

Dative and Oblique Case Morphology in Burushaski: A Comparative Study

Recent research has demonstrated dialectal differences in the Burushaski dative and oblique case (Andersen 2001; Munshi 2016; Berger 1974). This study provides a morphosyntactic comparison of the various regional dialects of Burushaski spoken in the Hunza, Nagar, Yasin valleys of Pakistan, and by a small number in Srinagar India dialects of Burushaski, with a primary focus on the dative and oblique case marking and sentence structures. The main objectives are to provide a comparative reconstruction of the morphological case system of Burushaski and analyze the diachronic changes in the dative and oblique forms in various dialects of Burushaski. We utilize the comparative analysis to assess changes in the dative and oblique cases and internal reconstruction for reconstruction of the parent language, i.e., Proto-Burushaski. For a structural analysis, we look at possible linguistic influences or differences with various contact languages.

Hunza, Nagar, and Srinagar are more conservative than Yasin, in retaining reconstructed dative and oblique forms. The dative case is realized as *-ya* in the Yasin variety while Hunza and Nagar dative markings are realized as *-ar/-r*. Interestingly enough, in case of Srinagar Burushaski, a divergent variety of the Nagar dialect, the dative is realized as *-are*. This, in turn, can be analyzed as the Genitive *-e/-a*, which functions as the Oblique in Burushaski, and the dative *-re*. The dialectal differences are also reflected in the assignment of the Oblique forms. Building on the existing studies on Burushaski and data from Munshi (2016), this study compares the dative and oblique forms in different dialects in terms of the morphophonological changes that might have occurred in the various dialects with an objective to reconstruct the forms in the parent language, i.e., proto-Burushaski. In terms of an aerial comparison, it seems that the Genitive case is reanalyzed as the Oblique in Burushaski – a possible contact influence.

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