

## CHAPTER 24

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# INFORMATION STRUCTURE IN LANGUAGES OF THE CAUCASUS

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## 24.1 INTRODUCTION

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IN this chapter, I follow the account of information structure developed in Krifka (2007) applying it to languages of the Caucasus. Krifka employs the categories of focus, givenness, and topic.<sup>1</sup> Based on existing literature, he defines these key terms as follows. *Focus* stresses and points out the existence of alternatives either to the expression (if the focus is on the linguistic expression itself) or, more commonly, to its denotation. *Givenness* indicates whether the denotation of an item is present in the common ground and the degree to which it is present or salient. *Topic* is what the utterance is about.

An additional notion that will be employed in this chapter and that partially overlaps with focus is *contrast*. Contrast is relational in the sense that there must be a relation between the contrasted item and at least one other identifiable alternative in the context whereby both the contrasted item and the alternative must be explicitly mentioned (e.g., Repp, 2010, 2016). The two items must be comparable to each other with respect to a shared domain.

Let us start with a brief discussion of three key notions: focus, givenness, and topic.

*Focus* has pragmatic as well as semantic uses. Pragmatic uses of focus do not have a truth-conditional effect. They can be divided into several subtypes. *Presentational* or

<sup>1</sup> Krifka makes use of a fourth category, namely, “frame-setting/delimitation,” which resembles aboutness topics or contrastive topics. Due to the difficulty in differentiating these notions I have excluded this category from the discussion.

*information focus* expresses the most important or new information. It fills a gap in the pragmatic information of the addressee as it is the case with answers to general content questions (“What did X do?” “What happened?” “What did you buy?”). This type includes *thetic* sentences which are fully focused. *Constituent focus* can be used to confirm or correct utterances (including *verum focus* on the truth value of a sentence) and highlight parallels. It can be, more generally, just contrastive (see also Dik et al., 1981). Content questions can also instantiate constituent focus (Drubig & Schaffar, 2001). Finally, contrastive topics contain a focused item, and focus in frame-setting expressions such as utterance-initial adverbials of time and place.

Semantic uses of focus can have an effect on the truth-conditions. Such focus is marked by focus-sensitive particles: additives and scalar additives, adnominal quantifiers, or negation particles. All these items encode scope-taking operators. The scope of focus-sensitive particles can but need not be identical with the focus in the utterance in which they occur. In contrast to the pragmatic use of focus, the contribution of focus-sensitive particles such as additives to the information structure does not affect the output common ground. Instead, it restricts the input common ground because the use of additives presupposes alternatives to the item in the scope of the additive.

*Givenness* is a scalar phenomenon since items can be given or activated in the mind of a speaker and hearer or they can be new to different degrees. Given items can be in focus. Thus, focus is not complementary to givenness, and, consequently, focus is also not identical to “new information” (see especially Gundel, Hedberg, & Zacharski, 1993).

In Krifka’s framework, *topic* is opposed to *comment*. Everything in an utterance that is not topical represents the comment. Topics can be divided into *aboutness topics* and *contrastive topics*. An aboutness topic is a topical item that is identified through an utterance and then some piece of information about it is provided. Topic is not identical with “given information” since new topics are possible.

*Contrastive topics* are a special category, as they combine topic and focus. A contrastive topic indicates alternatives each of which is an aboutness topic.

The functional categories of information structure often correlate with specific formal means of expression. For focus, these are, for example, pitch accent, word order, clefts and pseudo-clefts, and focus-sensitive particles. For givenness, these include anaphoric expressions (from null pronominals to elaborated noun phrases), word order, deaccentuation, and dislocation. Topic can be marked by particles, word order (including dislocation), and the use of particular syntactic roles/positions; the correlation between topic and subject is well established.

With respect to Caucasian languages, information-structural effects have been mainly studied with respect to word order and clefts. Constructions resembling clefts are widely used in Northwest Caucasian languages and to a somewhat lesser extent in Nakh-Dagestanian. They are also attested in Kartvelian but seem to be less frequently employed to manipulate the information structure.

Among dislocations, the distinction is between hanging topics (*H-type* dislocations) and (contrastive) dislocation (*D-type* dislocation) (see López, 2016). Hanging topics often occur to the left of the clause and are disconnected from the clause because they

are not syntactically dependent on the verb and do not show case connectivity. Contrastive dislocations are constituents of the core clause and bear the same case as in the base position (case connectivity). Hanging topics are usually aboutness topics and are used to introduce new referents (*topic promotion*). Hanging topics that occur to the right of the clause are mostly afterthoughts that provide clarification of referents. *D-type* dislocations, which always express given information, can be contrastive if they evoke a set of alternatives.

In languages with free word order, such as the Caucasian languages, dislocation is not always easy to identify. Nevertheless, it seems that Nakh-Dagestanian and Kartvelian languages seem to have *H-type* and *D-type* dislocation. The nature of dislocation in Northwest Caucasian languages is less clear and it is not included in this chapter.

The role of prosody awaits further clarification, although there are a number of studies on pitch accent in Georgian. All languages have particles of the additive, scalar additive, and restrictive type that interact with the focus structure of the utterance.

In what follows, I treat each language family individually, focusing on the categories introduced here.

## 24.2 NAKH-DAGESTANIAN LANGUAGES

The major ways of expressing focus, givenness, and topic in Nakh-Dagestanian are constituent order, focus-sensitive particles, anaphoric expressions, and syntactic positions. (For an overview on information structure in Nakh-Dagestanian, see Forker & Belyaev, 2016).

### 24.2.1 Focus and Contrast

In this section, I concentrate on constituent order, cleft or cleft-like constructions, and focus-sensitive particles. Lexical accent is not a very prominent category in Caucasia languages and is sometimes hard to identify (see Chapter 16), but can, in principle, also be used to mark focus or contrast.

#### 24.2.1.1 *Constituent Order in Phrases and Clauses*

Noun phrases are head-final. Various types of modifiers (except for demonstratives) can occur after the head noun or in some other position separated from the head noun. In many cases those modifiers do not form one NP with the separated nominal but rather make up their own NP, for example, because they need to be nominalized (1c), case marked (1b), or bear other types of special marking (e.g., Dargwa languages, Akhvakh, Ingush). Testelec (1998b) states that there are two possible scenarios regarding their syntactic status: (i) postponed modifiers belong to the preceding head noun and form one NP with it or (ii) they form their own separate NP. He further writes that



the evidence, in particular for Avar, Andic, and Tsezic languages, is contradictory and provides exemplary tests for Bezhta. Similarly, Kazenin (2009a) concludes that there is evidence for Lak that discontinuous modifiers make of their own NP.

Testelec (1998b, p. 274, 1998c, pp. 654–658) characterizes postposed modifiers as focused, contrasted, or restrictive (1b). Kazenin (2009a) provides examples of modifiers that occur separated from the head nominal in constituent focus constructions (9b). In general, contrastive modifiers can be positioned after the head noun, but they can also occur before the head noun (1a). Examples (1a) and (1b) have contrastive modifiers, but the contrast in (1b) with the postponed modifiers is greater.

(1) a. Godoberi

hanq'u b-iŋi ɬabuda adami-di, b-aχi ce-w adami-di.  
house N-built three man-ERG N-bought one-M man-ERG  
“The house was built by three men and bought by one man.” (Kazenin, 1996b, p. 150)

b. Godoberi

hanq'u b-iŋi adami-di ɬabuda-š-t:i, b-aχi adami-di.  
house N-built man-ERG three-OBL-ERG N-bought man-ERG  
ce:-š-t:i  
one-OBL-ERG  
“The house was built by three men and bought by one man.” (Kazenin, 1996b, p. 150)

c. Ingush

da'ar k'oma-dar di'ar aaz.  
food hot-D.NMLZ D.eat.WPST 1SG.ERG  
“I ate hot (spicy) food.” (Nichols, 2011, p. 631)

In natural texts, genitives, in particular possessive pronouns, are postposed more commonly than any other type of modifier. Creissels (2013) analyzes such constructions in Akhvakh and calls them “floating genitives” (2a,b). In contrast to genitives occurring in their canonical prenominal position, floating genitives agree with the head noun in gender and fulfill “a possessive framing function, in the sense that the floating genitive identifies the personal sphere of its referent as the frame within which the predication expressed by the clause holds” (Creissels, 2013, p. 333). For instance, in (2b) the personal sphere of the population, expressed through the first person plural pronoun, provides the frame for the predication in a similar manner as spatial adverbials in clause-initial position have a delimiting function.

