

The preroot vowel *a-* in the Laz verb

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Basic transitive and intransitive constructions
- 1.2 1st and 2nd person pronouns split
- 1.3 S_a verbs
- 1.4 Verb classes
- 1.5 The mediopassive derivation

2. Functions of the preroot vowel *a-*

- 2.1 The applicative derivation
- 2.2 The possessor raising construction
- 2.3 The potential/non-volitional derivation
- 2.4 Verbs with a frozen vowel *a-*
- 2.5 Summary

3. Remarks on subject properties

- 3.1 Number agreement
- 3.2 Word order

4. Conclusion

1. Introduction

The South Caucasian (also called Kartvelian) language family consists of four members: Laz, Mingrelian, Georgian and Svan. Laz is spoken mainly in North-East Turkey. Estimates range from 50.000 to 500.000 speakers. Laz is a non-written language for which we do not have any comprehensive grammar. It is an endangered language: young people still understand it, but they speak only Turkish. There are different dialects. The data presented here is from the dialect of Arhavi.

1.1 Basic transitive and intransitive constructions

1.1.1 Case marking and cross-referencing

In Laz, syntactic roles are indicated by cases and cross-referencing affixes. There are two sets of cross-referencing affixes ('set I' and 'set II'). Sentence 1 illustrates the basic transitive construction. The A (*berek*) is in the ergative and is cross-referenced on the verb by a set I affix; the O (*otsxoj*) is in the absolutive and is cross-referenced by a set II affix.

- (1) bere-k otsxoj me-∅-tk'oč-u
boy-ERG comb.ABS PV-II3-throw-AOR.I3S
'The boy threw the comb.'

Sentence 2 illustrates the basic intransitive construction. The S (*mk'yapu*) is in the absolutive and is cross-referenced on the verb by a set I affix.

- (2) *mk'yapu xrotsk-u-n*
 jackal.ABS die-THS-I3S
 'The jackal is dying.'

1.1.2 Number agreement

With respect to 3rd person arguments, in the transitive construction only the A can mark its plurality in the verb; the O cannot:

- (3) *hats'iner delik'anl-epe-k hem dolokunu me-tk'oč-es*
 today's young.man-PL-ERG DEM clothes PV-throw-AOR.I3P
 'Today's young people no longer wear these clothes.'
 lit. 'today's young people have left these clothes'

- (4) *bere-pe k-ok'o-tsk'-u*
 child-PL PV-PV-separate-AOR.I3S
 'He separated the boys.'

The S can mark its plurality in the verb:

- (5) *bere-k i-bgar-s*
 child-ERG MP-cry-I3S
 'The child is crying.'
- (6) *bere-pe-k i-bgar-nan*
 child-PL-ERG MP-child-I3P
 'The children are crying.'

1.1.3 The basic alignment type

The comparison of the basic transitive and intransitive constructions shows that S behaves like O according to case marking (both are in the absolutive) and S behaves like A according to cross-referencing (both are cross-referenced by set I affixes). Moreover, S and A, contrary to O, trigger number agreement.

Case marking	O = S (absolutive) ≠ A (ergative)	→ ergative alignment
Cross-referencing	S = A (set I) ≠ O (set II)	→ accusative alignment
Number agreement	S = A (agree) ≠ O (does not agree)	

The basic alignment of Laz is thus of the mixed type.

1.2 1st and 2nd person pronouns split

1st and 2nd person pronouns have the same form in the ergative, absolutive and dative cases.

- (7) ma si e-k-č'op-are
 1S 2S PV-II2-marry-FUT.I1S
 'I will marry you.'
- (8) si guruni ye-i
 2S donkey be.I2S-INT
 'Are you a donkey?'

Thus, with respect to the form of 1st and 2nd person pronouns, the alignment is neutral.

1.3 S_a verbs

A few intransitive verbs take an ergative subject. The subject of these verbs is always animate:

- laugh, cry, work, talk, think, rest, cough, sneeze, snore, yawn
- croak, bark, miaow, low, bleat, etc.

- (9) hemindoras veziri-k ar ko-n-i-dušun-u
 at.that.time vizier-ERG once PV-PV-MP-think-AOR.I3S
 'Then the vizier thought a little.'

