LEXICAL AND COMPOSITIONAL FACTORS IN THE ASPECTUAL SYSTEM OF ADYGHE

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1. Introduction

Adyghe (West Circassian) < Circassian < North-West Caucasian, Russian Federation

Outstanding typological features:

♣ (almost) no distinction between nouns and verbs (Lander & Testelets 2006);
♣ polysynthesis (pronominal affixes expressing all syntactic arguments of the predicate, rich system of valency increasing operations);
♣ ergativity in both dependent marking (case on NPs) and head marking (pronominal affixes on verbs);
♣ rich system of locational preverbs;
♣ complex mechanisms of clause combining and sentential complementation (cf. Gerasimov 2006; cf. also Kumakhov & Vamling 1998 for the closely related Kabardian).

The data comes mainly from the fieldwork materials collected during field-trips to village Hakurinohabl, Republic Adygeya, organized by the Russian State University for Humanities in 2004–2005.


♣ actionality (≈ lexical aspect): aspectual classification of predicates into states, processes, events etc.;

Non-aprioristic typologically-oriented theory of actionality (Tatevosov 2002):

♣ universal actional meanings: state (S), process (P), multiplicative process (M), entry-into-a-state (ES), entry-into-a-process (EP), quantum-of-a-multiplicative-process (Q);
♣ actional characteristic of a TA-form: the set of actional meanings a TA-form of a given verb may have;
♣ empirical procedure for the discovery of actional classes in a particular language: two verbs belong to one actional class iff their combinations with the universal aspextual viewpoints (perfective and imperfective) show identical actional characteristics;
♣ cross-linguistic actional classes: classes which recur in different languages; NB the set of cross-linguistic actional classes does not coincide with the set of classes proposed for English by Vendler (1967).

Outline of the talk:
2. The tense-aspect system of Adyghe.
3. Actional classes in Adyghe.
4. Interaction of predicates of different classes with adverbials of temporal duration and temporal extent: Lexical vs. compositional analysis.
5. Morphosyntactic evidence for the compositional analysis.
2. Tense and aspect in Adyghe

'Static' vs. 'dynamic' predicates (a general North-West-Caucasian feature, Hewitt 2005): more a morphological distinction than a semantic one (all morphologically 'static' verbs are semantically stative, but not all semantically stative verbs are morphologically 'static').

The difference between 'static' and 'dynamic' predicates is observed in the Present tense:

(1) a. č’ale-r s’o-t.  
   boy-ABS LOC-stand  
   'The boy is standing.' (static)  
   b. č’ale-r txaregęç.  
   boy-ABS cunning  
   'The boy is cunning.' (static)

(2) a. č’ale-r ma-kwe.  
   boy-ABS DYN-go  
   'The boy is walking.' (dynamic)  
   b. č’ale-m pjısmeⁱ j-e-txe.  
   boy-OBL letter 3SG.A-DYN-write  
   'The boy is writing a letter.' (dynamic)

Some predicates allow both 'static' and 'dynamic' morphology (with a semantic difference):

(3) a. č’ale-r bzağ’e.  
   boy-ABS rascal  
   'The boy is a rascal.' (static)  
   b. č’ale-r me-bzağ’e.  
   boy-ABS DYN-rascal  
   'The boy is being naughty (now).'</dynamic>

A 'classical' European tripartite tense system:

♣ Present (unmarked with 'static' predicates, 'dynamic' prefix -e/-me- with 'dynamic' predicates): allows both Progressive (4a) and Habitual (4b) interpretation.

(4) a. pšaše-r j-e-ʒ’e.  
   girl-ABS 3SG.IO-DYN-read  
   'The girl is now reading the book.'  
   b. pšaše-r mafe qes txoł-o-m j-e-ʒ’e.  
   girl-ABS day every book-OBL 3SG.IO-DYN-read  
   'The girl every day reads the book.'

♣ Preterite (suffix -Re): Perfective viewpoint in the past, with both Terminative (5a) and Delimitative (5b) interpretations.

(5) a. pšaše-r txoł-o-m j-e-ʒ’a-k.  
   girl-ABS book-OBL 3SG.IO-read-PST  
   'The girl read the book (to the end).'  
   b. č’ale-r televizor-e-m je-pla-k.  
   boy-ABS television-OBL 3SG.IO-watch-PST  
   'The boy watched television (for some time).'