(2) a. Akhvakh

ič':o č'or-ere b-ik'<sup>w</sup>-a-wi če ek'<sup>w</sup>a-s:<sup>w</sup>-e Molla  
door know-PROG N-be-N-PFV one man-M-ERG Molla

Rasadi-be.

Rasadi.GEN-N

“Molla Rasadi’s door was hit by a man.” (lit. “The door was hit by a man, of Molla Rasadi.”) (Creissels, 2013, p. 343)

b. Tsez

[Context: The people told him of the grief that was brought on them.]

raq’dalʃi=n      r-ay-n,      quqi.uci-n      q’iči-moči=n,      posu=n  
draught(IV)=ADD   IV-come-CVB   get.dry-CVB   crop.field=ADD   cattle(IV)=ADD  
r-exu-s      elu-s=ʃin.

IV-die-WPST      1PL-GEN1=QUOT

“A drought came, and our crop dried and our cattle died, they said.” (Abdulaev & Abdullaev, 2010, p. 173)

Constituent order in main clauses in Nakh-Dagestanian languages is variable (see Chapter 3). Future research will determine whether the variation between SOV and SVO depends mainly on information structure. A general consensus in the literature is that the focus position is pre-verbal. However, focused items can also occur in clause-initial position, not adjacent to the verb, as well as in a postverbal position (the latter option is ruled out for *wh*-words). Focal objects that occur after the verb commonly occur after a topical subject. Thus, there is no unique focus position in Nakh-Dagestanian languages. Schematically, constituent orders in the main clause can be associated with particular focus constructions in the following manner:

**Table 24.1** Constituent Order and Focus Types in Nakh–Dagestanian

constituent order	common distributional patterns of topic and focus
monovalent predicates	
SV	predicate focus,thetic utterances (fully focused), subject focus
VS	Fully focused thetic utterances, verb focus
bivalent predicates	
SOV	predicate focus,thetic utterances (fully focused), object focus
SVO	predicate focus,thetic utterances (fully focused), subject focus, occasionally introductory structure with predicate focus or object focus
OVS	object focus, predicate focus, subject focus
OSV	subject focus
VSO	verb focus, focal object, topical subject

Fully focused thetic utterances instantiate presentation focus and occur as pragmatically neutral utterances in elicitation out of context. Their common constituent orders include SV, VS, SOV, and SVO, shown in (3).

## (3) a. Agul

SVO (beginning of a story)

sa ʔus:e idemi lik'a-ʔaji bʷan.di-k q'ismet-ar.  
 one old man write.IPFV-PST stone-SUB/CONT destiny-PL  
 "One old man wrote the destiny (of the people) on a stone." (Maisak, 2014,  
 p. 220–221)

## b. Hunzib

VS (beginning of a story)

zuq'u-n lo q'an.u is-na bixinab=no c'ujab=no.  
 be-CVB be.H.PL two sibling-PL male=ADD female=ADD  
 "There were two siblings, a brother and a sister." (van den Berg, 1995, p. 219)

Common constituent orders for predicate focus and object focus are SV, VS, SOV, SVO, OVS, and VSO, for example,

## (4) a. VS with predicate focus or presentational focus: Sanzhi Dargwa

[A: What are they doing? B:]

ʃ:at:ir t:ura b-uq-un ca-b hex-t:i,  
 walk outside HPL-go.PFV-PRET be-H.PL DEM.UP-PL  
 ʃi-b.b-ax<sup>w</sup>-araj.  
 SUPER-H.PL-relax.PFV-SUBJ.3  
 "They went for a walk, to relax." (field notes)

## b. VSO with predicate focus: Khwarshi

tuq-un-ay izze iʔes xabar.  
 listen-PST.NWIT-NEG those.ERG that.GEN1 story  
 "They didn't listen to her talk." (Khalilova, 2009, p. 305)

Subject focus is shown in (5) and (6):

## (5) a. OSV with preverbal subject focus: Lezgian

[We will tell you where the treasury is hidden and you tell the king that]

a xazina žin-err.i čünüx-na lah.  
 that treasury jinn-PL.ERG hide-AOR QUOT  
 "The treasury was hidden by jinns." (Haspelmath, 1993, p. 301)

## b. SVO with preverbal subject focus: Avar

[The wife said: "I cooked only one piece of meat, the second piece where does it come from?" The husband said:]

di-ca t'am-un=in co kesek.  
 1SG-ERG let-AOR=EMPH one piece  
 "I added one piece." (Axlakov, 1976, p. 31)

## c. OVS with postverbal subject focus: Tsakhur

[When I went to school, ]

za-s	dars	hiwo-jn	Nuri:	ma <sup>ʔ</sup> fallim-e:
1SG-DAT	lesson(IV)	give.PFV-ATTR	Nuri	teacher-ERG

“The teacher Nuri taught me.” (Kibrik, 1999, p. 828)

With verb focus, common constituent orders are verb-initial (see also Forker & Belyaev, 2016, p. 246). For example,

## (6) Batsbi

[ja-i]	šukia	yazē	učitelʔ
is-Q	Shukia	good	teacher

“Is Shukia a good teacher?” (Holisky & Gagua, 1994, p. 200)

Turning now to *wh*-words, argument *wh*-words are commonly placed in the pre-verbal position, but in most Dagestanian languages they can occur in the clause-initial position, so adjacency to the finite verb is not required. Nakh languages are more restricted in this respect: both Ingush (Nichols, 2011, p. 711) and Chechen (Z. Molochieva, personal communication, October 25, 2017) require that *wh*-words appear preverbally, adjacent to the verb.<sup>2</sup>

24.2.1.2 *Clefts and Cleft-Like Constructions*

Nakh-Dagestanian languages also have specialized focus constructions that are similar to clefts or pseudo-clefts (Forker, 2016a; Harris, 2001, 2002; Kalinina & Sumbatova, 2007; Kazenin, 2002b; Komen 2015; Rudnev, 2015; Sumbatova, 2009b, 2013; Testelec, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c). These constructions express constituent focus that can be contrastive or corrective.

Cleft constructions the following morphosyntactic properties: (i) a particle, copula, or other auxiliary immediately follows the item in focus, and (ii) the verb appears in the form of a participle or a similar non-finite form that is otherwise used in relative clauses. Expletive (dummy) pronouns appear in clefts constructions in Tsudaqar Dargwa (Harris, 2001) and Chechen (Komen, 2015). Depending on the language and the construction in question, the focused item appears either in the absolutive case, as it would be expected for a copula subject in a cleft construction, or in the case required by the lexical verb or by their function as adjunct. Kalinina and Sumbatova (2007), who study Bagvalal, Tsakhur, and Itsari Dargwa, call these particles or verb-like items “predicativity markers” and claim that their main function is the expression of illocutionary force and information structure.

<sup>2</sup> In Batsbi, there is a strong preference for *wh*-words in the preverbal position, although with some exceptions (Holisky & Gagua, 1994).





Clefts are freely available for focusing material in the baseline matrix clause. Constituents of infinitival complements can also be focused by means of the copula, for example, in Godoberi (Kazenin, 1996a), Bagvalal (Kazenin, 2001b), Lak (Kazenin, 2002b, 2013b), and Sanzhi Dargwa (Forker, 2016a).

An unusual cleft-like construction is found in Tsakhur, where it serves to focus items within different types of subordinate clauses (complement clauses, adverbial clauses, relative clauses). Example (10a) shows a cleft-like construction for focus in a relative clause and example (10b) in an adverbial clause.

(10) Tsakhur

- a. za-k'le [mišleš-qa wo-r 'uq:a-na] gade gež-e.  
 1SG-AFF Mishlesh-ALL COP-I go.I-IPFV-ATTR boy(I) see.I-IPFV  
 "I see the boy who is going to MISHLESH."
- b. Rasul [Fa:t'imat=o-r a-r-i:inga<sup>a</sup>] a<r>k'in.  
 Rasul(I) Fatimat(II)=COP-II II-come-TEMPERS.COMM.VB leave.pfv  
 "When PATIMAT came, Rasul left." (Kazenin, 1999a, p. 598)

Kazenin (2001a, 2002b), who investigates the properties of this construction in Tsakhur, concludes that the copula marks focus in situ and is base generated as an adjunct to the head of the focused constituent, in the embedded position together with the focus. According to Kazenin, the construction differs from genuine cleft constructions in being monoclausal.