1.4 Verb classes

Laz verbs may be grouped into two main classes according to the form of the 3rd person singular suffix of set I. Class 1 can be further divided into three subclasses according to the form of the thematic suffix (thematic suffixes appear in certain tenses such as the present and the imperfect; they do not appear in the aorist). This classification is morphologically-based, but it has several syntactic correlates. Verbs of Class 1 are predominantly transitive; verbs of Class 2 are all intransitive.

	Class 1			Class 2
	1a	1b	1c	
3 rd person sg set I	-s	-s	-s	-n
THS	-Vm	-mer	-∅	-V(r)
Transitivity	transitive and intransitive			intransitive

1.5 The mediopassive derivation

In Laz, valency-changing operations are marked on the verb by vowels placed just before the root. These vowels are called “version” in traditional Georgian grammar.

The preroot vowel *i-* is used to derive mediopassive forms: reflexive, reciprocal, facilitative, anticausative, autocausative, grooming actions, self-beneficiary and passive. There is also a small class of verbs which include the preroot vowel *i-* in their basic form (*media tantum* verbs).

◆ Reflexive

- (10) a. padišahi-k hantepe do-xazir-u-doren
 sultan-ERG DEM.PL PV-prepare-AOR.I3S-EVD
 ‘The sultan prepared these things.’
- b. oxorjal-ep do k’oč-ep d-i-xazir-e-nan
 woman-PL and man-PL PV-MP-prepare-THS-I3P
 ‘Women and men prepare themselves.’

◆ Reciprocal

- (11) padishaği do hem k’oči i-xvel-ap-u-nan
 sultan and DEM man MP-kiss-SFX-THS-I3P
 ‘The sultan and that man kiss each other.’

◆ Facilitative

The facilitative use of the mediopassive derivation indicates the predisposition of the subject to undergo a process.

- (12) a. sarayi-s padišahi-š bozo ko-dzir-u-doren
 palace-DAT sultan-GEN girl PV-see-AOR.I3S-EVD
 ‘He saw the sultan’s girl in the palace.’
- b. k’ule-šen mteli Mp’oli i-dzir-e-t’u-doren
 tower-ABL all Istanbul MP-see-THS-IMPFT.I3S-EVD
 ‘From the tower you can see all of Istanbul.’
- (13) haya baška turli var-i-par-e-n
 DEM other way NEG-MP-share-THS-I3S
 ‘It cannot be shared in another way.’
- (14) hamu-ši xortsi var-ti i-čk’om-e-n
 DEM-GEN meat NEG-too MP-eat-THS-I3S
 ‘Its meat cannot be eaten either.’

◆ Anticausative

- (15) a. hentepe-k-ti sarayi-s o-bgar-in-u o-gn-es-doren
 3P-ERG-too palace-DAT PV-cry-SFX-NV TR-hear-AOR.I3P-EVD
 ‘They heard crying in the palace.’
- b. ar ses i-gn-u
 one noise MP-hear-AOR.I3S
 ‘A noise was heard.’

◆ Autocausative

- (16) a. k'oči o-gzal-u
man TR-dismiss-AOR.I3S
'He dismissed the man.'
- b. div-epe i-gzal-es
giant-PL MP-dismiss-AOR.I3P
'The giants left.'

◆ Grooming actions

- (17) a. k'ay do-bon-es-doren
well PV-wash-AOR.I3P-EVD
'They washed him well.'
- b. oxorja-k t'ani d-i-bon-u
woman-ERG body PV-MP-wash-AOR.I3S
'The woman washed.'

◆ Self-beneficiary

This function of the preroot vowel *i-* is called 'subjective version' in Georgian grammar.

- (18) a. hemoras bere demiri-š zinjir-epe-te d-o-k'or-es-doren
then child iron-GEN chain-PL-INSTR PV-TR-tie.up-AOR.I3P-EVD
'Then they tied up the boy with the iron chains.'
- b. yaği-ti fot'a-s ko-n-i-k'or-u
butter-too apron-DAT PV-PV-MP-tie.up-AOR.I3S
'She tied up the butter in her apron.'
- (19) bozo-k t'urva mo-y-k'id-u
girl-ERG bag PV-MP-hang-AOR.I3S
'The girl hung the bag over her back.'

