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▶ **To cite this version:**

René Lacroix, Peter K Austin, Oliver Bond, Monik Charette, David Nathan, et al. (Dir.). Laz relative clauses in a typological and areal perspective. 2009. halshs-03268022

**HAL Id: halshs-03268022**
**https://shs.hal.science/halshs-03268022**

Submitted on 22 Jun 2021

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Proceedings of Conference on
**Language Documentation & Linguistic Theory 2**

Edited by Peter K. Austin, Oliver Bond, Monik Charette, David Nathan & Peter Sells

13-14 November 2009 School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London

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ISBN: 978-0-7286-0392-9

This publication can be cited as:

René Lacroix. 2009. Laz relative clauses in a typological and areal perspective. In Peter K. Austin, Oliver Bond, Monik Charette, David Nathan & Peter Sells (eds) *Proceedings of Conference on Language Documentation and Linguistic Theory 2*. London: SOAS.

or:

René Lacroix. 2009. Laz relative clauses in a typological and areal perspective. In Peter K. Austin, Oliver Bond, Monik Charette, David Nathan & Peter Sells (eds) *Proceedings of Conference on Language Documentation and Linguistic Theory 2*. London: SOAS. www.hrelp.org/eprints/ldlt2_21.pdf

# Laz relative clauses in a typological and areal perspective

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper examines the relativization strategies of Laz (South Caucasian) in a typological and areal perspective[1].

Laz is an underdescribed and endangered language spoken in North-East Turkey. The last official Turkish census dates back to 1965 and gives the number of 85,108 speakers (Andrews 1989: 176). Feurstein (1983) estimates 250,000 speakers. All Laz are bilingual with Turkish. Young people under the age of 25 still understand, but do not speak Laz. Laz is not written and is only spoken within the close family circle.

There are four main dialects. The data presented here, from the Arhavi dialect, are taken from published sources and from material which I gathered during field trips. The data and the analysis of other languages are taken primarily from Creissels (2005).

In this paper, I adopt the definition of relativization used in works such as Keenan and Comrie (1977), Keenan (1985), Comrie (1989), Creissels (2006) and Andrews (2007). Andrews' definition may be cited here: 'A relative clause (RC) is a subordinate clause which delimits the reference of an NP by specifying the role of the referent of that NP in the situation described by the RC' (2007: 206).

Almost all types of relativization strategies are attested in the Caucasus-Iran-Anatolia area (Creissels 2005). As will be seen, the main strategy of Laz differs both from the strategies found in the other South Caucasian languages and from Turkish, with which it is in contact. In what follows, I examine prenominal relatives (section 2), postnominal relatives (section 3) and correlatives (section 4).

## 2. PRENOMINAL RELATIVE CLAUSES

### *2.1. Areal data*

Prenominal relatives using participles are widespread in the Caucasus-Iran-Anatolia area. In particular, they represent the most productive strategy in Turkic

[1] In the transcription of Laz, the apostrophe marks glottalized consonants. The following abbreviations are used: AOR = aorist, APPL = applicative, COP = copula, DAT = dative, DEF = definite, DEM = demonstrative, DIST = distal, ERG = ergative, FUT = future, IMP = imperative, INT/REL = interrogative/relative pronoun, JCT = junctor, MID = middle, NEG = negation, NHS = non-human singular, OPT = optative, PL = plural, POSS = possessive, PRES = present, PTCP = participle, PV = preverb, REL = relativizer, SUB = subordinator, TAM = tense-aspect-mood, THS = thematic suffix, TR = transitive. Roman figures (I and II) indicate the set of cross-referencing affixes. For instance, I1 = Set I, 1st person; II2 = Set II, 2nd person.

and North-East Caucasian languages. Here is an example from Godoberi. The same participle is used to relativize different syntactic roles: the A argument in (1b) and the O argument in (1c).

(1) (a) *waču-di* *hamaχi* *b-aχi*
brother-ERG donkey NHS-buy.PAST
'My brother bought the donkey.'

(b) *hamaχi* *b-aχi-bu* *wači*
donkey NHS-buy.PAST-PTCP brother
'my brother who bought the donkey'

(c) *waču-di* *b-aχi-bu* *hamaχi*
brother-ERG NHS-buy.PAST-PTCP donkey
'the donkey that my brother bought'
(Creissels 2005: 8)

Turkish also uses prenominal relative clauses with non finite verbs.

In the Indo-European languages of the area, it is not rare to find prenominal participial relatives beside postnominal ones. Western Armenian is a case in point:

(2) (a) *(ayn)* *mardə* *or* *P'ariz* *ekaw*
(DEM) man.DEF REL Paris come.TAM.3SG
'the man who came to Paris'

(b) *P'ariz* *ekoɣ* *mardə*
Paris come.PTCP man
'the man who came to Paris'
(Creissels 2005: 9)

Contrary to what is found in Turkic and North-East Caucasian languages, Indo-European participial relatives are often more restricted as to which role can be relativized; often, only the subject can.

*2.2. Laz*

Laz has several types of relative clauses. In one of the most productive strategies, the relative precedes the head. The verb is finite and occurs at the end of the relative clause. If the verb is the only constituent of the relative clause, the clitic subordinator *na* prefixes to it:

(3) (a) *na-p'-or-om* *bozo* *b-dzi-i*
SUB-I1-love-THS girl I1-see-AOR
'I saw the girl I love.'
(own field data)

By 'finite verb', I intend a verb which has the ability to head an independent clause. The verb form *p'orom* 'I love' in (3a), for instance, can be used in an independent clause, as illustrated by (3b) below.

