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Ga in Lak and the Three "There"s: Deixis and Markedness in Daghestan¹

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As Nazarov (1974:22) pointed out, Northeast Caucasian deictic systems are still in need of detailed study. The five-term series of Lak, while not the most complicated system of Daghestanian deictics (cf., e.g. Abercrombie 1889, Charachidzé 1981), is in need of more attention than it has received, particularly because the descriptions in the available grammars do not reflect the current state of the language, nor do they give a sense of the markedness relations obtaining among the five. In this paper, I shall attempt to demonstrate which of the five Lak deictics is the least marked and also determine the features for which the remaining terms are marked.

Lak is one of the five literary languages of the Daghestanian group in the Northeast Caucasian family and is spoken by close to 100,000 people in southern Daghestan (Ibragimov 1991:III). It's five-term system of demonstrative pronouns and related adverbs and adjectives is usually described as distinguishing two marked degrees of height with relation to the speaker in addition to a three-way opposition based on relation to speaker and addressee. The base forms are summarized in Table 1. The commonly cited definitions are given in boldface, additional meanings that have been given in some sources or may be relevant are given in parentheses.²

TABLE ONE

	demonstrative	local	manner
near to speaker (new, following, focus)	va	ši-	ukun
near to addressee (old, preceding)	mu	mi-	mukun
distant from both, neutral (level, opposite)	ta	ti-	tukun
below speaker (neutral)	ga	gi-	gukun
above speaker	k'a	k'i-	k'ukun

Demonstratives decline after the pattern of ga in Table Two. (But mu keeps its vowel in the oblique and its plural is mij.) The other oblique cases are formed by replacing the -l of the genitive, e.g. dative gana-n. Lak also has absolutive affixes and clitics that attach to the nominative.

TABLE TWO

PRONOUNS		singular		plural	
		nom.	gen.	nom.	gen.
first person		na	ttu-l	žu	žu-l
second person		ina	vi-l	zu	zu-l
demonstrative	class 1	ga	gana-l	gaj	gajnna-l
	2		gani-l		gajnnu-l
	3				
	4				

The personal pronouns, which are limited to the first and second persons, are opposed to demonstratives, any of which can fill the function of a third person, for which no special form exists.³ In keeping with the markedness hierarchy identified by Silverstein (1976), the personal pronouns remain in the nominative (absolutive) case regardless of whether they are the subject or direct object of a normal transitive or intransitive verb (examples 1a,2a,3a), whereas the demonstrative pronouns, like all other nominals, will be in the absolutive as the subjects of normal intransitives and as the objects of normal transitives but will be in the genitive (which serves ergative and other functions) when the subject of a normal transitive, as in examples (1b, 2b, 3b):⁴

- | | | |
|-----|--------------------|--------------------|
| 1a. | na naj ø-ur-a | I am coming |
| 1b. | ga naj ø-ur | He is coming |
| 2a. | na b-axxara čvu | I sell the horse |
| 2b. | gana-l b-axxaj čvu | He sells the horse |
| 3a. | na ga ucara | I am bringing him |
| 3b. | ganal na ucara | He is bringing me |

Morphologically, the demonstratives agree with their referent according to class as indicated in Table Two.⁵ Local deictics can either take the local case affixes directly, e.g. ši-vu 'in here', ši-v-un 'into here', mi-vu-n-n-aj

'towards in there by you (class 2)' or three special local affixes:

-kku	location
-kkun	toward
-čča	away from

e.g., šikku 'here', k'ikkun 'up thither', etc.

Given that all of Lak's five demonstratives can and do function in roles played by third person pronouns in languages that make such a distinction, our first question can be which if any of the five deictics occurs most freely in this use. In the first full description of Lak, published in 1890 but based on fieldwork done in the early 1860's, UsLAR (1890:63) states unequivocally that ta serves this function. He adds that ta is used when the object is undifferentiated with respect to its position in relation to the speaker and addressee, especially when it is to one side of both. He goes on to state that va is used for objects closer to the speaker than to the addressee, mu is used for those closer to the addressee than to the speaker, k'a is used for objects higher than the speaker, and ga for those lower than the speaker. The next description of Lak phonology and morphology was published by Žirkov (1955). In his discussion of demonstratives (Žirkov 1955:71), he repeats UsLAR's formulations, but with some modifications. Although Žirkov states that ta is the most neutral with respect to level and distance, he also notes that for ga the meaning 'lower' has been significantly weakened, and that it is often used as a neutral demonstrative or a simple third person pronoun. His formulations for va and mu are also slightly more general: va is defined simply as denoting the 'nearest', while mu is defined as being in the 'sphere' of the addressee. For k'a he states that the indication of the object as higher is usually quite clear. In the next Lak grammar, Murkelinskij (1971:162) repeated UsLAR's formulations without any modification, and did so again in his Lak school grammar (Murkelinskij 1980:85).

