

Variation in stem formation in Tsezic languages

The Tsezic languages, a subgroup of Nakh–Daghestanian consisting of five languages, have a complex system of stem formation, as is typical for this part of the Caucasus. Nouns in Tsezic distinguish between a base stem for the Absolutive case and an oblique stem used in the formation of other cases (see table below). Oblique stems can be formed in various ways: ablaut, deletion of the final vowel, insertion of a consonant, change in stress, suffixing an oblique marker or a combination of these means; absolute and oblique stems are sometimes identical. Notable is also the diversity of oblique stem formation markers that vary between 6 in Khwarshi and 21 in Hunzib. Some languages like Khwarshi have only two plural markers, one for the Absolutive and another one for all other cases. Other languages such as Hunzib or Bezhta have about 8 to 13 plural markers that are used with all cases. A number of nouns allow for more than one oblique marker and even for double marking in the plural, for instance Hinuq *berten-mo-za-s* ('wedding–OBL.SG–OBL.PL–GEN1') or Tsez *ɣ^hul-a-za-s* ('stone–ABS.PL–OBL.PL–GEN1').

In my talk I will analyze the different ways of stem formation in the Tsezic languages, determine their basic principles and compare them with other languages using similar patterns of stem formation such as the Dravidian languages Toda and Tamil.

	Hunzib	Bezhta	Khwarshi	Tsez	Hinuq
	'father'	'place'	'girl'	'bull'	'cat'
SG.ABS	αbu	mäče	kad	is	k'et'u
SG.GEN1	αbu-s	mica-s	ka<n>d-i-s	is-e-s	k'et'-e-s
PL.ABS	αbu-wa	mäče-ya	ka<n>d-a-ba	is-bi	k'et'(u) -be
PL.GEN1	αbu-wa-s	mäče-ya-s	ka<n>d-a-za-s	is ^w -a-s	k'et'-za-s