

Focus and the Auxiliary in Eastern Armenian

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1 Introduction

- The auxiliary verb in Eastern Armenian (EA) is a clitic that can be fronted to mark focused and questioned elements (Comrie 1984, Tamrazian 1994, Tragut 2009)
- There is no auxiliary clitic in the Western Armenian dialect.
- Armenian is an Indo-European language; the Eastern dialect is spoken in Armenia and Iran. Examples here mainly represent the colloquial Iranian-Armenian dialect.

- (1) a. Aram-n a aʳ-el es mek^hena-n
 Aram-NOM AUX/3SG.PR buy- PERF this car- NOM
 ‘It is Aram who bought this car.’
- b. Aram-ə es mek^hena-n a aʳ-el
 Aram-NOM this car-SP AUX/3SG.PR buy- PERF
 ‘It is this car that Aram bought.’
- c. Aram-ə aʳ-el a es mek^hena-n
 Aram-NOM buy- PERF AUX/3SG.PR this car-SP
 ‘Aram did buy this car/Aram BOUGHT this car.’

- (2) a. Aram-n a es mek^hena-n aʳ-el ?
 Aram-NOM AUX/3SG.PR this car- NOM buy- PERF
 ‘Was it Aram who bought this car?’
- b. Ov a es mek^hena-n aʳ-el ?
 who AUX/3SG.PR this car- NOM buy- PERF
 ‘Who bought this car?’

- A purely focus-based analysis fails to capture the properties of the auxiliary in neutral sentences.
- I argue that the auxiliary is in the leftmost position within the vP domain in neutral contexts (Kahnemuyipour and Megerdooomian 2011, henceforth K&M 2011) and

outside the vP in focus sentences.

- Explore the possibility of focus-marking auxiliaries being an areal feature in the Caucasus.

2 The Auxiliary: Some background

- The auxiliary verb in Eastern Armenian occurs in the tenses of the indicative (with the exception of the aorist).
- The auxiliary contains tense and agreement features, while the verb is in a participial form carrying the aspectual marker.

- | | | | | | | | | |
|-----|----|-----|---------------------------------------|------------|----|-----|---------------------------------------|-------------|
| (3) | a. | yes | kart ^h -um | em | b. | yes | kart ^h -um | ei |
| | | I | read-PROG | AUX/1SG.PR | | I | read-PROG | AUX/1SG.PST |
| | | | ‘I am reading / I read.’ | | | | ‘I was reading.’ | |
| | c. | yes | kart ^h ac ^h -el | em | d. | yes | kart ^h ac ^h -el | ei |
| | | I | read(AOR)-PERF | AUX/1SG.PR | | I | read(AOR)-PERF | AUX/1SG.PST |
| | | | ‘I have read.’ | | | | ‘I had read.’ | |
| | e. | yes | kart ^h .al-u | em | f. | yes | kart ^h .al-u | ei |
| | | I | read.INF-FUT | AUX/1SG.PR | | I | read.INF-FUT | AUX/1SG.PST |
| | | | ‘I am going to read.’ | | | | ‘I was going to read.’ | |

- The full paradigm:

	PRESENT	PAST
1SG	em	ei (<i>colloquial</i> im)
2SG	es	eir (<i>colloquial</i> ir)
3SG	e (<i>colloquial</i> a)	er
1PL	enk	eink (<i>colloquial</i> ink)
2PL	ek	eik (<i>colloquial</i> ik)
3PL	en	ein (<i>colloquial</i> in)

- Auxiliary verb is also the copula.

- (4) ašakert-ner-ə urax **en**
 student- PL-NOM happy COP/3PL.PR
 ‘The students are happy.’

- Auxiliary verb is an enclitic
 - It does not carry stress and requires a host to precede it (Tamrazian 1994)
 - Word-level stress in EA is on the last syllable, but auxiliary does not take stress (contra agreement suffixes)
 - Does not undergo morphophonological alternations (contra agreement suffixes where the 3rd singular affix changes from ‘e’ to ‘i’ when stressed)

- (5) a. yer^h-úm e b. yete yer^h-í
sing-PROG AUX/3SG.PR if sing-3SG.PR
‘He is singing / He sings.’ ‘If he sings’

- In orthographic practice, the auxiliary is written separately from the host while agreement suffixes are written attached
- It does not have to be adjacent to the verb and may optionally undergo ellipsis in coordinated structures (contra agreement suffixes)