♣ Imperfect (suffix -s’t’es’e): Progressive-in-the-Past (6a) and Habitual-in-the-Past (6b) interpretations.

(6) a. wane-m s-o-z-je-he-m č’ale-r pšaše-m de-gw-ež’e-š’t’es’e-k.  
   room-OBL 1SG.S-SBD-LOC-go-OBL boy-ABS DYN-ache  
   'When I entered the room, the boy was talking with the girl.'  
   b. č’ale-r sahat-fa-ble čoje-s’t’es’e.  
   boy-ABS hour-INF-seven sleep-IPF  
   'The boy used to sleep for seven hours.'

3. Aspectual classes in Adyghe

Aspectual classes were determined on the basis of the actional meanings of (Progressive) Present and Preterite forms of predicates from a representative sample, see Table 1.

♣ Stative:

(7) a. rasul a-šhe me-wəzə.  
   Rasul 3SG.POSS-head² DYN-ache  
   'Rasul has headache.'  
   b. rasul a-šhe wəzə-ške.  
   Rasul 3SG.POSS-head ache-PST  
   'Rasul had headache (for some time).'

1 Indefinite nouns lack overt case marking.
2 Possessed nouns, proper names and personal pronouns do not (usually) inflect for case.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Class</th>
<th>Actional characteristic of the Present</th>
<th>Actional characteristic of the Preterite</th>
<th>Number of predicates</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stative</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>j'el.m 'to lie', psewən 'to live'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Inceptive-Stative</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>ES</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>ʃən 'to know', ʃekən 'to see'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak Inceptive-Stative</td>
<td>S</td>
<td>ES, S</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>ʃəgən 'to sleep'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Processual</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>ʃəgən 'to play', txən 'to write' (intransitive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Ingressive-Processual</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>EP</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>ʃən 'to go', ʃənən 'to fly'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Multiplicative</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>ʃən 'to shout', ʃənəntxən 'to spit'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weak Multiplicative</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Q, M</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>pške 'cough'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punctual</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>ES</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>ʃə 'to throw', qewən 'to explode'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong Telic</td>
<td>P</td>
<td>ES</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>ʃən 'to die', ʃən 'to give', ʃən 'to dig', qebe 'to swell'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Strong Inceptive-Stative:**

(8) a. č'ale-m psha-r ʃə j-e-ʃekən ʃə.  
boy-ABS girl-ABS good 3SG.A-DYN-see  
‘The boy loves the girl.’  
‘The boy fell in love with the girl || *loved the girl (for some time).’

**Weak Inceptive-Stative:**

(9) a. č'ale-r me-ʃəjə.  
boy-ABS DYN-sleep  
‘The boy is sleeping.’  
‘The boy slept (for some time) || fell asleep.’

**Processual:**

(10) a. č'ale-xe-r me-ʃəgən-x.  
boy-PL-ABS DYN-play  
‘The children are playing.’  
‘The children played (for some time).’

**Strong Ingressive-Processual:**

(11) a. č'ale-r wezəntxən.  
boy-ABS house-OBL DYN-run  
‘The boy is running to the house.’  
‘The boy started running to the house || *came to the house running || *ran to the house for some time.’

**Strong Multiplicative:**

(12) a. č'ale-r me-wəntxən.  
boy-ABS DYN-spit  
‘The boy is spitting.’  
‘The boy spat (once || *for some time).’

**Weak Multiplicative:**

(13) a. č'ale-r ma-pske.  
boy-ABS DYN-cough  
‘The boy is coughing.’  
‘The boy coughed (once || for some time).’

**Punctual:**

(14) a. psha-r ʃənən ʃə ʃə.  
girl-OBL keys DIR-DYN-find  
‘The girl (always) finds the keys || *is finding the keys now.’  
‘The girl found the keys.’

3 To this class, to my knowledge, belong only the predicates of manner of motion.
Strong Telic:

(15) a. *thamate-m ze'oyanç'e-r  r-j-e-ka-ţ'e.
director-OBL meeting-ABS 3SG.IO-3SG.A-DYN-CAUS-begin
‘The director is opening the meeting.’
b. txamate-m ze'oyanç'e-r  r-j-o-ke-ţ'a-k.
director-OBL meeting-ABS 3SG.IO-3SG.A-CAUS-begin-PST
‘The director opened the meeting || *tried to open the meeting but failed.’

