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Introduction

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The history of Kurdish linguistics can be traced back to the 17th and 18th centuries with the works of Kurdish authors, who worked within the widespread Arabic-centred tradition of grammar writing (cf. Leezenberg 2014). This was followed by works in the Orientalist tradition, the first one being Maurizio Garzoni's notable grammar and vocabulary of Kurmanji Kurdish published in 1787. In the subsequent two centuries, up until the mid-20th century, a large number of works describing the grammar of particular dialects appeared, and often vocabulary samples and construction types from Kurdish were also incorporated into comparative studies by scholars of Indo-European grammar. Most of those grammars are modeled after the categories distinguished in Latin or those of the working language of the orientalist author. Noteworthy are also the two "sensibly prescriptive" grammars of Sorani and Kurmanji Kurdish in the second quarter of 20th century, the first one by Tawfiq Wahbi (1929) and the second one by Djeladet Ali Bedir-Khan (Celadet Alî Bedirxan) with Roger Lescot (1970), itself based on a series of articles in the journal *Hawar* that were published between 1932 and 1943.

Work in Kurdish linguistics – in its modern sense – began only in the 1950s, with the studies of such authors as C. J. Edmonds (e.g. 1955), David N. MacKenzie (e.g. 1961), and Ernest McCarus (e.g. 1958) providing principled descriptions of Kurdish grammar as well as accounts of particular phenomena in Kurdish morphology and syntax. However, with extremely limited institutional support the research on Kurdish remained sporadic and constrained. It was only with the new millennium, when the visibility of the Kurds on the international scene increased and sovereign states governing Kurdish societies eased restrictions on the use of and work on Kurdish, that there has been increased interest in Kurdish linguistics in international academia. Over the last two decades, many young scholars, including those

at universities in Kurdish-speaking regions of Iraq, Turkey and Iran, have had the chance to pursue research projects for their post-graduate studies on Kurdish.

However, collective venues such as conferences and edited volumes or journals dedicated to Kurdish linguistics have been scarce. The most important event along these lines was the *First Kurdish Linguistics Conference* organized at the University of Kiel, Germany, in 2000, the contributions of which were collected in a special issue of the journal *Language Typology and Universals* (2002). The conference was not continued as a recurrent event, but research in Kurdish linguistics began to figure more frequently in other topically broader conferences, particularly at the biennial *International Conference on Iranian Linguistics*. However, a workshop focusing specifically on "Variation and Change in Kurdish" was held in 2013 at the University of Bamberg and a selection of its contributions were edited in a special issue of the journal *Kurdish Studies* (2014). The introductory article there (Haig & Öpengin 2014) summarizes the current topics, trends, and desiderata in the field. The workshop was continued in the form of the *International Conference on Kurdish Linguistics* (ICKL), which gathered first at Mardin Artuklu University (2014) and subsequently at the University of Amsterdam (2016) and the University of Rouen (2019). In a short span of time this conference has turned into a lively venue for the presentation of new research, exchange of ideas and establishment of collaborations among scholars from different generations and countries. The present volume, *Current Issues in Kurdish Linguistics*, brings together a robust selection of contributions presented at the Amsterdam conference. However, it is more an edited volume than a typical "proceedings", since the presentations were solicited in the format of research articles, and a rigorous peer-review and editorial procedure was implemented – hence the extended time frame in its appearance as a book.

The volume contains ten contributions which span the field of Kurdish linguistics in a geographic as well as a topical sense. Along with several works on Kurmanji (Northern Kurdish) and Sorani (Central Kurdish), two chapters shine light on the lesser-known Southern Kurdish language area. Other studies are comparative and treat the Kurdish language area as a whole. The linguistic approaches of the authors are a mixture of formal and typological perspectives, and cover topics ranging from geographical distribution and variation to phonology, morphosyntax, discourse structure, and sociolinguistics.

In the first chapter, Erik Anonby, Masoud Mohammadirad and Jaffer Sheyholislami provide a first detailed and comprehensive picture of language

distribution in Kordestan Province, which is one of four provinces in Iran where Kurdish is the main spoken language. Their research has been carried out in the context of the *Atlas of the Languages of Iran* (ALI) research programme (see Anonby & Taheri-Ardali, et al. 2015–2019). The article presents the methodology and results of new data collection, consisting of local place names and language distribution data, combined with existing data sets and mapped out to the level of each settlement. The authors show that the language situation in Kordestan Province is diverse, with six important high-level varieties represented: Central Kurdish, Southern Kurdish, Hawrami, Turkic, Persian and Aramaic. Moreover, most of these varieties display substantial internal variation, and are thus classified into major sub-varieties. Among the high-level varieties, the authors specifically focus on the labelling and internal classification of Central Kurdish and Southern Kurdish for which the dialect situation presents a number of complexities.

