1. Antipassives: some general issues

According to the standard definitions (Cooreman 1994; Polinsky 2005; Say 2008; Kulikov 2011: 380–383; Janic 2013), antipassive is a valency-changing operation which is applied to a transitive verb with two core arguments (A and P) and makes it intransitive, with the A argument realized as S of an intransitive predicate. The original P argument is either left unrealized (1) at all or demoted to an oblique grammatical function (2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>transitive</th>
<th>antipassive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$A_i$</td>
<td>$S_i$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>(Obl)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) MATSES (Panoan, Peru, Brazil; Fleck 2006: 559)

a. \textit{aid} \textit{opa-n matses pe-e-k}.
   \textit{DEM} dog-ERG people(ABS) bite-NPST-IND
   \textquoteleft That dog bites people.\textquoteright

b. \textit{aid} \textit{opa} \textit{pe-an-e-k}.
   \textit{DEM} dog(ABS) bite-AP-NPST-IND
   \textquoteleft That dog bites.\textquoteright

(2) WARRUNGU (Pama-Nyungan, NE Australia; Tsunoda 1988: 598)

a. \textit{pama-ngku kamu yangka-n}.
   man-ERG water(ABS) search-NFUT
   \textquoteleft The man looked for water.\textquoteright

b. \textit{pama kamu-wu yangka-kali-n}.
   man(ABS) water-DAT search-AP-NFUT
   \textquoteleft id.\textquoteright

It should be noted that some linguists include the possibility to express the omitted object with a peripheral syntactic device into the definition of antipassive, cf. (Aikhenvald, Dixon 2000: 9):

\textquoteleft This argument can be omitted, although there is always the option of including it\textquoteright.

We assume that both cases where the object of antipassives can be expressed and those where it cannot can be grouped together due to their functional similarity.

Antipassives are often morphologically marked on verbs, though P-demotion without any formal marking (“A-lability”) is also quite widespread, cf. (3).

(3) ENGLISH

a. \textit{John is reading a book}.

b. \textit{John is reading}.

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1 The present talk is an updated and extended version of the paper presented at \textit{\textquotedblleft Syntax of the World\textquoteleft s Languages V\textquotedblright} in Dubrovnik, October 2012.
Traditionally, antipassive has been considered to be mainly characteristic of ergative languages (cf. Dixon 1994: 147; Dixon & Aikhenvald 2000: 10), and the function of the antipassive has been taken to demote the syntactic status of the P in transitive constructions. Indeed, in ergative languages, the P argument of transitive verbs shows signs of syntactic prominence, and therefore it is relevant for the grammar whether P is present or absent. However, as recent studies by Saj (2008) and Janic (2013) have shown, antipassives are found in many languages with accusative alignment as well.

The definition of antipassive implies that this operation affects only transitive verbs, and is not used to demote or eliminate an indirect object of a bivalent intransitive verb.

In our talk we will present a typologically unusual case of an antipassive construction in an ergative language which applies indiscriminately to both transitive and intransitive two-argument verbs thus operating on accusative rather than ergative basis.

2. Circassian languages
A branch of the North-West Caucasian (Abkhaz-Adyghe) language family, comprising two major languages (or rather groups of dialects): Adyghe (West Circassian) and Kabardian (East Circassian).

Our fieldwork data comes from three Circassian varieties spoken in the Republic of Adygeya (Russian Federation):
- Temirgoy dialect of Adyghe, village Haqwerinehabl (very close to standard Adyghe)
- Besleney dialect of Kabardian, village Ulyap (very different from standard Kabardian)
- Kuban dialect of Kabardian, village Blešepsyne (very different from standard Kabardian)

Important typological features of Circassian languages:
- very little distinction between nouns, adjectives and verbs (Lander & Testelets 2006);
- polysynthesis: pronominal affixes expressing all arguments of the verb (S, A, P as well as various indirect objects such as recipient, benefactive, and even location, cf. e.g. Smeets 1992) and a rich system of affixes marking aspectual, temporal and modal meanings (Korotkova & Lander 2010, Lander & Letuchiy 2010, Arkadiev & Letuchiy 2011):

(4) BESLENEY KABARDIAN (elicited)
\[\text{lG},\text{ABS-DIR-FCT-3PL},\text{IO-BEN-LOC-NEG-tie-ELAT-RE-PST-ABS}\]
\[\text{‘that they could not untie me’}\]