◆ Passive

- (20) a. ar mintxani-k div do-yl-u
one someone-ERG giant PV-kill-AOR.I3S
'Someone killed the giant.'
- b. baba-muši d-i-yl-u
father-POSS3S PV-MP-kill-AOR.I3S
'His father got killed.'

In the passive construction, the agent cannot be expressed.

◆ *Media tantum* verbs

Media tantum verbs include the preroot vowel *i-* in their basic form: they cannot be shown to derive from a form without the vowel *i-*. Among them, we find the following verbs:

i-čališ	‘work’
i-mgor	‘scream’
i-bgar	‘cry’
i-kom	‘do’
i-nčvir	‘swimm’
i-pxor	‘eat’
i-švac	‘rest’
i-dzits	‘laugh, smile’
i-čin	‘know’
i-dušun	‘think’
i-fik’ir	‘think’
i-bir	‘sing’

- (21) kčini-k i-bgar-s
old.woman MP-cry-I3S
‘The old woman is crying.’
- (22) bič’i-k hek dido oa-s i-čališ-u
boy-ERG there a.lot time-DAT MP-work-AOR.I3S
‘The boy worked there for a very long time.’
- (23) k’at’a ts’ana-s ham ts’its’ila-k i-pxor-t’u bere-pe-čkimi
every year-DAT DEM snake-ERG MP-eat-IMPFT.I3S child-PL-POSS1S
‘Every year, this snake used to eat my children.’

Reflexive, facilitative, anticausative, autocausative and passive derivations are valency-reducing: they entail the loss of an argument of the corresponding non-derived construction. Morphologically, they belong to Class 2, which includes intransitive verbs only.

Self-beneficiary and grooming actions do not entail the loss of an argument (see examples 17-19). Together with *media tantum* verbs, they may enter into a transitive construction. Morphologically, they belong mostly to Class 1, which is predominantly transitive.

2. Functions of the preroot vowel *a-*

The valency of mediopassive verbs may be increased by substituting the preroot vowel *a-* for *i-*: applicative forms may be derived from *media tantum* verbs (2.1); passive and anticausative verbs may be involved in the possessor raising construction (2.2).

The preroot vowel *a-* is also used in verbs which do not (synchronically) derive from mediopassive forms: the potential/non-volitional derivation (2.3) and some verbs which involve an experiencer and include the preroot vowel *a-* in their basic form (2.4).

2.1 The applicative derivation

The applicative derivation adds an argument to the non-derived corresponding construction. In this derivation, marked on the verb by the preroot vowel *a-*, the licensed argument is in the dative and is cross-referenced by a set II affix:

- (24) a. bere i-mt'-u
child MP-flee-AOR.I3S
'The child fled.'
- b. bere mgei-s Ø-a-mt'-u
child wolf-DAT II3-APPL-flee-AOR.I3S
'The child fled from the wolf.'
- c. bere m-a-mt'-u
child II1-APPL-flee-AOR.I3S
'The child fled from me.'
- (25) a. sha i-xvets'-i
PARTCL MP-implore-IMP
'Implore as much as you want!'
- b. k'oči-k oxorja-mushi-s Ø-a-xvets'-e-n
man-ERG woman-POSS3S-DAT II3-APPL-implore-THS-I3S
'The man implores his wife.'

Below are some applicative verbs including the preroot vowel *a-*. These verbs cannot be shown to derive, at least synchronically, from a corresponding form with the vowel *i-*:

	<u>Form with <i>a-</i></u>		<u>Form with <i>i-</i></u>
<i>a-xvel</i>	kiss sb		<i>i-xvel</i> kiss each other
<i>a-on</i>	get married [to a man] (lit. follow [a man])		<i>i-yon</i> take sb away
<i>a-g</i>	meet sb		(non attested in my corpus)
<i>a-ġod</i>	happen to sb		

The preroot vowel *a-* is used to derive applicative forms from mediopassive verbs only. Non mediopassive verbs use the preroot vowels *i/u-* and *o-*. The applicative with the vowels *i/u-* is used to express, among other things, the beneficiary:

- (26) a. baba-k oxoi do-k'od-u
father-ERG house PV-build-AOR.I3S
'The father built a house.'
- b. baba-k bere-muši-s oxoi d-Ø-u-k'od-u
father-ERG child-POSS3S-DAT house PV-II3-APPL-build-AOR.I3S
'The father built a house for his son.'

