On the *mi-/mo-* Preverbs in Ditransitive Georgian Verbs

Jean-François Juneau – University of Toronto
jeanfrancois.juneau@mail.utoronto.ca

Prefixed to a verbal root, preverbs traditionally add spatial and/or directional, temporal and/or aspectual information, or are simply idiosyncratic without particular meaning (Corre, 2015). In Modern Georgian, these preverbs generally encode information of Tense-Aspect-Mood (TAM) (Harris, 2003; Holisky, 1981) and in some cases, may increase the number of arguments of certain transitive verb (Makharoblidze 2010, 2012). They also denote a spatial relation between the individuals of the discourse (Asatiani, 2007), as shown in examples 1-2.

1. man   dato-s   c'eril-i   mi-√c'er-a
   3SG-ERG   Dato-DAT   letter-NOM   PRV-1SG-√write-AOR/3SG
   'He/She wrote Dato a letter'
2. man   shen   c'eril-i   mo-√c'er-a
   3SG-ERG   you-DAT   letter-NOM   PRV-1SG-√write-AOR/3SG
   'He/She wrote you a letter'

The preverb *mi-* (away from the speaker/listener) and its counterpart *mo-* (toward the speaker/listener) are the same as in the motion verbs, such as 'to go'/'to come', and appear with a wide variety of transitive verbs ('to sell', 'to cut', to break', to name a few (Makharoblidze 2010, 2012)). What type of functional head could these preverbs be, considering that the have multiple functions and that they are in relation with the added argument of the verb? To illustrate the problem, both preverbs *mi-/mo-* introduce a new argument while the preverb *da-* (and other idiosyncratic preverbs) can only take an oblique adjunct in sentences like the example 3.

3. man   c'erili   dato-stvis   da-√c'er-a
   3SG-ERG   letter-NOM   Dato-for/to   PRV-1SG-√write-AOR/3SG
   'He/She wrote a letter to Dato'

Following Pylkkänen (2002,2008) (see also McGinnis (2001, 2008)), I propose that the preverbs *mi-/mo-* in ditransitive verbs reflect the structural presence of a low applicative head (ApplLH) adding the non-core argument, while the prefixed verbs with *da-* (and the other idiosyncratic preverbs) cannot introduce an indirect object, but only an adjunct. I will demonstrate this claim through tests providing the appropriate diagnostic determining that the argument is introduce by a low applicative, such as the transfer of possession between the two internal objects. Along with the demonstration of the structural presence of an ApplLH, the odd relation between the general properties of TAM of the preverb and the said ApplLH is explored. I analyse the relationship between the preverb *mi-/mo-* and the ApplLH in a Distributed Morphology approach where postsyntactic operations account for the several information carried by the unique preverb (Embick and Noyer, 2001; Harley and Noyer, 1999). I argue that the appropriate Vocabulary Item is selected from a set of features associated with the ApplLH in complementary distribution with the features of other idiosyncratic preverbs encoding TAM associated with transitive verbs.

The present research is an attempt to better understand the syntactic properties of the preverbs in Georgian, but also an attempt to bring the observation made in Georgian to the larger context of the Caucasian languages in which preverbs are still understudied by linguists working within the Minimalist theoretical framework.

References

Asatiani, Rusudan. 2007. "A Dynamic Conceptual Model for the Linguistic Structuring of Space: Georgian Preverbs." In *International Tbilisi Symposium on Logic, Language, and Computation*, Springer: 38–46.

Embick, David, and Rolf Noyer. 2001."Movement Operations after Syntax." *Linguistic Inquiry* 32, no. 4: 555–595.

Harris, Alice C. 2003. "Preverbs and Their Origins in Georgian and Udi." *Yearbook of Morphology 2003*: 61–78.

Harley, Heidi, and Rolf Noyer. 1999. "Distributed Morphology." *Glot International* 4, no. 4: 3–9.

Holisky, Dee A. 1981. *Aspect and Georgian Medial Verbs*. Delmar, N.Y: Caravan Books.

Makharoblidze, Tamar. 2010. *Lingvist'uri Ts'erilebi II (Linguistic Letters – II)*. Tbilisi: St. Andrew University of the Patriarchy of Georgia

———. 2012. *The Georgian Verb*. Muenchen: LINCOM GmbH.

McGinnis, Martha. 2001. "Variation in the Phase Structure of Applicatives." Linguistic Variation Yearbook 1 (1):105–146.

———. 2008. "Applicatives." Language and Linguistics Compass 2 (6):1225–45.

Pylkkänen, Liina. 2002. "Introducing Arguments". PhD, University of Pittsburgh.

———. 2008. *Introducing Arguments*. Linguistic Inquiry Monograph. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press.