The existence of pharyngeal and emphatic articulations in Kurdish has long been considered one important feature of Kurdish, setting it apart from most other Iranian languages on one hand and, on the other hand, pointing to intense contact with Semitic languages, especially Arabic. However, a theoretically-informed treatment of such observations, focusing on phenomena specific to Kurdish, has been missing. Daniel Barry, in his chapter on pharyngeal sounds in Kurdish, provides a detailed account of these sounds both in Arabic loans and the native component of the lexicon, also defining and characterizing the phonological environments where they typically occur. He argues that while pharyngeal phonemes have been introduced into Kurdish through Arabic loans, their propagation into the native lexicon in Kurmanji is the result of an internal phonological process that is modulated by speakers' familiarity with the phonetics of Arabic pharyngeals. The phonological process in question builds upon the association of pharyngealized vowel phonemes with a subset of consonants, particularly labials, and constraints determined by the phonotactics of the language. Barry's analysis is revealing in accounting for the particular phonological environments in which pharyngealization in the native component occurs, and in accounting for different historical layers in the treatment of pharyngeal articulations in Kurdish.

In her chapter on the dialectology of Southern Kurdish, Sara Belelli sheds light on major methodological questions in approaching Southern Kurdish, and addresses core issues of terminology. The article meticulously reviews Fattah's (2000: 9) proposed dialect classification alongside other

existing sources, and complements it with the author's own documentation activities in Kermanshah Province and elsewhere in the Southern Kurdish-speaking area. The author delineates the geographic extension of the Southern Kurdish continuum from Kordestan Province, across Kermanshah and south towards the Laki-speaking regions of Lorestan and east Ilam. Laki-Kermānshāhi and Kordali function as transitional links to Laki and Lori respectively. Belelli concludes, however, that more in-depth study is required before any assertion on genetic affiliations or the direction of contact-induced variation in border areas can be made.

"Asymmetries in Kurmanji morphosyntax", by Songül Gündoğdu, scrutinizes the status of postverbal goals and certain adpositional phrases in Kurmanji Kurdish in order to understand why some phrases appear in the immediate postverbal position and why certain object-like constituents are adpositional, unlike direct objects in this language. The discussion in this article reveals that the morphological realization of the constituents (case vs. adposition) and their linear ordering (preverbal vs. postverbal) in a Kurmanji clause are sensitive to the correlation between verb meaning and event type: structural participants are realized with case morphology while constant participants are introduced with adpositions. Furthermore, the author argues that the reason Kurmanji makes a distinction in the linear ordering of structural participants is indeed a word-order property (Verb-Goal) retained from proto-Kurdish and further constrained by the morphosyntactic properties of this language.

Geoffrey Haig's contribution, "Debonding of inflectional morphology in Kurdish and beyond", defines and discusses examples of "debonding" in Kurdish and other West Iranian languages, including Balochi and Tatic varieties. Debonding involves a loosening of the distributional and phonological attachment between an inherited inflectional affix and its base. The consequences of debonding may be the intrusion of additional morphology between the affix and base, or the analogical extension of the debonded affix to hosts of other classes that were not previously associated with that morpheme (e.g. from nouns to pronouns). Debonding runs counter to the expectations of grammaticalization theory, according to which inflectional morphology is predicted to either remain as such, or erode to zero. There are obvious connections to the shift from affix to clitic observed for person indexing morphology in Öpengin's chapter on Central Kurdish in this volume. Haig's chapter also considers the unexpected sequences of definiteness and number morphemes in Southern and Central Kurdish, but suggests that, despite certain superficial similarities, this is not an example of

debonding, but arises through the unusual source of definiteness marking from diminutives.

Geoffrey Haig and Baydaa Mustafa investigate patterns of language use and language attitudes among Bahdini Kurdish speakers in the multilingual city of Duhok in Iraqi Kurdistan. The Bahdini variety of Northern Kurdish is sociolinguistically doubly disadvantaged: within the context of Iraqi Kurdistan, it is the smaller and less prestigious variety in comparison to Sorani, and in the context of Northern Kurdish it is relatively peripheral, isolated from the pan-national Botan standard by certain dialectal features, and the use of the Arabic script. The authors present the results of structured interviews and lexical retention tasks with more than 100 speakers, from three generations. The results reveal both age- and gender-related differences, indicating that awareness of Kurdish language issues is more strongly reflected in the speech of younger generations, though this does not necessarily match reported attitudes towards Kurdish as the language of education. In particular, the age cohort of 31- to 50-year-old adults exhibits variable attitudes, with a strong effect of gender, possibly reflecting this generation's first-hand experience in the difficult formative phases of Kurdish language education. This is the first empirical study of this scale from the Duhok region, and provides a basis and impetus for further research on one of the most complex multi-lingual settings in contemporary Kurdish society.