For my own study, I examined deictic usage in texts in a variety of genres: literary prose, expository prose, and epic poetry. The literary prose turned out to have the greatest variety of deictic usage, although the expository prose also provided useful examples. Due to its dependence on formulae, rhythmic structure, and repetition, Lak epic poetry provides a relative paucity of demonstratives. The author or narrator is much more likely to repeat the name of the referent. The small expository prose sample of about 2,600 words was striking in that va and mu accounted for over 90% of the 62 deictics, with ga accounting for the remainder. This will prove useful in our discussion of the distinction between va and mu later. My main source of material, however, was a collection of folk narratives (Xalilov 1976), which contained 540 deictics in a corpus of over 7,000 words. With one exception, the 33 narratives were collected between 1950 and 1966 from more than 15 speakers from the Kumux dialect area, which is the largest and also provides the basis for Literary Lak.

From what has just been said, it can be seen that ta and ga are the two most likely candidates for unmarked demonstrative/third person pronoun. In her chapter entitled "Myths About Markedness" Andrews (1990) rightly points out that statistical rarity is not a defining characteristic of markedness. It can and does happen in language that the meaning for which a word is marked is one which speakers have frequent cause to specify, e.g. personal confirmation in Macedonian (cf. Friedman 1977). In looking at a complex deictic system in a broad range of contexts, however, if we see one set accounting for almost 52% of the examples as is the case with Lak ga in our corpus of folk tales, and another totalling less than 9% as occurs with k'a, we can at least look first at the less frequent form for a defining characteristic. And when we discover that the deictic traditionally described as the most neutral accounts for under 3% of the examples in the same corpus, we have reason to investigate carefully the basis of the traditional description.⁶

In the folktale corpus, the 278 occurrences of forms based on ga do not display any invariant meaning that can be connected with the concept "lower". Example (4) is typical:⁷

(4) Ivk'un ur, qqaivk'un ur ca šjaravu ca č'javuk'ul malla ivk'un ur. Cal, njužmar qini ganizitravu quran kkalaj ivk'un ur. (Xalilov 1976:204)

Once upon a time in a certain aul there was a clever mullah. One Friday he was reading aloud the Koran in the mosque.

On the other hand, the occurrences of ta all display a sense of contrast or opposition, as in (5) and (6):

(5) Žuva urč'a insan uru, ta k'ija. (Xalilov 1976:217)

We are nine people, they [are only] two.

(6) Ca "hura" buvkkuna qquv - a's kussakssa,

Šadšivu dullajssa lakral čuluxa,

Ca "uh" qqak buvkkuna tamurčuluxa,

Pat'ima paxrulij xxič'ux bavčukun. (Xalilov 1969:33)

A "hurrah!" like thunder and lightning was heard from the rejoicing Lak side

An "ugh" was heard grumbling from their [the enemy's] side

As Patima proudly rode in front of them.

Similarly, Lak fixed expressions contrasting proximal and distal local expressions use the forms based on ti- as in example (7)

(7)	
tij-šij	on both sides (lit. 'thereon hereon')
tin-šin baqqa	without hesitation (lit. 'thither-hither not-being')
tixa-šixa	thence and hence
tixunmaj-šixunmaj	thither and hither (class 3)

Example (8) occurs in the context of two rooms. In one the faithful wife entertains importunate suitors one at a time, in the other stands a kettle of boiling water into which the suitors fall when they flee her supposedly returning husband. The use of the locational deictic ti- not only stresses the "oppositeness" of the second room, but also conveys the sense of the victim walking in expecting a level floor before falling to his death:

(8) **Gagu, tivun** naj una, k'unk'urduvun ahnu ur. (Xalilov 1976:216)

He, too, going into there, fell into the kettle.