### 24.2.1.3 Focus-Sensitive Particles

Focus-sensitive particles are widely used in Nakh-Dagestanian languages. Usually these particles have a semantic content and express additivity ("also, too") (Forker, 2016b), scalar additivity ("even"), or exclusivity ("only"). Others are modal particles that resemble Russian *že*, for example, Dargwa =q'al/=q'alle/=q'ali (Forker, 2018a). A third common type is reflexive intensifiers ("self"), for example, Bezhta =zu, Avar =go (Forker, 2015), Hinuq, Tsez =tow, and so on. A number of languages also have particles that do not fall into any of these semantic groups but are described in the literature as "focus markers," "emphatic particles," or "contrastive particles." These include the Andi particle =ɓib that marks contrastive or restrictive modifiers (Testelec, 1998c, p. 656), the Avar focus particles (=j)in, and =χa (Rudnev, 2015, pp. 169–212), and the Archi enclitic =či (see also Section 24.2.1.2 for more languages).

Focus and focus-sensitive particles can be used in specialized focus constructions such as clefts or in other types of constituent-focus constructions as well as in contrastive topic constructions (18b).

When a particle appears in a cleft construction with a copula, focus is marked redundantly, and both the particle and copula follow the focused constituent (see Kazenin, [1999a, p. 588] on Tsakhur and Kazenin [2001b, p. 686] on Bagvalal). However, as (11)



shows, in Bagvalal, it is possible to position the particle and the copula after different constituents, as long as the particle linearly precedes the copula. In such a case, only the particle serves to mark focus. Further work is needed to investigate constructions presented here.

- (11) Bagvalal  
 Mahammad= $\kappa$ -o:  $\chi$ ajl-i-r ek<sup>w</sup>a č<sup>ʔ</sup>ini-w-o.  
 Mahammad=PTCL-M Khalil-OBL-ERG COP beat.up-M-CVB  
 “It is Mahammad who Kahlil beat up.” (Kazenin, 2001b, p. 686)

Contrastive topics, which predominantly occur to the left of the verb, are sometimes marked with particles. These are often additive particles that follow the second member of the contrast set, as the Kryz additive *an* in (12), but other types of particles can be used as well (cf. the Archi enclitic =č*i* in (13)).

- (12) Kryz  
 leh lehad, ic ciy-a<sup>ʕ</sup>ar č<sup>ʔ</sup>ut<sup>ʔ</sup> an  
 calf black REFL.GEN fat.tail-IN.ELAT tip(F) ADD  
 luzu ši-u-ru. white be-F-MOD.FUT.F  
 “As for the calf, it will be black, and the tip of its tail will be white.” (Authier, 2009, p. 379)

- (13) Archi  
 “un inžit i<w>t:i-t<sup>ʔ</sup>aw  $\chi$ u-mč<sup>ʔ</sup>iš, zon=č*i* inžit=  
 2SG suffer inch.PFV-NEG.CVB find.I.PFV-COND 1SG=CONTR suffer=EMPH  
 i<w>t:i-t<sup>ʔ</sup>u” bo-li  
 inch.PFV-NEG say.PFV-EVID  
 “‘If you did not suffer, I did not suffer at all,’ he said.”  
 (<http://www.philol.msu.ru/~languedoc/rus/archi/corpus.php>)

Nakh-Dagestanian additive markers can also associate with focus, like all focus-sensitive particles, but they are not pure focus markers because they also associate with aboutness topics or contrastive topics (Forker & Belyaev, 2016).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Polinsky and Potsdam (2001) propose to analyze the Tsez additive enclitic =*n(o)* as a topic marker, but most likely its function as a topic marker is simply an extension of the main function of =*n(o)* as an additive enclitic.



## (14) Tabasaran

giyizq'an	učvu	uzu-qh	marccival.i-ʔindi	lix-ura-čva.
until.today	2PL	1SG-POST	cleanness-SUPER.COMIT	work-PRS-2SG.A
‘Until today, you have worked for me with loyalty.’ (Babaliyeva, 2013, p. 109)				

(15) Chechen

i	ɤullaq	q'a:stuo	ju:xa.w.örzu	iza.
DEM	matter	figure.out.INF	back.returned.M	he

‘So he went back to figure the matter out.’ (Nichols, 1994, p. 59)

(16) Hinuq

[The dying father gives each of his three sons directions on what to do after his death.]

q'wena eʎa ɣwedʎ'o, Ø-oʎodemuni uʒi, haytoy=no r-uw-a  
 two.OBL ORD day.SPR I-middle boy(I) he.ERG=ADD v-do-INF  
 hanging topic resumptive

goʎ axranʎi q'arʎ'os q'arʎ'or  
 be guarding(v) from.morning till.morning  
 "On the second day the middle son, he will also guard (the grave) from one morning till (the next) morning." (field notes)

## (17) Ingush

[The Hwulxoi had also lost some in a siege, so]

... shi sag='a txuona xaac [mycha vaxaav  
 two person=ADD 1PL.EXCL.DAT know.NEG where v.go.nwIT.V  
 eanna] dwa-vannavaac.

SUB DEIC-V.give.nwIT.V.NEG

"They said they didn't know where the two bodies (of their enemies) were and  
 didn't return them." (Nichols, 2011, p. 584)

Maisak (2010) discusses a construction in a number of Dagestanian languages which he calls "predicate topicalization." In the generative tradition, these constructions are usually called "predicate clefts" (e.g., Landau, 2007). In this construction, the verb is doubled, and the two copies serve different information-structural functions. The fronted verb is expressed by a non-finite form (this form can appear with the object) and often combines with additive, emphatic, or reflexive particles. It is interpreted as topic or contrastive topic. Further down in the clause, there is finite form of the same verb (or a light verb such as "do"), which usually expresses *verum focus* or polarity focus. The entire utterance expresses a situation that is contrasted with another situation, which is previously mentioned or recoverable from discourse.

## (18) Rutul

jirq'in, ha'li jirq'iri, amma k'ibdi qaa'rχi'ri.  
 come.MSD Ali come.PST but early go.away.PST

"As for coming, Ali came, but went away soon." (Maisak, 2010)

In some languages, arguably similar constructions have slightly different formal and functional properties. For instance, in Avar, the doubled verb in the infinitive immediately precedes the finite verb (not being dislocated to the left of the clause) and there is no overt adversative or concessive clause before or after (Forker, 2015). In the great majority of the corpus examples, the finite verb is negated, and the meaning is that of emphatic negation (the speaker explicitly rejects possible conflicting ideas or expectations).

### 24.2.3 Backgrounding

Nakh-Dagestanian languages have antipassive and biabsolutive constructions; both types have been described as backgrounding the patient.

Antipassive constructions are attested in Avar, some Andic languages (e.g., Godoberi), Tsezic languages except Khwarshi and Tsez, and Dargwa languages (Comrie et al., forthcoming). Biabsolutive constructions are found in all branches of Nakh-Dagestanian

with the exception of Khinalugh, for which I lack the relevant data. Sanzhi Dargwa and a couple of Lezgian languages such as Lezgian, Rutul, Kryz, and Budukh also do not have biabsolutive constructions (Forker, 2012).

#### 24.2.4 Givenness

There are no studies on givenness in Nakh-Dagestanian languages. Because of the absence of determiners, definite and indefinite noun phrases do not require special marking. The numeral “one” can optionally be used to express indefinite NPs (1b). Demonstrative pronouns are optionally found in definite NPs (see also Chapter 19). Unmarked common nouns are interpreted as non-specific, but marked common nouns may be non-specific as well.

Impressionistically, NPs with demonstrative pronouns that do not express deixis are used when given referents which have not been mentioned for a while are taken up again in the discourse. For instance, in (19), from a story about a miller, the miller tries to use the secrets he learned from a fox, a wolf, and a bear that came to his mill. The noun phrase *ogu si* takes up the bear again. More research is needed to test the possible correlation between demonstrative modifiers in NPs and their function of topic-marking.

