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Expletive Verb Marking in Abkhaz

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1.0 Introduction.

It is well known that many languages contain “expletive” or “dummy” noun phrases which have no semantic content, but which fill a syntactic slot required by the language. The best known examples of these are English “it” and “there” and French “il”, as illustrated in (1):

- 1) a. It is raining.
- b. It is obvious that John is guilty.
- c. There is a unicorn in the garden.
- d. Il fait beau.
- e. Il est impossible que Jean soit parti.

Proponents of the Government and Binding model of syntax (e.g. Chomsky 1981: 35) have often claimed that expletive NPs can only occur in subject position (as in the examples in (1)), because this position is not subcategorized for by the verb in GB. In that theory, syntactic subcategorization is the same as theta-marking; a verb subcategorizes for a syntactic position if and only if it assigns a theta role to it, where the theta roles assigned by a verb represent its semantic arguments. Since expletives, being semantically empty, receive no theta role, it follows that they cannot occur in subcategorized positions. However, Postal and Pullum (1988) show that, at least in English, expletive NPs can indeed occur in subcategorized positions, as in the following examples:

- 2) a. I regret it very much that we could not hire Mosconi.
- b. The Lord stopped it from raining.
- c. The mayor prevented there from being a riot.
- d. See to it that this package arrives on time.
- e. Beat it!

Postal and Pullum show that the underlined NPs in (2) are indeed semantically vacuous expletives, and that they are in fact arguments of their respective main verbs by all available tests. P & P argue that such examples show that syntactic subcategorization cannot be reduced to semantic argument structure, as is generally done in GB; a verb may subcategorize syntactically for a position it assigns no theta role to. Authier (1991) concedes Postal and Pullum’s main point and proposes a modified definition of subcategorization in GB which does not rely exclusively on theta-marking.

In this paper I argue that the conclusions reached by Postal and Pullum for syntax apply equally well to morphology: it is possible for a verb to subcategorize morphologically for an “agreement” affix which corresponds to no semantic or syntactic argument of the verb. Specifically, I will show that the Northwest Caucasian language Abkhaz contains at least three different semantically and syntactically empty person-number markers, one corresponding to each agreement slot on the verb, which are morpho-phonologically identical to third person singular agreement markers. Thus the lexical entry for each Abkhaz verb must contain a morphological “subcategorization frame” (stating which person-number affixes it

requires) in addition to information about syntactic subcategorization and semantic argument structure.

2.0 Abkhaz verb morphology

Abkhaz, like most of the indigenous languages of the Caucasus, is very complex morphologically, particularly with respect to the verb. Abkhaz verb morphology is templatic, as in many Native American languages; the verbal template contains a large number of “slots”, and only one affix from each slot may be present at once.¹ The exact number of slots in the Abkhaz verb is not a completely settled matter (Spruit 1987 shows 20, Hewitt 1989 shows 25), but the following simplified diagram includes the most important affixes for our purposes:

3) absolutive-dative-preverb-ergative-root-tense/aspect

These affixes must occur in the above order, though of course all will not necessarily cooccur in the same verb. Three of the above affixes (absolutive, dative, and ergative) are generally referred to as agreement prefixes, since they vary according to the person, number, and animacy of the verb’s arguments. Table (4) shows the different forms these prefixes can take, and (5) illustrates a verb which contains all three prefixes:^{2,3}

4)	<u>Absolutive</u>	<u>Dative</u>	<u>Ergative</u>
1sg.	s-	s-	s-/z-
2sg. masc.	w-	w-	w-
2sg. fem.	b-	b-	b-
3sg. masc.	d-	y-	y-
3sg. fem.	d-	ɫ-	ɫ-
3sg. nonhum.	y-/∅	a-/∅	a-/na-
1pl.	h-	h-	h-/aa-
2pl.	šʷ-	šʷ-	šʷ-/žʷ-
3pl.	y-/∅	r-	r-

5) a-xác'a a-šʷqʷə́ a- phʷəs y- ló- y- te yt'
 DEF-man_i DEF-book_j DEF-woman_k 3.SG.ABS_j-3.SG.F.DAT_k-3.SG.M.ERG_i-give-AOR
 “The man gave the woman the book”

The slashes in the table indicate various alternations, some phonologically-based and some morphologically-based, which will be discussed below. Also, some of the morphemes which appear to be identical in the table actually differ in stress-status, which will also be discussed below.