In view of this evidence, we may well wonder why the grammars all state or give the impression that ta is the least marked demonstrative and the closest equivalent to a third person pronoun. I believe the answer is to be found in a combination of time and space. Although Uslar writes that he worked in Kumux with his chief informant, Abdulla Omar-ogly, Žirkov states that the dialect described by Uslar was that of Vicxi, which is a dialect area to the north of the Kumux region. In our corpus, more than half the examples of ta occur in a single tale, the only one recorded before 1950 from a speaker from outside the Kumux area, viz. in 1934 in the aul of Kurkli in the northern Vicxi region. I would suggest that while ta may well have been the unmarked demonstrative for Vicxi speakers in the 1860's -- and this apparently reflects the original situation (cf. Burč'uladze 1985) -- Kumux speakers of today have shifted the marking. Markedness for depth in ga has been replaced by markedness for contrast or opposition in ta. The persistence of Uslar's description is probably due to a combination of respect for his work and lag time between normative and descriptive grammar.⁸

Unlike ga, k'a has clearly retained its height orientation. All of our examples clearly refer to some sense of physical height, even when they are temporal. Thus, for example in a tale about Nadir Shah of Persia planning a campaign against Lakkia, which is physically higher than Persia, forms of k'a are used repeatedly to refer to things connected with Lakkia, as in example (9):

(9) Lakral a'rallunnavu t'urča bik'anvagu, k'a č'umal šanazara insan ivk'un ur. (Xalilov 1976:207)

As for the Lak army, at **that** time it had three thousand people.

Similarly, example (10) shows that ga can occur as a referent to a preceding item in the discourse which can also be explicitly referred to with k'a, which here functions much as English 'the above'. This is additional evidence that ga is unmarked with respect to k'a:

(10) Podležaššee va skazuemoe calčimur daražalul člentrur. **Gaj**anaqissar predloženijalul hanu. ...

Xxal dannu ukunssa k'ira predloženie: Int durk'unni. Vapredloženie sakin xunu dur tak k'iva calčimur daražalul člentraja -- podležaššilija va skazuemilija. Ka predloženie lači dannu. ...
Zunttavun ġilissa int ččjani durk'unni.

K'a predloženijaluvu calčimur daražalul člentru -- int durk'unni -- qanaqissar predloženijalul hanunu. (Buržunov 1975:27)

The subject and predicate are the primary constituents. **They** constitute the basis of the sentence.

...

Look at such a two-member sentence: Spring arrived. **This** sentence is made up of only two primary constituents: a subject and a predicate. Lengthen **this** sentence. ... A warm spring came early to the mountains.

In **this** sentence the primary constituents -- spring arrived -- constitute the basis of the sentence.

Thus, if we take the subset of Lak demonstratives that have traditionally been described as referring to height with relation to speaker (above - level - below), and which we can call the dimensional set, we find the following situation. In the recent past and in the North, unmarked ta was opposed to k'a marked for 'highness' and ga marked for 'lowness', and ta had a chief contextual variant meaning of 'opposite'. Over time, however, 'opposite' has developed into the marked meaning of ta while ga has lost its marking for 'lowness' and become the unmarked member of the opposition.

The next question is how ga relates to va and mu and how these two relate to each other. In view of traditional descriptions, we can refer to this group for the time being as the personal set. Here again Žirkov (1955:71) seems closer to a broader generalization than Uslar. It is clear that "closer to the addressee" will not account for the use of mu in example (11) but "in the sphere of the addressee" will, if "sphere" is understood in a sense of "sphere of interest":

(11) Calčimanal kunu bur: - qqarššunni cukunč'av ššinavun. Ttun muttula jarunnin kkavkkunni, -

kunu. (Xalilov 1976:214)

The first one said: "No way did it touch the water. I saw it with thesemy own eyes."

Thus, while the speaker's eyes are obviously closer to him than to his interlocutor, he uses mu because he wishes to draw the addressee's attention to his eyes.⁹ Consider also the shift in deictic reference in example (12) in which a rich merchant is giving deathbed instructions to his spendthrift son:

(12) Ina za jadajssa aqqara, qinu xarž dullalissa, jaluv qqaavc'ussa ura. Ttul qus vin mukunssa o'rmulun dijäl qqažunnissar. Vajvila dustural inava lijan uvnu, cič'ar daqqa livč'ukun, gaj vija k'ura bajannissar. Gajnnal inava qaivtukun, vin o'rmu qqaččan žunnissar. Muč'umal ina ca žžagu lavsun žula qqatlul k'ilčinmur uttussanuj a's žu. (Xalilov 1976:208)

You do not save anything, you are a spendthrift and a wastrel. My wealth is not enough for this kind (mu) of life you lead. These (va) friends of yours having ruined you and left you with nothing, they (ga) will turn their backs on you. When they (ga) leave you, you will not want to live. At that (mu) time, take a rope and hang yourself from the second beam of our house.

