

EAST ANATOLIA AS A LINGUISTIC AREA?

CONCEPTUAL AND EMPIRICAL ISSUES¹

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1. Introduction

The term “East Anatolia” has various readings, depending on the context. In official Turkish usage, it refers to the provinces of the mountainous region of inland Eastern Turkey known as Doğu Anadolu Bölgesi, but excludes provinces along the Syrian border. In international usage, it often refers fairly loosely to the entire territory of Turkey eastwards of the town of Sivas (cf. Haig 2001). Although “Eastern Anatolia” in this looser sense is not a well-defined region, it has nevertheless come to be associated with certain attributes, both cultural and geographic. In the absence of a more stringent definition, this is the usage that this chapter adopts.

Historically, the region is the homeland of several distinct linguistic, ethnic and religious groups. Among the most salient are the Armenians (up until 1915), Arabic-speaking Muslim and Christian groups, Aramaic-speaking Jews and Christians of varying denominations, Kurmanji-speaking orthodox Muslims, Alevites, and Yezidis, Turkish-speaking orthodox Muslims and Alevites, and Zazaki-speaking orthodox Muslims and Alevites (cf. Andrews 1989, Zentrum für Türkeistudien 1998, Haig 2003). The peripheries of east Anatolia are host to additional distinct linguistic groups: on the Black Sea coast northeast of the city of Trabzon there are speakers of Laz, a Kartvelian language, and westwards of central Anatolia there was an extensive Greek-speaking population up until

1 I am exceedingly grateful to Ergin Öpengin, Eleanor Coghill, and Don Stilo for their comments and corrections of an earlier version of this chapter, though they bear no responsibility for the remaining errors.

the 1920's. Up until the end of the 19th century, speakers of the largest Anatolian languages Kurdish, Armenian, Aramaic, Arabic and Turkish / Turkmen, had been co-existing for almost a thousand years. Unsurprisingly, deep cultural and linguistic commonalities unite the speech communities, though the degree and nature of social interactions must have varied enormously according to local conditions, and can only be indirectly reconstructed for most regions. The current omnipresent influence of Turkish in the region is in fact a relatively recent phenomenon, fueled by compulsory Turkish-language state education, the mass-media, and large-scale military operations carried out by the Turkish army in the conflict against militant Kurdish groups. But prior to the twentieth century, the influence of Turkish in many parts of rural east Anatolia was negligible. Even today, in Turkey's far southeast there are many people, mostly females over forty years old, who do not speak Turkish.

Haig (2001) provides the first synopsis of linguistic commonalities in the region, based on data from Zazaki, Turkish, Laz and Kurmanji Kurdish. With regard to the question of whether East Anatolia should be considered a "linguistic area", the provisional answer provided in that paper was "we don't know yet" (Haig 2001: 209). That non-committal stance was in part due to insufficient data for many of the relevant languages available to the author at that time. Reviewing the issue more than a decade later and against data from a larger cross-section of languages, however, has not resolved the question. The problem is not in fact primarily one of lack of data, but of more fundamental issues. First, the still-unresolved issue of where the geographic boundaries of a putative "linguistic area" should be drawn. As mentioned at the outset, east Anatolia lacks clear geographic or culturally delineated borders, and was politically affiliated with various regions prior to the twentieth century; before any claims regarding an east Anatolian linguistic area can be stated, some consensus needs to be reached regarding the geographic

borders of the region. Second, some of the postulated common Anatolian features are not attested in all languages that are spoken in the region; it is becoming increasingly evident that there are significant subdivisions within Anatolia itself, as I will demonstrate below. Third, those features which are apparently common to all languages of Anatolia generally also spill over into neighbouring regions.

In this chapter I do not intend to offer an answer to the question of whether east Anatolia is, or is not, a linguistic area. Instead I will take a closer look at the concept of linguistic area itself, before moving on to investigate in some detail one recent claim of shared commonalities apparently indicative of contact influence in east Anatolia, namely that of a shared pattern in verbal inflection (Matras 2010). While the claim itself fails on a number of counts as a diagnostic for an “east Anatolian linguistic area”, it nevertheless turns out to be instructive as an additional diagnostic in identifying possible sub-regions within east Anatolia.

