

Exceptive constructions with the postposition *jet:3m3* in Iron Ossetic

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Ossetic

- ▶ Northeastern Iranian language (Indo-European)
- ▶ Spoken by about half a million people mainly in the Republic of North Ossetia–Alania and the Republic of South Ossetia (Russia)
- ▶ Geographically isolated from the rest of the Iranian languages
- ▶ In contact with languages of the Caucasus
- ▶ Two main dialects: **Iron Ossetic** and Digor Ossetic
- ▶ Both dialects have a written tradition, but Iron Ossetic is much more widespread

Exceptives

- ▶ Exceptive constructions: *Everyone left, except for Mary.*
 - *Everyone* – the restricted QP
 - *except for Mary* – the exceptive phrase
 - *Mary* – the exception
- ▶ Exceptive markers in (Iron) Ossetic:
 - ***jet:3m3*** (jedd3m3, jedt3m3, jett3m3)
 - *f3št3m3*
 - *w3ldaj*
 - ...
- ▶ In earlier work, there is no detailed discussion of exceptives in Ossetic (only brief descriptions in grammars)

The goal

- ▶ I concentrate on constructions with *jet:3m3*, mainly on their syntactic structure
- ▶ The data for the research were collected in Vladikavkaz (the Republic of North Ossetia–Alania, Russia) in 2022–2023;
- ▶ Methodology (cf. Matthewson 2004)
 - translation task (translation from Russian into Ossetic);
 - judgement task (asking whether an Ossetic sentence is felicitous);
 - analyzing corpus data (ONC: <http://corpus.ossetic-studies.org/>, SpOC: <https://ossetic-studies.org/ru/texts>).

Ossetic postpositions

- ▶ “The majority of the postpositions combine with the genitive. <...> In so far a postpositional phrase has the same syntactic structure as a complex noun phrase with a genitive modifier” (Thordarson 2009: 172).

(1) *k^wəz iš t3šč’-ə mid3g*
dog EXST basket-GEN inside

‘The dog is in the basket.’ (Mazurova 2013: 231)

Ossetic postpositions: exceptives

- ▶ Some postpositions combine with other cases
- ▶ All exceptive markers, apart from *jet:3m3*, are used with ablative case (see, e.g., Gagkaev 1952: 90).

(2) *gabo-j3 f3št3m3, iwwəld3r wəd-əštə k'laš-ə*
 Gabo-ABL except all be-PST.3PL class-IN
 ‘All the students except Gabo were in class’
 (Akhvlediani (ed.) 1963: 293–294)

jet:3m3 and genitive

- ▶ Like a “normal” postposition *jet:3m3* is used with genitive
- ▶ GEN + NOM

(3) *wəj j3 = kʷəšt-ə jet:3m3 ni-sə žon-ə*
 that POSS.3SG = work-GEN except NEG-what know-PRS.3SG
 ‘He doesn’t know anything except his job.’ (Bagaev 1982: 21)

- ▶ The genitive does not mirror the case in the “main clause”, so it is conditioned by *jet:3m3*

The position of the ExcpP– 1

- ▶ Immediately before the QP

(4) *x3zar-ə* [*žalixan 3m3 nana*]-*jə* *jet:3m3 ni-čī*
 house-IN Zalikhan and grandmother-GEN except NEG-who
 wəd-i
 be-PST.3SG

‘There was no one in the house except Zalikhan and the grandmother’
 (ONC)

The position of the ExcP – 2

- ▶ Left periphery of the clause

(5) *bir3y-ə jet:3m3 j3-xi fəd ni-čī x3r-ə*
 wolf-GEN except POSS.3SG-REFL meat NEG-who eat-PRS.3SG
 ‘No one eats their own meat except the wolf.’ (ONC)

The position of the ExcP – 3

- ▶ Right periphery of the clause

(6) *binont-3j xəzar-ə ni-čī wəd-i nog čənz-ə*
 family-ABL house-IN NEG-who be-PST.3SG new daughter-in-law-GEN

jet:3m3

except

‘There was no one in the house except the new daughter-in-law.’

(ONC)

jet:3m3 and nominative

- ▶ In general Ossetic postpositions do not combine with nominative
 - Cf. (7) with *gæron*, which behaves more than an affix than a postposition (Belyaev, p.c.)