(19) Hunzib

[They went and ate and after they had finished, the miller went and hid in the grain chute of the mill.]

r-eš-en      žĩ.wá.q'-oł,      ogu      si      m-okẽ.m.eļ'e-n      lo.  
 PL-eat-CVB   end.PL-when   that(IV)   bear(IV)   IV-lie.down.IV-CVB   COP.IV  
 “After (they) had finished eating, the bear lay down for a while.” (van den Berg, 1995, p. 168)

Although Nakh-Dagestanian languages are generally pro-drop and arguments that are retrievable from context are regularly omitted, these languages rely on demonstrative and reflexive pronouns in anaphoric function. Bickel (2011) found that in Chechen and Ingush more than half of the possible arguments are actually overtly expressed. Forker (2007) notices a similar percentage of overt arguments for Hinuq.

### 24.3 NORTHWEST CAUCASIAN LANGUAGES

The Northwest Caucasian language family is the least studied indigenous language family of the area with respect to information structure. Some existing work discusses clefts and pseudo-clefts.



### 24.3.1 Focus and Contrast

Focus and contrast are marked through constituent order, clefts and pseudo-clefts, and focus-sensitive particles. The latter have been largely neglected in extant research.

#### 24.3.1.1 *Constituent Order*

Constituent order at the phrase level is heterogeneous because some modifiers precede the noun and others follow it. Pronominal possessors are expressed by means of prefixes. Certain modifiers such as non-referential nominal modifiers, adjectives, resultative verbs, and others are incorporated into a single nominal complex that function as single words and no parts of nominal complexes can be focused or emphasized (Lander, 2017; Chapter 9 of this volume).

Northwest Caucasian languages can be described as head-final, and SOV is the dominant word order (cf. natural texts in Colarusso, 2015). SVO is a common alternative. In contrast to Nakh-Dagestanian and Kartvelian, case marking is rather scant, which necessitates rigid subject-before-object placement in order to disambiguate the syntactic functions and semantic roles.

Presentational focus can be expressed in sentences with various word orders. Intransitive sentences that introduce new referents can have the order SV or VS:

(20) a. Adyghe

avtobusə-r                      q-e-k'we!  
 bus-ABS                      DIR-DYN-go  
 "A bus is arriving." (Sumbatova, 2009a, p. 607)

b. Abkhaz

jə-q'a-n                      aʒər-jə-pa-c<sup>wa</sup>                      h<sup>wa</sup>                      j<sup>wa</sup>ə-ʒ<sup>i</sup>a                      [a]-aj.ʃ<sup>i</sup>-c<sup>wa</sup>  
 3PL-be-PST.FINITE                      Adzhyr-3-son-PL                      QUOT                      two-HUM                      ART-brother-PL  
 "There lived two brothers (reportedly known as) Sons of Adzhyr."  
 (Chirikba, 2003b, p. 259)

A recent grammar of Ubykh states that postverbal constituents are extremely rare in Ubykh texts (Fenwick, 2011, pp. 151–153) and that in addition to SOV only OSV is a common alternative, but apparently marked order that "appears to provide a certain degree of emphasis to the fronted absolutive object."

In Kabardian, OSV order is quite common (Kumakhov & Vamling, 2009, p. 126; Matasović, 2010a, p. 97; Polinsky, 1989). It is, however, restricted to particular contexts: an inanimate subject acting upon an animate object; subject and object expressed by first/second person pronouns (Kumakhov & Vamling, 2009, p. 113), and some embedded clauses with non-finite verb forms (Matasović, 2010a, p. 91; see Colarusso, 1992, p. 171, for examples).

The immediately preverbal position is that of focus (Kindlein, 2016, p. 20), for example, in the question-answer pair (21):

(21) Kabardian

- a. xet                      Ø-jə-ś'-a                      wəne-r?  
     who                      3.ABS-3SG.A-make-PST                      house-ABS  
     ‘Who built the house?’
- b. pχaś'e-m              Ø-jə-ś'-a-ś                      wəne-r  
     carpenter-OBL      3.ABS-3SG.A-make-PST-AFFIRM      house-ABS  
     ‘The CARPENTER built the house.’ (Matasović, 2010a, p. 92)

Turning to the placement of *wh*-words in monoclausal questions, there are a number of tendencies. *Wh*-words usually occur *in situ*. Sumbatova (2009a, 2009b) investigates questions in Adyghe; in questions with finite verbs the question particle attaches to the predicate and not to any other constituent. The *wh*-phrase is *in situ*, and this strategy is especially preferable when the question phrase is an adverbial, in particular with manner and locative adverbials (22a,b).

(22) Adyghe

- a. murat                      təde                      k'wə-ɣ-a?  
     Murat                      where                      go-PST-Q  
     ‘Where did Murat go?’ (the speaker is not sure whether Murat has really gone) (Sumbatova, 2009b, p. 322)
- b. sədewəš'tew              q'wəje-r                      a-ś'ə-r-a?  
     how                      cheese-ABS                      3PL.A-make-DYN-Q  
     ‘How is cheese made?’ (Sumbatova, 2009b, p. 323)
- c. sədə-m                      wəne-r                      Ø-q-ə-ke-nefə-re?  
     what-OBL                      house-ABS                      3.ABS-DIR-3SG.A-CAUS-light-DYN  
     ‘What lightens the house (room)?’ (Kumakhov & Vamling, 2009, p. 139)

However, other orders are also possible (Kumakhov & Vamling, 2009, pp. 134–135), and the adjacency of a *wh*-word to the verb is not a rigid constraint (cf. (23c)).

(23) Kabardian

- a. a-bə                      xet/sət                      Ø-jə-ɬeɣ<sup>w</sup>-a?  
     DEM-OBL                      who/what                      3.ABS-3SG.A-see-PST  
     ‘Whom/what did he see?’                      SOV (*wh-in situ*)

b. a-bə	Ø-jə-ʔeɸ <sup>w</sup> -a	xet (sət)?	SVO
c. xet/sət	a-bə	Ø-jə-ʔeɸ <sup>w</sup> -a?	OSV
d. xet/sət	Ø-jə-ʔeɸ <sup>w</sup> -a	a-bə?	OVS
e. *Ø-jə-ʔeɸ <sup>w</sup> -a	a-bə	xet/sət?	VSO
f. *Ø-jə-ʔeɸ <sup>w</sup> -a	xet/sət	a-bə?	VOS

Northwest Caucasian languages also have cleft and pseudo-cleft structures for question formation; I discuss these in Section 24.3.1.2.

Other constructions expressing constituent focus include verb-focus constructions and parallel structures. Verb focus, with the OSV order, is illustrated in the question-answer pair in (24).

(24) Adyghe: OSV

- Q: mə txəʔə-r we qe-p-ʃʲefə-ɤ-a?  
     this book-ABS 2SG DIR-2SG.A-buy-PST-Q
- A: haw, a-r se bibliotekə-m qə-ʃʲə-s-təɸ<sup>w</sup>ə-ɤ  
     no that-ABS 1SG library-OBL DIR-LOC-1SG.A-steal-PST  
     ‘Did you buy this book? No, I stole the book in the library.’  
     (Sumbatova, 2009a, p. 607)

Contrastive constituents in parallel structures (with or without correction) are often placed clause-initially, for example (25).

(25) Kabardian

- mə-txəʔ-xe-r se we Ø-w-e-s-t-a-xe-ś  
     this-book-PL-ABS 1SG 2SG 3.ABS-2SG.IO-DAT-1SG.A-give-PST-PL-AFFIRM  
     ‘I gave these books to you (not those).’ (Colarusso, 1992, p. 176)

### 24.3.1.2 Clefts and Pseudo-Clefts

All Northwest Caucasian languages have dedicated constructions that resemble cleft or pseudo-cleft constructions. They have been studied most extensively for Adyghe (Sumbatova, 2009a) and Kabardian (Kindlein, 2016; Kumakhov & Vamling, 2009), and to a lesser extent for Abkhaz (Hewitt & Khibia, 1979). As in Nakh-Dagestanian, the constructions differ from language to language, and their analyses differ as well. Kumakhov and Vamling (2009, p. 146) describe the constructions as resembling clefts. Chirikba (2003), Fenwick (2011), Hewitt and Khibia (1979), and Kindlein (2016) analyze them as (identificational) pseudo-clefts for Abkhaz, Ubykh, and Kabardian, respectively. Sumbatova (2009a) does not analyze these constituent-focus constructions in Adyghe as cleft constructions and suggests that they are monoclausal but still diverge from



sentences with neutral information structure because the nominal constituent functions as predicate whereas the verbal constituent functions as an argument in the absolutive case.