- (6) seda-n moten-um e gərič-ə ver^hn-um yev
Seda-NOM approach-PROG AUX/3SG.PR pen-SP take-PROG and

storagr-um namak-ə
sign-PROG letter-SP
‘Seda approaches, takes the pen and signs the letter.’ (from Kozintseva 1995)

3 Positional Distribution of the Auxiliary¹

- Tragut (2009) and Tamrazian (1994) argue that in EA, the contrastive/exhaustive focus of the sentence appears in the immediate preverbal position, where preverbal refers to the position preceding the inflected part of the whole verbal form (i.e., the auxiliary in analytic tenses).
- This does not adequately explain the obligatory fronting of the auxiliary in non-marked sentences.

¹ Data in this section are from Kahnemuyipour and Megerdumian (2010, 2011)

- Auxiliary generally follows the verb (7).

- (7) me hat šun *vaz-vəz-um* **a**
 one CL dog run-REDUP-PROG AUX/3SG.PR
 ‘A dog is running around.’

- Auxiliary follows the preverb in compound verbal constructions

- (8) a. Ara-n ira nkar-ner-ə mez *c^huyc^h* **a** tal-u
 Ara- NOM his picture-PL-SP us demonstration AUX/3SG.PR give-FUT
 ‘Ara will show us his pictures.’

- b.*Ara-n ira nkar-ner-ə mez *c^huyc^h* tal-u **a**
 Ara- SP his picture-PL-SP us demonstration give-FUT AUX/3SG.PR

- (9) ənker-ner-əs p^hafk^h-um *man* **en** gal-is
 friend-PL-POSS.1SG park-LOC (walk) AUX/3PL.PR come-PRES
 ‘My friends are taking a walk in the park.’

- (10) es hivand-ə *c^hav* **er** kaš-um
 this patient-NOM pain AUX/3SG.PST pull-PROG
 ‘This patient was in pain / This patient was hurting.’

- In an SOV sentence with a non-specific direct object, the Auxiliary follows the nonspecific object

- auxiliary cannot follow the verb if there is a nonspecific object

- (11) a. Ara-n *girk^h* **a** ań-el
 Ara-NOM book AUX/3SG.PR buy-PERF
 ‘Ara has bought a book/books.’
 b.*Ara-n *girk^h* ań-el **a**
 Ara-NOM book buy-PERF AUX/3SG.PR

- auxiliary follows bare or quantified nonspecific objects

- (12) Nairi-n poqoc^h-um *gndak* **er** xaq-um
Nairi-NOM street-LOC ball AUX/3SG.PST play-PROG
‘Nairi was playing ball in the street.’

- (13) yerex-erk-ə *me hat muk* **en** č’ar-el
child-PL-NOM one CL mouse AUX/3PL.PR find-PERF
‘The children have found a mouse.’

- If there is a non-specific object and a compound verb, auxiliary cannot follow the preverbal element in the compound verb, but rather follows the non-specific object.

- (14) a. višapoc^h-ə mi gišatič *gazan* **er** kul talis
boa-NOM one predatory beast was (throat) giving
‘The boa constrictor was swallowing a wild beast.’
b. *višapoc^h-ə mi gišatič *gazan* kul **er** talis
boa-NOM one predatory beast (throat) was giving
‘*The boa constrictor was swallowing a wild beast.’

- There is a clear contrast between the behavior of nonspecific and specific objects with respect to the placement of the auxiliary. In an SOV sentence, the auxiliary appears on the object, if it is nonspecific, whereas it appears on the verb if it is specific.

- (15) a. Ara-n *girk^h* **a** a’-el
Ara- NOM book AUX/3SG.PR buy-PERF
‘Ara has bought a book/books.’
b. Ara-n *girk^h-ə* *a’-el* **a**
Ara- NOM book- SP buy-PERF AUX/3SG.PR
‘Ara has bought the book.’

- Auxiliary follows the manner adverb (or other low adverbs) if the latter is present

- (16) a. Ara-n *arag* **a** čaš ut-um
Ara-NOM fast AUX/3SG.PR food eat-PROG
‘Ara eats fast.’

- (17) a. es šun-ə *arag* **a** vaz-um
 this dog-NOM fast AUX/3SG.PR run- PROG
 ‘This dog runs fast.’
- b. Nairi-n erek *lav* **er** gndak xaq-um
 Nairi-NOM yesterday good AUX/3SG.PST ball play-PROG
 ‘Nairi was playing ball well yesterday.’
- (18) a. yes *he’u* **em** apr-um
 I far AUX/1SG.PR live- PROG
 ‘I live far.’
- b. Nairi-n *durs* **a** gən-ac^h-el
 Nairi-NOM out AUX/3SG.PR go-AOR-PERF
 ‘Nairi has gone out.’