2. Defining linguistic areas

A number of different definitions of linguistic area (sometimes taken as synonymous with Sprachbund, e.g. Heine 2011) have been formulated, but the concept remains vague and largely intuitive (cf. Aikhenvald 2011). Campbell, Kaufman & Smith-Stark (1986) first attempted a more rigorous definition, while Thomason (2001, Ch. 5) and Matras (2011) provide more recent in-depth coverage. Nevertheless, we are far from a consensus when it comes to the details. Matras (2011: 157) suggests that linguistic areas “are simply cases of convergence that catch our attention because of the density of shared isoglosses in a multiplicity of languages.” The insight intended here is that linguistic areas are not the primitive units in areal linguistics; convergence processes are the primitives, which may, given sufficient density and overlap, secondarily yield a

linguistic area. But what level of density, and how many stocks/languages/dialects are involved, apparently reduce to a matter of subjective interpretation: those which “catch our attention”.

It therefore seems relatively meaningless to claim that East Anatolia “is” or “is not” a linguistic area, and in fact, the concept of “linguistic area” is at best a heuristic. The basic unit of investigation is not an area, but a linguistic feature. And the initial task of areal linguistics is not to test whether a particular area is or is not a linguistic area, but to plot the areal distribution of linguistic features. When clusters of shared features are detected, the analyst needs to assess the relative plausibility of the potentially available explanations: shared genetic inheritance, chance similarity, or contact-induced similarity. This is not a simple task, and involves sifting through linguistic and extra-linguistic sources in order to arrive at realistic assessments. There is no gold standard that will yield an automatic answer, nor is there any set limit on how many shared features attributable to contact are necessary to warrant assuming a linguistic area. The prime task in any investigation of language contact is the identification of shared features, followed by a rigorous assessment of their probable genesis. Postulating a linguistic area is merely a secondary, and ultimately subjective, inference.

In assessing the degree of contact influence in the spread of linguistic features, it is useful to explicitly formulate certain diagnostic criteria against which candidate features may be assessed. The following five points are an attempt to identify some of the relevant criteria (cf. Thomason (2001: Ch.5), Winford (2003: 91-99), and Matras (2007) for more extensive discussion).

(a) Degree of typological markedness of shared features. For example, the order adjective-noun is not a particularly compelling diagnostic for language contact, as it is typologically widespread in the languages of the

world, and can arise independently in languages of different types. The presence of a marked-nominative case-marking system, on the other hand, is typologically unusual; its presence in a group of geographically contiguous, unrelated languages in East Africa (both Nilo-Saharan and Afroasiatic), for example, is a powerful indicator of language contact (Aikhenvald 2011: 13), and carries correspondingly more weight in identifying regions as linguistic areas.

(b) Commonalities in bound inflectional morphology, either through common paradigm organization, or phonological and semantic identity of the formatives, or both, are indicative of high contact influence. The insight behind this criterion is that bound morphology, particularly verbal morphology, is generally considered more resistant to contact-induced change than other aspects of language structure. However, criterion (a) above applies nonetheless; for example, expression of plural number on nouns via a suffix is typologically commonplace, and the presence of such a suffix in two areally contiguous languages would hardly qualify as evidence of contact influence, despite counting as a “similarity” in inflectional morphology.

(c) Commonalities in non-transparent morphological formatives are highly significant. “Non-transparent” here means morphological formatives that are (i) not readily segmentable from their bases; (ii) lack a one-to-one form-meaning mapping; (iii) not productive, that is, involve unpredictable gaps in the distribution of the formatives. Examples of such morphology (less “natural” morphology in the sense of Dressler 1985) would be the irregular past-tense formation of certain verbs in Germanic languages (*give* / *gave*, but *live* / *lived* etc.), Arabic broken plurals (*raju:l* / *rija:l* ‘man/men’), or non-predictable gender assignment in languages such as Kurmanji Kurdish (Haig & Öpengin, to appear). Again, transparency is a matter of degree, but the insight here is that shared non-

transparent morphology in neighbouring, but unrelated, languages could only result from massive contact influence. In fact, this may be a purely hypothetical scenario; I am not aware of such morphology actually being borrowed in a contact situation; for example, the system of root-and-pattern morphology in the Arabic verb system has never, to my knowledge, been adopted in a language in contact with Arabic. Nor do creoles with English as lexifier inherit the Germanic system of irregular verbs, and so on. More readily segmentable, semantically transparent morphology, on the other hand, is certainly borrowable.