Many Abkhaz verbs contain preverbs, which occur between the dative and ergative markers in (3); these are roughly similar in function to English prepositions, though there are more of them (well over 100) and they can be more specialized in meaning:^{4,5}

6) a-mašʷə́na á-c'la-kʷa ∅- rə- bžʷə́- sə- yt'
 DEF-car DEF-tree-PL 3.PL.ABS-3.PL.DAT-between-pass-AOR.ACT
 “The car passed between the trees” (-bžʷə́- = ‘between’)

- 7) a-č'ás'w č'asá-k' Ø- á- mæ- s- xə- yt'
 DEF-loaf piece-one 3.SG.ABS-3.SG.DAT-from-1.SG.ERG-take-AOR.ACT
 "I took a piece (of bread) from the loaf" (-mæ- = 'at; from')
- 8) a-xəlpə Ø- k'ná- s- ha- yt'
 DEF-cap 3.SG.ABS-hook-1.SG.ERG-put-AOR.ACT
 "I hung up the cap" (-k'ná- = 'on a hook')

Some preverbs require the verb to have an indirect object with a corresponding dative marker (6-7 above), while others do not (8).

3.0 Expletive verb marking

For the most part, it is possible to reconstruct the argument structure of a clause in Abkhaz by looking at the number of agreement markers on the verb; each marker corresponds to a semantic argument. However, some Abkhaz verbs do not conform to this ideal: they require a dummy third person singular (nonhuman) "agreement" marker which seems not to correspond to any verbal argument. Such dummies can occupy any of the three agreement slots in the Abkhaz verbal template, as the following examples illustrate (dummy markers are in boldface):

9) Absolutive dummy

a) (sará) **y-** sə- z- ha- wéyt'
 I 3.SG.ABS-1.SG.DAT-for-grow-PRES.ACT
 "I grow", literally "It grows for me" (-z- = 'for')

b) (sará) a-ca-rá **y-** á- k'wə- s- k'ə- yt'
 I GO-INF 3.SG.ABS-3.SG.DAT-on-1.SG.ERG-hold-AOR.ACT
 "I intended to go", lit. "I held it on going" (-k'wə- = 'on')

c) **y-** pxnə- wp'
 3.SG.ABS-be.summer-PRES.STATIVE
 "It is summer"

10) Dative dummy:

a) a-pšá Ø- á- s- weyt'
 DEF-wind 3.SG.ABS-3.SG.DAT-hit-PRES.ACT
 "The wind is blowing", lit. "The wind is hitting it"

b) (sará) a-č-k'á Ø- a- nə- s- c'e- yt'
 I DEF-horse-PL 3.PL.ABS-3.SG.DAT-on-1.SG.ERG-put-AOR.ACT
 "I bred horses", lit. "I put horses on it" (-nə- = 'on (a flat or concave surface)')

c) (dará) d- á- c'a- xe- yt'
 he 3.SG.ABS-3.SG.DAT-under-remain-AOR.ACT
 "He was defeated", lit. "He remained under it" (-c'a- = 'under')

d) (dará) d- á- lə- r- xə- yt'
 him 3.SG.ABS-3.SG.DAT-out.of-3.PL.ERG-take-AOR.ACT
 "They elected him", lit. "They took him out of it" (-lə- = 'in, out of (a solid or a group)')

11) Ergative dummy:

a) a-k^wá Ø a w wéyt'
 DEF-rain 3.SG.ABS-3.SG.ERG-make-PRES.ACT
 "It is raining", lit. "It is making rain"

b) á- rc'əw- k^wa rə fa-ra Ø a w wéyt'
 DEF-grasshopper-PL 3.PL.DAT-eat-INF 3.SG.ABS-3.SG.ERG-make-PRES.ACT
 "It is possible to eat grasshoppers", lit. "It makes eating grasshoppers"

c) (sará) a-psəʒ Ø sə č' ná- xə yt'
 I DEF-fish 3.SG.ABS-1.SG.DAT-face-3.SG.ERG-take-AOR.ACT
 "I vomited up the fish", lit. "It took the fish out of my mouth" (-č' = 'at /
 from the face')

d) (dará) d- rə la- na- gala- yt'
 he 3.SG.ABS-3.PL.DAT-among-3.SG.ERG-bring-AOR.ACT
 "He found himself among them", lit. "It brought him among them" (-lə =
 as in 8d above)