All researchers agree that cleft/pseudo-cleft constructions in Northwest Caucasian consist of the focal part expressed by the predicate and the presupposed part expressed by a relative clause. The predicate commonly appears at the end of the utterance but can also appear at the beginning or in a medial position. The entire construction is structurally analogous to identificational or specificational copula clauses. The identification or specification is commonly exhaustive in the sense that the focus phrase denotes the entire set of things capable of being substituted for the variable in the open proposition.

- (26) HEADLESS RELATIVE CLAUSE                      Nominal part+COPULA  
presupposition    assertion (focus)

As examples (27a,b) show, the focal part can appear in clause-final position or in clause-initial position (“inverted pseudo-cleft”). For Ubykh, Fenwick (2011, p. 196) finds that the focal element is frequently occurring in clause-initial position for emphasis.

- (27) a. Abaza

arəj    ajxa    z-la-ŋa-šjt’ə-r-x-wa                      a-rəč<sup>w</sup>a-g<sup>j</sup>ə=j  
that    iron    REL.IO-INS-DIR-PV-3PL.A-lift-IPFV    art-tongs-INTENS=ADD  
[Satanaja]<sub>foc</sub>    l-ak’<sup>w</sup>-b  
Satanaya                      3SG.F.IO-be-FINITE  
jə-z-z-rə-č<sup>j</sup>pa-z  
3SG.M.IO-POT-REL.ERG-CAUS-make-PST.NFINITE  
“Also the tongs, which can be used to lift up hot iron, it was Satanaya who caused him to be able to make them.” (O’Herin, 2001, p. 481)

- b. Abkhaz

[Man: “Let’s walk through life together,” he reportedly said]  
sara    jə-s-taxə-w                      [wara]<sub>foc</sub>    w-a-wə-p’  
1SG    REL.ABS-1SG.IO-want-PRS. NFINITE    2SG    2SG.ABS-be-PRS.ST-FINITE  
“The one that I want is you.” (“What I want is you.”) (Chirikba, 2003b, p. 261)

In another type of cleft-like construction, the focal item is directly followed by a personal or demonstrative pronoun in a special predicative form. This type is best described for Adyghe, but it also exists in Kabardian (Y. Lander, personal communication), Abaza (Y. Lander, personal communication), and Abkhaz (G. Hewitt, personal communication). The predicative form of a pronoun is a special form used in copula constructions expressing identification, taxonomic relations, and so on. In the cleft-like construction, this predicative pronoun needs to be adjacent to the nominal it accompanies (i.e., the

focus) and optionally agrees in number with it. This pronoun can combine with information-structural particles and other suffixes. The entire construction has the semantics and pragmatics of a cleft but has a wider distribution. It can be used to focus constituents of matrix and embedded clauses. For instance, in (28), focus is on the subject of a concessive conditional.

- (28) Adyghe  
 [Marat]<sub>loc</sub> a-rə-m-jə tjek'<sup>w</sup>a-ke-r, se sə-g<sup>w</sup>  
 Marat DEM-PRED-COND-ADD win-PST-ABS 1SG 1SG-heart  
 r-jə-hə-r-ep a-r zer-je-ś'a-ke-r.  
 LOC-3SG.A-carry-DYN-NEG DEM-ABS REL.MNR-3SG.IO-do-PST-ABS  
 "Although it was Marat who won, I did not like how he played."  
 (Sumbatova, 2009a, p. 575)

There is almost no information in the literature on focus or contrast within a noun phrase, but it appears that constituents within an NP can be made focal or contrastive by means of the cleft-like construction with a demonstrative.

- (29) Adyghe  
 ɤ<sup>w</sup>əneɤ<sup>w</sup>-pśaśe-r a-rə Remezan  
 neighbor-girl-ABS dem-PRED Ramazan  
 q-ə-ɬeɤ<sup>w</sup>ə-ke-r.  
 DIR-3SG.A-see-PST-ABS  
 • "Ramazan saw the NEIGHBOR's girl." (Sumbatova, 2009a, p. 590)

All Northwest Caucasian languages make use of cleft or pseudo-cleft constructions to form *wh*-questions (see also Chapter 9). Such interrogatives are the default, more common than other types of questions that make use of finite verbs (Section 24.3.1.1). In Abkhaz, Abaza, and Ubykh, the *wh*-word itself can be omitted, and an interrogative affix appears on the verb in a non-finite form (e.g., (30); see also Chapter 10).

- (30) Abaza  
 jə-b-ba-da?  
 REL.ABS-2SG.F.A-see.AOR-Q.HUM  
 "Whom did you see?" (lit. "[one] that you saw") (Lomtadze & Klychev, 1989, p. 149)

Interrogative pronouns can appear in any position in the questions (for Abkhaz, see Hewitt & Khiba, 1979, p. 21).

Kabardian, Adyghe, Abkhaz, and Abaza also have free-standing *wh*-words. Fronting of the question phrase is optional, though according to Kumakhov (2006, p. 496) the clause-initial position is the default position for interrogative words and phrases.

### 24.3.1.3 *Focus-Sensitive Particles*

As already mentioned, particles (and suffixes) appear in pseudo-clefts and cleft-like constructions; they attach to the item in focus or to a copula or predicative pronoun that accompanies the item in focus. Other focus-sensitive particles include additives (e.g., (31)).

- (31) Abkhaz
- |      |                             |         |                    |
|------|-----------------------------|---------|--------------------|
| sara | š <sup>w</sup> -sə-la-z,    | sar=ǵə  | š <sup>w</sup> ara |
| 1SG  | 2PL-1SG.IO-be.amidst-IMP.ST | 1SG=ADD | 2PL                |
- s-š<sup>w</sup>ə-la-zaap’.
- 1SG.ABS-2PL.IO-be.amidst-INFERENTIAL
- “Abide in me, and I shall abide in you.” (Chirikba, 2003b, p. 251)

Chirikba also notes that evidential (inferential) suffixes in Abkhaz can function like focus-sensitive particles (Chirikba, 2003a, p. 72, 2003b, pp. 255–256).

### 24.3.3 Topics and Givenness

Northwest Caucasian languages are not topic-prominent languages (neither are any of the other languages spoken in the Caucasus) and none of the available grammars mentions specific topic markers. Topical objects can be fronted (32). Contrastive topics are also found in clause-initial position as has been shown in (31).

- (32) Adyghe
- [The bamboo chest was thrown up into the seashore.]
- |       |                       |             |                         |
|-------|-----------------------|-------------|-------------------------|
| qaməɬ | pχ <sup>w</sup> ate-r | nat-xe-m    | ja-qezaχ <sup>w</sup> e |
| chest | bamboo-ABS            | Nart-PL-OBL | 3PL.POSS-goose.herder   |
- Ø-q-ə-ɬ<sup>w</sup>etə-ɬ.
- 3SG.ABS-DIR-3PL.A-find-PST
- “The goose herder of the Narts found the bamboo chest.” (Colarusso, 2015, p. 123)

Highly topical constituents can also be placed to the right of the verb and they possibly mark the right edge of an utterance (similarly to Nakh-Dagestanian languages, see Section 24.2.2).

- (33) Kabardian
- [. . . said the old witch and invited them in.]
- |                          |           |                          |                               |
|--------------------------|-----------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| c’ək’ <sup>w</sup> -xe-r | wəne-m    | ś’-jə-š-a-ś              | wədəz-c’ək’ <sup>w</sup> ə-m. |
| little.one-PL-ABS        | house-OBL | LOC-3SG.A-lead-PST-ASSOC | old.witch-little-OBL          |
- “The little old witch led the little ones into the house.” (Kindlein, 2016, p. 41)



In Ubykh, aboutness topics and topic continuity in narratives are encoded as stative verbs and inflected for the non-finite past tense (Fenwick, 2011, p. 197; cf. (34)). This is possible because in Northwest Caucasian languages most lexical items can be used as predicate, and thus any nominal can be turned into a stative verb (see Chapter 9).