(d) Degree of genetic distance between the languages exhibiting the common features. It is fairly obvious that an areal cluster of closely-related dialects will display many common features, but many of them will naturally be the result of shared genetic inheritance. An areal cluster of unrelated languages exhibiting shared features, on the other hand, is a much more powerful indicator of contact impact.

(e) Blanket distribution: shared features should be present in a maximally large number of languages of the region, because this is precisely what a contact-based explanation for them predicts: they should spread across language boundaries. Gaps in the distribution are significant, and weaken any claims for a putative “linguistic area”.²

To summarize this brief discussion, the notion of “linguistic area” is an impressionistic one, referring to a regionally defined group of languages/dialects which appear to have surpassed some (unspecified) threshold on contact-induced similarities. The concept can be made

2 Not all scholars consider blanket coverage a necessary criterion in establishing a linguistic area; it is included here as illustration of a hypothetical extreme, in the sense that the higher the level of blanket coverage, the stronger the case for a linguistic area (of course assuming the criteria (a-d) are also taken into consideration). A related, though somewhat different issue, is the criterion of “geographic restriction of the feature to the area”, which is not considered here; cf. Thomason (2001: Ch. 5) for discussion of both points.

somewhat more stringent when certain criteria are identified, against which shared features can be assessed. In practice, the investigation of contact influence also needs to go beyond the mere statement of the linguistic facts, but also to draw on evidence from related languages, language history, and available historical records of settlement patterns in the region concerned.

In what follows, I will take a closer look at East Anatolia, focussing on one feature that has been claimed as (co-)defining an Anatolian linguistic area / convergence zone. Although I will demonstrate that the feature concerned fails as a diagnostic for an Anatolian linguistic area, it is nevertheless instructive to trace its distribution, as it turns out to be relevant for understanding the finer-grained contours of the region, and may in fact contribute to identifying a major divide within Anatolia itself.

3. Shared verbal morphology: the case of the present indicative prefix

In a recent overview contribution, Matras (2010: 75) takes it as given that eastern Anatolia is a “linguistic area”, and cites a case of apparent convergent morphology as a shared feature of the region:

“In the case of the linguistic area of eastern Anatolia, contact has led to shared grammaticalization pathways in the development of aspect/mood prefixes. The languages involved - Persian, Kurdish, Armenian, Neo-Aramaic and Levantine Arabic - all have a progressive-indicative aspectual prefix, usually derived from a preposition indicating location or similarity. The subjunctive is marked either by the absence of the progressive-indicative prefix, or by a specialized subjunctive prefix (Table 3.1).”

Matras’ Table 3.1 is reproduced here as Table 1:

Table 1: Layout of present-tense finite verb in languages of East Anatolia

	'I see' PRESENT INDICATIVE			'I see' PRESENT SUBJUNCTIVE		
	ASPECT	ROOT	PERSON	ASPECT	ROOT	PERSON
Ṭuroyo Aramaic	<i>ko-</i>	<i>-ḏoz-</i>	<i>-eno / -ono</i>	<i>ø</i>	<i>-ḏoz-</i>	<i>-eno / -ono</i>
Kurmanji Kurdish	<i>di-</i>	<i>bîn-</i>	<i>-im</i>	<i>ø / bi-</i>	<i>-bîn-</i>	<i>-im</i>
Persian	<i>mī-</i>	<i>-bîn-</i>	<i>-æm</i>	<i>ø / be-</i>	<i>-bîn</i>	<i>- æm</i>
Western Armenian	<i>gə-</i>	<i>-desn-</i>	<i>-em</i>	<i>ø</i>	<i>-desn-</i>	<i>-em</i>
Levantine Arabic	<i>ba- -a-</i>	<i>-šūf</i>	<i>[zero]</i>	<i>ø -a-</i>	<i>-šūf</i>	<i>[zero]</i>

In what follows, I will refer to the common pattern illustrated in Table 1 as the prefixed present indicative. Convergent inflectional morphology, as suggested by Table 1, would indeed constitute powerful evidence in favour of heavy contact influence in the region. As noted in §2, criterion (c), similarities in verbal inflection are potentially indicative of strong contact influence. However, there are several problems with these data.