As the glosses in (9)-(11) indicate, these dummy verb markers do not correspond to anything in the semantics. Nevertheless, there is considerable evidence that they are morphologically identical to their non-dummy counterparts. This evidence includes the following: (a) Dummy and non-dummy third person markers are homophonous and occupy the same slots in the verb's morphological template, as a comparison of the morpheme glosses in (5)-(8) vs. (9)-(11) illustrates. (b) They have the same effect on word stress. Each mora of an Abkhaz word can be divided into one of two classes, accented and unaccented; stress in a word goes on the first accented mora which is not immediately followed by another accented mora (cf. Spruit 1985, Kathman 1992). Abkhaz third person singular verb markers have the same stress status whether they are dummy or not: the absolutive (y-/Ø-) is unaccented, the dative (a-/Ø-) is accented, and the ergative (a-/na-) is unaccented. (c) They participate in the same morphosyntactically conditioned alternations. For example, the 3sg. nonhuman dative marker is realized as a- with certain verb roots (cf. 10 above) and as Ø- with others (cf. 13-15 below). Dummy and "real" agreement markers behave exactly alike in this respect. Similarly, the 3sg. nonhuman ergative marker is realized as a- when there is no preverb present (cf. 11.a-b) and as na- when there is a preverb present (cf. 11.c-d). Here, too, dummy and non-dummy verb markers behave exactly alike.

Whether expletive verb markers correspond to anything in the syntax is a more difficult question, partly empirical and partly depending on one's theoretical assumptions. Like most languages with comparably rich verb inflection, Abkhaz does not require overt NPs to occur with its verbs; thus a single finite verb, such as the one in (5) above, can stand alone as a sentence:

12) y- lə y- te yt'
 3.SG.ABS-3.SG.F.DAT-3.SG.M.ERG-give-AOR
 "He gave it to her"

In a Government-and-Binding analysis (e.g. Baker 1991), the above sentence would contain null pronouns ("little pro") coindexed with the agreement markers and serving as the syntactic arguments of the verb; thus, we might say that the

sentences in (9)-(11) contain a similar null pronoun which is coindexed with the dummy verb markers. However, such an analysis is not without its problems. Note that each of the markers in the above verb can correspond to an overt NP, as a comparison of (12) with (5) illustrates. In contrast, expletive verb markers are incapable of appearing with an overt NP; this can be illustrated by comparing verbs which have inflectional dummies in an idiomatic meaning with their literal counterparts where the same marker is not a dummy, as in the following minimal pairs:

- 13) a. (*yara) y- a- nǝ- s- c'e- yt' a-č-k'á
 it 3.PL.ABS-3.SG.DAT-on-1.SG.ERG-put-AOR.ACT DEF-horse-PL
 "I bred horses", lit. "I put horses on it" (= 10.b above)
- b. a-saán Ø- a- nǝ- s- c'e- yt' a-c'w'á
 DEF-plate 3.PL.ABS-3.SG.DAT-on-1.SG.ERG-put-AOR.ACT DEF-apple
 "I put the apple on the plate"
- 14) a. a-baá a-soldat-c'w'á (*yará) y- Øǝ- k'w'ǝ- r- xǝ- yt'
 DEF-castle DEF-soldier-PL it 3.SG.ABS-3.SG.DAT-off-3.PL.ERG-take-AOR
 "The soldiers destroyed the castle", lit. "The soldiers took the castle off it"
- b. a-y'w'nǝ a-xǝb a-pšá y- Øǝ- k'w'ǝ- na- xǝ- yt'
 DEF-house DEF-roof DEF-wind 3.SG.ABS-3.SG.DAT-off-3.SG.ERG-take-AOR
 "The wind took the roof off the house" (-k'w'ǝ- = 'on / off')
- 15) a. (*yará) d- Ø- tá- xa- yt' a-soldát
 it 3.SG.ABS-3.SG.DAT-in-remain-AOR.ACT DEF-soldier
 "The soldier perished", lit. "The soldier remained in it"
- b. s-ž'ǝba y- Ø- tá- xa- yt' a-c'w'á
 1.SG-pocket 3.SG.ABS-3.SG.DAT-in-remain-AOR.ACT DEF-apple
 "The apple remained in my pocket" (-ta- = 'in (a hollow space)')