- (34) Ubykh
- |  |   |
|--|---|
| w3n3-n   | Ø-Ø-χ <sup>j3</sup> -g <sup>jib3i</sup> -n, |
| that-OBL   | 3SG.ABS-3SG.OBL-BEN-be.angry-CVB            |
| [Ø-e-pχ <sup>j3dik</sup> 'wi-jt'] <sub>top</sub> | i-Ø-k' <sup>w</sup> -q'3.                   |
| 3SG.ABS-ART-young.woman-ST.PST.NFINITE           | 3SG.ABS-3SG.ERG-kill-PST                    |
- “He got angry about that and he killed the young woman [that I mentioned].”  
(Fenwick, 2011, p. 197)

Abaza, Abkhaz, and Ubykh have articles prefixed to nominals that encode definiteness/referentiality ((34a), (44a,b), (47), (48)). Adyghe and Kabardian use the opposition of case-marked versus non-case-marked nominals to mark definiteness, topicality, or givenness (see also Chapters 9 and 19).

Judging from the texts published in Colarusso (2015), Northwest Caucasian languages make less use of personal and demonstrative pronouns as anaphoric devices as compared to Nakh-Dagestanian languages. This is to be expected since in these languages, verbal indices take over the functions of arguments and adjuncts. The inventory of referential indices prefixed to the verb is rich and goes beyond the core arguments (see Chapters 9 and 10). Overt pronouns can be used for emphasis.

## 24.4 KARTVELIAN LANGUAGES

This section is largely based on Georgian because it is by far the best researched Kartvelian language. Whenever possible, data from other Kartvelian languages is included. As Nakh-Dagestanian languages, Kartvelian languages do not have articles. They all have extensive pro-drop supported by rich agreement whereby given referents are frequently omitted.

### 24.4.1 Focus and Contrast

In Kartvelian languages focus and contrast are expressed by means of constituent order, clefts, focus-sensitive particles and intonation. For the use of prosody in the expression of focus in Georgian, see Chapter 17.

### 24.4.1.1. *Constituent Order*

Kartvelian languages have head-final noun phrases, but possessive pronouns can appear after the noun. Megrelian and to a lesser extent also Georgian can have postnominal modifiers such as adjectives and relative clauses and partially also genitives (Aronson, 1991; Harris, 1991; Pourtskhvanidze, 2015, pp. 169–170).<sup>6</sup> The syntactic status of postposed modifiers is not the same as that of preposed modifiers in Modern Georgian. Postposed modifiers form a separate constituent (Testelec, 1998c); preposed modifiers are part of the noun phrase with their head noun. In Laz, the tendency to postpose possessive pronouns is so strong that occasionally, possessive pronouns may even follow a postposition (Holisky, 1991). In Svan, postposed modifiers, including possessive pronouns, are very rare and archaic. They seem to be restricted to poetry and lyrics (Schmidt, 1991, p. 537; Tuite, 1998a; see Testelec, 1998a, for examples).

There is little information available about the expression of contrast and more generally the information structure of noun phrases. Testelec (1998b, 1998c) notes that sometimes noun phrases with contrastive/focal items are discontinuous with the focal material separated from the non-focal material.

#### (35) Megrelian

Maran-s	[did-i	lagwan-ep-i] <sub>foc</sub>	r-də
cellar-DAT	big-NOM	jug-PL-NOM	be-IPFV.3SG.S
ywin-iši	epša		
wine-GEN	full		

“There were BIG JUGS full of wine in the cellar.” (Testelec, 1998a, p. 254)

At the clausal level, verb final order is the basic order but apart from a few exceptional cases both VO and OV orders occur in free variation (Skopeteas, Féry, & Asatiani, 2009; Testelec, 1998b). All other orders are also attested (see, e.g., Pourtskhvanidze, 2015, pp. 161–162, for examples).

Laz is the only Kartvelian language that has a relatively strict verb-final order, probably due to Turkish influence. Postverbal items in Laz appear only under special conditions, for example, in questions with the interrogative pronoun in the pre-verbal positions (50) or reserved for few semantic roles such as goals (see examples in Holisky, 1991, pp. 449–450).

#### (36) Laz

[mi] <sub>foc</sub>	u-škun	worsi	lazuri	nena-Ø?
who	3.S-know	well	Laz	language-NOM

“Who knows the Laz language well?” (Testelts, 1998c, p. 239)

<sup>6</sup> Postposed adjectives and genitives in Georgian are described as archaic and following Old Georgian patterns (Testelec, 1998a).

Table 24.2 Svan Sentence Structure								
D	C	B	A	O	A'	B'	C'	D'
setting; topic; vocative	new infor-mation	rheme; particles; quantifiers; adverbials; pronouns	pre-verbal clitics	VERB	post-verbal clitics	rheme; particles	new infor-mation	anti-topic
<i>Note.</i> From Tuite (1998a).								

VO is not triggered by any special pragmatic or semantic configurations but occurs as a freely available alternative to OV (Asatiani & Skopeteas, 2012).

Table 24.2 presents the schema of the Svan sentence:  
 Presentational/information focus is compatible with OV and VO. In Georgian, Megrelian, and Svan, utterances at the beginning of a new narrative can have the verb-initial order. In contexts that do not introduce new participants such verb-initial orders seem impossible.

- (37) Svan
 

ašxwin

læcte

otzəzax

bepšw

once

water.to

they.apparently.sent

child.NOM

“Once they sent a child to the water.” (Schmidt, 1991, p. 539)

- (38) Georgian
 

i-qʼ-o

da

ara

i-qʼ-o

ra,

CV-be.PST-AOR.S.3SG

and

not

CV-be.PST-AOR.S.3SG

what.NOM

i-qʼ-o

ert-i

xelmcʼipe.

CV-be.PST-AOR.S.3SG

one-NOM

king.NOM

“Once upon a time there was a king.” (Asatiani & Skopeteas, 2012, p. 134)

Verb-initial introductory sentences are not allowed in Laz (Testelec, 1998a; see also Laz texts in Kutscher & Genç, 1998, and Lacroix, 2009).

In Georgian, pre-verbal items that express constituent focus must be adjacent to the verb, and only the negation particle can intervene. This rule also applies to wh-words, as shown in (39). Other Kartvelian languages generally show the same pattern (e.g., Laz, (40)) (Lacroix, 2009, p. 736), Svan ((41)),<sup>7</sup> but Svan has somewhat more particles that can intervene (Tuite, 1998a).

<sup>7</sup> For Megrelian, see Erschler (2012a, p. 685).

## (39) Georgian

- a. vin            i-q'id-a                            p'amidor-i?  
       who.ERG    VERS.SUBJ-buy-AOR.S.3SG    tomato-NOM  
       "Who bought tomatoes?"
- b. \*vin            p'amidor-i    i-q'id-a? (Asatiani & Skopeteas, 2012, p. 137)

## (40) Laz

- ham                            mi            iyasen;                            mu  
       DEM.PROX.SG            who            bring.[3>3]S.FUT.PFV            what  
       p'aten;                            mu            va                            p'aten?  
       DO.3PL.FUT.PFV            what            NEG                            do.3PL.FUT.PFV  
       "Who will carry it? What shall we do? What shouldn't we do?" (Kutscher & Genç, 1998, p. 248)

## (41) Svan

- mæj    eser    x-a-k'u?  
       what.NOM    QUOT    O.3SG-OBV-want  
       "What do you want?" (Tuite, 1998a, p. 44)

For Georgian, the rule of strict adjacency for preverbal constituent focus includes adjuncts. The Laz grammar by Lacroix (2009, p. 171) contains one example with the *wh*-word *mudes* ~ *mundes* "when" which is not immediately pre-verbal, although all other examples of interrogative clauses in Lacroix (2009) and Kutscher and Genç (1998) have interrogative pronouns in the pre-verbal position. For Megrelian, Harris (1991, p. 378) notes that the interrogative adverbial *mušeni* "why" usually occurs in clause-initial position not immediately before the verb.