(16) a. molær-r me-tkwna.  
ice-ABS DYN-melt
‘The ice is melting.’
b. molær-r tkwna-o-ke.  
‘The ice melted (completely || partly).’

All actional classes observed in Adyghe are cross-linguistic actional classes.

The fact that the ‘weak’ (actionally ambivalent) predicates are almost absent in Adyghe is typologically peculiar (but see next section).

4. The interaction with temporal adverbials

Two cross-linguistic types of temporal adverbials:

adverbials of temporal duration: sobhatnaqwe ‘for half an hour’, taqjøjaqøjø ‘for two minutes’ etc.;
adverbials of temporal extent: ‘Instrumental’ suffix -ţ'e: sobhatnaqwe-ţ'e ‘in half an hour’, taqjøjaqøjø-ţ'e ‘in two minutes’.

The data

Adverbials of temporal extent more or less freely combine with all predicates whose Preterite has an ‘entry-into’ actional meaning, viz. with Strong Inceptive-Stative (17a), Weak Inceptive-Stative (17b), Strong Ingressive-Processual (17c), Strong Multiplicative (17d), Punctual (17e) and Strong Telic (17f), (17g):

(17) a. č'ale-r psaše-r taqjøq-jø-tkw-ţ'e  s-łesw-ó-ke.  
boy-OBL girl-ABS minute-INF-two-INS 3SG.A-see-PST
‘The boy saw the girl in two minutes.’
b. č'ale-r sobhat-naqwe-ţ'e čajo-ke.  
boy-ABS hour-half-INS sleep-PST
‘The boy fell asleep in half an hour.’
c. č'ale-r taqjøq-jø-s'q-ţ'e  ča-ke.  
boy-ABS minute-INF-three-INS run-PST
‘The boy started running in three minutes.’
d. č'ale-r taqjøq-jø-tkw-ţ'e wəqømantxa-k.  
boy-ABS minute-INF-two-INS spit-PST balloon-ABS minute-INF-two-INS DIR-explode-PST
‘The boy spat (again) in two minutes.’
e. č'ale-r taqjøq-jø-tkw-ţ'e qe-wa-ke.  
boy-ABS minute-INF-two-INS DIR-stop-PST
‘The balloon exploded in two minutes.’
f. mašine-r taqjøq-ja-tfw-ţ'e  qe-wəçw-ó-ke.  
car-ABS minute-INF-five-INS DIR-stop-PST
‘The car stopped in five minutes.’
g. psaše-m sobhat-naqwe-ţ'e pjasme-r s-txə-ke.  
girl-OBL hour-half-INS letter-ABS 3SG.A-write-PST
‘The girl wrote the letter in half an hour.’

Adverbials of temporal extent never combine with Stative predicates (18a) and are usually not felicitous with Processual predicates (18b):

(18) a. *ma čəfør-r joles-jo-tfw-ţ'e  żə-ke.  
this man-ABS year-INF-five-INS old-PST
Intended meaning: ‘This man grew old in five years.’
b. ĉ'ale-r taqjøq-jø-ţfw-ţ'e qe-šw-ó-ke.  
boy-ABS minute-INF-five-INS DIR-dance-PST
‘The boy started dancing in five minutes.’
Adverbials of temporal duration freely combine with Stative (19a), Weak Inceptive-Stative (19b), Processual (19c), and Weak Multiplicative (19d) predicates:

(19) a. `ale-m pšaše-r jòles-jò-tfe stwp jòleksw-r-k.
    boy-OBL girl-ABS year-INF-five good 3SG.A-see-PST
    ‘The boy was in love with the girl for five years.’

b. samoljwetE-r sèhat-jò-twE krasnwedar hòbe-kh.
    airplane-ABS hour-INF-two Krasnodar fly-PST
    ‘The airplane flew in the direction of Krasnodar for two hours.’

c. `ale-m `ale-r tagjòq-jò-s’re ò-kh-sà-k-kh.
    man-OBL tree-ABS minute-INF-three 3SG.A-CAUS-shake-PST
    ‘The man shook the tree for three minutes.’

d. `ale-m sèhat-næqwe pìjšme-r ò-txà-k-kh.
    boy-OBL hour-half letter-ABS 3SG.A-write-PST ice-ABS day-INF-five melt-PST
    ‘The boy wrote the letter for half an hour.’

f. *txamate-m tagjòq-jò-s’E re-yè-m.  
    director-OBL minute-INF-three meeting-ABS 3SG.IO-3SG.A-CAUS-begin-PST
    ‘*The director opened the meeting for three minutes (i.e. he tried to open the meeting for three minutes, but failed, e.g. because the people were too loud.’