In her corpus-based research on the development of conjunctions in Kurmanji Kurdish, Annette Herkenrath takes a synchronic look at the transitional area between clausal and NP-level patterns of junction, based on a corpus of academic writings published in Kurmanji. The article focuses on lexical nouns with a temporal meaning (i.e. temporal nouns – TN) such as *dem* 'time, period', *gav* 'moment, time, step', *wext* 'time, period, season' and *çax* 'time, age, period, era'. Since these temporal words function as nouns, junctors, and adpositions depending on their syntactic environment, they can flexibly change roles between lexical noun and subordinating junctor. The author demonstrates that finite subordinate clauses appear at one end of a scale of TN modifiers, after nouns, action nouns, verbal nouns and participles, whereas clause-embedding TNs may express up to two functional categories associated with the NP area. Moreover, at the intersection of these two continua, constructions can be observed to subtly transit into and out of "nouniness" at both levels simultaneously.

"Kurdish -*râ* as an Anti-Actor marker", by Gholamhossein Karimi-Doostan and Fatemeh Daneshpazhouh, investigates the semantic and syntactic roles of the -*râ* morpheme in Sorani Kurdish. The authors adopt the framework of

Role and Reference Grammar, specifically the notion of Actor and Undergoer macroroles. Discussing the semantic and syntactic functions of -*râ* in various constructions, the article demonstrates that this morpheme appears in non-active clauses which lack Actor external arguments (i.e. the DPs with Actor roles) at the syntax level. In other words, it shows up when an Actor role is semantically present, but syntactically absent. Therefore, the authors argue that -*râ* is an Anti-Actor morpheme, as its presence leads to the absence of arguments with Actor roles.

One of the major undertakings in the field of Kurdish linguistics has been the collaborative project "Structural and typological variation in the dialects of Kurdish", led by Yaron Matras between 2011–2017, and based at the University of Manchester.[1] Preliminary findings of this project pertaining to the distribution of structural features and dialect geography and classification are presented in a chapter by Yaron Matras. Matras presents the background to the project, the methodology of data collection, data types and the processing of the data. His account builds upon previous work on Kurdish dialect classifications and is based on data from over 150 locations in Kurdish-speaking regions of Turkey, Iran, Iraq, and Syria. Appealing to the principle that it is innovation that creates differences among related varieties, Matras sets out to reconstruct the layers of structural innovation and investigate the extent of their diffusion in geographical space. Since the extent to which individual innovations spread are variable, there are no pre-determined dialect boundaries in the survey, which is also a methodological novelty of the project in the study of Kurdish dialects. Matras summarizes project findings on the well-known "great divide" between Northern Kurdish and Central Kurdish before presenting in detail the innovations that characterize sub-areas or epicentres of the northern and southern dialect clusters of respective varieties. He further elaborates on retention zones, especially the archaic convergence zone between Northern and Central Kurdish to the north of Erbil province. A welcome addition to the dialectology of Kurdish in Matras' paper is the three-way classification of Kurdish dialects in Syria. Matras concludes with a detailed hypothesis on the relationship of the Northern and Central Kurdish dialect clusters and the stages through which the innovation and retention zones have been shaped, stemming from the current complexity of intersecting isoglosses across a relatively large space.

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[1]For further information on the project, see:
`http://kurdish.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/` (accessed 5 July 2019).

Finally, in his contribution on the interactions of two categories of person markers in Central Kurdish, Ergin Öpengin considers several theoretical and language-internal problems around combinations of pronominal clitics and verbal agreement suffixes. In Central Kurdish, in certain morphosyntactic constellations elements from these two person marker categories occur in sequence (each one indexing a separate grammatical relation). In such combinations, the pronominal clitic occurs before the verbal agreement suffix, except with a third person singular pronominal clitic which regularly comes after the verbal agreement suffix. This poses a double problem: (i) being syntactic entities, pronominal clitics are expected to occur external to morphological verbal affixes; and (ii) the idiosyncratic behaviour of third person singular pronominal clitic violates the paradigmatic structure of the person marker categories. In his analysis nested in Prosodic Phonology, Öpengin looks into the facts of lexical stress in Central Kurdish, and shows that the verbal agreement person markers – which are historically "affixes" – do not phonologically integrate into the verb stem to which they attach. That is, they do not form a phonological/prosodic word with their host, and as such are clitic-like in this regard. The observed order in combination, with pronominal clitics preceding the verbal agreement person markers, then, follows the general second-position placement principle of pronominal clitics in Central Kurdish. As for the idiosyncratic ordering with a third person singular pronominal clitic, this is seen as an exceptional case of "identity avoidance" that results from the constraints that require the forms in sequence to preserve their distinct morpho-phonological identity and effectively express the encoded morpho-syntactic function (e.g. grammatical relations, argument roles).

The present edited volume is the first of its kind in bringing together contributions from a relatively large number of linguists, working in a diverse range of frameworks and on different aspects and varieties of Kurdish. As such, it attests to the increasing breadth and sophistication now evident in Kurdish linguistics, and is a worthy launch for the new series *Bamberg Studies in Kurdish Linguistics* (BSKL).

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