Unexpected applicatives and morphological compositionality in Adyghe

The defining aspect of polysynthetic languages relates to the peculiar role of morphology. In particular, polysynthetic morphology takes many functions traditionally ascribed to syntax in non-polysynthetic languages and at times (although not always) displays the same organization as syntax, being compositional and easily allowing the construction of complex expressions in the course of speech (de Reuse 2006; Rice 2000). For such morphology, an interesting question can be posed of whether "syntactic morphology" has any special properties as compared to syntax (besides possible restrictions on complexity). This paper discusses the appearance of compositional morphology in restricted contexts in Adyghe and relates it to special properties of morphology.

Adyghe, a Northwest Caucasian polysynthetic language, has a rich system of morphological marking of argument relations within verbs (see, e.g., Smeets 1992; Rogava & Keraševa 1966). Adyghe verbs may contain several argument prefixesthat seem to function as true arguments in accordance with hypotheses presented in Jelinek 1984; Van Valin 1985 *inter alia*, in particular these prefixes can establish reference, also in relative, reciprocal and reflexive constructions (1). In addition to the core arguments (namely, absolutive and transitive agent), a verb can cross-reference various other participants of the situation described in a clause. This is made possible by a highly-developed system of applicative derivations expressing, for example, benefactive, malefactive, comitative and locative relations. These derivations do not change the core of the argument structure and hence can apply recursively (2). Despite the fact that some applicative-stem combinations are lexicalized, in general, applicatives are used productively in constructing complex forms and even allow some variation in arrangement. In most cases, the appearance of a new argument introduced within an applicative is semantically transparent and compositional. However, this semantic transparency may disappear in certain relative and reciprocal constructions.

Reciprocal constructions. Verb forms expressing reciprocal relations between agent and transitive undergoers require demotion of the agent by means of the instrumental applicative preverb and the replacement of the corresponding prefix by the reciprocal one (3). Notably, Adyghe lacks a parallel morphological pattern without reciprocalization.

Relative constructions. Relativization of non-absolutive arguments in Adyghe requires the replacement of the relevant argument prefix with the relative marker (4). However, occasionally we observe relativization of an argument that is absent in independent forms. This phenomenon is found in three cases. First, the target of relativization can be implied by the semantics of the verb, yet remain covert in independent forms. Still, its relativization requires its overt introduction by means of an applicative preverb (5). Second, sometimes the target cannot/need not occur outside of relative constructions because of its peculiar semantics, such target acquires the argument status only in relative constructions. This holds for the manner and fact relativization (6); see Gerasimov & Lander 2008, and for a similar, yet different interpretation Caponigro & Polinsky 2008. Third, certain syntactic constraints (such as that prohibiting direct relativization from embedded clauses) require unexpected applicatives within the predicate of the relative clause (7).

It can be argued that these phenomena partly owe their presence to the specifics of the Adyghe morphology. On the one hand, Adyghe may employ applicatives in order to introduce necessary argument slots exactly due to the fact that the organization of this part of the Adyghe verb is basically compositional and easily allows for additional derivations. On the other hand, in these constructions applicatives have non-standard functions and thus are not entirely compositional, but this is explained by the fact that here they participate in the formation of grammatical forms and hence must be interpreted in relation to certain *fixed* morphological patterns.

Data

(1)   wə-zə-fə-ra-ʁa-ǯe   'They teach you for their benefit.'
        2SG.ABS-[RFL.IO-BEN]-3PL.A-CAUS-study

(2)   [a-də]-[zə-de]-s-e-hə   'I am carrying this with me together with them.'
        3PL.IO-COM-RFL.IO-COM-1SG.A-DYN-carry

(3) a. se   wəne-r   s-λeʁwə-ʁe   'I saw the house.'
         I   house-ABS   1SG.A-see-PST
     b. s-jə-ŝeweʁwə-xe-r   ze-re-λeʁwə-š'tə-ʁe-x   'My friends (often) saw each other.'
         1SG.PR-POSS-friend-PL-ABS   REC.IO-INS-see-AUX-PST-PL

(4) a. č'ale-m   apč'ə-r   ə-qwəta-ʁ   'The boy broke the window.'
         boy-OBL   window-ABS   3SG.A-break-PST
     b. apč'ə-r   zə-qwəta-ʁe   č'ale-r   'the boy that broke the window'
         window-ABS   REL.A-break-PST   boy-ABS

(5) a. sə-(*∅-de)-ḳwa-ʁ   'I went there.'
         1SG.ABS-3SG.IO-LOC-go-PST
     b. sə-zə-de-ḳwa-ʁe-r   '(the place) where I went'
         1SG.ABS-REL.IO-LOC-go-PST-ABS

(6) a. anzwere psənč'e   ded-ew   q-∅-je-ǯe   'Anzor reads very quickly.'
         Anzor   quickly   very-PRED DIR-3SG.IO-OPV+DYN-read
     b. se z-ʁe-ŝeʁwa-ʁe   anzwere   ze-r-∅-je-ǯe-re-r
         I   1SG.A-CAUS-wonderful-PST   Anzor   REL.IO-INS-3SG.IO-OPV-read-DYN-ABS
         'I marveled how Abzor reads.'

(7) a. pŝaŝe-m   s-∅-je-pλ-ze   sə-(*∅-fə)-λepewa-ʁ
         girl-OBL   1SG.ABS-3SG.IO-OPV-look.at-CNV   1SG.ABS-3SG.IO-BEN-stumble-PST
         'While looking at the girl, I stumbled.'
     b. pŝaŝ-ew   sə-z-e-pλ-ze   sə-z-fə-λepewa-ʁe-r
         girl-PRED   1SG.ABS-REL.IO-OPV-look.at-CNV   1SG.ABS-REL.IO-BEN-stumble-PST-ABS
         'the girl such that while looking at her I stumbled (lit. for her)'

Abbreviations

A - agent, ABS - absolutive, AUX - auxiliary morpheme, BEN - benefactive, CAUS - causative, CNV - converb,
COM - comitative, DIR - directive, DYN - dynamic, INS - instrumental, IO - indirect object, LOC - locative, OBL
- oblique case, OPV - general oblique preverb, PL - plural, POSS - possessive, PR - possessor, PRED -
predicative, PST - past, REC - reciprocal, REL - relative, RFL - reflexive, SG - singular,

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