The preroot vowel is *i-* if the licensed argument is a SAP, *u-* if it belongs to 3rd person:

- (27) do-m-i-k'od-u
 PV-II1-APPL-build-AOR.I3S
 'he built it for me'

The applicative with the vowel *o-* is used to express a movement toward or a contact:

- (28) ses-ep karmat'e-s n-Ø-o-xol-t'u
 noise-PL mill-DAT PV-II3-APPL-approach-IMPFT.I3S
 'The noise was approaching the mill.'

Among the mediopassive verbs, the *media tantum* may take the preroot vowel *i/u-* instead of *a-*:

- (29) sum ts'ana-s do-g-i-čališ-i
 three year-DAT PV-II2-APPL-work-AOR
 'I have worked for you three years.'

- (30) sum ts'ana-s d-Ø-u-čališ-u xoja-s
 three year-DAT PV-II3-APPL-work-AOR.I3S hoja-DAT
 'He worked for the hoja three years.'

The verb *bir* 'sing' may use the preroot vowels *a-* and *i/u-*:

- (31) hasteri biyapa-ti Ø-u-bir-am-s
 such song-too II3-APPL-sing-THS-I3S
 'And she sings to him such a song...'

- (32) bič'i-k ko-gy-Ø-a-bir-u oxorja-muši-s
 boy-ERG PV-PV-II3-APPL-sing-AOR.I3S woman-POSS3S-DAT
 'The boy began to sing for his wife.'

- (33) hasteri biyapa gel-Ø-a-bir-u nusa-s
 such song PV-II3-APPL-sing-AOR.I3S bride-DAT
 'He sang such a song to the bride...'

The non-derived form of this verb is given in example 34.

- (34) škit ndğa-s š-um-t'es i-pxor-t'es do i-bir-t'es
 seven day-DAT drink-THS-IMPFT.I3P MP-eat-IMPFT.I3P and MP-sing-IMPFT.I3P
 'During seven days, they drank, ate and sang.'

In the literature, the term 'applicative' is often restricted to constructions in which the licensed argument is treated as the O argument of prototypical transitive verbs. It is not the case in Laz, since the licensed argument is in the dative case. However, some authors (cf. Dixon & Aikhenvald : 2000) extend the notion of 'applicative' to include such phenomena as those found in Laz, and I retain this solution.

The licensed argument of the applicative derivation has a special syntactic status. Like core terms of non-derived constructions (A, O and S), it is cross-referenced on the verb. Moreover, its presence is triggered by the preroot vowel. Therefore, the licensed argument

cannot be considered as an oblique. On the other hand, it differs from A, O, S by its dative marking. This suggests recognizing a fourth core syntactic role, which can be symbolized by E (standing for ‘Extension to core’), following Dixon & Aikhenvald (2000).

2.2 The possessor raising construction

In the possessor raising construction, the possessor and the possessee are independently related to the verb instead of being involved in a genitive construction.

The possessor is in the dative and is cross-referenced by a set II affix; the possessee is in the absolutive and is cross-referenced by a set I affix:

- (35) a. k’abğa d-i-čod-u
 quarrel PV-MP-end-AOR.I3S
 ‘The quarrel ended.’
- b. bič’i-s xortsi d-∅-a-čod-u
 boy-DAT meat PV-II3-APPL-end-AOR.I3S
 ‘The boy had no more meat.’
 lit. ‘the meat ended to the boy’

The preroot vowel *a-* is used in the possessor raising construction only with mediopassive verbs. Non mediopassive verbs use the preroot vowels *i/u-*.

- (36) a. sarayi-š avli-s dg-i-t’u
 palace-GEN yard-DAT stand-THS-IMPFT.I3S
 ‘He was in the yard of the palace.’
- b. ar padišahi-s ont’ule-s ar didi oškur ∅-u-dg-i-t’u-doren
 a sultan-DAT field-DAT a big apple.tree II3-APPL-stand-THS-IMPFT.I3S-EVD
 ‘A sultan had a big apple tree in his field.’

