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Split Recipients in East Caucasian

Split S (differential patterning of the role of the Sole in the so-called active languages), split A (such as intentional vs. non-intentional agents in transitive constructions) and split P (aka differential object marking in accusative languages) are well known phenomena, widely attested in the typology of relational / morphosyntactic features across many languages. In this talk, I will consider what appears to be a split R, presence of two alternative strategies to mark Recipients in ditransitive constructions, as attested in East Caucasian (Nakh-Daghestanian) languages. The choice of marking is available in apparently identical linguistic contexts – such as simply ‘I gave him a book’ – through assignment to the Recipient either dative or lative marking and conveys a semantic difference which is, cross-linguistically, typologically rare, or almost unique. This is the semantics that I will focus on. We will go through several stages of interpretation of the semantic contrast between the lative and the dative strategy, to reach the point where the apparently unique East Caucasian pattern meets general typology of Recipient marking. The suggested interpretation also fits into a theoretical approach that originated from independent considerations, the distinction between perceptual and action roles, as briefly referred to e.g. in Levin & Rappoport-Hovav (2005).