The verbs in each pair are morphologically identical, but the (a) sentences permit one fewer overt NPⁱ than the (b) sentences; thus if we adopted a little pro analysis, we would have to specify somehow that the expletive markers obligatorily, rather than optionally, are governed by a null pronoun. Stump (1984) in fact argues for something like this analysis to account for some superficially similar facts in Breton. As Stump shows, in Breton "the appearance of personal inflections encoding a particular argument position excludes the appearance of an overt noun phrase in that position" (1984: 289); in other words, sentences with subject agreement on the verb cannot contain a subject NP.⁶ He accounts for this fact by proposing that Breton has a principle stating that the governor of AGR must be null; in practice this means that the subject of any verb containing agreement must be little pro. Even if we accept Stump's arguments, though, there are some crucial differences which make the little pro analysis less than ideal for Abkhaz. For one thing, Stump's principle covers all agreement in Breton, but for Abkhaz we would have to lexically specify that only certain agreement markers in certain verbs require their governor to be null. Even if we could come up with some way to do this, there is a more serious problem: under standard GB assumptions, little pro must receive a theta role. Since the Abkhaz dummy markers are semantically empty, they

do not correspond to any theta role unless we make the notion of theta role semantically vacuous;⁷ thus, they could not be governed by little pro.

Another possible analysis would be to say that Abkhaz person-number markers are themselves the syntactic arguments of the verb; then we would be able to treat expletive verb markers as syntactically equivalent to the expletive NPs in such sentences as *It is raining* and *I regret it very much that we could not hire Mosconi*, and whatever explanation we propose for syntactic expletives could be extended to morphological expletives. Among the more prominent analyses which treat “agreement” morphology as a syntactic argument are Jelinek (1984, 1989) and Sadock (1991: 198-205). Jelinek argues that, at least in Warlpiri and certain other languages, what are generally considered “agreement markers” are actually the syntactic arguments of the verb, and that any overt NPs which appear in a sentence are syntactically adjuncts. Sadock (1991: 198-205) treats at least some verb agreement morphology in such languages as Breton and Spanish as a syntactic argument (generally subject) of the verb; however, he differs from Jelinek in that he allows overt third person NPs to also be arguments if they are present, in which case the agreement morphology loses its syntactic independence.

Here, too, we run into problems when we try to apply these analyses to Abkhaz. For one thing, there are numerous ways in which Abkhaz NPs do not behave like adjuncts, as they would be under a Jelinek-style “pronominal argument” analysis: (1) As Hewitt (1989: 155) notes, NPs in Abkhaz, including independent pronouns, do not have any inherent contrastive force and commonly occur in unmarked, noncontrastive environments; there is a separate set of emphatic contrastive pronouns. This is in contrast to Jelinek’s pronominal argument languages (e.g. Warlpiri, Choctaw), where all pronouns are emphatic to some degree. (2) Not all argument NPs are optional in Abkhaz; they are strongly preferred in questions, and some postpositions require an overt NP object (Hewitt (1989: 73)). Abkhaz differs in this way from the languages discussed by Jelinek, where the optionality of NPs is one of her primary reasons for considering them adjuncts. (3) Hewitt (1989) makes numerous syntactic generalizations, involving such things as word order, reflexives, and reciprocals, under the assumption that Abkhaz NPs are arguments of the verb bearing grammatical relations such as subject, direct object, etc. These generalizations are lost if all NPs are considered adjuncts.