- rich system of valency increasing operations, including causative and a large set of applicatives: benefactive, malefactive, many locatives etc. (Letučij 2009a,b, Paris 1995);
ergativity in both head- and dependent-marking (Smeets 1992, Kumakhov & Vamling 2009, Lander 2012, Letuchi 2012), coupled with an impoverished case system comprising only Absolutive (-r, marks intransitive subjects (5a) and direct objects (5b)) and Oblique (-m, marks transitive subjects (5b), all types of indirect objects (5b), and adnominal possessors (5c); NB personal pronouns, possessed nominals and proper names, as well as non-referential common nouns normally do not admit case marking (see Arkadiev & Testelets 2015).

(5) TEMIRGOY ADYGHE (elicited)
   a. č'ale-r  Ø-2-me-čəje.
      boy-ABS  3SG.ABS-DYN-sleep
      ‘The boy is sleeping.’
   b. č'ale-m pšaše-m txəλə-r  Ø-Ø-r-j-e-tə.
      boy-OBL  girl-OBL  book-ABS  3SG.ABS-3SG.IO-DAT-3SG.ERG-DYN-give
      ‘The boy is giving the book to the girl.’
   c. ćəfə-m  Ø-ja-wəne
      man-OBL  3SG.PR-POSS-house
      ‘the man’s house’

Existing sources on Circassian morphosyntax:
- in general on Circassian: Kumaxov 1971 (in Russian); Kumakhov & Vamling 2009 (in English);
- on Adyghe: Paris 1989 (in French), Smeets 1984 (in English), Rogava & Keraševa 1962, Testelec (ed.) 2009 (in Russian);
- on Kabardian: Colarusso 1989, 1992, 2006, Matasovič 2008 (in English), Kumaxov (ed.) 2006 (in Russian);
- on Besleney: Balkarov 1952, 1969 (in Russian); Alparslan, Dumézil 1964 (in French);


3. Two-argument predicates in Circassian
Transitivity is a formal morphosyntactic feature of verbs in Circassian reflected in the kind of cross-referencing prefixes they take:
- Transitive verbs have at least two arguments: the A cross-referenced in the prefixal position closest to the verbal stem by a special set of person-number prefixes which we gloss ERG(ative) (in particular, the 3SG.ERG prefix is overt, while other 3SG prefixes are zero), and the P cross-referenced in the word-initial position by a different set of prefixes glossed ABS(olute).
- Intransitive verbs have an S argument cross-referenced in the word-initial position by prefixes from the Absolutive set.

Both transitive and intransitive verbs may have an indirect object argument introduced either by one of the numerous specific applicative prefixes or by the semantically bleached “Dative” applicative prefix (j)e-. All applicative prefixes occur in slots intermediate between those of the Absolutive and the Ergative arguments.

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Henceforth we will not mark and gloss zero morphemes.
transitive

(6) BESLENEY KABARDIAN (elicited)

a. \( \text{wə-s-λe}\text{er}^\text{w}-\text{a} \)
   2SG.ABS-1SG.ERG-see-PST
   ‘I saw you.’

b. \( \text{w-ja-λe}\text{er}^\text{w}-\text{a} \)
   2SG.ABS-3SG.ERG-see-PST
   ‘S/he saw you.’

intransitive with an indirect object

(7) BESLENEY KABARDIAN (elicited)

a. \( \text{sə-qa-w-e-z-a} \)
   1SG.ABS-DIR-2SG.IO-DAT-wait-PST
   ‘I waited for you.’

b. \( \text{∅-qa-w-e-z-a} \)
   3SG.ABS-DIR-2SG.IO-DAT-wait-PST
   ‘S/he waited for you.’

Circassian languages possess a large and heterogeneous class of two-argument intransitive verbs. These can denote both physical activity (‘hit’, ‘bite’, ‘drink’, ‘kiss’ etc.) and mental activity, speech, or perception (‘read/learn’, ‘look at’, ‘scold’, ‘talk to’, ‘smell’, ‘think about’ etc.). Many of these predicates are translated by transitive verbs into SAE languages.

