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Some Aspects of the Medio -Active Verbs in the Megrelian and Laz Languages ¹

Abstract

Since Dionysius THE Thrax singled out the category of the Medial Voice, its formulation has not undergone any significant changes: when one (active) verb form expresses an action and another one (passive) denotes a feeling, there is a medium form between them, which, according to its outward signs belongs to the first category whereas according to its meaning to the other ones: such forms are referred to as Medial Voice forms.

Medial voice forms are unmarked members of the opposition. They do not possess a distinct shape, and resemble Active Voice in terms of its form on the one hand and Passive Voice in terms of its function, on the other. However, in this respect they differ both from the first voice (according to the function) and from the second one (according to the form). In terms of similarities and differences Medial voice forms occupy the middle position between Active and Passive voices. That's why we refer to them as "Medial" forms.

This article briefly examines Medial verbs and particularly, the characteristic features of Medio-Actives in the Megrelian and Laz Languages based on relevant examples. It is noted that due to the verbs' formal and semantic difference these types of verbs in the Megrelian and Laz Languages are known for their diversity and complexity.

This article discusses dynamic and static issues regarding the voice. More specifically, Medio active verb forms are examined within the context of static verbs. In addition, this article also analyses the issues connected with the category of aspect and prefixes.

Keywords: Medio-Active, Megrelia, Laz

1. Introduction

The opinions regarding the Medial Voice in the Georgian language differ from those in traditional linguistics. (Holisky 1981; Melikishvili, 2001; Jorbenadze 1975). Moreover, the voice category in Megrelian and Laz

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Languages has not yet been explored. As a PhD candidate of the Kartvelian Linguistics, and a speaker of one of the Kartvelian Languages (Megrelian), I became interested in this issue during my Master studies and wrote my Master thesis on “The Medial Voice in the Megrelian and Georgian Languages”. In order to study the Laz Language and at the same time collect the empirical data relevant for this article, as well as for my PhD I lived, for a certain period of time, in the villages of Georgia, in which Megrelian and Laz languages are used as a means of communication.

2. Article structure

The article focuses mainly on Medio-Active Verbs in the Megrelian and Laz languages, where they are characterised in terms of their distinctive formal and semantic features.

1. General overview of the Voice Category
 - 1.1 *Basis of Voice distinction.*
 - 1.2 *The issue of Voice number in the Georgian Language.*
 - 1.3 *Classification of the Megrelian-Laz verbs according to the Voice.*
2. Medio-Active Verbs
 - 2.1 *Medio-Actives in Megrelian .*
 - 2.2 *Medio-Actives in Laz*
3. The Issue of Dynamics and Statics in the Megrelian and Laz languages
4. Forms with different semantics
5. Verb -Forms with Prefixes
 - 5.1 *Aspect Formation*

3. Methodology

During this research, more than 400 verb-forms in the Megrelian and Laz Languages were analysed. The empirical data were collected during field expeditions. In addition, Megrelian and Laz dictionaries and texts were also used. The data were analysed on the basis of

descriptive and comparative methods and later were compared to the compatible verb-forms in Georgian. Based on this research, general similarities and differences typical of the Kartvelian languages are singled out and discussed.

4. Results

The Study of Media-Actives in the Megrelian and Laz Languages resulted in the following conclusions:

1. In Megrelian double-finite, Medio-Actives are singled out
2. Unlike the Georgian language, Medio-Actives in Megrelian possess their distinct forms of formation.
3. The above-discussed verbs express the stative state in the Megrelian and Laz languages.
4. In the Megrelian and Laz Languages such verb forms belong to different semantics, for instance, to those expressing sounds as well as to various natural phenomena.
5. In Megrelian, Medio-Actives are used with affirmative particles (ko-, k-, ku-), which (1) form the Perfective Aspect and (2) carry the function of a prefix. These particles differentiate between perfective and imperfective forms of the Aspect.
6. Medio-Active verbs occur together with the prefixes (go-, do-), which, unlike the Georgian language, do not denote a direction.
7. In most cases Laz verb-forms follow the pattern of the Georgian language verb formation.

5. Discussion

Among the various categories of verb, the voice occupies a central place. Discussions concerning this issue date back to the grammar by Dionysius the Thrax (I BC). In fact, he introduced the notion of the voice and discerned its three types: Active, Passive, and Medial voices.

Among these types the oldest verb-forms in Indo-European languages are considered to be Active and Medial Voices (Medio-Passive). The Passive voice is thought to have developed later (Jorbenadze, 1975, 13).

In the absolute majority of languages, Medial verbs are only functionally separated, as the category of Mediality represents one of the functions of the above mentioned forms of the voice and these types of verbs do not possess grammatical features (Giorgobiani, 1998, 13).

The voice is closely related to other verb categories, and clarification of their nature is possible only after taking into consideration formation and causation of the verb's voice forms.

