

## **Change from head-final to head-initial: Clause structure in Caucasian Urum**

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Language Contact is an interesting empirical situation because it allows insights about the kind of linguistic entities that are transferred from one language to another. It is generally assumed that the interaction of the grammars in contact is a process of "copying"/"transfer"/"replication" of particular linguistic entities across grammars. My question is whether speakers of natural languages are more creative than we generally assume, i.e., whether they participate to the structure-building processes based on the input of the foreign languages, which is arguably more than replication.

This talk examines data from Caucasian Urum, a Turkish dialect spoken by ethnic Greek speakers on the Georgian Caucasus. In the current stage of the language, we can observe a difference in the language of two generations: the most frequent word order in the language of the older speakers is OV, while the most frequent order in the language of the younger speakers is VO. The crucial difference between the speakers of these two generations is that the competence in Russian increases in the younger speakers. However, OV and VO are rather "observables" than linguistic entities. In particular VO languages are a heterogeneous category from the structural point of view, and should be further divided to further classes.

I present evidence that young Urum speakers realize a change from OV to VO (that superficially resembles to Russian), however a closer inspection of the properties of Russian as spoken in their environment shows that the emerging structure in the variety of the younger Urum speakers is not identical to the structure that triggers the change.

This finding is very relieving: speakers are more creative than we usually assume, they actively participate to the structure-building processes and do not just replicate the perceived input from the languages of their environment.