Not only is there reason to believe that Abkhaz NPs are arguments (contra Jelinek’s analysis), but I am aware of no evidence that Abkhaz verbal markers should be considered syntactically independent verbal arguments. There are languages in which good arguments can be made for the syntactic independence of bound agreement morphemes – for example, numerous languages, including Irish (McCloskey 1986), Crow (Graczyk 1991), and Greenlandic (Sadock p.c.) allow agreement morphology to be conjoined with a full NP. However, such conjunction does not work in Abkhaz:

16) a. áxre-y saré-y h- aa- yt'
 AXRA-AND I-AND 1.PL.ABS-COME-AOR.ACT
 “Axra and I came”

b. * áxre-y h- aa- yt'
 AXRA-AND 1.PL.ABS-COME-AOR.ACT

c. * áxre-y s- aa- yt'
 AXRA-AND 1.SG.ABS-COME-AOR.ACT

Such a fact does not, of course, mean that it is impossible to analyze Abkhaz verb markers as having syntactic independence, but in general I am aware of no positive evidence for such an analysis. In the absence of any evidence to the contrary, I will assume that Abkhaz verb inflection in general (and expletive verb agreement in particular) does not have any independent syntactic reality, and that it does not correspond to any null element in the syntax.

4.0 Consequences

The facts outlined above are difficult to reconcile with the common model of agreement whereby features are copied from NPs onto the verb, since with dummy marking there is nothing for the features to be copied from. I suggest that we can best account for the facts of Abkhaz by positing the existence of a morphological subcategorization frame separate from both semantic argument structure and syntactic subcategorization. Verbs can subcategorize for more morphological slots than syntactic/semantic arguments, in which case one of the morphological slots must be a dummy, unconnected to the syntactic frame. The following lexical entries for the Abkhaz verb roots -ha- 'grow' and -s- 'blow' illustrate this, using some of the notation of Autolexical Syntax (Sadock 1991):

- | | |
|--|--|
| 17) a. -ha- "grow" (9.a) | b. -s- "blow" (10.a) |
| semantics: [F-1] | semantics: [F-1] |
| syntax: [_S NP <u> </u>] | syntax: [_S NP <u> </u>] |
| morphology: [<u>Agr1</u> , Agr3] | morphology: [Agr1, <u>Agr3</u>] |

These entries indicate that semantically, both verbs are one-place predicates, and syntactically, both are intransitive verbs, which combine with an NP to make a sentence. Although they each require only one semantic and syntactic argument,⁸ both verbs subcategorize for two person-number markers: an absolutive (indicated by "Agr1") and a dative (indicated by "Agr3"). Furthermore, we must specify lexically which of the markers in each verb corresponds to the single syntactico-semantic argument and which is a dummy: in (17a), the absolutive marker is a dummy (indicated by underlining it), and so the dative marker corresponds to the single syntactic argument; in (17b), the dative marker is a dummy, and so the absolutive marker corresponds to the syntactic argument. For transitive verbs containing morphological dummies (such as those shown earlier in (13)-(14), which take two syntactic arguments but three verb markers), things are slightly more complicated; not only do we have to specify which of the three verb markers is a dummy, but we have to make sure that the two non-dummy morphological slots correspond to the right syntactic arguments. In Kathman (in progress) this is accomplished by linking rules involving parallel hierarchies of grammatical relations and of agreement markers; I will not go into these linking rules here because of space limitations, but the system outlined in Gerdtz (1993) is very similar in spirit.

Enriching the lexical entries of verbs in this way might be a questionable move if it were done solely to handle the facts of Abkhaz; as it turns out, though, similar dummy "agreement" marking is found in many other languages, though usually not as clearly or extensively as in Abkhaz. The following is by no means

an exhaustive catalog of languages with dummy verb marking, but it should be enough to show that the phenomena we have seen in Abkhaz are far from unique, and that they need to be accommodated in any linguistic theory with any claim to be universal. All of these cases can be handled by separating morphological and syntactic subcategorization, as in (17); details can be found in Kathman (in progress).

a) Georgian has some verbs which require an indirect object marker, even though syntactically they are intransitive and cannot take an indirect object (Aronson 1990: 407):⁹

- 18) a. **kari u- berav- s**
wind 3.SG.IO-blow-3.SG.SUBJ.PRES
“The wind blows”
- b. **ga- e- mgzavr- a**
PVB-3.SG.IO-travel-3.SG.SUBJ.AOR
“He traveled”
- c. **da- e- cem- a**
PVB-3.SG.DAT-fall.down-3.SG.SUBJ.FUT
“He will fall down”

b) Algonquian languages also provide numerous examples (many pointed out by Anderson 1992a) of verbs whose morphology indicates more arguments than are present syntactically. Algonquian verbs are traditionally divided into four classes according to their transitivity and the animacy of the absolutive argument, and these classes are clearly distinguished morphologically. In most of these languages, there are some verbs which are syntactically and semantically intransitive, yet which require Transitive Inanimate inflection, normally used for verbs which take an inanimate direct object (in the terminology of Bloomfield 1962, these verbs take a “formal object”):¹⁰