The voice as a verb category in the Georgian language was formed in a relatively later period and the process of its formation is not yet complete.

The voice of the verb was paid a special attention in the first grammar textbooks of the Georgian language in which the authors (Anton I, Zurab Shanshovani, and Gaioz Rector) single out all three types of voices.

Modern Georgian linguistic literature singles out three basic points concerning the number of voice:

1. There are three voices in the Georgian language: Active, Passive and Medial (Shanidze, 1953, 289).
2. The Georgian verb can form Active and Passive voice forms (Chikobava, 1968, 132).
3. The Medial voice is one of the parts of the voice category but at the same time it is a static verb-form. Passive and Active voice forms are opposed by the Medial voice, similar to static forms opposed by the dynamic ones (Jorbenadze, 1975, 177).

Based on the collected empirical material, voices in the Megrelian and Laz languages are classified in terms of Active and Passive voices. As for the Medial voice forms, they do not reveal a developed voice category, as "these types of verbs became medial after the formation of the voice category" (Uturgaidze, 2002, 117).

Regarding the formation of the Medial voice verbs, we can single out two groups: the first one shares the method of formation of the Active voice whereas the second one - that of the Passive voice. Accordingly, these verbs are classified as Medio-Active and Medio-Passive voice categories (Shanidze, 1953, 314-316).

Medio-Activity in Megrelian is characterised by the lack of the case-changing object, one-person, or two-person nature and inversion in the third series. The subject case in Megrelian cannot be used as a classified notion, as in the Past the subject is in the Ergative case, notwithstanding the transitivity or intransitivity of the verb and the voice.

The Medio-Active subject of the Laz verb, like other transitive verb subjects, is presented in the Ergative case in the first series and this condition is typical for non-passive voice verbs.

Examples:

Megr. bayanaibir-s
Child.NOM.SG. sing-PRS.S3

The child sings
comp.

Laz.
bere-k ibir-s
Child-ERG.SG. sing-PRS.S3

The child sings

Other examples:

(1) Megr. joyorilalun-s
Laz. joyori-k lalup-s

The dog barks.

(2) Megr. miinoc'ian-s
Laz. atmaja-kc'iap-s

Sparrow-hawk squeals

(3) Megr. čilixap'uns

Laz. oxorja-kxoronap-s

The wife dances.

(Kiria... 2015, 595-596)

As is well known, the root of one-person, Medio-Active Future and Passive voice present tenses coincides with similar roots in the Georgian Language. In Megrelian this coincidence is not revealed because the Medial voice verbs do not employ the appropriate Passive voice root. In most cases, they have their own forms of formation.

i-duyeb-s [is mas]

SV-boil-S3.SG (ACT)

i-duyeb-s [is]

PASS-boil-S3.SG(NV)

Formal and functional differences as well as compatible features between the Georgian and Megrelian languages can be schematised in the following way:

(he/she/it him/her/it) The Present Tense	i-punuan-s →
i-duyeb-s SV-boil-S3.SG.PRS(ACT)	
SV-boil.ACT(he/she/it) The Future Tense	← ko=pan-s
MA-boil.NVAFF=boil-S3.SG.FUT(MA)	

Georgian

(1) šimšilob-s

SV-hunger-S3.SG.FUT(MA)

hungerS3.SG. PRS(MA)

i-šimšileb-s

i-šimšileb-s

SV-hunger-S3.SG.PRS(ACT)

PRV-SV-hunger-S3.SG.FUT(ACT)

mo-i-šimšileb-s

Compare Megrelian:

škirenul-en-s

i-škirenul-u+an-s

hunger-S3.SG.PRS(MA)

SV-hunger-S3.SG.PRS(ACT)

ki=i-škirenul-en-s

ki=m-i-škirenul-u+an-s

AFF=SV-hunger-S3.SG.FUT (MA)

AFF=PRV-SV-hunger-S3.SG.FUT (ACT)

Georgian

(1) avadm'opobs i-avadm'opeb-s

illnes- S3.SG. PRS(MA)SV-illnes -S3.SG.PRS(ACT)

i-avadm'opeb-s da-i-avadm'opeb-s

SV-illnes- S3.SG.FUT(MA) PRV-SV-illnes-S3.SG.FUT(ACT)

Compare Megrelian:

i-lax-an-si-lax-u+an-s

illness - S3.SG.PRS(MA)SV-illness -S3.SG.PRS(ACT)

ki=lax-an-s

ki=di-lax-u+an-s

AFF=SV-illness - S3.SG.FUT(MA)AFF=PRV-SV- illness -S3.SG.FUT(ACT)

The analysis of the paradigms shows that the forms of Medial and Active voices both in Present and Future tenses reveal differences regarding thematic markers. Specifically, thematic markers –end/-and are used with Medio-Active forms whereas thematic markers –u+an are used with Active forms.