Some expressions involving an experiencer resemble the possessor raising construction:

- (37) čobani-s per ∅-a-mt’-udort’un
 shepherd-DAT color II3-APPL-flee-PPFT.I3S
 ‘The shepherd went pale.’
 lit. ‘the color fled from the shepherd’
- (38) ģnosi m-a-mt’-u
 mind II1-APPL-flee-AOR.I3S
 ‘I was amazed.’ (elicited)
 lit. ‘the mind fled from me’

As we will see later, this construction differs from the genuine possessor raising construction with respect to the subject properties of the dative argument.

2.3 The potential/non-volitional derivation

2.3.1 Basic properties

In the potential derivation, no argument is added, but the encoding of the underlying subject is modified: the argument representing the participant who can (or cannot) perform the action is in the dative and is cross-referenced by a set II affix. The verb contains a 3rd person singular affix of set I which does not refer to any argument and cannot be put into correspondence with any noun phrase.

The potential derivation occurs most often with the negation.

- (39) e-b-ul-ur
PV-I1-go.up-THS
'I go up.'
- (40) ma var-e-m-a-l-e-n
1S NEG-PV-II1-APPL-go.up-THS-I3S
'I cannot go up.'
- (41) heya miti-s var-Ø-a-xen-e-n
DEM nobody-DAT NEG-II3-APPL-do-THS-I3S
'Nobody can do it.'

The potential derivation is also used to express the deontic possibility ('be allowed to do something'):

- (42) gama-g-a-l-e-n
PV-II2-APPL-go.out-THS-I3S
'You can go out.' ('you are allowed to'; elicited)

The same derivation is used to express an action done accidentally, without the control of the subject:

- (43) kče mčxuri-s na gye-xed-at'u
white sheep-DAT REL PV-sit-POPT.I3S

uča-s ko-gy-Ø-a-xun-u
black-DAT PV-PV-II3-APPL-sit-AOR.I3S
'Instead of sitting on the white sheep, he sat on the black one.'
- (44) tersi oda-še k-ama-m-a-l-u
wrong room-ALL PV-PV-II1-APPL-go.in-AOR.I3S
'I went into the wrong room.'
- (45) izmoje Ø-a-dzir-u-ki
dream II3-APPL-see-AOR.I3S-that

jur k'oči ok'-a-k'id-u-doren
two man PV-APPL-quarrel-AOR.I3S-EVD
'He had a dream in which two man were quarreling.'

2.3.2 Conflicts in the access to core syntactic roles

2.3.2.1 Ditransitive verbs

It is interesting to observe the behavior of the ditransitive verbs in the potential derivation. In Laz, the recipient of a ditransitive verb is in the dative and is cross-referenced by a set II affix:

- (46) a. bozo-k bič'i-s ar matsk'indi ko-me-Ø-č-u
girl-ERG boy-DAT one ring PV-PV-II3-give-AOR.I3S
'The girl gave a ring to the young man.'
- b. ko-me-k-č-u
PV-PV-II2-give-AOR.I3S
'She gave it to you.'

In general, a verb cannot simultaneously have two arguments marked by the dative; furthermore, it cannot cross-reference more than two arguments. Thus, when putting a ditransitive verb in the potential derivation, the recipient cannot be marked by the dative since there is already a dative subject, and it cannot be cross-referenced on the verb, since the verb already includes two cross-referencing affixes. The recipient must undergo demotion: it is encoded as an allative oblique and is not cross-referenced on the verb.

- (47) bič'-epe-s xoja-še mutu var-Ø-a-tkv-es
boy-PL-DAT hoja-ALL something NEG-II3-APPL-say-AOR.I3S.II3P
'The boys couldn't say anything to the hoja.'

The allative case of 1st and 2nd person pronouns is *de- ~ da-*:

- (48) ma skan-de mut var-m-a-xen-u
1S 2S-ALL something NEG-II1-APPL-do-AOR.I3S
'I could not do anything for you.'

This constraint, however, is not absolute. In example 49, the beneficiary is expressed as a dative noun phrase:

- (49) padišari-ši bozo-s mutu var-g-a-xen-u
sultan-GEN girl-DAT something NEG-II2-APPL-do-AOR.I3S
'You could not do anything to the sultan's girl.'