4. The Circassian antipassive: the “normal” case

When applying to transitive verbs, the antipassive in Circassian either eliminates the P argument, thus producing a single-argument intransitive verb, or demotes the P to the indirect object (the latter option being limited to a small number of lexicalized cases).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>transitive</th>
<th>antipassive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>( A_i )</td>
<td>( P_k )</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cross-reference</td>
<td>Ergative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>case-marking</td>
<td>Oblique</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are two morphological subtypes of the antipassive: marked and unmarked. The marked antipassive is formed from verbs whose stem ends in /ə/ (in some positions this vowel is elided) by substituting it with /e/ (in some positions /e/ changes to /a/).

(8) TEMIRGOY ADYGHE

a. \( \text{njewəš’ š’jeʁež’aʁew c’əmpe-r qə-č’a-č’ə-ze a-şxə-š’t}... \)
   tomorrow beginning.with strawberry-ABS DIR-LOC-3PL.ERG-pick-CNV 3PL.ERG-eat-FUT
   ‘From tomorrow on they’ll eat strawberries right after having picked them...’ [GišKr: 111]

b. \( \text{ǯədedem ŝʷə-z-ʁe-sxe-š’t} \)
   now 2PL.ABS-1SG.ERG-CAUS-eat.AP-FUT
   ‘And now I’ll give you something to eat.’, lit. “I will make you eat” [GišKr: 42]

(9) BESLENEY KABARDIAN (elicited)

a. \( \text{pșașe-m ǯane ja-da-n x’je.} \)
   girl-OBL dress 3SG.ERG-sew-POT must
   ‘The girl must sew a dress.’

b. \( \text{natașe dew’-wə joč’jo dax-wə ma-de.} \)
   Natasha good-ADV and beautiful-ADV DYN-sew.AP
   ‘Natasha sews well and nicely.’

(10) KUBAN KABARDIAN (elicited)

a. \( \text{s-ja-q’eș’a-m s-ja-txɔlə-r ja-ʒ’ə-ne.} \)
   1SG-POSS-brother-OBL 1SG-POSS-book-ABS 3SG.ERG-read-FUT
   ‘My brother will read my book through.’

b. \( \text{s-ja-q’eș’a-r s-ja-txɔlə-m j-o-ʒ’e.} \)
   1SG-POSS-brother-ABS 1SG-POSS-book-OBL DAT-DYN-read
   ‘My brother is reading my book.’ (elicited)
The unmarked antipassive occurs with verbs whose stem ends in /e/ and is manifested by the valency change alone, marked by the number and position of cross-referencing prefixes and the case-marking of corresponding NPs.

(11) TEMIRGOY ADYGHE (elicited)
   a. ʁʷəneʁʷə-m xate-r j-e-pč̣'e.
       neighbour-OBL garden-ABS 3SG.ERG-DYN-weed
       ‘The neighbour is weeding the garden.’
   b. a-r mafe rjeʃə-m pč̣'a-ʁe.
       DEM-ABS day whole-OBL weed(AP)-PST
       ‘He was busy weeding whole day long.’

(12) BESLENEY KABARDIAN (elicited)
   a. λ̣ə-xe-m ʁʷefə-r ja-ve-n xʷje.
       man-PL-OBL field-ABS 3PL.ERG-plough-POT must
       ‘The men must plough the field.’
   b. λ̣ə-xe-r ma-ve-xe.
       man-PL-ABS DYN-plough(AP)-PL.ABS
       ‘The men are busy ploughing.’

The antipassive mostly applies to verbs denoting specific activities with a strong manner component (“manner verbs” in terms of Levin & Rappaport Hovav 1998), e.g. ‘eat’, ‘wash’, ‘sew’, ‘knit’, ‘dig’, ‘sow’, ‘cut’, ‘wipe’, ‘write’, ‘steal’ et c., and is used when no particular P argument is implied and the speaker’s focus is on the activity itself. The bivalent antipassives of the kind shown in (10) are opposed to their transitive counterparts as less telic, i.e. also focusing on the activity rather than on its endpoint.

5. The referential status of the omitted argument

An important question concerns the referential status of the omitted argument. Several theoretical possibilities (see Shibatani 1988 where several alternatives are proposed for agent demotion in passive constructions) are available:

- the P-argument is unknown;
- the speaker does not want to mention the P due to its irrelevance or other reasons;
- the P is indefinite or non-specific;
- the P is omitted/demoted due to syntactic reasons (e.g., the language does not have an A relativization pattern, and the A must become S to be relativized).