The first is the choice of languages. It is not clear why Persian should be considered a language of eastern Anatolia, unless the term is to be extended even further than the loose usage outlined above. The same applies to Levantine Arabic, generally applied to vernacular Arabic spoken on the eastern Mediterranean coasts of Syria, Lebanon and Palestine – with no shared geographic overlap with Persian, for example. As it turns out, a number of Arabic varieties spoken in Anatolia itself do in fact have a similar structure (see below), but there are also parallels in Arabic varieties well outside the region. For example, Brustad (2000: 232) notes that Moroccan vernacular Arabic marks the indicative through a prefix *ka-* / *ta-*, while the subjunctive is unmarked. The pattern is thus present in Arabic, but is certainly not restricted to Anatolia.

More troubling than the selection of languages chosen to represent eastern Anatolia is the fact that several undeniably eastern Anatolian languages are not included. These include: Zazaki, several varieties of Turkic (Anatolian dialects, Azeri dialects, Turkmen dialects), East Arme-

nian, vernacular varieties of Arabic spoken in east Anatolia, and several varieties of North Eastern Neo-Aramaic. In fact, the prefixed present indicative illustrated in Table 1 is conspicuously absent in Zazaki and all varieties of Turkic from the region, thus weakening the overall relevance of the feature for east Anatolia considerably.

With regard to North Eastern Neo-Aramaic (NENA), the picture turns out to be more complex, and can only be briefly sketched here. Ashitha Neo-Aramaic, spoken in the village of Lower Tiyare in southeastern Turkey on the Iraqi border, lies squarely within east Anatolia. But neither present indicative habitual nor present indicative progressive has an additional prefix to the present stem (Borghero 2005: 122-123). Similarly, the Neo-Aramaic dialect of Hertevin (Jastrow 1988: 54-55) lacks such a prefix in the simple present (though a prefix *b-*, *bed-* occurs with ‘habitual’ and ‘future’ meanings). However, in the negated forms of the present, the relics of such a prefix can be discerned: negated subjunctive has the negation particle *la*+present base, while the indicative has *le*+present base, the latter presumably from *la+e-* (Jastrow 1988: 55).³ A number of Neo-Aramaic dialects do exhibit a prefix generally introduced by a velar stop, presumably cognate with the *ko-* prefix provided for the present indicative of Turoyo Aramaic in Table 1. However, it is frequently limited to occurrence with a very restricted set of verbs. For example, in the dialect of Neo-Aramaic spoken by Jews around Lake Urmīye, a prefix *g-* / *k-* occurs in the present indicative, but only with a “restricted set of stem I verbs with Ø or h as their first radical” (Khan 2008:75). In the Bohtan dialect (Fox 2009: 55), only vowel-initial stems take an additional *y-* in the present tense. Note that this is a dialect that has undergone massive contact influence from Kurmanji (e.g. a shift to OV word order), so again one could have expected wholesale adoption of the prefixed indicative present, if it were indeed a contact-induced phe-

3 I am grateful to Eleanor Coghill (p.c.) for pointing out the negated forms to me.

nomenon. According to Coghill (1999:33), in those dialects which do have a contrast between a bare present stem, and a present stem prefixed with *k-*, the bare form “tends to express subjunctive” while the “main function” of *k*-prefixed form is the “indicative present”. Thus the functional distribution does indeed square up with the claims of Table 1, but the pattern is far from consistent across the dialects of the region.

