i>
e. <i>-č’a</i> ‘near’	∅	<i>-n</i>	<i>-a(tu)</i>	<i>-x</i>	<i>-maj</i>
f. <i>-c’</i> ‘next to’	∅	<i>-n</i>	<i>-a(tu)</i>	<i>-x</i>	<i>-maj</i>
	<i>at</i>	<i>to</i>	<i>from</i>	<i>via</i>	<i>towards</i>

Natural reanalysis: essive is the lack of a mode (i.e., Place without a Path)

Such is not always the case: in Akhvakh and Tindin essives are marked (Radkevich 2010:4 without reference; Magomedbekova 1967:61: Akhvakh essive is marked with *-e-* alternating with *-i-*)

The spellout of locational affixes is agglutinative: all lative (directional, “mode”) suffixes are added on top of the essive (locative, “series”) ones:

- (2) a. q:at- lu-v(u) inessive, I-a, Zhirkov 1955:36
 house- AUG-IN
in the house
- b. q:at- lu-vu-x intranslative, IV-a, Zhirkov 1955:36
 house- AUG-IN-TRS
through the house
- c. q:at- lu-lu-x subtranslative, IV-f, Zhirkov 1955:37
 house- AUG-UNDER-TRS
across under the house

Adjectives, demonstratives, etc., are not marked for case (Zhirkov 1955:45)

1.2. Locative case decomposition

Comrie and Polinsky 1998: the locative sub-domains of the extremely rich Nakh-Dagestanian case systems (Testeleets 2019, Mel'čuk 2006, Daniel and Ganenkov 2009, Radkevich 2010, Kazenin 2013, etc.) should not be viewed as a list of cases

In fact, their composition follows the usually assumed semantics for paths

Jackendoff 1973, 1983, 1990, Koopman 2000, den Dikken 2010, etc.: paths are constructed on the basis of places:

- (3) general consensus
-

Evidence: complex prepositions, case morphology, semantics

Lak locative cases do not fit into this system, if they are viewed as features

Let's look at the “subtranslative case”. Is it a single feature? No (cf. Radkevich 2010), both semantics and morphology argue for at least two sub-features here: [sub] ‘under’ and [trans] ‘through’. How do they end up on the NP?

NB: We set aside the issue of case-concord, since it does not exist in Lak

Take (i): the subtranslative, as in (2c), has to reflect the features of Place (*under*) and of Path (*through*): two features (at the very least) are assigned to the NP. How come they are realized agglutinatively in the order in (2c)?

- (4) a. subtranslative, IV-f (2c)
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Take (ii): [sub] and [trans] are either realizations of heads in the functional KP sequence on top of an NP or features assigned by these K-heads. In the former case (4b), how are these K-

heads different from adpositions? In the latter case, the same issue arises as before: how come the features [sub] and [trans] are both realized on the NP (or what are they realized on)?