2.3.2.2 The potential derivation with two SAPs

As noted above, Laz verbs cannot take more than two cross-referencing affixes. Since, in the potential derivation, the verb always includes a 3rd person affix of set I, a conflict arises when the two participants of the potential derivation are SAPs. In such a case, the non-subject participant is expressed as the possessor of a genitive construction; the possessee may be the noun *ti* 'head' (ex.50) or the verbal noun corresponding to the main verb (ex.51):

- (50) si čkimi ti var-g-a-čk'om-e-n
 2S POSS1S head NEG-II2-APPL-eat-THS-I3S
 'You cannot eat me.'
 lit. 'you cannot eat my head'
- (51) čkimi o-yil-u-ti do-g-a-il-e-n
 POSS1S PV-kill-VN-too PV-II2-APPL-kill-THS-I3S

 o-k'a-u-ti do-g-a-k'ar-e-n
 PV-treat.well-NV-too PV-II2-APPL-treat.well-THS-I3S
 'You can kill me if you want or you can treat me well.'
 lit. 'you can kill my killing and you can treat well my treating well'

2.4 Verbs with a frozen vowel *a-*

There is a small class of verbs involving an experiencer which include the preroot vowel *a-* in their basic form: 'be afraid', 'remember', 'be jealous of', 'like', 'be hungry', 'be tired', 'fall asleep'. The NP representing the experiencer is in the dative and is cross-referenced by a set II affix. The verb contains a 3rd person singular affix of set I which does not refer to any argument and cannot be put into correspondence with any noun phrase.

◆ 'be afraid'

- (52) bozo-s Ø-a-škurn-u
 girl-DAT II3-APPL-be.afraid-AOR.I3S
 'The girl became afraid.'
- (53) m-a-škurn-u
 II1-APPL-be.afraid-AOR.I3S
 'I became afraid.'

The stimulus is expressed as an ablative oblique:

- (54) tsk'ari-šen Ø-a-škurn-e-n
 water-ABL II3-APPL-be.afraid-THS-I3S
 'He is afraid of the water.'

◆ 'remember'

- (55) bozo-s mut var-g-Ø-a-šin-e-t'u
 girl-DAT nothing NEG-PV-II3-APPL-remember-THS-IMPFT.I3S
 'The girl didn't remember anything.'

◆ 'be jealous of'

- (56) didi-lepe-s hemu-she Ø-a-t'amax-e-t'es
 older-PL-DAT 3S-ALL? II3-APPL-be.jealous-THS-IMPFT.I3S.II3P
 'The older sisters were jealous of her.'

◆ ‘like’

- (57) baba-muši-s dido k’ay d-Ø-a-ts’on-u
 father-POSS3S-DAT a.lot well PV-II3-APPL-like-AOR.I3S
 ‘His father liked it very much.’

◆ ‘be hungry’

- (58) badi-s gyar Ø-a-mshkorin-u
 old.man-DAT food II3-APPL-be.hungry-AOR.I3S
 ‘The old man became hungry.’

◆ ‘be tired’

- (59) aslan-epe-s dido d-Ø-a-čk’ind-es
 lion-PL-DAT a.lot PV-II3-APPL-be.tired-AOR.I3S.II3P
 ‘The lions were very tired.’

◆ ‘fall asleep’

In the texts, the subject of the verb ‘fall asleep’ occurs in the dative (ex.60) or the absolutive (ex.61). However, my main informant does not accept a dative subject with this verb. I will return to this point in the conclusion.

- (60) hemu-s-ti d-Ø-a-nji-u
 3S-DAT-too PV-II3-APPL-fall.asleep-AOR.I3S
 ‘He fell asleep too.’

- (61) divi d-Ø-a-njir-u
 giant PV-II3-APPL-fall.asleep-AOR.I3S
 ‘The giant fell asleep.’

2.5 Summary

The applicative and the possessor raising derivations add an argument to the corresponding non-derived construction. The potential derivation modifies the coding properties of the subject without adding any argument. Verbs with a frozen vowel *a-* do not derive from any other construction. All these constructions involve an argument marked by the dative case and cross-referenced by a set II affix. In the next section, I examine some subject properties of this argument.