In Circassian, the antipassive with an omitted P is almost exclusively used when the P is non-specific. For instance, in (13), the use of the antipassive is impossible because the object (‘dirt’) is specific, even though it has not been overtly mentioned.

(13) KUBAN KABARDIAN
       here dirty-very-IPF-ADD 1SG-POSS-son-OBL 3SG.ERG-wipe-PST
       ‘It was very dirty here, but my son wiped it.’
       here dirty-very-IPF-ADD 1SG-POSS-son-ABS wipe(AP)-PST
       Intended: ‘It was very dirty here, but my son wiped.’

By contrast, (14) is a good context for the antipassive, because we do not know what the girl washes and wipes — the sentence refers just the activity.

(14) KUBAN KABARDIAN
   pšaʔe-r me-thaʃe, me-λaʃe.
   girl ABS DYN-wash.AP DYN-wipe.AP
   ‘The girl washes and wipes.’
6. The “indirect antipassive” in Circassian
The application of the valency-reducing operation described in the previous section is not restricted to morphosyntactically transitive verbs but can also apply to two-argument intransitive predicates suppressing the indirect object.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>bivalent intransitive</th>
<th>antipassive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>(II)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S₁</td>
<td>IO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cross-reference</td>
<td>Absolutive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>case-marking</td>
<td>Absolutive</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Marked antipassive from intransitive verbs:

(15) TEMIRGOY ADYGHE (elicited)

a. č̣'ale-r pšaše-m je-bewa-x.
   boy-ABS girl-OBL DATE-kiss-PST

b. bewe-na-r ja-č̣'as.
   kiss.AP-MSD-ABS POSS-love

‘The boy kissed the girl.’
‘S/he loves kissing.’ (lit. ‘To kiss is his/her love’).

(16) BESLENEY KABARDIAN

 readings | morphological analysis | gloss
---|---|---
road-OBL | je-pλ-te-qm | 'he looked at the road, he would drive looking and talking here and there.' [TlinJiM: 4]

(17) KUBAN KABARDIAN (elicited)

a. se šale-m s-je-ʔwʌnšə-ne.
   1SG guy-OBL 3SG.IO+DAT-NEG POSS-think-FUT

b. sabjə-xe-r me-ʔwʌnšə
   1SG.ABS-DAT-push-FUT child-PL-ABS DYN-push.AP

‘I will shove that guy.’
‘The children are jostling.’

Unmarked antipassives from intransitive verbs:

(18) STANDARD ADYGHE (newspaper “Adyge maq” (‘Adyghe Voice’) http://www.adygvoice.ru

a. č̣'ale-r mə-dej-ew adəγa-bze-č̣'e me-gʷəpšəse-št.
   boy-ABS NEG-bad-ADV Adyghe-tongue-INS DYN-speak

b. č̣'ale-r ma-dej-ew adəγa-bze-č̣'e me-gʷəpšəse-št.
   boy-ABS NEG-bad-ADV Adyghe-tongue-INS DYN-speak

‘The pupil ... won’t think about anything but sports.’ [AM 18.05.10]

(19) BESLENEY KABARDIAN (elicited)

a. ha-r qə-šə-w-e-gaQE-č̣'e vrača-m = djə kʷe.
   dog-ABS DIR-TEMP-2SG.IO-DAT-bite-INS doctor-OBL = to go(IMP)

‘If a dog bites you, go to the doctor.’

b. ha-r me-gaQE.
   dog-ABS DYN-bite(AP)

‘The dog bites.’

7. Discussion

With respect to the Circassian languages we believe that it is fully legitimate to treat both the “direct” (transitive-based) and the “indirect” (intransitive-based) instances of the valency-reducing operation described above uniformly as antipassive whose function is to eliminate or demote the second (non-subject) argument of a two-argument verb.

Though in Circassian languages with their predominantly ergative morphosyntax there are not many diagnostics of grammatical relations such as subject and object, there still exist some, such as reflexivization and “inversion” marking, which group together the A and the S arguments to the exclusion of the P and the IO arguments.

- Reflexivization is expressed by the prefix əzə- behaving as a pronominal affix: it occupies one of the valency slots corresponding to the participants which enter into the reflexive relation. With transitive verbs, as in (20a), the reflexive prefix occupies the absolutive (P) slot, while with intransitive ones it occurs in the IO slot (20b). In both cases the reflexive is controlled by the subject argument, i.e. A of transitive verbs and S of intransitive verbs, which are expressed with regular cross-referencing prefixes.