- (4) b. subtranslative, IV-f (2c)
- ```

graph TD
 KP2 --> KP1
 KP2 --> KTRS0
 KP1 --> NP
 KP1 --> KSUB0
 NP --> house[house]
 KSUB0 --> SUB[-SUB]
 KTRS0 --> TRANS[-TRANS]

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NB: Lak has “postpositions” that are distinct from “case markers”, we will return to this issue

## 2. A REANALYSIS OF LAK SPATIAL CASES

Major intuition: locative suffixes are independent heads with lexical meaning (i.e., more like locative adpositions rather than structural cases)

However, they are not adpositions (contra Murkelinsky 1971, who argues for this analysis)

My idea: Lak locative suffixes are bound, locative *and* nominal

### 2.1. Lak locative suffixes as independent functional heads

Locative suffixes have clear **semantic import**, which is not the case for prototypical cases, such as dative or genitive

Vocative, on the other hand, is associated with just one syntactic/semantic environment, yet it cannot be claimed that the case marker itself is the source of the vocative interpretation

#### 2.1.1. Versative

Independent evidence for **versative** as a separate functional head: it **contains a class marker** agreeing with the subject of motion (Zhirkov 1955:39-40, Murkelinsky 1971:87), i.e., with the absolutive argument:

NB: On the zero augment in some case cells of the noun *aq* ‘garden’ see Murkelinsky 1971:93

- (5) a. o‘rč’ q:at -lu-vu-n-Ø-aj lavgunni. Zhirkov 1955:42  
 boy<sub>I</sub>.ABS house-AUG-IN-ALL-AGR<sub>I</sub>-VERS went  
*The boy went towards the inside of the house.*
- b. ssil ninu q:at -lu-vu-n-n-aj durcunni.  
 sister.GEN=ERG mother<sub>III</sub>.ABS house-AUG-IN-ALL-AGR<sub>III</sub>-VERS brought  
*The sister brought the mother inside the house.*
- (6) a. o‘rč’ aqu -Ø-vu-n-Ø-aj lavgunni. Murkelinsky 1971:66  
 boy<sub>I</sub>.ABS garden -AUG-IN-ALL-AGR<sub>I</sub>-VERS went-AGR<sub>I</sub>  
*The boy went towards the garden.*
- b. š:arrsa aqu -Ø-vu-n-n-aj largunni.  
 woman<sub>II</sub>.ABS garden -AUG-IN-ALL-AGR<sub>II</sub>-VERS went-AGR<sub>II</sub>  
*The boy went towards the garden.*
- c. ba‘rč aqu -Ø-vu-n-m-aj lavgunni.  
 calf<sub>III</sub>.ABS garden -AUG-IN-ALL-AGR<sub>III</sub>-VERS went-AGR<sub>III</sub>  
*The calf went towards the garden.*

This kind of agreement also characterizes some other Lak adverbials, including *šava* ‘home’ (which can be lexically specified to bear uninterpretable class features)

The position of an agreement affix indicates that **the versative is not a feature on an NP but an independent functional head**:

- other forms of the NP do not agree, so uninterpretable class features cannot be a property of the NP itself
- postulating an additional functional head to bear this agreement morphology leads to ordering issues: the class marker is located between the versative suffix and the NP

- The entire affix has to be an independent functional head

**Series markers feed derivational processes:** they appear in complex nouns formed with the location suffix *-alu-* (8) (Zhirkov 1955:33, Abdullaev and Èl'darova 2000:27):

(8) a. lamu- x- alu  
bridge BEHIND AREA  
*the area beyond the bridge*

b. vi- v- alu  
inside IN AREA  
*the interior*

**Series markers assign case themselves:** the stem they combine with is not the shortest form (absolute), but a stem derived with a root-specific augment (glossed as AUG in (2))

Zhirkov 1955:41: this stem is also what is used in compounds (9)-(10) and can be analyzed as a truncated genitive-ergative form (confirmed by Murkelinsky 1971:124):

- Irrespective of the status of the “genitive augment”, stative locative forms can be reasonably assumed to have **the syntax of compounding**, with the “series marker” functioning as the head (as in *tabletop*)

Treating locative suffixes as cases assigned by higher functional heads is more problematic: it means postulating a null functional head that is either transparent for case assignment from outside (4) or can itself be case-marked and cliticize onto its NP complement

Caveat: **all oblique cases are based on this form**, whose derivational link to the absolutive form is unpredictable (see Zhirkov 1955:30-35,43).

Vocative is based on the absolutive though (Zhirkov 1955:43)