(7) *q3w-g3ron iw dæg3rdæg xəžt-i*
 village-near one calf graze-PST.3SG
 ‘close to the village a calf was grazing’ (Thordarson 2009: 172)

- ▶ *jet:3m3*: many examples with NOM + GEN

(8) *Gabo jet:3m3 zə ni-k3jə ba-zət:-on.*
 Gabo except 3PL.ABL NEG-who.GEN PV-know-PST.1SG
 ‘Apart from Gabo, I didn’t recognize any of them.’
 (Akhvlediani (ed.) 1963: 294)

jet:3m3 and nominative

► NOM + SUPER

- (9) *č'reba* – *Xuššar Irəšton-ə š3jrag gor3t, zur-əns = zə* *alə*
 Tskhinval south Ossetia-IN main town talk-PRS.3PL = 3SG.IN every
3vžag-əl *iron jet:3m3*
 language-SUPER Iron except
 ‘Tskhinval is the capital of South Ossetia, all languages are spoken
 there except Ossetic’ (ONC)

Fixed case marking: corpus data

case	number
NOM	1542
GEN	1408

- ▶ *jet:3m3* is often used with the genitive (with is typical of Ossetic postpositions) and with nominative (with is not so typical)
- ▶ These cases are conditioned by *jet:3m3*, since they not always match the cases in the main clause

Genitive: the problem

- ▶ Some speakers prefer nominative over genitive

(10) *Alan / ??Alan-ə jet:3m3 b3r3gbon-m3 ni-či 3rba-səd*
Alan Alan-GEN except feast-ALL NEG-who PV-go.[PST.3SG]
‘No one came to the party except Alan.’

Other cases

- ▶ *jet:3m3* is also used with other cases, which match with those in the main clause

(11) *3xšar-3n jet:3m3 3ž ni-k3m-3n žayt-on*
Akhshar-DAT except 1SG NEG-who-DAT say-PST.1SG
‘I didn’t tell anyone except Akhsar.’ (Akhvlediani (ed.) 1963: 295)

Case marking: corpus data

case	number
NOM	1542
GEN	1408
DAT	19
ALL	17
ABL	34
SUPER	2
EQU	2
COM	0

Postpositions

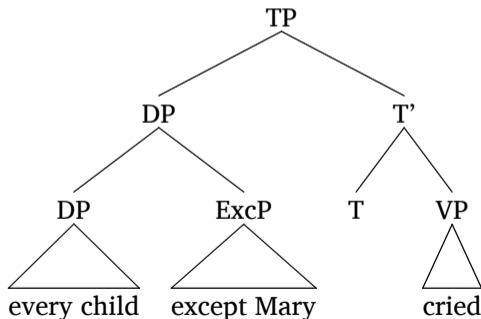
- (12) *šk'ola-jə* *f3št3* *jet:3m3* *ax3m* *didinžə-t3* *ni-k^wə*
 school-GEN behind except such flower-PL NEG-where
žaj-əns
 grow-PRS.3PL

‘Such flowers do not grow anywhere except behind the house.’

	number
postposition	35

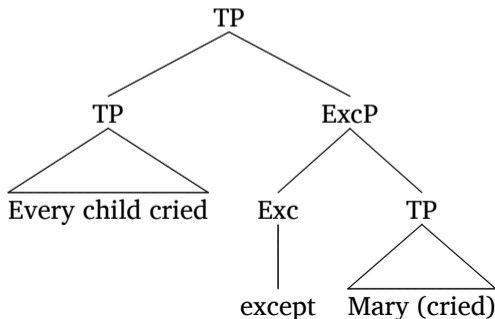
Syntax of exceptives

- ▶ Connected vs free exceptives (Hoeksema 1995)
- ▶ In **connected exceptives** the exceptive phrase is a nominal modifier, it is adjacent to QP. (The trees from Polinsky 2019)



Syntax of exceptives

- ▶ In **free exceptives** the ExcP is located at the periphery of the clause.
- ▶ Two different ways of derivation (Postdam, Polinsky 2019).
 - FEs could arise as the result of clausal ellipsis (clausal derivation)
 - or be derived from CEs by extraposition (cf. scrambling) of the exceptive phrase (phrasal derivation)



Finite verbs

- ▶ *jet:3m3* is not used with finite verbs

(13) *fən3j k3n-ən / *k3n-ə jet:3m3 alan ni-sə kuš-ə*
 sleep do-INF do-PRS.3SG except Alan NEG-what work-PRS.3SG
 ‘Alan does nothing but sleep.’

“Multiple exceptions”

- ▶ *jet:3m3* is not used with items which do not make a constituent less than a clause

(14) *alan (*žnon) jet:3m3 wəsə x3zar-m3 ni-k^{wə} ni-či*
 Alan yesterday except that house-ALL NEG-when NEG-who
səd
 walk[PST.3SG]

‘Apart from Alan (yesterday), no one has ever gone to that house.’

(15) **alan z3lin3-j3n (3xx^{wəš} k3n-ən) jet:3m3 ni-či ni-k3m-3n*
 Alan Zalina-DAT help do-INF except NEG-who NEG-who-DAT
3xx^{wəš} k3n-ə
 help do-PRS.3SG

Expected meaning: ‘No one helps anyone except Alan helps Zalina.’