(20) TEMIRGOY ADYCHE (elicited)

a. əzə-sə-wəpsə-ʁ
   RFL.ABS-1SG.ERG-shave-PST
   ‘I shaved (myself).’

b. ʁʷənǯe-m-č̣e s-jə-ə-pλə-ž’ə-ʁ
   mirror-OBL-INS 1SG.ABS-LOC-RFL.IO-DAT-look-RE-PST
   ‘I looked at myself in the mirror.’

Thus, reflexivization is sensitive to grammatical relations “subject (S,A)” vs. “object (P,IO)”, and not to the distinctions either between Agent and Absolutive or between transitive and intransitive verbs.

- “Inversion” marking concerns the use of the directional prefix (Ady. qe-/qə-, Kab. qe-/qə-) in those instances when the IO outranks the subject on the person hierarchy “1 > 2 > 3” (the directional prefix may also be used when the P is higher on the person hierarchy than the A, but in transitive verbs its use is optional). Notably, the use of the directional prefix is insensitive to the distinction between transitive (21) and intransitive (22) verbs and, thus, between A and S.

BESLENYE KABARDIAN (elicited)

(21) a. qə-z-e-p-t-a
   DIR-1SG.IO-DAT-2SG.ERG-give-PST
   ‘You gave it to me.’

b. ja-p-t-a
   3PL.IO+DAT-2SG.ERG-give-PST
   ‘You gave it to them.’

(22) a. əqə-w-e-ž-a
   3.ABS-DIR-2SG.IO-DAT-wait-PST
   ‘S/he waited for you.’

b. w-ja-ž-a
   2SG.ABS-3.PL.IO+DAT-wait-PST
   ‘You waited for him/her.’

On the face of it, the antipassive is clearly another morphosyntactic process in Circassian which groups together S and A into a “subject” relation.

However, the behavior of the Circassian antipassive can be also accounted for in semantic terms (cf. Letuchiy 2012). What is eliminated in the antipassive is the least agentive argument of polyvalent verbs. This is supported by the fact that the vowel change in ditransitive verbs like əqə ‘give’ is associated with the elimination of the theme, not of the recipient.

(23) BESLENYE KABARDIAN

a. ja-de-qəm mašine-r qə-r-jə-tə-n-wə.
   3SG.ERG-agree-NEG car-ABS DIR-DAT-3SG.ERG-give-MSD-ADV
   ‘[He] does not agree to give him the car.’ [HadPod: 7]

b. sedaq̇e p-τə-n-r derwə.
   alms 2SG.ERG-give-MSD-ABS good
   ‘It is good to give alms.’ (elicited)
8. Typological outlook
The “indirect antipassive” found in the Circassian languages is a cross-linguistically fairly infrequent phenomenon.

In general, an asymmetry exists between valency increase and valency decrease in their relations to transitivity. Two features: ‘valency increase’ vs. ‘valency decrease’ and ‘change in transitivity’ vs. ‘no change of transitivity’ yield four possible values shown in the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>transitivity changes</th>
<th>transitivity does not change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>valency increase</td>
<td>applicative adding a DO</td>
<td>applicative (’version’) adding an IO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>valency decrease</td>
<td>antipassive</td>
<td>??</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If we consider only operations that affect object arguments, one of the four cells remains empty: applicatives can add either a DO (the cross-linguistically most common case, see Peterson 2007) or an IO (Kartvelian and North-West Caucasian languages), but antipassives only eliminate a DO, not an IO. Most languages, when they need to eliminate an IO argument, do not employ any special marking (such option, as we have seen, exists in Circassian as well, but is a minor pattern). Circassian languages fill this empty cell with the indirect antipassive.

Such an asymmetry between direct and indirect object demotion can be explained semantically: when there is need to remove an IO argument, languages usually do not employ any special marking because IOs are low in prominence and not always clearly distinguishable from optional adjuncts. By contrast, the addition of an IO is nevertheless often marked, because the exact semantic role of the IO is not always obvious (recipient, benefactive, malefactive, instrument, etc.), and its addition can change the semantics of the whole situation.

Abbreviations

References


