

Transitivity Prominence in Classical Armenian (and beyond)

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Keywords: *Armenian; transitivity; morphosyntactic alignment; subjecthood*

The present paper aims to investigate the degree of transitivity prominence in Classical Armenian, enhancing the typological profile of this language and providing, at the same time, a few preliminary considerations about the development of this feature within this branch of the Indo-European languages.

Transitivity prominence, “the degree to which languages [...] tend to use transitive encoding in their verbal lexicon” (Haspelmath 2015, 132), is a recent and rather unstudied field of linguistics (cf. Bossong 1998; Say 2014; Creissels 2018, etc.) and little it is known about its diachrony. Despite this, Haspelmath (2015) has already been able to determine (via the *ValPaL* database, cf. Khurshudian and Daniel 2013) the transitivity prominence of Modern Eastern Armenian (namely 0.55, rather low).

In my paper, I intend to conduct the same inquiry in Classical Armenian with the main purpose of comparing diachronically the two stages of the language. To do this, I will calculate the proportion of verbs that in this language present a transitive encoding. Relevant data will be gathered with the help of the Pavia Verbs Database (Kocharov 2022), together with physical and digital dictionaries (Ciackciack 1837; Decours et al. 2014, etc.) and, then, checked in textual sources (mainly Coulie and Kindt 2020). I will, then, discuss the results of my work, in order to understand how and why an increase or decrease of transitivity prominence is detectable or not between Classical and Modern Eastern Armenian. Since alignment, subjecthood and transitive encoding seem to be closely related areas of grammar, possibly influencing one with the other (Dahl 2023), I will verify in what measure the loss of Classical Armenian split alignment (Meyer 2022) and variation in (non-canonical) subject marking (Kölligan 2013; Muth 2016) influenced Armenian transitive encoding.

This study will provide an initial survey on how transitivity prominence evolves over time in a language with an uncommon development of morphosyntactic alignment and subjecthood. It will be a great opportunity to explore the extent to which these three dimensions of grammar interact in diachrony, reflecting on some of the issues related to this workshop.

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