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Deficient Agent and its Derivation in Khwarshi

Transitive vs. intransitive alternations and the causative (Agent-bringing derivation) in the East Caucasian languages have been studied in detail in many descriptive grammars and typologically oriented works (Kazenin, Ljutikova 2001; Comrie 2010; Daniel, Maisak, Merdanova 2012, a.o.) and their results agree well with what we know about these phenomena in the world's languages, cf. (Xolodovič (ed.) 1969; Comrie 1976; Comrie, Polinsky (eds.) 1993; Kulikov 2001; Letučij 2013).[1]

Much less interest has been raised by the derivations associated with the involitive or deficient Agent constructions since their discovery (Bokarev 1948; Haspelmath 1993), cf. (Ganenkov, Maisak, Merdanova 2006; 2007; Shushurin 2017; Comrie, Khalilov, Khalilova 2013); on the typology of the phenomenon cf. (Kittilä 2005; Schäfer 2012). In this talk we attempt to elaborate and deepen the predecessors' analysis of the deficient Agent constructions, based on the data of the Khwarshi-Khonokh dialect of Khwarshi. The unwritten Khwarshi language belongs to the Tsezic branch of the East Caucasian family and is spoken in several villages of the Tsumada district of the Republic of Dagestan, Russian Federation. The data originate mostly from our fieldwork in the area and partly taken from texts published in (Karimova 2014).

Like in other East Caucasian languages, the deficient Agent, or Effector, constructions in Khwarshi are ambiguous between the two following meanings:

1) the involitive meaning that excludes the act of will: the actor either unwillingly initiates a process or an action which goes on spontaneously, or fails to prevent it happen once it started;

2) the meaning of the realized possibility: the Agent exerts a force to bring about a process or an action, but succeeds only after a protracted attempt, or due to some factor that (s)he does not control.

In Khwarshi, with verbs denoting telic processes, a derived deficient Agent marked with the possessive case *-qo* is available without any morphological marking on the verb (the possessive meaning is not obligatory, e.g. in (1b), the house must not belong to those who burn it). There are in fact no 1-place telic process verbs in Khwarshi, all of them are 2-place verbs subcategorizing for Patient and deficient Agent. Some of these verbs are labile, i.e. they can be used as transitive, marking the normal Agent with Ergative (1c):

-ak'ʷa- 'burn'
(1) a. ʁaj   b-ajk'-a
    house III-burn-AOR
    'The house burned down'

    b. žid-u-**qo**   ʁaj   b-ajk'-a
    they-**POSS**   house III-burn-AOR
    'Because of them, the house burned down' (set on fire by negligence)
    'They managed to burn down the house'

    c. žid-i   ʁaj   b-ajk'-a
    they-ERG house III-burn-AOR
    'They burned down the house'

The deficient Agent need not be overtly expressed which is seen from (2) with *-iha-* 'die':

(2) adʁol   zamana-ł   iq'a-bč'u   žik'ʷa
     old   time-CONT   I.know-NEG.CVB   person
     iha-zal,   req'el   l-u:w-a   l-ejč-a
     I.die-TMP   reconciliation   IV-do-GNR   IV-be-AOR

'In old times, if someone unintentionally killed a person (lit.: "if a person died without (the killer's) knowing"), they would arrange a reconciliation'.

Contexts like (2) suggest that telic process verbs have a valency on the deficient Agent which need not be overtly realized – like the transitive verbs' valency on the Agent. There is no converb subject control in Khwarshi, but without the valency, the combination of the negative converb *iq'abč'u* 'not knowing' and the matrix clause in (2) would be incoherent.

Most verbs in Khwarshi can attach the potential suffix *-ł-* which marks the valency-increasing derivation (with intransitive stems, it is semantically vacuous, since they have the intended valency anyway):

ƛes- 'fall asleep'
(3) a. žu   ƛejs-a
         she   fall.asleep-AOR
         'She fell asleep'

     b. žu   ƛes-ejł-a
         she   fall.asleep-POT-AOR
         'She accidentally fell asleep//She managed to fall asleep'

     c. q'al-a-qo   žu   ƛes-ejł-a
         children-POSS   she   fall.asleep-POT-AOR
         'The children managed to put her to sleep'

-ah- 'throw'
 (4) a. kand-i   čorpa-ł-el   ʕeziʕan   cĩjo   l-ah-na
          girl-ERG   soup-CONT-DAT   much   salt   IV-throw-EVD
          'The girl threw a lot of salt into the soup'

      b. kande-qo   čorpa-ł-el   ʕeziʕan   cĩjo   l-ah-eł-na
          girl-POSS   soup-CONT-LAT   much   salt   IV-throw-POT-EVD
          'The girl accidentally threw a lot of salt into the soup.'

The parallel between the S=P-lability (like English *fill, break, move* etc.), the causative and the unmarked and the potential-marked deficient Agent derivations in Khwarshi is obvious. Therefore the grammatical analysis of these phenomena must be similar, e.g. employing an extension of the VP with the involitive "small v" head. The "involitive v" may replace the transitive/causative v. It occurs with the transitive verbs (4) where the ergative Agent is replaced with the deficient Agent in the possessive case.

Abbreviations: I, III, IV denote gender numbers, AOR – aorist, CONT – contact localization, ERG – ergative, EVD – evidential, GNR – general tense, LAT – lative, NEG.CVB – negative converb, POSS – possessive, POT – potential, TMP – temporal converb

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