- (11) a. q:at- ta absolutive, Zhirkov 1955:36  
           house- ABS  
           *house*
- b. q:at- lu-l genitive/ergative  
           house- AUG-GEN/ERG  
           *of the house*
- c. q:at- lu-v(u) inessive  
           house- AUG-IN  
           *in the house*
- d. q:at- lu-š:a ablative  
           house- AUG-ABL  
           *from the house*

Given the abundance of forms regarded as cases in Lak (including, e.g., comparative, causal, comitative...), the same question can be raised for them: are they really cases?

## 2.2. The status of allative

There is evidence that unlike other mode suffixes, allative (-n) is a case-marker:

- it is syncretic with dative (Bokarev 1948:63, Zhirkov 1955:39)
- it is the only mode suffix that can be embedded

Unlike allative, elative and translative, the versative mode does not combine with the essive NP directly: an intervening allative suffix must be present:

- (12) q:at- lu-vu-n-m-aj Lak, Zhirkov 1955:36  
           house- AUG-IN-ALL-AGR<sub>III</sub>-VERS  
           *towards the inside of the house*

While in some other Nakh-Dagestanian languages the versative may combine with allative or with elative (Testelefs 2019:35), in Lak it can only follow the allative suffix

If allative/dative is taken to be semantic (and to mean ‘to’), the contribution of the versative suffix is non-intersective: taking a set of paths terminating at the target location it returns the set of paths that form part of those paths yet exclude the final point

Alternative: the **versative suffix assigns dative**:

- if versative assigns case, it is not itself a case, but a separate functional head
- the constituent that case (dative) is assigned to has to be nominal

⇒ Series suffixes create NPs

## 2.3. Lak locative suffixes as nominalizers

Proposal: Lak series markers are bound nominal roots (like the English *-ware* in *silverware* or *-top* in *tabletop*, *rooftop*, etc.) with axial-part semantics (Svenonius 2006, Svenonius 2008, Matushansky and Zwarts 2019).

They therefore create **nominal compounds** with the **semantics of loci** (places), whose syntax is that of locative adjuncts (or arguments), though they also exhibit nominal properties

In particular, they can be case-marked (with dative, as per hypothesis above)

Further support: the so-called “**spatial postpositions**” in Lak, freestanding morphemes with the same spatial semantics and often, a similar phonological form:

(13) Lak postpositions (Zhirkov 1955:129, Murkelinsky 1971:247)

| “series markers”     | “postpositions”                                      |
|----------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| - <i>v(u)</i> ‘in’   | <i>viv</i> ‘inside’                                  |
| - <i>j</i> ‘on’      | <i>jalu</i> ‘in top of’                              |
| - <i>lu</i> ‘under’  | <i>lu</i> ‘underneath’                               |
| - <i>x</i> ‘behind’  | <i>maq</i> ‘behind’<br><i>qiriv</i> ‘at the back of’ |
| - <i>č’a</i> ‘near’  | <i>č’arav</i> ‘nearby, beside’                       |
| - <i>c</i> ‘next to’ | <i>čulux</i> ‘close by’                              |

Points to note:

- all these “postpositions” combine with the mode suffixes (e.g., *vivu-naj* ‘towards the inside’, *viv-atu* ‘from the inside’)
- all of them allow the omission of the complement (can function as adverbials)
- they all assign genitive case
- like series markers, they lend themselves to temporal meanings (e.g., *maq* can also mean ‘after’)
- four out of six are transparently connected to the corresponding series markers (most clearly, the super-essive postposition *jalu* seems to contain the nominalizer *-alu-* used to create names of locations, yet it also creates entity-denoting nouns from these “postpositions” (Murkelinsky 1971:103))
- *čulux* ‘close by’ is only listed as a postposition by Zhirkov

All these facts can be explained if these “postpositions” are free locative nouns (e.g., *č’arav* ‘side’, *jalu* ‘top’), while the “series markers” (-*v*, -*j*) are their bound counterparts

Both denote in the locative domain and are therefore incompatible with argument positions

Lak (Zhirkov 1955:129) has other locative adverbials that only have locative cases (see Daniel and Ganenkov 2009 for the same phenomenon in Bagvalal), e.g., *ṣ:ič* ‘in front’, *da’niv* ‘between’, as well as some toponyms (Murkelinsky 1971:103)