4 Position of the Auxiliary in Neutral Contexts

- Schematic distribution of the auxiliary is shown in the chart below, where the auxiliary clearly appears on the constituent in the leftmost edge of a domain.

(DO = Direct Object; NSP = nonspecific)

[	<i>manner-adverb</i>	aux	DO-NSP	Preverb	Verb]
	[	<i>DO-NSP</i>	aux	Preverb	Verb]
		[	<i>Preverb</i>	aux	Verb]
			[	<i>Verb</i>	aux]

- This domain is the vP based on the following previously established claims:
 - Specific and non-specific objects occupy distinct positions: specific object is vP-external, non-specific object is vP-internal (Megerdooomian 2002)
 - Manner adverbs mark the left edge of the vP in Eastern Armenian (Kahnemuyipour 2004)

K&M 2011 argue that:

- The Armenian Auxiliary is neither a verb-adjacent clitic nor a second position clitic of the kind found in many other languages, where second is defined with

respect to the clausal domain (CP).

- The Auxiliary should be analyzed as a second position clitic in the vP domain.

5 The Auxiliary in Focused Contexts

- The auxiliary clitic appears after the focused constituent.
- The copula also fronts to mark focus

- (19) *inch hin en ko gərək-er-ə*
 what old COP/3PL.PR your book-PL-NOM
 ‘Your books are so old!’

- Focused elements are outside the vP: The (a) examples show the focus neutral order where the auxiliary appears on the manner adverb, while the (b) examples show that the focused/*wh* element and *wh*-phrase to the left of the manner adverb.

- (20) a. *Ara-n [arag a girk^h kart-um]*
 Ara-NOM fast AUX/3SG.PR book read- PROG
 ‘Ara reads books fast’

- b. *Ara-n a [arag girk^h kart-um]*
 Ara- NOM AUX/3SG.PR fast book read- PROG
 ‘It’s Ara who reads books fast’

- (21) a. *Ara-n spaneren [lav a xos-um]*
 Ara- NOM spanish good AUX/3SG.PR speak- PROG
 ‘Ara speaks Spanish well.’

- b. *Ara-n inc^h lezu a [lav xos-um] ?*
 Ara- NOM what language AUX/3SG.PR good speak- PROG
 ‘What language does Ara speak well?’

- Focused element appears to the right of the C head.

- (22) a. *kartz-um es vor Amerika-n a olimpiḱ-ə tanel-u ?*
 think- PROG are that America- NOM is Olympics win- FUT
 ‘Do you think that it’s America who’s going to win the Olympics?’

- b. kartz-um es vor um-er-in **enk** handipel-u vaqə ?
 think- PROG are that who- PL-DAT are(1PL) meet- FUT tomorrow
 ‘Who do you think we’re going to meet tomorrow?’

- *Wh* and Focus phrases cannot co-occur, suggesting that they are occupying the same syntactic position.

- (23) a. *ov* **a** Ara-in həravir-el ?
 who AUX/3SG.PR Ara- DAT invite- PERF
 ‘Who has invited Ara?’
- b.* *ov* Ara-in **a** həravir-el
 who Ara- DAT AUX/3SG.PR invite- PERF
- c. * Ara-in **a** *ov* həravir-el
 Ara- DAT AUX/3SG.PR who invite- PERF

Proposal: The Armenian Auxiliary is a clitic that appears on the constituent in the leftmost edge of the vP in neutral contexts. In focus contexts, it appears on the focused element higher in the clause structure.

6 The Auxiliary as an Areal Feature?

- There are mobile auxiliary clitics in Udi (Harris 2002), Tsakhur (Kazenin 2001), and Talyshi (Stilo 2008) that seem to mark focus.
- Udi is a Lezgian language of the Nakh-Daghestanian family (North-East Caucasian) spoken in Nij and Vartashen (Azerbaijan), Zinobiani (Georgia); Tsakhur is a language of the Nakh-Daghestanian family spoken in Daghestan and Azerbaijan; Northern Talyshi is a Northwest Iranian language spoken in Iran and the Republic of Azerbaijan.
- **Note:** *shi* in Lebanese Arabic and *mI* in Turkish used in yes/no questions (but not the focus usage)

Harris (2002)

- Udi subject person marker clitics are special clitics that appear on the focused constituent.
- Appears typically on the verb with Future, Subjunctive and Imperative forms but can be fronted to mark focus.