In sum, although a large number of NENA dialects do exhibit the prefixed present indicative, it is completely lacking in some, and only weakly present in others. If this feature were indicative of pan-Anatolian convergence, we would expect to find it consistently realized in the related dialects within the region. Its absence in a significant number of these dialects is quite suggestive of local sub-regions of heavy influence, but do not support a pan-Anatolian development. We return to possible explanations below.

Turning now to the Iranian languages mentioned in Table 1, Persian and Kurmanji, the presence of an indicative present prefix in these two languages is paralleled in numerous West Iranian languages spoken outside of Anatolia (e.g. Balochi (Nourzaei & Jahani 2012), Hawrami (MacKenzie 1966), Gorani (Mahmoudveysi et al 2011, Mahmoudveysi & Bailey 2012), Southern Kurdish (Fattah 2000), Vafsi (Stilo 2004), Delvari (Haig & Nemati (2013), to mention only a few). The presence of a parallel morphological structure in Kurmanji and Persian thus represents the trivial instance of closely related languages exhibiting similar morphology, with little bearing on assessing the effects of language contact. Against this background, the absence of the prefixed present indicative in Zazaki, also West Iranian, is highly significant. Given what appears to be a strong genetic predisposition in West Iranian towards the indicative prefix pattern of Table 1, coupled with apparent areal pressure, it appears doubly odd that Zazaki should not exhibit this feature.

In Zazaki, the present indicative is formed quite differently. There is no indicative prefix, and the present stem is extended through a nasal augment, to which person, number and gender agreement morphology is suffixed. This pattern is also found in some West Iranian languages of the Caspian, for example Māzanderānī (cf. Windfuhr (2009: 26-27) for details of the distribution). The obvious parallels in the present tense paradigms from Zazaki and Māzanderānī⁴ are shown in the lefthand side of Table 2:

Table 2: Present tense (indicative) of ‘sell’ in Zazaki, and two dialects of Māzanderānī

	Zazaki	Māzanderānī (Sari dialect)	Māzanderānī (Ziarat dialect)
	PRESENT STEM - AUGMENT — AGREEMENT		INDICATIVE - PRESENT STEM - AGREEMENT
1SG	<i>roš-en-ā</i>	<i>ruš-em-be</i> (<* <i>ruš-en-be</i>)	<i>me - ruš-em</i>
2SG	<i>roš-en-ē</i> (m.) - <i>ā</i> (f.)	<i>ruš-en-i</i>	<i>me - ruš-i</i>
3SG	<i>roš-en-ō</i> (m.) - <i>ā</i> (f.)	<i>ruš-en-e</i>	<i>me - ruš-e</i>
1PL	<i>roš-en-ē</i>	<i>ruš-em-bi</i> (<* <i>ruš-en-bi</i>)	<i>me - ruš-im</i>
2PL	<i>roš-en-ē</i>	<i>ruš-en-ni</i>	<i>me - ruš-in</i>
3PL	<i>roš-en-ē</i>	<i>ruš-en-ne</i>	<i>me - ruš-en</i>

The pattern of Zazaki and the Sari dialect of Māzanderānī is evidently quite different to the prefixed present indicative pattern of Table 1 above. However, in another dialect of Māzanderānī, the Ziarat dialect illustrated in the right-hand column of Table 2, we find a complete restructuring, leading to a loss of the original nasal augment and the introduction of the prefixed present indicative pattern. Shokri (2012) attributes the change in Ziarat to contact influence from Persian (recall the Persian pattern from Table 1). Thus the organisation of an inflectional paradigm

⁴ The Māz. forms are taken from (Shokri 2012), but the segmentation adopted here differs from the presentation in the original; I have added the reconstructed forms, which appear to be plausible beyond reasonable doubt. Zazaki forms are adapted from Paul (1998: 79-84), and ignore some variation in the agreement morphology.

may indeed change under contact influence, but in the case of Ziarat, it has arisen in the case of contact with a closely-related language, namely Persian. Zazaki, a language squarely belonging to east Anatolia, has evidently not been subjected to contact pressure in a similar degree from a language with the prefixed-indicative pattern, and has preserved what can reasonably be assumed to be an original paradigm shape, involving no prefix, and a post-stem nasal augment.