However, adverbials of temporal duration no less freely combine with Strong Inceptive-Stative (20a), Strong Ingressive-Processual (20b), Strong Multiplicative (20c) and some Strong Telic (20d), (20e) vs. (20f) predicates:

(20) a. `ale-m pšaše-r jòles-jò-tfe jòle-ksw-r-k.
    boy-OBL girl-ABS year-INF-five good 3SG.A-see-PST
    ‘The boy was in love with the girl for five years.’

b. samoljwetE-r sèhat-jò-twE krasnwedar hòbe-kh.
    airplane-ABS hour-INF-two Krasnodar fly-PST
    ‘The airplane flew in the direction of Krasnodar for two hours.’

c. `ale-m `ale-r tagjòq-jò-s’re ò-kh-sà-k-kh.
    man-OBL tree-ABS minute-INF-three 3SG.A-CAUS-shake-PST
    ‘The man shook the tree for three minutes.’

d. `ale-m sèhat-næqwe pìjšme-r ò-txà-k-kh.
    boy-OBL hour-half letter-ABS 3SG.A-write-PST ice-ABS day-INF-five melt-PST
    ‘The boy wrote the letter for half an hour.’

f. *txamate-m tagjòq-jò-s’E re-yè-m.
    director-OBL minute-INF-three meeting-ABS 3SG.IO-3SG.A-CAUS-begin-PST
    ‘*The director opened the meeting for three minutes (i.e. he tried to open the meeting for three minutes, but failed, e.g. because the people were too loud.’

The only actional class whose members normally do not combine with durational adverbials is the Punctual class (21a); however, in appropriate contexts recategorization is possible (21b):

(21) a. *`egwe-re tagjòq-jò-twE qe-we-k.
    balloon-ABS minute-INF-two DIR-explode-PST
    ‘The balloon exploded for two minutes.’

b. *`egwe-xe-re tagjòq-jò-twE qe-we-be-x.
    balloon-PL-ABS minute-INF-two DIR-explode-PST-PL
    ‘The balloons exploded (one after another) for two minutes.’

How to explain the behaviour of the adverbials of temporal duration?

Two possible accounts:

♣ **The ‘lexical’ account** (cf. Tatevosov 2002 and especially Tatevosov 2005 for Bagwalal, Mari and Tatar): Adyghe ‘Strong’ predicates are in fact ‘Weak’, i.e. inherently actionally ambiguous: their Preterite forms always allow both telic (ES, EP, Q) and atelic (S, P, M) interpretations, but the latter requires special context which is provided precisely by the durational adverbials.

♣ **The ‘compositional’ account** (cf. Depraetere 1995, Smith 1995, de Swart 1998): Adyghe actional classes are as in Table 1; the actional properties of the predicate may be subject to change when it is combined with adjuncts of various kinds.
5. Arguments for the compositional account

‘Weak’ Inceptive-Stative and Ingressive-Processual verbs in other languages allow atelic interpretation regardless of whether durational adverbials are present.

Bagwalal (Avar-Andi < North-East Caucasian, Tatevosov 2002: 383, 385)

(22) a. moHammad-i-la o-b zadača b-uňa.
Mohammed-OBL-DAT this-N task N-understand
‘Mohammed came to understand this task || understood this task for some time.’

b. pať imat qari.
Fatima cry
‘Fatima started crying || cried for some time.’

➤ ‘There is at least one predicate in Adyghe which behaves like Bagwalal -uňa ‘understand’, viz. čəjen ‘sleep’ (9). Other Inceptive-Stative and Ingressive-Processual (‘initiotransformative’ in terms of Johanson 1996, 2000) predicates are rather similar to Bagwalal hā ‘see’, cf. (23) and (8) or Tatar kajna ‘boil’, cf. (24) and (11):

Bagwalal (Tatevosov 2002: 382):

(23) moHammad-i-ba žali hā.
Mohammed-OBL-AFF Ali see
‘Mohammed saw (= caught sight of) Ali || *saw Ali for some time.’