(24) aq'-al-**zu** [receive-FUT-**1SG**] 'I will receive'

(25) k'al-**zu**-x-a [call-**1SG**-LV-PRES] 'I call'

(26) zu nard -**zu** acipe
 I.ABSL backgammon -**1SG** played
 'I played BACKGAMMON' 'It was backgammon that I played'

- Negation > wh-phrase > focus

(27) me isq'ar-mux mano aiz-i-**q'un** karx-esa?
 this man-PL-ABSL which village-DAT-**3PL** live-PRES
 'WHICH VILLAGE do these men live in?'

(28) nana-n te-**ne** buya-b-e (te-ne) p'a ačik'alšey
 mother-ERG NEG-**3SG** find-DO-AORII two toy.ABSL
 'Mother did not find two toys'

Stilo (2008)

- Northern Talyshi has a set of mobile Person Agreement Marker (PAM) clitics and their movement is triggered by focus and information structure issues.

(29) maštæ kæ=dæ bæ-b-é=š? (Unfronted)
 tomorrow house-LOC TAM-be-INF=**2S**
 'Will you be home tomorrow?' (no previous knowledge or context)

(30) maštæ kǎ=dæ=š bæ-b-é? (Fronted)

tomorrow house-LOC=2S1 TAM-be-INF

‘Will you be *home* tomorrow?’ (or somewhere else?)

(31) maštǎ=š kǎ=dæ bæ-b-é? (Fronted)

tomorrow=2S1 house-LOC TAM-be-INF

‘Will you be home *tomorrow*?’ (instead of today?)

(32) tǎ=š maštæ kǎ=dæ bæ-bé? (Fronted)

you=2s1 tomorrow house-LOC TAM-be-INF

‘Will *you* be home tomorrow?’ (or someone else?)

- Encode agreement with the subject/agent in the Direct case in the clause
- Have present and past tense equivalents
- Suffixal in some paradigms (e.g., subjunctive, Imperfect) and mobile in others where it acts as the auxiliary forming analytic constructions (e.g., Present, Future, Present Perfect, Past progressive, Past perfect).
- Serves as the copula
- The host carries main sentential stress
- Clitic cannot move to the right of the verb; the verb is the right margin
- Clitics attach to the whole constituent and not just the stressed/focused word
- *Difference*: fronting is not obligatory in Talyshi (remains on verb even though sentence stress falls on another word)

(33) navminji sinif=ædæ hǎnd-æ=**m**. (<handé=dæ=m)

ninth class-LOC read-TAM-1s infinitive-LOC-1s

‘I am studying in 9th grade’

(34) di pæs-i æmæ hæmišæ še=dæ=b-**imon**

with sheep-OBL we always went-TAM-AUX.PAST-1p1

‘We were always going with the sheep.’

6 Conclusion

- Showed that a purely focus-based analysis of the Armenian auxiliary cannot explain the distribution of the auxiliary in non-marked contexts.
- The auxiliary occupies the leftmost edge of the vP in neutral contexts and appears on the focus constituent outside the vP in marked contexts.
- Data from Udi, Talyshi, Tsakhur suggest that the auxiliary as marking focus is an areal feature:

“This particular analytic Present and Present/Past progressive construction, formed with the use of adpositions, is only found in northwestern Iran as an areal pattern both in Iranian (Northern Tati, Northern and Central Talyshi, Gilaki and some Central Tati dialects) and non-Iranian (Armenian, Azerbaijani, Aramaic, Udi, and possibly others) languages of the area. Both this use of Set1b enclitics and their mobility in all three tenses of this group are rather unusual for Iranian languages.” (Stilo 2008)
- The question remains whether we can find a usage of the auxiliary similar to the usage in Armenian in neutral contexts ... The current data are not sufficient to notice this as an areal feature.

Udi examples:

- Clitic on the preverbal element of a compound verb

(35) k'al-**zu**-x-a [call-**1SG**-LV-PRES] ‘I call’

- Clitic on non-specific object. Would it still be there in non-focused context or on the verb?

(36) zu nard -**zu** acipe
I.ABSL backgammon -**1SG** played
‘I played BACKGAMMON’ ‘It was backgammon that I played’

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