Consider finally the issue of the genesis of the forms themselves. Matras suggests they are “usually derived from a preposition indicating location or similarity”, and may be considered the result of “shared grammaticalization pathways”. For Persian, such an etymology is certainly not generally accepted; the particle *mī-* is assumed to go back to an adverb *hamē* (Nourzaei & Jahani 2012: 173, Windfuhr 2009: 25-26). The etymology of Kurmanji *di-* (*da-* in some dialects, cf. Haig & Öpengin, Ms.) is obscure (Agnes Korn, p.c., but see Windfuhr (2009: 26) for a suggestion). As for the origin of the Neo-Aramaic *k-*prefix, Coghill (1999:46) suggests it may go back to Babylonian Talmudic and Mandaic *qa-*, a verbal prefix with progressive meaning. A number of Mesopotamian Arabic dialects also exhibit a “present marker”, which in the Anatolian varieties is generally *kū-* (Jastrow 1980: 155). Jastrow identifies the origin of this marker as the truncated form of a copula *kūwe* ‘right now he is’. The origin of the West Armenian prefix *gə-* is apparently also obscure (Don Stilo, p.c.). In sum, there appears to be virtually no evidence for the existence of a shared grammaticalization path from preposition to indicative / progressive indicative prefix among the languages that exhibit such a marker.⁵ On the contrary, the languages that have the prefixed indicative present seem to have recruited them from

5 The grammaticalization of a local preposition to a marker of progressive aspect is in fact discussed as an areal feature of “northwest Iran”, e.g. in Talyshi, in Stilo (2008: 373). But the markers concerned do not grammaticalize as prefixes, hence this case is quite different.

highly divergent sources. That in itself does not preclude contact influence: what contact influence involves is a common target, or model, which different languages may replicate with quite diverse means. But the facts from etymology should nevertheless not simply be ignored.

Thus on closer inspection, an “Anatolian” pattern of present tense inflections turns out to be something of a myth. There are quite possibly local contact hotspots, such as Kurmanji/Ṭuroyo Aramaic, and the undeniable parallels between the verbal system in these two varieties may indeed have resulted from contact influence.⁶ In this case, corollary evidence such as the presence of numerous Kurdish loan words in Ṭuroyo Aramaic, and in a number of other features of morphology and syntax (the comparative suffix *-tir* for example, which has entered these dialects from Kurdish), makes such a scenario probable (and definitely worthwhile pursuing). However, the uneven distribution of the feature within Neo-Aramaic generally, and its complete absence in Zazaki and Turkish (to which we return below) render it a poor candidate for a defining feature of an “east Anatolian linguistic area”.

More generally, when one looks towards the northern and eastern peripheries of Anatolia, it is notable that the prefixed indicative is generally lacking. In Eastern Armenian, the indicative present has no prefix, and looking further afield, the Kartvelian outlier language Laz (Turkey’s Black Sea Coast, Lacroix 2009) as well as Udi (Lezgic, Nakh-Daghestanian, spoken in Azerbaijan) likewise lack the feature (Harris 2002). This is in itself suggestive, and with all due caution I would briefly like to outline an alternative account of the areal distribution of the prefixed present indicative in Anatolia: in West Iranian and Semitic, a general

6 In Matras (2007: 45), the NENA “present progressive” prefix is in fact interpreted as a local contact effect from Kurmanji Kurdish. Somewhat problematic, however, is the fact that the prefix in Kurmanji itself is not a progressive, but simply an indicative, with no particular aspectual value. Actually it could be argued that the “tense *ezafe*” (Haig 2011) of Badini Kurdish, which expresses, among other things, progressive aspect, arose through influence from local varieties of NENA.

tendency is attested throughout both groups for marking present indicative forms overtly through a prefix. Other moods / aspects of the present may additionally be marked, or may not. Such a pattern could quite possibly have arisen quite independently in these two language groups, with no necessity of assuming any contact influence.⁷ In the NENA dialects of Bohtan (Fox 2009) and Hertevin (Jastrow 1988) mentioned above, the faint traces of an indicative prefix actually look more like remnants of an older construction, rather than contact-induced innovations that have arisen through the close contacts that these two dialects have had with Kurdish.

