

“Between derivation and inflection: locative and perfectivizing preverbs in literary Tabasaran”

Tabasaran, along with Lezgian and Aghul, makes up the Eastern sub-branch of “Lezgian”, a branch of the East Caucasian language family (also known as Nakh-Daghestanian). In most Lezgian languages a perfective/imperfective aspectual opposition is marked on verb stems, and usually the formally marked category is the imperfective, which bears a sonorant (*r, l, n*) prefixed to the root. Other categories such as negation and gender/number agreement with the S/P argument are also commonly marked by prefixes to the root. Verbal roots being more often than not monoconsonantal, their number is limited, and the chief device used to derive new verbs is prevervation, which is found in all Lezgian languages. Preverbs are strictly bound and can be subdivided into two classes: locative preverbs, always found in first position, closely match existing locative case markers on NPs; second position preverbs, on the other hand, have less clear-cut meanings and their origin is not well understood. These derivational preverbs never interact with aspect in Lezgian languages, except in the southern dialects of Tabasaran, on the basis of which the recent literary tradition has developed.

Verbs in literary Tabasaran, apart from a few irregulars, can be divided into two broad classes:

- weak verbs have only one stem for all tense, aspect and modality categories, and most of them show stable derivational preverbs (tables 1 and 2);
- strong verbs have three different stems, the imperfective stem being unmarked, while an ‘aorist’ stem is derived from it by the preverb *ǰV-* and a ‘perfect’ stem is derived by the preverb *dV-*; strong verbs never have a locative preverb, but they can have a stable, ‘second position’ preverb, for instance *ǰa-/da-c’a<b>k-* ‘bend’ (table 3).

The origin of both aspectual preverbs found on strong verbs is perfectly clear: *ǰV-* and *dV-* are also found as stable, locative preverbs on weak verbs:

- *ǰV-* marks the aorist stem of strong verbs, but on weak verbs it is stable and has only the locative meaning ‘out, from’, in all aspectual forms of the verb (cf. table 2);
- *dV-* marks the perfect stem of strong verbs, but on weak verbs it is stable and has only the locative meaning ‘on (diffuse)’ in all aspectual forms of the verb (table 4); there is no correlating case marker on NPs.

The grammaticalization of locative adverbs as ‘delimiters’ and markers of perfective (telic; anterior) aspectual nuances is well known cross-linguistically (Bybee *et al.* 1994, p. 87), e.g. in some branches of Indo-European like Slavic or Germanic, as well as in the Iranian language Ossetic, and in Kartvelian, another language family found in the Caucasus but not genetically related to East Caucasian. But Tabasaran is unique in its family in marking aspect through prevervation; it has no contact with Kartvelian or Ossetic; and the emergence of aspectual preverbs clearly predates the intense contact situation with Russian which nowadays prevails. The emergence of aspect-marking prevervation is thus certainly spontaneous, not contact-induced. Furthermore, the situation in literary Tabasaran is quite original in the following respects:

- the same markers are found *in complementary distribution*, operating as derivational meaningful elements in one part of the verb lexicon, while in the remainder they have become inflectional aspect markers and lost any locative meaning: they thus coexist synchronically as grammaticalized *and* not grammaticalized;
- two locative preverbs have grammaticalized differently and subcategorize the perfective domain of strong verb stems into two categories – aorist and perfect. This level of specialization for aspectual preverbs is, as far as we know, unique cross-linguistically;
- the preverb *-dV-* is found as a marker of perfect on strong verbs, as a derivational (locative) morpheme on some weak verbs (table 4) and also, in combination with a locative first preverb, as a ‘reversive’ second preverb on some other weak verbs (table 6).

References and tables:

Bybee, J., Perkins, R., Pagliuca, W., 1994, *The Evolution of Grammar. Tense, Aspect and Modality in the Languages of the World*. The University of Chicago Press. Chicago and London.

(1) weak verbs:

<i>ʔu-č'v-</i>	'enter' (IMPF=AOR=PERF)
<i>ku&lt;b&gt;k'</i>	'touch'
<i>kka-&lt;b&gt;qh-</i>	'fall (under)'
<i>hu&lt;b&gt;s-</i>	'thrust (from the front)'
<i>qhe&lt;b&gt;g-</i>	'run after'

(2) locative cases and stable, derivational preverbs on weak verbs

case markers		preverbs		
IN	-ʔ	<i>ʔV-</i>	<i>i-v-</i>	'put in'
AD	- <i>xh/-h</i>	<i>h(V)-</i>	<i>hi-v-</i>	'put in front of'
CONT	- <i>k</i>	<i>k(V)-</i>	<i>ki-v-</i>	'put beside'
POST	- <i>qh</i>	<i>qh(V)-</i>	<i>qhi-v-</i>	'put behind'
SUB	- <i>kk</i>	<i>kk(V)-</i>	<i>kki-v-</i>	'put under'
INTER	- <i>ğ</i>	<i>ğ(V)-</i>	<i>ği-v-</i>	'put out'
SUPER	- <i>in (&lt;-il)</i>	<i>Vl(V)-</i>	<i>ili-v-</i>	'put on'

(3) strong verbs:

	'eat'	'arrive'	'sew'	'boil'	'search'	'look'	'bend'
IMPF	<i>it'-</i>	<i>ruq'-</i>	<i>&lt;bi&gt;rx-</i>	<i>u&lt;b&gt;xh-</i>	<i>ag-</i>	<i>lig-</i>	<i>c'a&lt;b&gt;k-</i>
AOR	<i>ğit'-</i>	<i>ğu-ruq'-</i>	<i>ği-&lt;bi&gt;rx-</i>	<i>ğu-&lt;b&gt;xh-</i>	<i>ğ-ag-</i>	<i>ği-lig-</i>	<i>ğa-c'a&lt;b&gt;k-</i>
PERF	<i>dit'-</i>	<i>du-ruq'-</i>	<i>di-&lt;bi&gt;rx-</i>	<i>du-&lt;b&gt;xh-</i>	<i>d-ag-</i>	<i>di-lig-</i>	<i>da-c'a&lt;b&gt;k-</i>

(4) weak verbs with locative preverb *ğV-*:

<i>ğü-büx-</i>	'choose between'
<i>ği-t-</i>	'leave out'
<i>ği-ʔ-</i>	'climb'
<i>ğä-s -</i>	'thrust between'

(5) weak verbs with locative preverb *dV-*:

<i>da-qh-</i>	'lie down'
<i>de-ʔ-</i>	'sit'
<i>de-e&lt;b&gt;t-</i>	'leave'
<i>de-&lt;r&gt;kk-</i>	'stop'
<i>da-rağ-</i>	'scatter'
<i>di-yiğ-</i>	'remain'
<i>da-xh-</i>	'pour'

(6) *dV-* as a reversive marker:

<i>ili-t-</i>	'put on'	>	<i>il-di-t-</i>	'take off'
<i>ʔi-p-</i>	'throw in'	>	<i>ʔi-di-p-</i>	'throw out'
<i>ʔu-č'v-</i>	'enter'	>	<i>ʔu-du-č'v-</i>	'exit'