The use of mukunssa by the father to refer to the son's life style is in keeping with second person reference, but it also refers to the topic introduced in the sentence which preceded it. The use of vaj in the following sentence, however, is not due to the son's friends being closer to the father but rather to their being introduced as a new topic related to the theme of the discourse; they had not been referred to at any previous point in the narrative. This done, they are indicated by the neutral gaj in subsequent clauses. In the final sentence, the father is again referring anaphorically to what he has just said, hence his choice of mu. In fact, the expression "at that time" usually refers to the time of an event just referred to, and hence its standard expression in Lak is mu č'umal. However, if the narrator wishes to emphasize the gap in time between two events, then one of the other deictics will be used as in example (9) cited above or example (13), in which the speaker, who has not seen his interlocutor for 15 years, is referring to the fight they got into the last time they met:

(13) Dak'nijriv žula ažmaqssa bijavu. Amma ci t'určagu, gā'umal culk'lul mağ nexxajn ššuna.

(Xalilov 1976:214)

Truly we were fools. But anyway, thattime the fox's tail did touch the river.

Example (14) provides a compact contrast of the three deictics that are not marked for dimension

(14) Mugu mažattal žunu dur va iširaj va ganin qast žunu dur insantural t'imur mjažžanssa buriv xxal ban. (Xalilov 1976:204)

She, too, was amazed at this thing, and she decided to see if what people were saying was true,

The woman was introduced into the narrative in the preceding sentence as the wife of a mutalim 'seminarian', and mu is the first anaphoric reference to her. The thing she was amazed at was the focus of the first main incident of the story. Thus va is something new to her but known to the reader/listener. It is also further back in the narrative. The third demonstrative, the class 3-4 dative singular of ga, refers again to the woman, whose pronominal identity was established by mu and which fact therefore now shifts to the background.

Consider in this context also the use of va in example (10) above, repeated here as example (15):

(15) Podležaššee va skazuemoe calčinmur daražalul člentur. Gajjanaqissar predloženijalul hanu. ...

Xxal dannu ukunssa k'ira predloženie: Int durk'unni. Vapredloženie sakin žunu dur tak k'iva calčinmur daražalul člentraja -- podležaššilija va skazuemilija. Ka predloženie laqi dannu. ...

Zunttavun žilissa int ččjani durk'unni.

K'a predloženijaluvu calčinmur daražalul člentu -- int durk'unni -- qanaqissar predloženijalul hanunu. (Buržunov 1975:27)

The subject and predicate are the primary constituents. They constitute the basis of the sentence. ...

Look at such a two-member sentence: Spring arrived. This sentence is made up of only two primary constituents: a subject and a predicate. Lengthen this sentence. ... A warm spring came early to the mountains.

In this sentence the primary constituents -- spring arrived -- constitute the basis of the sentence.

The author began the paragraph with an exposition on the primary and secondary constituents of a sentence, with all demonstratives being of the ga type. He then begins a new paragraph telling the reader to consider a concrete example. In referring to this newly introduced material, he uses va on the first reference, and subsequently switches to the marked positional deictic k'a in further references.

In an expository text such as the introduction to Xajdakov and Žirkov (1962:8-10, 16-20), the reader is led from point to point with no sense of digression. In this text of some 2,600 words there are 45 occurrences of deictics based on mu, 12 from the va group, 5 based on ga, and none based on ta or k'a. The explanation for

this is the fact that the majority of deictics in this text are referring to preceding material that is at the same time not newly introduced. The examples with va refer to new or following material, while the few with ga are neutral with respect to these values. There are no binary contrastive contexts, hence the lack of ta, and likewise no references to a specific foregoing item (as in example 10/15), hence the lack of k'a. The following examples are illustrative of these contrasts:

(16) Amma xaqinussa qininin cavagu, čanssa buxurčagu ššallussa - ja q'ivissa, ja qunmassa lakku mazral va o'rus mazral slovar' bukkun qqabuvssija. Vac'anassa slovar' qanaqissar calčinssa mukunssa slovar'nu. (Xajdakov and Žirkov 1962:9)

But until today not one more or less satisfactory Lak-Russian dictionary has been published. This (va) present dictionary constitutes the first such (mu) dictionary.