This kind of behavior, mixing nominal properties with purely locative semantics, is often also characteristic of bare axial nouns in other languages (e.g., Chalcatongo Mixtec (Brugman 1981, see also Svorou 1994), Kîtharaka (Muriungi 2006))

### 3. CONCLUSION AND FURTHER QUESTIONS

Lak stative locative suffixes can be analyzed as bound axial morphemes (like *top* in *tabletop*)

The versative mode must be analyzed as a functional head (rather than a feature on an NP)

The status of other mode suffixes is open to debate, but if what is viewed as the allative case is really dative, then at least the allative mode is an independent (null) functional head

In some other languages of the area a distal suffix appears after locative (essive) suffixes and before directional ones. Its position receives a natural explanation if it is *that tabletop* but I’m not sure of Radkevich’s data here

#### 3.1. Possible objection: non-locative uses of “locative cases”

Bokarev 1948, Kazenin 2013, Testelet 2019 (see also Forker 2010 for Tsez, Ganenkov and Lander 2011 for Dargwa): locative forms can be used in non-locative senses (e.g., the superessive used as an instrument) or for core arguments:

NB: For Lak nearly all such cases involve the dative (allative) case. Bokarev 1948:65 claims that the superessive is used as the subject of necessity verbs, but all examples given by Kazenin 2013:181ff. involve datives (or the cases assigned by the embedded verbs)

- (14) a. žul kolxoz-ra-vu **traktor-da-x** ġaj učajs:ar. Bokarev 1948:62  
 our kolkhoz-AUG-IN tractor-AUG-POST till-3PL  
*In our kolkhoz they till with a tractor.*

- b. **rik'-ira-x** murx̂ buvtunni. Zhirkov 1955:43  
 axe-AUG-POST tree.ABS cut.PAST  
*He cut the tree with an axe.*

This means little, as adpositions and even “complex prepositions” (*on top of*) may acquire idiosyncratic meanings (e.g., *pomimo* ‘besides’ in both Russian and English)

And verbs are known to select specific adpositions (e.g., *look at*). This is generally taken to be syntactic selection, but can it be semantic (cf. Marelj and Matushansky 2015 on *for* and *in* in non-verbal predication)?

### 3.2. The approximative case

Zhirkov claims an additional incomplete locative case, the approximative (aka, apudlocative) one:

- (15) a. q:at- lu-x̂ Zhirkov 1955:37  
 house- OBL-APPROX  
*by the house*
- b. q:at- lu-x̂:-un  
 house- OBL-APPROX-ALL  
*towards the house*

Murkelinsky 1971:86, however, calls this case the possessive one and claims that the general ablative case *š:a* ‘from’ (treated by Zhirkov as being outside the locative paradigm) is formed from it, with the reduplicated *x̂:* turning into *š:* by a more general phonological process  
 Same analysis in Bokarev 1948:63, hypothesizing that the original meaning of this case was ‘before’

If Murkelinsky and Bokarev are right, the full locative paradigm should look as follows:

#### (16) Lak locative cases

|              | essive<br>I | allative<br>II | elative<br>III | translative<br>IV | versative<br>V | P               |
|--------------|-------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| a. ‘in’      | -v          | -vun           | -va(tu)        | -vux              | -vunmaj        | viv             |
| b. ‘on’      | -j          | -jn            | -ja(tu)        | -jx               | -jnmaj         | jalu            |
| c. ‘under’   | -lu         | -lun           | -la(tu)        | -lux              | -lunmaj        | lu              |
| d. ‘behind’  | -x          | -xun           | -xa(tu)        | -xux              | -xunmaj        | maq, qiriv      |
| e. ‘near’    | -č’a        | -č’an          | -č’a(tu)       | -č’ax             | -č’anmaj       | č’arav          |
| f. ‘next to’ | -c’         | -c’un          | -c’a(tu)       | -c’ux             | -c’umaj        | čulux           |
| g. ‘by’      | -x̂         | -x̂:un         | -š:a           | —                 | —              | x̂:ič’ ‘before’ |
|              | at          | to             | from           | via               | towards        |                 |



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