In other words, there seems to be no general propensity for the languages of Anatolia to develop such a pattern through mutual contact influence; the prefixed present indicative found in Kurmanji, and in certain varieties of Aramaic and Arabic in Anatolia, could be interpreted as reflexes of an inherited morphological template, which is well-attested in the related Northwest Iranian and Semitic languages outside Anatolia. Languages which never had this pattern did not acquire it (Zazaki and Turkish), while Laz and Udi are probably simply too far outside the Mesopotamian core to be affected anyway. Thus the putative shared Anatolian common scheme for present indicative verb forms can be viewed as further confirmation of the old truism that contact influence is most likely to trigger structural changes when the languages concerned share some common ground in their inherited structures.

7 The World Atlas of Linguistic Structure (Dryer & Haspelmath 2013) offers no obvious feature for assessing the typological markedness of the prefixed present indicative pattern. However, tense/aspect prefixes, though an overall minority when compared to suffixes (Dryer 2013), are sufficiently well documented in the languages of the world to make a coincidental shared development well within the realm of the possible.

4. The Mesopotamian versus the Caspian/Caucasian influence in east Anatolia

Finally, we can advance some provisional thoughts as to how the above proposals might relate to the broader context of shared structural features in Anatolia. The ideas sketched here take up the notion that features may have a more or less identifiable geographic epicentre, and then gradually fade-out across a certain region; see especially Stilo (2005, 2012, in preparation). Within Anatolia, at least two large sub-regions can be identified, each of which are associated with a particular set of traits. I refer to them as the Mesopotamian sphere, and the Caspian/Caucasian sphere. The Mesopotamian sphere is centred on North Iraq and the neighbouring strips of Iran, Turkey and Syria. The Caspian/Caucasian sphere is centred on the northeast of Anatolia towards the intersection of the Armenian and Azeri borders. In central Anatolia, both spheres overlap, and the languages there exhibit various admixtures. One language (or dialect cluster) that covers the entire region is Northern Kurdish, and it is highly notable that the various varieties of Kurdish do in fact reflect rather closely their respective proximities to the Mesopotamian and Caspian/Caucasian ends of the continuum (cf. Haig 2006: 295-296). Table 3 provides a selection of what appear to be relevant structural traits for distinguishing a Caspian/Caucasian sphere from a Mesopotamian sphere (a more detailed exposition is a matter of ongoing research). Ideally, languages from each region have opposing values on each feature, as shown in the respective columns.

Table 3: Candidate features for distinguishing a Caspian / Caucasian sphere from a Mesopotamian sphere

	Feature	Casp/Cauc.	Mesopotam.
1.	Recipient arguments flagged through postpositions or case-suffixes ⁸	+	-
2.	The „wanters” of verbs of desire / volition expressed as canonical subjects, with no significant formal difference to the subjects of prototypical transitive verbs (with regard to both case and agreement morphology)	+	-
3.	Presence of pronominal clitics cross-referencing verbal arguments	-	+
4.	Grammatical gender on nouns	-	+
5.	Prefixal tense/aspect marker in the present indicative	-	+

Some comments on individual languages and features are necessary. Turkish and Eastern Armenian pattern in the manner expected for languages of the Caspian/Caucasian sphere, and to a certain extent can be considered to provide the model for the region. Laz also follows the pattern, except with regard to feature 2.⁹ Turning now to languages from North Iraq, where the Mesopotamian values would be expected, matters are not as clear. While the dialects of NENA generally exhibit four of the expected values (though the prefixed indicative present is not represented in all varieties, cf. discussion in §3), I have not found reference to a non-canonical subject with ‘want’ in the sources available to me (feature 2), so I assume that they pattern like the Caspian/Caucasian lan-

8 At least as one available option; circumpositions, or post-predicative position/oblique case may also serve to indicate recipients in several of the languages concerned.