(17) C'ardaššalssa sočetanijarttu ukunkkakkan buvnu bussar. (Xajdakov and Žirkov 1962:17)

Nominal collocations are shown thusly (va):

(18) Lakku mazral va o'rus mazral slovar' qanaqissar č'javučil mjunpat lasunssa lunu. Muniqunmassa kumag bant'issar lakral školardal učitel'turan, ... (Xajdakov and Žirkov 1962:10)

The Lak-Russian dictionary is a book useful for everyone. It (mu) will be of great help to teachers in Lak schools, ...

(19) Muqul ca mja+na gamur ma+nalijatu k'unt' xiriv bivxussa bači c'anassa a'rab tarixraj lič'ij durnu dussar; ... (Xajdakov and Žirkov 1962:17)

A bold-faced Arabic numeral followed by a period differentiates one meaning of a word from another (ga) meaning.

Examples (16), (17), and (18) show contrasts of various forms based on va and mu: the va forms refer either to a new topic or to following material, whereas the mu forms refer to the immediately preceding clause.

Additional evidence for the meanings of mu and va can be found in the deictics most frequently used in certain expressions such as munixlunu 'therefore', mukunma 'likewise', which typically refer to some immediately preceding statement or item (see also the discussion of mu č'umal 'at that time' above), whereas expressions such as vaj maqssa šinardij 'in recent years', va maqssa č'umuvu 'recently' are used to introduce a new topic in the discourse. Another common usage is an adjectival form of ga to mean 'another', as in example (19). This usage is conditioned by the fact that as the least marked deictic, ga is used to qualify an item that is being separated from but not contrasted with some other.

In terms of markedness relationships, va and mu form a pair opposed to ta and ga, which are also paired. The four together are all opposed to k'a, which is clearly marked for the feature 'height'. I would argue that the opposition between va/mu on the one hand and ta/ga on the other is that the former are marked for a higher degree of discourse salience (cf. Hanks 1989, Kirsner 1979). Both va and mu are clearly associated with deictic and discourse meanings such as 'speaker/addressee', 'anticipation/anaphora', while both ta and ga do not mark such connections in a narrative. In a sense, va/mu are more 'demonstrative' than ta/ga, but it would be a mistake to use 'demonstrative' as a distinctive feature in view of the fact that all five deictics can function as both demonstratives and as personal pronouns; they can all modify another noun phrase or stand alone. But it is clear from the foregoing examples that va/mu direct the addressee's or reader's attention to specific places in the text/discourse such as 'sphere of speaker, following information, new information' on the one hand and 'sphere of addressee, preceding information, old information', on the other. The deictics based on ta and ga do not have this type of discourse function.

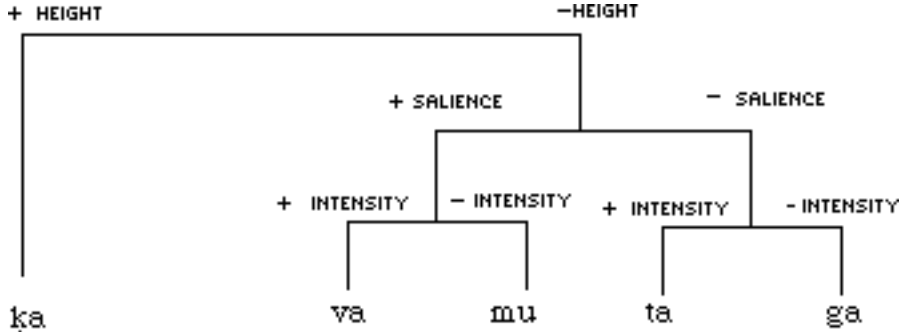
Within each pair, it is clear that ta is marked with respect to ga, and I would argue that va is marked with respect to mu. As noted above, frequency of occurrence does not constitute proof of markedness. Nonetheless, the fact that ga in narrative prose and mu in expository prose are the overwhelmingly predominant pronouns suggests that it is the other pronouns that can be defined in terms of an invariant meaning. In the case of ta, a meaning such as 'contrast' or 'opposition' was suggested above, while for va the meaning is associated with 'anticipation, speaker, new topic'. Kirsner (1979) has identified a scale of deictic emphasis in Dutch that is relevant for Lak. According to such a scale, deictics are marked for the emphasis they place on the act of deixis itself (high vs low intensity) rather than on a feature such as relative proximity. This seems to be particularly applicable to va and ta. In the case of ta marking for intensity without marking for salience gives the meaning 'opposite, contrasting', while in the case of va marking for both salience and intensity gives 'speaker, anticipation, new topic'. For mu, marking for salience without marking for intensity yields 'addressee, preceding, anaphora', while, k'a marks maximal distance and ga is the most neutral deictic.

