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The peculiar resultative in Adyghe
and what it can tell about aspectual composition in the language

Adyghe (West Circassian) possesses a rather peculiar construction that, to our knowledge, has so far never been described in any published works on the language. It is formed by means of a prefix *zere-* attached to a finite verb form and expresses meaning that at the first approximation can be characterized as "resultative":

(1) pče-r   ǯərjə   zere-ʔwəhə-ʁ
     door-ABS   still   *ZERE*-open-PST
     'The door is still opened'.

On closer examination, however, the construction in question appears to have a rather uncommon semantics, crucially dependent on actional properties of the main predicate and the tense-aspect morphology involved. Use of this construction implies that both the Speaker and the Addressee share the knowledge that at some moment of time prior to *the reference time* a situation S described by the predicate took place. The construction is used to inform the Addressee that some situation S' is in effect at the reference time, the exact character of S' depending on the actional properties of S (and, sometimes, certain discourse-pragmatic considerations). If the predicate is atelic, S is perceived as not having reached its final endpoint at the reference time and so S' is merely a continuation of S. If the predicate is telic, S' is taken to be a post-final state of S (i.e. the situation that emerges after the final endpoint of S is reached). Cf. (2) and (3):

(2) a.   mə   ŝeẑəje-xe-r   č'anə-ʁ
          this   knife-PL-ABS   sharp-PST
          'These knives were sharp'.

     b.   mə   ŝeẑəje-xe-r   zere-č'anə-ʁ
          this   knife-PL-ABS   *ZERE*-sharp-PST
          'These knives are still sharp (= as sharp as they once were)'.

(3) a.   tə-ḳwa-ʁ
          1PL-go-PST
          'We went (there)'.

     b.   tə-zere-ḳwa-ʁ
          1PL-ZERE-go-PST
          'We are still there (= where we once went)'.

Note that in the "telic" case the identity of S' is rather arbitrary and dependent on pragmatic factors, preceding discourse, etc. Naturally, different states may be regarded as post-final states of the same situation. Two informants, when presented with (4), readily gave two quite different translations:

(4) šaḳwe-m   məŝe-r   zer-jə-wəč'ə-ʁ
     hunter-ERG   bear-ABS   *ZERE*-3SG-kill-PST
     'After the hunter has killed the bear, he kills bears no more'.

'After the hunter has killed the bear, the bear doesn't trouble us any more'.
.

Apparently, (4) states that some resulting state of an already mentioned event (namely, the hunter killing the bear) is in effect; what this resulting state actually is is left to the Addressee. Therefore the Adyghe 'resultative' exhibits a paradoxical and somewhat non-iconic nature: it is used to refer to some situation (S'), but it doesn't mention it; another situation (S), already known to the speech act participants, is mentioned instead.

It is worth noting that different tense-aspect markers behave differently with respect to the construction in question. In the examples above, the perfective past marker -ʁə modifies S; some other suffixes, however, like the future and the imperfective, when attached to the *zere*-marked predicate, modify S' instead (5c).

(5) a. sabəj-xe-r   zere-ʒ'egwə-x
         child-pl-abs   ZERE-play-PL
         'The kids are still playing'.

    b. sabəj-xe-r   zere-ʒ'egwə-ʁe-x
        child-PL-ABS   ZERE-play-PST-PL
        'The kids, after they have played, are not playing any more'.

    c. sabəj-xe-r   zere-ʒ'egwə-štə.ʁe-x
        child-PL-ABS   ZERE-play-IPF-PL
        '[The kids were playing at some moment; when we called on them later] the kids were still playing'.

It has been noted that in Adyghe adverbs of temporal duration freely combine with predicates of Strong (in terms of Tatevosov 2002) actional classes, including some Strong Telic predicates (Arkadiev 2006). This typologically highly unusual behaviour can in principle be accounted for in two ways. Under the 'lexical' account (Tatevosov 2002) one has to assume that Adyghe 'Strong' predicates are in fact 'Weak', i.e. inherently actionally ambiguous: their past forms always allow both telic (ES, EP, Q) and atelic (S, P, M) interpretations, the latter requiring a special context which is provided precisely by the durational adverbials. Under the 'compositional' account (cf. Depraetere 1995, de Swart 1998) no inherent ambiguity is proposed; instead it is assumed that actional properties of a predicate may be subject to change when it is combined with adjuncts of various kinds. Semantic behaviour of the 'resultative' construction with respect to actional classes provides a strong argument in favour of the latter approach.

Predicates of 'Weak' classes allow both 'telic' and 'atelic' interpretations when used in *zere*-construction (6). Predicates of 'Strong' classes, however, do not allow 'atelic' interpretation, despite the fact that they allow it with durational adverbials (7):

(6) a. č'ale-r   čəja-ʁ
         boy-ABS   sleep-PST
         'The boy fell asleep'.
         'The boy has taken a sleep'.

     b. č'ale-r   zere-čəja-ʁ
         boy-ABS   ZERE-sleep-PST
         'The boy is still sleeping (= after he has fallen asleep)'.
         'The boy is no longer sleeping (= after he has taken a sleep)'.

(7) a. mələ-r ẑwə-ʁ
         ice-ABS melt-PST
         'The ice melted'.

b. mələ-r zere-ẑ_wə-ʁ
  ice-ABS ZERE-melt-PST
  'There's no more ice (= after it has melted)'.
  'The ice still melts (= as it once did)'

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