9 In Laz, the ‘wanter’ does not take the ergative case, and is cross-referenced on the verb through an affix of the Series II, typically used for direct and indirect objects (cf. Lacroix 2009: §9.4). However, the extent of such ‘non-canonical’ constructions in Laz give them a somewhat different status within the verbal system when compared to the other languages under consideration, and renders a comparison on this parameter less meaningful.

guages on this feature. Central Kurdish, likewise North Iraq, also has four features with the expected values, but lacks gender (feature 4), hence patterns on this feature unexpectedly like the Caspian/Caucasian languages.

Kurmanji Kurdish is particularly instructive: it exhibits an areally-determined split on four of the features: all dialects pattern identically with regard to feature 5 (prefixed present indicative), but the northernmost dialects may flag recipients with postpositional particles (e.g. Kurmanji of Armenia, or Tunceli, cf. Haig 2006), while the southernmost dialects (Shemzinan) do not have this option (feature 1). With regard to the ‘wanters’ (feature 2), again a north/south split is evident, with the southernmost dialects exhibiting the Central Kurdish pattern (non-canonical subjects), and the northernmost dialects exhibiting the Caspian/Caucasian pattern. On feature 3, most dialects lack the mobile clitics, but the southernmost (e.g. Surçi dialect in North Iraq, MacKenzie 1961) do have the clitics, though in fewer contexts than the Central Kurdish (Sorani) dialects of further south. Finally, certain dialects to the north and west of the Kurmanji-speaking region are known to be losing grammatical gender, again bringing them closer to the Caspian/Caucasian profile. Northern Kurdish (Kurmanji) thus straddles the overlap zone, and the respective dialects adapt in the predicted manner to these areal profiles (cf. Haig & Öpengin (Ms.) for a more detailed account of variation in Kurmanji). Zazaki is likewise an intermediate language, patterning on features 1, 2 and 5 like a Caspian/Caucasian language, but on 3 and 4 like a Mesopotamian language - quite in line with its location in central east Anatolia.

The claim made here is not that we can identify a sharp borderline between the two sub-zones identified, but rather that it is possible, and in fact necessary, to identify significant sub-clusterings within Anatolia, defined in terms of epicentres and gradual fadeouts, and an area of over-

lap exhibiting mixed features, in the sense of Stilo (2012). I suspect it would be possible to identify an Armenian/Zazaki/dialectal Kurmanji zone in central Anatolia, but work on this is still pending.

5. Conclusions

East Anatolia is a region of rich and long-standing linguistic diversity, and unsurprisingly, the languages of the region exhibit multiple shared features. Some of them reflect shared genetic origins, some are accidents, and others almost certainly arose through speakers' (generally unconscious) adoption of conventions of a neighbouring language. Whether we wish to consider the region a linguistic area is, however, largely a matter of terminological preference, not a meaningful research agenda. In this chapter, we examined one structural trait that has been suggested as characteristic of languages of Anatolia, the prefixed present indicative. Closer investigation on a language-by-language basis shows that the feature concerned is (a) shared in related languages outside the area (e.g. Levantine Arabic, Balochi dialects of central and eastern Iran), and (b) is notably absent in two of the major languages of Anatolia itself, namely Turkish and Zazaki. As such, it is not a promising candidate for pan-Anatolian convergence. However, the feature does in fact turn out to have some predictive power, namely as one of a bundle of features that may constitute a Mesopotamian sub-zone within east Anatolia.

What makes Anatolia deeply intriguing from a contact perspective is its position as an overlap, or transition zone (cf. Stilo 2012); it occupies the intersection of several major macro-areas: an Afro-Asiatic zone to the southeast, a central Asian zone to the east, a Caucasian zone to the northeast, and a Mediterranean zone to the west. The high level of language diversity arises thus secondarily; unlike, for example, the Caucasus, there is no language in east Anatolia that does not have close rela-

tives outside the region. Language diversity in east Anatolia follows from the multiple overlaps, which, as I have tried to sketch here, may lead to peripheral subregions, with an area of admixture centrally. That of course does not preclude the existence of pan-Anatolian structural features, but given the numbers of distinct language families involved, each candidate needs to be assessed against the evidence from related, but geographically distant languages. Short answers are unlikely to be forthcoming.

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