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Rendering Spatial Relations by Means of Preverbs in Megrelian and Laz

Megrelian and Laz are unwritten Kartvelian (South Caucasian) languages the historical differentiation of which has been the most recent stage in the split of Proto-Kartvelian; this is why these languages display more commonalities both structurally and semantically. This is also true with the encoding of spatial relations by means of preverbs, and this can be considered as a common structural characteristic feature of the languages in question.

The principal means for rendering of spatial relations in Megrelian and Laz are preverbs added on to verbal roots, referring to motion/immobility, and define motion or location of bodies in space, convey a specific direction and location of motion, providing a typological characterization of a location as well. In other words, preverbs provide a local picture of the spatial distribution of dynamic and stative processes.

The paper is aimed at establishing of spatial relations by means of preverbs for dynamic and stative patterns in Megrelian and Laz, as displaying the diverse system of spatial orientations and directions of motion, and at comparing the data of the languages in point.

In Megrelian and Laz, structurally simple, that is, *primary preverbs* are monosyllabic – occurring as either V or CV structures, and *derived preverbs* (and not *compound ones*) are *bisyllabic* occurring as either V+CV or CV+CV, having resulted from joining of two different elements: *simple preverb* + *adverbial particle* (PRV+PTC: ADV).

Within the sequence of verbal morphemes, preverbs occupy a slightly different, however, a stable position:

Languages	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
Megrelian	NEG	AFF /PRF	PRV	IMPF	EVD	S/O	FV	Root-
Laz				NEG/ AFF/PRF	PRV	S/O	FV	Root-

Megrelian and Laz preverbs seem to be functionally similar; however, analyses of each preverb do not provide an identical picture with respect to semantic components. In the languages in point, the principal functions of preverbs are the following:

1. Derivational: a) in combination with verbal roots, preverbs derive numerous semantically differing stems; b) characterize a place of motion/immobility; c) with verbal roots referring to motion/movement, they convey direction and orientation of motion;
2. Grammatical: they derive Perfective Aorist and Future forms from Imperfective ones.

Analyses of preverbs show that they do not perform essentially all the functions; simple preverbs mostly denote direction, while compound preverbs denote location, alongside with direction; therefore, they are *locative preverbs*.

A direction, rendered by means of preverbs, is either *horizontal* or *vertical*, or is referred to in relation to another object, either mobile or immobile. Hence, directions are: *forward – backward, from above – from beneath, pass thither – pass hither, beside, around, in relation to a trajectory of motion*.

Two types of orientation have been attested in Megrelian and Laz: deictic and canonical orientation. However, the deictic orientation is weakly encoded in these languages. Motion or location, rendered by verbal forms, are represented in relation to a certain object, and an appropriate meaning is encoded by means of a preverb. With respect to such an approach, we identify *absolute and relative types* of orientation in Megrelian and Laz; the former is based upon natural landmarks -- earth and water surfaces, in relation with which a direction of motion is determined within a vertical space; *deictic and locational (canonical)* orientations are assumed to belong to the latter type (*relative*).

Below, several examples will be drawn for the *stative* form Mg./Lz. *xe-*, “to sit” with the morphological pattern PRV- root.S3.SG.PRS and for the *dynamic* form Mg. *rt-* Lz. *xt-* “to go” with the morphological pattern PRV- root.S3.SG:AOR :

Location	Dynamic		Stative	
	Megrelian	Laz	Megrelian	Laz
beside: (1)	<i>ala-rtu</i>	<i>ela-xtu</i>	<i>ala-xe(-n)</i>	<i>ela-xen</i>
inside, (2)	<i>dino-rtu</i>	-	<i>dino-xe(-n)</i>	<i>dolo-xen</i>
in the (3)	<i>aša-rtu</i>	<i>eša-xtu</i>	<i>aša-xe(n)</i>	<i>eša-xen</i>
middle: (4)	<i>miša-rtu</i>	<i>meša-xtu</i>	<i>miša-xe(n)</i>	<i>meša -xen</i>

The three examples (2), (3), (4) in the category “Location: inside,” differ from each other in terms of *topological features*, which is also one of the functions of a preverb. Example (2) – deep, vertical, half-open space, (3) – open vertical space, (4) – dense, horizontal, open space.

The table demonstrates similar, if not identical, phonemic structures and semantic components of the Megrelian and Laz preverbs; however, this is not always the case, as illustrated by the following examples:

Megr. *ac'o/ec'o-žanu* (= is lying in front of something / within a prior space),

PRV-to lie.S3.SG. PRS

Laz *ec'a-žans* (= is lying under something / within a lower space);

PRV- to lie.S3.SG. PRS

The same meaning is expressed in Megrelian by the preverbs **ato-/eto-**:

Megr. *eto-/ato-žans* “is lying from below something;”

PRV- to lie.S3.SG. PRS

However, cf.

Megr. *ec'-u/ac'-u-dgu* < **ec'a-udgu* (=is put in front of something / within a prior space)
PRV-OV-put.S3.SG.AOR

Laz *ec'-u-dgu* < **ec'a-udgu*
PRV-OV-put.S3.SG.AOR

Prior space:

mk'iapuk xap'ei mtutis *k-ec'-u-dgu*
jackal.ERG skull.NOM bear.NOM AFF-PRV-OV-put.S3.SG.AOR
The jackal put the skull in front of the bear.

Lower space:

k'uk'uma c'k'ais *k-ec'-u-dgu*
pitcher.NOM water.DAT AFF-PRV-OV-put.S3.SG.AOR
[S/he] put the pitcher under the water.

In Megrelian and Laz, an individual preverb *is unable* to convey the entire path of motion, *movement from one point to another*. In fact, each preverb refers to a certain passage or a phase of a process of motion such as *course* (principal phase of motion); *beginning* and *ending* (marginal phases of motion). The three phases encoded by preverbs are independent of each other with respect to the fact that none of them necessarily imply an occurrence of another. According to which phase of motion is encoded by an individual preverb, one may identify the preverbs of *course*, *beginning* and *ending* (I. Kobalava). The analysis, provided in the paper, has been based upon the aforementioned classification.

Abbreviations: ADV – adverbial, AFF – affirmative, EVD – evidential, FV – functional vowel (voice, version or causative marker), NEG - negation, PRV – preverb, PRF - perfect, IMPF – imperfect, PTC – particle, S – subject, O – object.

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