Megrelian and Laz Medial verbs are distinguished by their diversity and complexity which is certainly caused by the variety of formal and semantic nature of these types of verbs.

As for their meaning, Medial verbs are generally considered to be the verbs expressing a state (B. Jorbenadze, G. Machavariani, A. Chikobava, M. Chukhua, M. Sukhishvili...). However, some scholars refer to them as dynamic verbs (V. Topuria, L. Nozadze...).

I propose that in the Georgian, Megrelian and Laz languages the Medial voice verbs express state. Specifically, Medio-Actives express active state whereas Medio-Passives are characterised by the passive, stative state. Medio-Actives in the Megrelian language are close to the dynamic verbs regarding the semantics of the state (according to their aspect and verb forms ...), while Medio-Passive are closer to stative verbs.

Examples:

Megr.	ibarbanču. DN-ST	VS	rču. ST
Laz.	čxat'ups. DN-ST		gentineien. ST

It is sparkles It is covered.

Megr.	ont'u(n).DN-ST	VS	Sort'yun.ST
Laz.	Nogzun.DN-ST		ot'k'un.ST

It is light The belt is round the waist

Megr.	k'ark'acans. DN-ST	VS	gezu.ST
Laz.	Kirkinups. DN-ST		gezin. ST

It is laughs It lies

In the Megrelian and Laz languages there are various Medial forms with different meanings. In Megrelian and Laz Medial verbs of this type belong to one and the same class.

- a) Verbs denoting sounds made by birds and animals:

Megrelian: *laluns* "barks", *rčxvians* "shouts", *elenans* "howls"...

Laz: *bɣorins* "howls", *lalups* "barks", *mɣorups* "meows" ...

- b) Verbs denoting noise:

Megrelian: *xupinuns* "whips", *zuminuns* "bellows", *ibur'inu* "mumbles", *burxinuns* "roars"...

Laz: *buyaps* "mumbles", *buxuns* "roars", *dgapunaps* "splashes", *čxialaps* "gushes"...

- c) verbs denoting the process of speaking:

Megrelian: *bardRalans* "blabs", *ekordgabalars* "tattles", *č'varč'valans* "grumbles", *ɣenčans* "talks rubbish", *bdɣvinavs* "roars", *buinuns* "stutters", *bluyunebs* "stammers", *belenans* "howls"...

Laz: *mɣorinaps* "roars", *nenasnadven* "stutters", *ibarbals* "stammers", *bɣaps* "bumbles", *buzɣunaps* "grumbles", *putulaps* "mumbles", *bɣorins* "howls", *kusinaps* "moans"...

- d) verbs denoting natural phenomena:

Megrelian: *č'vins* "rains", *tuns* "snows", *valuns* "lights", *t'yvacuns* "thunders"...

Laz: *mč'ims* "rains", *mtups* "snows", *valups* "lights", *xoncun* "thunders"...

- f) Roots borrowed from the Georgian language:

Megrelian: *cxovrobs/cxovrens* "lives", *čkarobs/čkarens* "speeds", *c'uxens/c'uxens* "troubles", *k'amatobs/kamatens* "argues"...

Laz: *petkavs/patkalaps* "beats", *puspusebs/puspusaps* "fusses", *yviris/yuraps* "shouts", *livlivebs/livlivaps* "shakes"

Such expressive verbs in Georgian denoting noise, light and movement fall into one group (Holisky, 1982). Holisky also explored verbs which express natural phenomena (Holisky, 1982, 101, 156).

6. Conclusion

In Megrelian the Medial voice of the Medio-Active verbs in Future and Past tenses add affirmative particles ((ko-, k-, ku-) which are used as prefixes and express the perfective aspect. In the Georgian language, verbs of this type don't reveal the category of Aspect (puns-kopuns-kopu/pu - "boils-will boil-boiled".)

In the Megrelian language Medio-Active verbs add prefixes (go-, do-), which, unlike the Georgian language, don't imply the direction (valunsu-govalunsu- "lights-will light".

In the case of lacking preverb forms, the Present and Future tenses either coincide with each other or a new root is employed to distinguish them. However, based on the material, in the majority of cases these roots coincide.

Medio-Active verbs in Megrelian are analysed within the context of Perfective and Imperfective aspects in the Future and Past tenses. In the Georgian Language these types of verbs don't reveal Aspect differences (*laluns-kolaluns//laluns - lal//kolalu*).

To sum up, it can be concluded that Medio-Active verb-forms in the Laz language follow the overall style of formation of verbs in the Georgian language. However, the Verb in Laz needs further exploration. On the other hand, Medio-Actives in the Megrelian Language reveal their own rules of formation.

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Abbreviations

NOM	nominative case	AFF	affirmative
ERG	ergative case	FUT	future
PRS	present tense	MA	Medio-Active
SG	singular	DN-ST	dynamic-static
S	subject	ST	static
ACT	active PRV preverb		
NV	neutral Version	SV	Subjective Version

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