## (42) Laz

- mudes                            çkim-da mo-xt-aye?  
       when                            1SG-ALL PREV-come-FUT.SM.1/2SG  
       "When will you come to me?" (Lacroix, 2009, p. 171)

## (43) Megrelian

- mušeni            čkimi            žimalepi            brel-cə            va-mušena...?  
       why            my            brothers            much-DAT            NEG-they.work  
       "Why do my brothers not work much?" (Harris, 1991, p. 378)

The OSV order can occur when the object is presupposed or given.

In Georgian, Svan, and probably Megrelian, constituent focus occurs not only in pre-verbal but also in the postverbal position. In Georgian, the position of postverbal focus as opposed to pre-verbal is free, that is, there is no condition of immediate adjacency to the verb. Skopeteas et al. (2009) and Asatiani and Skopeteas (2012) explain the possibility of postverbal focus as a consequence of verb-fronting that leads to in situ focus, with that focus occurring in a postverbal position. The constituent order is not triggered by any special discourse feature. Therefore, pre-verbal and postverbal focus can have the same interpretations; they are not associated with different types of focus, and in both positions the focus is not necessarily exhaustive. Although production data from an experiment presented in Skopeteas and Fanselow (2010a, p. 1374, 2010b) indicate that contrastive focus is significantly more frequent in the pre-verbal position, this focus can also occur after the verb.

In parallel structures with contrastive topics in Georgian, the contrastive topics are commonly positioned before the verb, whereas the contrastive focus follows the verb, although other orders are also possible (Testelec, 1998a). This has been observed in answers to content questions with two interrogative pronouns and in partial answers in which the contrasted alternative is not overtly expressed (Skopeteas & Féry, 2007).

- (44) Georgian  
[Who is throwing what?]  
gogona i-svr-i-s burt-s bič'una  
little.girl.NOM CV-throw-PRS-S.3SG ball-DAT little.boy.NOM  
i-svr-i-s rgol-s.  
CV-throw-PRS-S.3SG circle-DAT  
‘A/the little girl throws a/the ball and a/the little boy throws a/the circle.’ (Skopeteas & Féry, 2007, p. 334)

#### 24.4.1.2 Cleft Constructions

Cleft constructions are available in Georgian, Laz, and Megrelian (Asatiani, 2013; Asatiani & Skopeteas, 2012; Harris, 1991, 1993; Skopeteas & Fanselow, 2010). Information on Svan is lacking. It seems that in Georgian, clefts are not particularly frequent (as opposed to Northwest Caucasian languages, see Section 24.3.1.2). According to Asatiani and Skopeteas (2012), clefts/pseudo-clefts occur when there is a special emphasis on the focus, for instance, in corrections. In (45), the clefted material is followed by the copula =a and forms a predicate together with it. The presupposition is expressed by a headless relative clause with the relative pronoun *vis-*.

- (45) Georgian  
[es bič'-i]=a [vi-s-a-c kal-i  
this.NOM boy-NOM=be.3SG who-DAT-TH-REL woman-NOM



u-rtq'-am-s].

(10.3)OBV-hit-TS-S.3SG

‘‘It’s this boy whom the woman is hitting.’’ (Asatiani & Skopeteas, 2012, p. 151)

Harris (1993) examines cleft constructions in Megrelian and Laz. Her Megrelian data include a great number of content questions, but she notes that clefting is not obligatory in interrogatives, nor is it limited to questions. Indeed, clefts serve as a focusing strategy in Megrelian. The dependent clause is formally a gapped relative clause marked with the subordinator *ni* ‘‘that’’ which regularly marks relative clauses (46). The main clause is an equational clause and contains the constituent in focus/the wh-word and the copula. The third person copula (*ore*) as well as the complementizer *ni* can occur in reduced form. For instance, *ni* in (46) can be replaced by its shortened form *i* (Harris, 1993, p. 341).

(46) Megrelian

[mu-su] <sub>loc</sub>	re,	č’aruns	ni?
what-DAT	it.be	he.writes.it	COMP?

‘‘What is it that s/he writes?’’ (Harris, 1991, p. 385)

Asatiani (2013) shows that at least in the Khopa dialect of Laz, spoken in Turkey, cleft constructions are also used to form wh-interrogative clauses (47). As in the Georgian example in (45), the clefted item appears in the nominative case (alternatively, in the unmarked form) required by the copula that follows it. The subordinator *na* occurs in the clause containing the lexical verb. This subordinator is regularly used in relative clauses as well as in other types of subordinate clauses such as adverbial clauses. Its position in relative clauses is before the verb. Furthermore, relative clauses are regularly formed by means of the gapping strategy, in which the head noun is not overtly represented in the relative clause. Therefore, the clause containing *na* is formally a relative clause, consistent with the biclausal cleft constructions.

(47) Laz

[mu] <sub>loc</sub>	(r)en,	na	č’ar-um-s?
what.NOM	be.PRS.S.3SG	COMP	write-TS-S.3SG

‘‘What it is that s/he is writing?’’ (Asatiani, 2013)

#### 24.4.1.3. Focus-Sensitive Particles

All Kartvelian languages have focus-sensitive particles. For instance, Georgian has the restrictive particles -*ya* ‘‘only,’’ the additive -*c* ‘‘also,’’ the scalar additive -*c k’i* ‘‘even,’’ and adverbials *sc’ored* ‘‘just, exactly,’’ *arc* ‘‘not also,’’ *mxolod* ‘‘only.’’

The restrictive particle -*ya* can be added to nominals and adverbials, but its occurrence with verbs is very restricted. It predominantly occurs on items in the immediate



pre-verbal position, which is the dedicated focus position (48a), but can also occur on items following the verb (48b). Pourtskhvanidze (2015) provides multiple examples of restrictive, additive, and scalar additive particles from authentic texts.

## (48) Georgian

- a. dyes [mona]<sub>foc</sub>-ya var.  
 today slave.NOM-only be.1SG.PRS  
 “Today I am only a slave.”
- b. dyes var [mona]<sub>foc</sub>-ya.  
 today be.1SG.PRS slave.NOM-only  
 “Today I am only a slave.” (Pourtskhvanidze, 2015, p. 51)

In addition to word order, contrastive topics in Georgian can be marked by the particle *ai*, which can be used as demonstrative. When marking contrastive topics, it evokes a set of alternatives. The answer in (49) represents a partial answer to the question *Who is smoking?*

## (49) Georgian

- ai MONADIRE ar e-c'ev-a.  
 PTCL hunter.NOM NEG CV-smoke-PRS.1TR.S.3SG  
 “The hunter doesn’t smoke.” (Asatiani & Skopeteas, 2012, p. 153)

Focus-sensitive particles in Megrelian include the additive *-ti*, the scalar additive *xolo*, and the restrictive *xvalee* “only, alone.” Example (50) shows the Svan additive *i~j* “and, also” and the restrictive *gar* “moreover, only.” The latter particle can only occur in the pre-verbal position as it is the case for the negative particles and the interrogative pronouns in Svan (Tuite, 1998a, p. 41). Laz has, among others, the particles *-ti* “also,” *bile* “even,” and *ancayi* “only.”

## (50) Svan

- ka:-j c'q'iljæn mære erwæ:j l-i  
 out-also holy man.NOM whoever.NOM be-SM  
 ečis gar x-e-c'we:-n-i.  
 that.DAT only O3-VERS.OBJ-appear-FUT-SM  
 “Also, it will only appear to those who are holy.” (Tuite, 1998a, p. 49)

## 24.4.2 Topics and Givenness

Kartvelian languages are not topic-prominent languages; in particular, non-focal items can precede or follow the focus. If focus occurs in preverbal position, then topic can



either occur before focus (51a), or after the verb (51b). For Georgian, the difference between the first and the second option has been described as corresponding to a topic-comment versus focus-presupposition structure (indicated in (51) and (52)).<sup>8</sup> In the topic-comment structure, the subject constitutes the topic and everything else is the comment. In other words, topic stands in the aboutness relation to the rest of the utterance. The comment can contain a focal constituent in the pre-verbal position, as in (51a). But the presupposed subject can also be realized after the focal object, in which case the order becomes OVS (51b).

(51) Georgian

[What did Nino buy?]