These relations are given as a feature matrix in Table Three and as a hierarchical diagram in Figure One.

TABLE THREE

	height	salience	intensity
k'a	+	0	0
ta	-	-	+
ga	-	-	-
va	-	+	+
mu	-	+	-

FIGURE ONE



The foregoing analysis differs significantly from previous analyses in two important points. First, it has shown that ga and not ta is the unmarked deictic in modern literary Lak. This appears to be the result of a relatively recent shift through which ta has become restricted to its chief contextual variant meaning of 'oppositeness' while ga has lost its specificity for 'lowness'. Second, in differentiating va, mu, and ta the analysis has shown that relation to speaker and addressee is not the defining factor. With regard to what do in fact constitute the semantic features, I have suggested a combination of markings for 'salience' and 'intensity' to account for the differences in meaning.

NOTES

¹An earlier version of this paper appears in *A Calculus of Meaning: Markedness, Deixis and Distinctive Features*. ed. by Edna Andrews and Yishai Tobin. Amsterdam: Benjamins. The present version has been expanded and the conclusions revised.

²Lak examples are all given in Latin transcription of Cyrillic Literary Lak orthography.

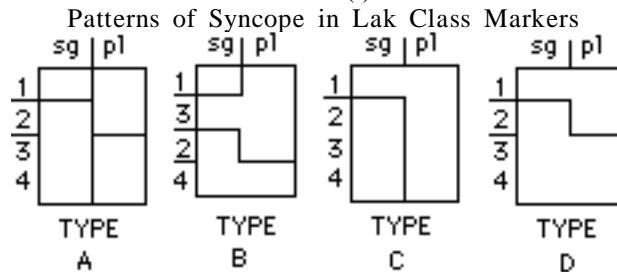
³It is important to note that any of the five deictics can occur alone in the function of a third person pronoun; none of them is limited to a purely demonstrative function.

⁴By normal I am excluding verbs and constructions that take dative or ablative subjects, which neutralize the distinction personal/nonpersonal (cf. Kibrik 1978).

- 2c. ttu-n va čvu b-axxan ččaj b-ur I want to sell this horse
- 2d. gana-n va čvu b-axxan ččaj b-ur He wants to sell this horse
- 2e. ttu-šša va čvu b-axxan bjuqlaj b-ur I can sell this horse
- 2f. gana-šša va čvu b-axxan bjuqlaj b-ur He can sell this horse

⁵In general, class 1 is used for mature male humans, class 2 for mature female humans, class 3 for other animates and some inanimates, and class 4 for inanimates and some animates. The demonstrative agreement type, whose patterns of syncope are illustrated in Table (i) as Type A, is peculiar to those pronouns and the morphologically related definite adjectives. It differs significantly from the syncope patterns in most other agreeing parts of speech (verbs, numerals, adverbials, emphatics, directive cases, durative adjectives), illustrated here as Type B. A Third pattern, Type C, is found only in the oblique reflexive pronoun, while Type D occurs in possessive pronominal adjectives in -ssa.

Table (i)



⁶In the folktales, mu was slightly more frequent than va, accounting for almost 24% of the deictics while va

accounted for almost 19%.

⁷Cf. also example (14) below.

⁸It is also worth noting that this part of the system is unstable. In the Arakul dialect, spoken in two auls in southernmost Lakkia, va can substitute for any of the demonstrative forms (Xajdakov 1966:28-30). It may be that Azeri influence has contributed to this breakdown.

⁹The Lak deictic mu is reminiscent of Turkish su, which like Lak mu is described as marked for closeness to the addressee, but which appears to be marked for deictic salience (Ščerbak 1977:129, cf. also Anderson and Keenan 1985:285) rather than any sort of proximity. Unlike su, however, mu is used anaphorically, whereas su is used to introduce following material, the less emphatic but more proximate bu being the deictic of anaphora.

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