Generalization

	Phrasal analysis	Clausal analysis
non-fixed case marking	—	OK
postpositions	—	OK
finite verbs	OK	—
multiple exceptions	OK	—

Discussion

- R1** “From what I understand in the abstract, *jet:3m3* is a postposition, and as such, it is expected to select a nominal complement (including nominalized ones)”
- R2** “Overall, I would not dismiss the clausal analysis entirely”
- ▶ Phrasal analysis – but where does the non-fixed case marking come from?
 - ▶ Clausal analysis – but why only nominals?
 - ▶ Deus ex machina: small clause?

Polinsky, Kurokami, Potsdam 2023: Japanese

- ▶ The postposition *igai*, combines with NPs
- ▶ “We have shown that Japanese free exceptives always include an underlying **nominalized CPs** (sometimes headed by a null nominal head), with elided material. This kind of ellipsis is different from clausal ellipsis in exceptives in languages like English where no nominal or determiner head is attested.”

[PP [NP [CP] (*koto*)] *igai*]

- (16) *Mearii-o shoutaishi-ta-igai-wa karera-wa onnanoko-o shoutaishi-nakat-ta.*
Mary-ACC invite-PST-except-TOP they-TOP girl-ACC invite-NEG-PST
‘They did not invite any girls, except they invited Mary.’
(Polinsky, Kurokami, Potsdam 2023)

“Split only”

- ▶ *jet:3m3* can be used without the QP with negation
- ▶ Sentential negation + exceptive marker = ‘only’ → “split only” (von Fintel, Iatridou 2007)

(17) *avd k'laš-ə jet:3m3 n3 wəd-i w3d šk'ola-t-ə*
 seven class-NMR except NEG be-PST.3SG then school-PL-IN
 ‘There were only seven classes in schools back then (lit. “except for seven classes there were not in schools”)’ (SpOC)

“Split only”

- ▶ Spoken Ossetic corpus data: only constructions with numerals
- ▶ Cf. also elicited examples:

(18) *max-m3 *(iw) mašin3 jet:3m3 n3 wəd-i*
 1PL-ALL one car except NEG be-PST.3SG
 ‘We only had one car.’

“Split *only*”: ONC data

- ▶ ONC: NUM + N.NMR + *jet:3m3* is almost always used without QP. There are far less examples like (19) than examples like (20).

(19) *nar pravleni-jə ni-či=wal wəd-i 3rt3 l3dž-ə*
 now government-IN NEG-who = more be-PST.3SG three man-NUM

jet:3m3
 except

‘Currently there was no one else on the board except three men.’
 (ONC)

(20) *jæ = čəš:3-jə 3rt3 šom-ə jet:3m3 n3j*
 POSS.3SG = wallet-IN three ruble-NUM except NEG.EXST

‘There are only three rubles in his wallet (lit. there isn’t except three rubles).’ (ONC)

Construction with the overt counterpart

- ▶ This construction includes a unit of the same level as the exception (*ironaw* ‘in Ossetic’ in the main clause and *wərəššagaw* ‘in Russian’ in the exceptive phrase in (21))

(21) *q3wwon f3šiv3d-3j pišmo wərəššag-aw jet:3m3 iron-aw*
 rural youth-ABL letter Russian-EQU except Ossetic-EQU
ni-či fəš:-ə
 NEG-who write-PRS.3SG

‘None of the rural youth writes letters in Ossetic, only in Russian (lit. “except in Russian, nobody writes in Ossetic”).’ (ONC)

Construction with the overt counterpart

- (22) *n3 = d3r kard-3j x3s-ən žon-ə, n3d3r fat-3j*
 NEG = ADD sword-ABL hold-INF know-PRS.3SG NEG.ADD arrow-ABL
x3s-ən žon-ə, b3laš-3j jet:3m3, galiw3g u,
 hold-INF know-PRS.3SG tree-ABL except left-handed be.PRS.3SG
galiw k'ux-3j jet:3m3 raxiž-3j d3r n3 žon-ə
 left hand-ABL except right-ABL ADD NEG know-PRS.3SG
x3s-ən.
 hold-INF

‘He does not know how to fight with a sword or an arrow, except with wood, he is left-handed, except with his left hand he cannot fight with his right.’ (ONC)

Conclusion

- ▶ I have described the exceptive constructions with the postposition *jet:3m3* in Ossetic.
- ▶ It can attach to NPs with different cases and to postpositions.
- ▶ But it does not combine with finite verbs and is not felicitous with “multiple exceptions”.
- ▶ *jet:3m3* is used in “split *only*” constructions (the typical context has a NP with a numeral and existential verb).
- ▶ *jet:3m3* is possible in constructions with the overt counterpart (‘except in Russian, nobody writes in Osettic’).

Thank you!

- ▶ Slides (+ references):



References

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