Tatar (Turkic < Altaic, Tatevosov 2002: 385):

(24) su kajna-dx:
water boil-PST
‘Water came to boil, started boiling || *boiled for some time.’

➤ As far as I can judge from Tatevosov 2001: 251–263, ‘Strong’ verbs in Bagwalal do not combine with durational adverbials. However, their counterparts in Adyghe do it freely.

➤ Co-occurrence with durational adverbials in Bagwalal is determined on the level of the lexicon, whereas in Adyghe it is rather a matter of semantic compatibility.

There are morphological forms of predicates whose interpretation is sensitive precisely to the actional properties as stated in Table 1:

➤ A non-finite form in zere-...-ew denoting the event immediately preceding the one denoted by the main clause:

3SG.POSS-head DIR-SBD-3SG.A-raise-CNV 1SG.A-shoot-PST
‘As soon as he raised his head, I shot.’

➤ The meaning of constructions with zere-...-ew crucially depends on the actional characteristic of the Preterite. Cf. Stative (26a) and Strong Inceptive-Stative (26b) predicates:

(26) a. č’ale-r zere-samaľ’-ew, ʂkwa/elɔ-m ƙu-ə-ke.
boy-ABS SBD-ill-CNV school-OBL go-PST
‘The boy, still being ill, went to school. || *The boy went to school as soon he became ill.’

b. ʂaką-e-m pshaše-r ʂu-ə zer-jạ-λeŋw-ew qo-š’a-k.
hunter-OBL girl-ABS good SBD-3SG.A-see-CNV DIR-marry-PST
‘The hunter married the girl as soon as he fell in love with her || *still being in love with her.’

➤ Strong Inceptive-Stative predicates do not allow atelic interpretation of the zere-...-ew form; however, the Weak Inceptive-Stative predicate čəjen ‘to sleep’, does allow the atelic interpretation, cf. (27a), (27b) and (27c):

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4 The material presented in this subsection was collected by Dmitry Gerasimov in Hakurinohabl in 2006.
Those Telic predicates which allow atelic interpretation with durational adverbials, do not allow it in the zere-...-ew construction, cf. (28a) and (28b):

boy-ABS SBD-sleep-CNV hour-half 3SG.A-paint-PST
'The boy has been painting the fence for half an hour.'

b. ć'ale-m č'ew-ʁ ĝ-je-xa-k.
boy-OBV fence-ABS rain-3SG.A-3SG.A-carry-PST
'While the boy was still painting the fence, it started to hail.'

Incidentally, the putative ‘Strong’ vs. ‘Weak’ Telic distinction based on the behavior of durational adverbials is not as rigid as a lexical contrast might be: some native speakers allow more Telic predicates to combine with adverbials of duration than others; however, it does not seem that any of the native speakers allow the atelic interpretation of the zere-...-ew forms of Telic predicates.

The non-finite zere-...-ew forms preserve the independently established distinction between the Strong and Weak Inceptive-stative predicates, but fail to reveal any contrast between those Telic predicates which co-occur with the durational adverbials and those which do not.

Both these facts strongly suggest that in Adyghe (at least) temporal adverbials of duration constitute a separate level of aspectual operators, which may change the actional properties of the predicate in a semantically-driven compositional way.

6. Theoretical implications

Adyghe material provides important evidence for the idea that aspectual structure has a richer architecture than is usually assumed even by the proponents of ‘two-component’ theories (cf. Sasse 2002): between the ‘inner’ level of lexically-driven actional properties of predicates and the ‘outer’ level of viewpoint operators there is at least one separate level of aspectual operators, viz. the temporal adverbials. The degree of prominence and importance this level acquires is subject to cross-linguistic variation; Adyghe is an example of a language where this level is very prominent.

The use of temporal adverbials for various aspectual tests (e.g. the common tests for telicity/atelicity) should be extremely cautious: it is justified only when there is independent evidence that adverbials do not shift the actional meaning of the predicate as they do in Adyghe.

Abbreviations


References