- a. [nino-m]<sub>TOP</sub>      [[p'amidor-i]<sub>FOC</sub>      i-q'id-a]<sub>COMMENT</sub>  
      Nino-ERG      tomato-NOM      VERS.SUBJ-buy-AOR.S.3SG  
      "Nino bought tomatoes." (Asatiani & Skopeteas 2012, p. 143)
- b. [p'amidor-i]<sub>FOC</sub>      [i-q'id-a      nino-m]<sub>BACKGROUND</sub>  
      tomato-NOM      VERS.SUBJ-buy-AOR.S.3SG      Nino-ERG  
      "Nino bought tomatoes." (Asatiani & Skopeteas, 2012, p. 143)

Skopeteas and Fanselow (2010a, 2010b) report subject/object asymmetry with respect to the position of non-focal material. The results of their semi-naturalistic production study show that in utterances with (contrastive or non-contrastive) subject focus, the SVO order is more frequent than OSV. In other words, the non-focused object is commonly placed after the verb (and thus after the focus). On the other hand, with object in focus, be it contrastive or non-contrastive, the SOV order is more frequently used than OVS. This means that the non-focused subject is commonly placed before the verb (and before focus).

Georgian also allows topicalization of material on the left. Distinguishing between left dislocation of the *D-type* and hanging topic (*H-type* left dislocation) is challenging because of the extensive pro-drop in Kartvelian languages. For instance, a sentence like (52) is structurally ambiguous. It may instantiate left-dislocation as in (52i), where the object is moved to the left from its base position, or it involves an implicit resumptive pronoun, as in (52ii), and such a null pronoun can alternate with an overt resumptive pronoun. It is up to further research to establish the boundaries between *D-type* and *H-type* left dislocation in Georgian.

(52) Georgian

- mezobl-eb-i      nino-m      ar      da-p'a't'iž-a  
      neighbor-PL-NOM      Nino-ERG      NEG      PV-invite-AOR.3SG

<sup>8</sup> See also chapter 17.



“The neighbors, Nino did not invite.”

i. mezoblebi <sub>i</sub>	ninom	<b>mezoblebi</b>	ar	dap'at'iža
ii. mezoblebi <sub>i</sub>	ninom	proi/isini <sub>i</sub>	ar	dap'at'iža

Left dislocation in Laz involves the suppression of case marking on the dislocated element, which is a clear indication of hanging topics (*H-type*). In example (53b), the stimulus argument appears in the nominative although the verb “love” normally requires the dative ((53a); Lacroix, 2009, p. 736).

(53) Laz

- a. čobani-k malte-s oxorca-s or-om-t'u-doren.  
sheperd-ERG neighbor-GEN woman-DAT love-TS-IPFV.I3SG-INFERENTIAL  
“The shepherd loved the neighbor’s wife.” (Lacroix, 2009, p. 618)
- b. [After they had amused themselves in the room, the girl fell asleep.]  
[Bozo]<sub>top</sub> ar ajliya-k or-om-t'u-doren.  
girl one dragon-ERG love-TS-IPFV.I3SG-INFERENTIAL  
“As for the girl, the dragon loved her.” (Lacroix, 2009, p. 736)

Laz also has constituents that occur at the right periphery of an utterance in the manner resembling *D-type* dislocation or afterthought (e.g., (54)).

(54) Laz

[Talking about the hazelnuts that the grandmother had hidden in her blouse]  
soɣuni dolobuyamʃitu xe, babaanne  
finally put.into(.for.sb)[1>3]P.IPFV hand grandmother  
mebuxiramʃitu, ke-buč'opamʃitu ntxire-pe  
steal.from.sb.[1>3]P.IPFV MOD-remove.from.sb.[1>3]P.IPFV hazelnut-PL  
“In the end we put our hands in and stole them from my grandmother, we took them away from her, the hazelnuts.” (Kutscher & Genç, 1998, pp. 65–66)

Laz also has a topicalization construction that Harris (1993) compares to *wh*-clefts in English. This construction consists of a left-dislocated topic phrase that formally has the structure of a headless relative clause with the copula as verb. As a regular relative clause (including the ones used in focus clefts), this relative clause also contains the subordinator *na*. However, the verb is always a form of the copula, and the topicalized constituent, namely, the phrase in the nominative, represents either the subject of the copula or its predicate, consider (55):

(55) Laz

[ek'ule	artei	k'ulani	na	ye-n] <sub>rc</sub>
then	one.NOM	girl.NOM	that	be.PRS-S.3SG

ka-gami-q'ón-u                      amu-k  
 PV-PV-bring-AOR.S.3SG          3SG-ERG  
 “Then, as for the girl, he brought her out.” (Harris, 1993, p. 346)

The example in (55) differs from focus clefts not only in its structure but also in its pragmatic properties. It is used in topic shifts in narratives, when the sentence topic is shifted back to a previously introduced character. Harris (1993) also notes the existence of the same construction in Georgian.

Svan is described as having both left- and right-dislocated topics (see Table 24.2). Topics are often doubled by resumptive pronouns within the clause. In (56), the personal pronoun at the end of the utterance is topical, but whether it is dislocated remains a subject for future research.

- (56) Svan  
 [(až-ya)]<sub>rheme</sub>                      x-i-gwn-i                      [(mo)]                      [(si)]<sub>top</sub>?  
 this-because.of                      S2-VERS.SUBJ-weep-SM                      Q                      2SG  
 “Is this why you are weeping?” (Tuite, 1998a, p. 41)

In some languages, additives associate not only with focus/contrastive topics but also with non-contrastive aboutness topics, and Laz seems to instantiate this language type. Laz additive particles are used when a topic switch takes place, from the currently active topic to a new one or to a reactivated old topic (Matić & Wedgwood, 2013). Subjects appear particularly often in the topic function, and Laz topic switch typically involves the subject as switched topic and hence the host of the additive particle. The switched topic need not occur in the previous sentence or context.

## 24.5 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This chapter compared the expression of information structure in the three indigenous language families of the Caucasus. I concentrated on constituent order and the use of particles, or other formal means such as intonation.<sup>9</sup> We find a number of parallels in the way information structure is expressed across the three families.

First, there are obvious (and expected) similarities in the constituent order at the clause level. All three language families show a clear preference for SOV, but other orders are in general possible. Ubykh and Laz have a more rigid word order than other languages, which might be due to Turkish influence. The major focus position is pre-verbal, but postverbal focus is also attested; adjacency to the verb is a violable constraint. Verb-initial

<sup>9</sup> See Chapter 17.

order is possible under presentational focus, for example, in introductory statements of narratives.

At the phrasal level we find a sharp difference between Northwest Caucasian, with its prenominal and postnominal modifiers,<sup>10</sup> and Kartvelian and Nakh-Dagestanian languages. Only in the latter two families are postnominal modifiers used for emphasis, contrast, or focus.

Caucasian languages make wide use of cleft and pseudo-cleft constructions that normally express constituent focus. The exact syntactic nature of these constructions has been investigated only for a handful of languages, and many questions remain. Cleft and pseudo-cleft constructions are commonly found in *wh*-questions, in particular in Northwest Caucasian (where they are the default for the formation of content questions) and in some Nakh-Dagestanian languages (e.g., Ingush, Avar, and Udi).

Caucasian languages frequently deploy enclitics and suffixes for information-structuring purposes. Modal markers, interrogative markers, additive affixes, and markers with grammatical meaning (person, tense, negation, etc.) are used as focus-sensitive particles and usually placed after the item they scope over or after the head of the phrase.

The research on information structure in the languages of the Caucasus is in its incipient stages. In general, there are only very few dedicated studies on different types of foci or other aspects of information structure such as topicalization, givenness, or contrast in individual languages. The role of prosody in conveying information structure has been studied only in Georgian. Other promising areas of future research include the encoding of givenness and/or topicality by means of long-distance reflexives in Nakh-Dagestanian languages and the influence of language contact on information structure, in particular between indigenous Caucasian languages and other languages spoken in the Caucasus and adjacent areas (Ossetic, Armenian, Turkic languages).

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I thank my colleagues Peter Arkadiev, George Hewitt, Yura Lander, and Nina Sumbatova for numerous comments and suggestions on several versions of this chapter.

<sup>10</sup> See also Chapter 9.