(b) *he* *bozo-s* *p'-or-om*
DIST.DEM girl-DAT I1-love-THS
'I love that girl.'
(K'art'ozia 1972, text 139)

If the relative clause includes other words before the verb, the subordinator *na* is suffixed to one of them:

(4) *bee-k* *bozo-s-na* *me-č-u* *matsk'indi* *čxant'-u-n*
child-ERG girl-DAT-SUB PV-give-AOR.I3SG ring shine-THS-I3SG
'The ring that the child gave to the girl shines.'
(own field data)

(5) *ma-na* *ti* *me-m-o-k'vat-ase* *k'oči*
1SG-SUB head PV-II1-APPL-cut.off-FUT.I3SG man
'the man who will cut off my head'
(K'art'ozia 1993, text 125)

When asked to repeat a sentence containing *na*, my consultant often changes the place of the subordinator, which suggests that it is not determined by a rigid rule. Examples are found where the subordinator appears twice in the relative clause.

Prenominal relative clauses using finite verb forms are typologically rare, as noted by Keenan (1985: 160).

As illustrated by the examples above, Laz relative clauses use a gap strategy: the position relativized is left empty in the relative clause. The functions of intransitive subject, transitive subject, direct object, E argument[2] and oblique may be relativized.

Laz free relatives can be described as canonical [relative clause + domain noun] constructions from which the domain noun would have been simply deleted. In such constructions, the suffixes which normally appear on the head noun attach to the finite verb of the relative:

(6) *si-na* *čk'om-i-pe-k* *va* *g-o-dzɣ-es-na*
2SG-SUB eat-AOR-PL-ERG NEG II2-TR-satisfy-AOR.I3PL-if
'If the ones you ate didn't satisfy you...'
(K'art'ozia 1972, text 137)

[2] *E* stands for 'extension to core' (see Dixon and Aikhenvald 2000: 3). The main semantic roles associated with E arguments in Laz are beneficiary and recipient.

Here I will also examine a typologically interesting case of free relatives being grammaticalized into topic particles.

The subordinator *na* has a range of other functions: it appears in complement clauses, adverbial clauses and conditional clauses.

There is another strategy used to form prenominal relatives, involving a participle. This participle can relativize different syntactic roles: the subject, the object and the E argument.

## 3. POSTNOMINAL RELATIVE CLAUSES

### *3.1. Areal data*

Postnominal relative clauses are attested in Georgian, Persian and Kurmanji Kurdish. Georgian uses relative pronouns. In Persian and kurmanji Kurdish (example 7), the relative is introduced by an invariable relativizer, which purely indicates subordination; in addition, resumptive pronouns are used.

(7) *gund-ê* *ku* *lê* *dimînim*
village-JCT SUB in.3SG stay.PRES.1SG
'the village where I live'
(Creissels 2005: 5)

### *3.2. Laz*

In my corpus, I have found very few examples of postnominal relative clauses. One of them is given in (8). The relative clause begins with the relative pronoun *namu*, whose case inflection reflects the function of the relativized constituent in the relative. The verb is finite.

(8) *ko-go-y-šin-es* *he* *kčini,*
PV-PV-MID-remember-AOR.I3PL DIST.DEM old.woman

*namu-k* *uškuri* *me-č-u*
INT/REL-ERG apple PV-give-AOR.I3SG
'They remembered the old woman who had given them the apple.'
(K'art'ozia 1972, text 135)

The pronoun *namu* is also used as an interrogative pronoun referring to a choice between a set of elements:

(9) *namu* *go-mtsk'-a?*
INT/REL PV-I1.open-OPT
'Which one should I open?'
(Dumézil 1937, text I)

*Namu* appears also in indirect questions and in correlative clauses (see below).

## 4. CORRELATIVE CLAUSES

### *4.1. Areal data*

In correlative clauses, the domain noun generally appears inside the relative clause, which is left-dislocated. A typologically infrequent type of correlative clause is attested in colloquial Georgian. Consider, for instance, example (10). The domain noun *kali* 'woman' appears in the *main* clause; the relativization is marked by the subordinator *rom*, which is not restricted to relative clauses. *Rom* gives no clue as to which role is relativized.

(10) *xval* *rom* *naxavt,*
tomorrow SUB see.FUT.2PL

*is* *kali* *čveni* *axali* *mezobeli-a*
DIST.DEM woman POSS1PL new neighbor-COP
'The woman who you will see tomorrow is our new neighbor.'
(Creissels 2005: 15)

Correlative clauses appear sporadically in Turkish.

### *4.2. Laz*

Laz attests free relatives using the correlative clause strategy. One example is given in (11). The left-dislocated constituent *namu mogts'ondasen* 'the one you like' is coreferent with the demonstrative pronoun *heya* in the main clause.

(11) *[namu* *mo-g-ts'ond-asen],* *heya* *e-č'op-i!*
INT/REL PV-II2-like-FUT.I3SG DIST.DEM PV-take-IMP
'Take the one you like!' (lit. 'which one you like, take it!')
(Žɣent'i 1938, text 27)

The bracketed constituent functions as a free relative. No domain noun is stated. The interrogative/relative pronoun *namu*, which occurs in the position relativized, can be analyzed as a 'domain noun substitute' (see Creissels 2006: 208).

## 5. CONCLUSION

Almost all types of relativization strategies are attested in the Caucasus-Iran-Anatolia area. The important variation found in this domain correlates to some extent with genetic distribution. Broadly speaking, Turkic and North Caucasian languages, which mainly use prenominal participial relatives, contrast with Indo-European and South-Caucasian languages, where postnominal relatives headed by finite verb forms are common. From this point of view, Laz constitutes a particular case. Its major relativization strategy involves prenominal relative clauses headed by finite verb forms, a typologically infrequent type. This strategy

differs from those found in other South Caucasian languages, but cannot be explained by the influence of neighboring languages.

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