- 19) a. Menomini (Bloomfield 1962: 46)
noqnon-am
swim-3.SG.SUBJ/INAN.OBJ
“He swims”
- b. Fox (Amy Dahlstrom, personal communication)
a:hkwamat-amwa
be.sick-3.SG.SUBJ/INAN.OBJ
“He is sick”
- c. Cree (Amy Dahlstrom, p.c.)
kaske:yiht-am
be.lonesome-3.SG.SUBJ/INAN.OBJ
“He is lonesome, homesick”

c) Tlingit, as described by Leer (1992), also exhibits expletive verb marking in some constructions. Tlingit has four main verb classes: Impersonal (taking neither subject nor object), Intransitive (taking a subject but not object), Objective (taking an object but no subject), and Transitive (taking both subject and object). In

addition, there are two groups of verbs which require a dummy indefinite human subject marker *du*. The first of these, which Leer calls *du*-impersonal, is syntactically and semantically an Impersonal verb (it takes no arguments), but morphologically it is Intransitive, inflected as though it had a subject (cf. 20a). The class which Leer calls *du*-objective has a single syntactic argument crossreferenced by an object marker on the verb, as well as a dummy indefinite human subject marker (cf. 20b):

- 20) a. wu- du- wa- nígw
 PREF-3.HUM.INDEF.SUBJ-PREF-WIND.BLOW
 "The wind is blowing"
- b. Xad# kaw- du- wa- sáy
 1.SG.OBJ-PREF-3.HUM.INDEF.SUBJ-PREF-BE.HOT
 "I am hot, sweaty"

d) Finally, in Warlpiri (Hale 1973: 336), certain transitive verbs can optionally take a dummy dative marker, which adds a sense of attempt or incompleteness to the action. Cf. 21a below, without a dative dummy, vs. 21b, with a dummy:

- 21) a. nyuntulu-rlu Ø- npa- ju pantu-rnu ngaju-Ø
 you-ERG PAST-2.SG.NOM-1.SG.ACC spear-PAST me-ABS
 "You speared me"
- b. nyuntulu-rlu Ø- npa- ju- rla pantu-rnu ngaju-Ø
 you-ERG PAST-2.SG.NOM-1.SG.ACC-3.DAT spear-PAST me-ABS
 "You speared at me; you tried to spear me"

The dative marker in (21b) is not a dummy marker in the strict sense, since it does contribute to the semantics of the sentence, but it arguably does not correspond to anything in the syntax since it cannot appear with an NP.

On a different note, an analysis which separates the morphology and the syntax of verb agreement predicts that in addition to dummy "agreement" morphology, there should be verbs in morphologically complex languages which exceptionally fail to agree with certain arguments -- i.e., which subcategorize for fewer morphological than syntactic arguments. This is in fact possible: while in general an Abkhaz verb must agree with any NP in its clause which is not the object of a postposition, a significant number of Abkhaz root-preverb combinations only optionally exhibit agreement with the object of the preverb:

- 22) a. a-ʒó a-k'ólç"ara-k"a yə- r- k'ól- sə- yt'
 DEF-water DEF-hole-PL 3.SG.ABS-3.PL.DAT-through-pass-AOR.ACT
 "The water leaked through the holes"
- b. a-ʒó a-k'ólç"ara-k"a yə- k'ól- sə- yt'
 DEF-water DEF-hole-PL 3.SG.ABS-through-pass-AOR.ACT
 "The water leaked through the holes"

Both the fact that the object a-k'əlc"ara-k" a does trigger agreement in (22a) and the fact that it appears without a postposition indicate that this NP is in fact a direct argument of the verb. We can account for the variation in (22) by positing two lexical entries for this verb: one, corresponding to (22a), which contains both Agr1 and Agr3 in its morphological frame, and the other, corresponding to (22b), which only contains Agr1:

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 23) a. -k'əl-sə- “pass through” (22.a) | b. -k'əl-sə- “pass through” (22.b) |
| semantics: [F-2] | semantics: [F-2] |
| syntax: [VP NP _] | syntax: [VP NP _] |
| morphology: [Agr1, Agr3] | morphology: [Agr1] |

Here, too, such phenomena are not limited to Abkhaz; most Algonquian languages have verbs which are syntactically transitive but morphologically intransitive (the opposite of the examples given above in (19)):

- 24) a. Fox (Amy Dahlstrom, p.c.)
 ahpe:nemo-wa
 depend.on-3.ANIM.SUBJ
 “He depends on him/it”
- b. Menomini (Bloomfield 1962: 47)
 napa:kəhnakesawan tepa:ha:ke:w
 FLAT.TIMBERS SELL-3.INAN.SUBJ
 “He sells flat timbers”

Such examples can be handled straightforwardly as verbs which are transitive morphologically but intransitive syntactically, parallel to the Abkhaz example in (23b).

5.0 Conclusion

I hope to have shown in the preceding pages that the relationship between “agreement” morphology and syntax is not always straightforward, and that separating morphological from syntactic subcategorization is a worthwhile and necessary step to take. Though the conclusions reached here are intended to be relevant for any grammatical framework, the existence of expletive verb marking in Abkhaz and other languages provides support for analyses, such as that of Sadock (1991), which treat morphology and syntax (and semantics) as independent but connected systems.

Notes

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¹ See Simpson and Withgott (1986) for a discussion of templatic morphology and a comparison with the “layered” morphology found in European languages like English.

² Spruit (1987) identifies a separate set of “causee” prefixes, used for the embedded subject in causatives of transitive verbs. These are similar but (contra

Hewitt 1989: 171) not identical to the dative prefixes; I will ignore them in this paper, since they are not relevant for our purpose.

³ I will use the following abbreviations in the morpheme glosses: DEF = definite; SG = singular; PL = plural; M = masculine; F = feminine; H = human; ABS = absolutive; DAT = dative; ERG = ergative; AOR = aorist; PRES = present; ACT = active; STAT = stative; SUBJ = subject; OBJ = object; INAN = inanimate. A third person singular marker not glossed with M, F, or H should be assumed to be nonhuman; Ø denotes apparently zero allomorphs which retain a metrical grid (Kathman 1993a).

⁴ Abkhaz does have postpositions, in some cases with meanings very similar to those of certain preverbs. Spruit (1987) contains extensive discussion of the differences in meaning between combinations of verb root + preverb and verb + postposition.

⁵ The third person absolutive marker γ - (nonhuman or plural) is realized as zero (Ø) when it is immediately preceded by its referent, as in (6)-(8).

⁶ Such sentences can contain an NP coreferential with the agreement, but Stump argues that such NPs are outside the sentence (i.e., are topics) and do not occupy an argument position. Also note that Stump's account is intended to cover inflected postpositions as well as verbs, but we need not go into postpositions here since they are not directly relevant to the point at hand.

⁷ Chomsky (1981: 37, 325) does propose the existence of a dummy theta role to be assigned to idiom chunks ("advantage" in "take advantage of") and some instances of pleonastic "it" (as in "It is raining"); however, in Chomsky (1982: 10) he seems to change his mind, saying that pleonastic "it" never receives a theta role. Positing semantically empty theta roles effectively strips the notion of theta role of any semantic content, and such an idea has been rejected by most GB syntacticians (such as Authier 1991).

⁸ I am here treating subjects as subcategorized arguments, as in Lexical Functional Grammar (Bresnan 1982).

⁹ Anderson (1992b) argues that some verbs in Georgian (those which Aronson (1990) calls Third Conjugation) have a dummy direct object marker. However, since the third person direct object marker is zero in Georgian, Anderson's evidence is necessarily indirect and his argument rather involved, so we will not go into it here.

¹⁰ Bloomfield (1962: 46-48) describes some further peculiarities of the verbal system of Menomini, including a verb which inflects for a dummy third person plural object, as well as verbs which have the morphological characteristics of ditransitive verbs despite being monotransitive syntactically. I will not go into these verbs here, but Kathman (in progress, Chapter 3) contains a discussion of them within a framework very similar to the one used in this paper.

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