3. Remarks on subject properties

3.1 Number agreement

The functions of the preroot vowel *a-* may be divided into two groups with respect to the control of number agreement on the verb by 3rd person arguments. In the applicative derivation, number agreement is controlled by the argument cross-referenced by set I affixes.

In all the other constructions involving the preroot vowel *a-*, it is controlled by the argument cross-referenced by set II affixes.

3.1.1 Set I agreement

In the applicative derivation, the argument cross-referenced by set I affixes triggers number agreement, contrary to the applied argument:

- (62) jumal-epe m-a-mt'-es
 brother-PL II1-APPL-flee-AOR.I3P
 'My brothers fled from me.' (elicited)
- (63) bee da-lepe-muši-s Ø-a-mt'-u
 child sister-PL-POSS3S-DAT II3-APPL-flee-AOR.I3S
 'The child flew from his sisters.'

3.1.2 Set II agreement

◆ Possessor raising construction

In the possessor raising construction, the possessor, and not the possessee, triggers number agreement:

- (64) jumal-epe do-m-a-yl-u
 brother-PL PV-II1-APPL-kill-AOR.I3S
 'My brothers were killed.' (elicited)
- (65) hentepe-s onjğore Ø-a-v-es
 3P-DAT shame II3-APPL-become-AOR.I3S.II3P
 'They became ashamed.'
 lit. 'the shame became to them'

In this respect, Laz behaves differently from colloquial Georgian, where both the possessee and the possessor can mark their plurality in the verb:

- (66) mšobl-ebi mo-m-i-k'vd-nen
 parent-PL PV-II1-APPL-die-AOR.I3P
 'My parents died.' (Georgian, elicited)
- (67) mezobl-eb-s deda mo-Ø-u-k'vd-a-t
 neighbor-PL-DAT mother PV-II3-APPL-die-AOR-PL
 'My neighbors' mother died.' (Georgian, elicited)

◆ Potential

In the potential derivation, number agreement is triggered by the argument referring to the participant who can (or cannot) perform the action:

(68) bič'-epe-s xoja-še mutu var-∅-a-tkv-es
 boy-PL-DAT hoja-ALL something neg-II3-APPL-say-AOR.I3S.II3P
 'The boys couldn't say anything to the hoja.'

(69) bere-z juma-lepe-muši va-∅-a-dzir-u
 child-DAT brother-PL-POSS3S NEG-II3-APPL-find-AOR.I3S
 'The child could not find his brothers.' (elicited)

◆ Verbs with a frozen vowel *a-*

The experiencer of the verbs with a frozen vowel *a-* triggers number agreement.

(70) div-epe-s ∅-a-škurn-ez
 giant-PL-DAT II3-APPL-be.afraid-AOR.I3S.II3P
 'The giants became afraid.'

3.2 Word order

In the unmarked word order, the argument which triggers number agreement is placed before any other argument:

◆ Applicative derivation

(71) bere-k padišahi-s sum ndğa muxleti ∅-a-k'vand-u-doren
 child-ERG sultan-DAT three day delay II3-APPL-ask-AOR.I3S-EVD
 'The boy asked the sultan for three day's delay.'

◆ Possessor raising construction

(72) čobani-s per ∅-a-mt'-udort'un
 shepherd-DAT color II3-APPL-flee-PPFT.I3S
 'The shepherd went pale.'
 lit. 'the color fled from the shepherd'

(73) zengini k'oči-s oxorja d-∅-a-dzabun-u
 rich man-DAT woman PV-II3-APPL-get.sick-AOR.I3S
 'The wife of the rich man got sick.'

◆ Potential derivation

(74) bič'-epe-s xoja-še mutu var-∅-a-tkv-es
 boy-PL-DAT hoja-ALL something neg-II3-APPL-say-AOR.I3S.II3P
 'The boys couldn't say anything to the hoja.'

◆ Verbs with a frozen vowel *a-*

(75) padišahi-š bere-s ham k'oči-še ∅-a-škurn-u
 sultan-GEN child-DAT DEM man-ABL II3-APPL-be.afraid-AOR.I3S
 'The sultan's son became afraid of this man.'

4. Conclusion

The behavioral properties examined above are typical subject properties. In the applicative derivation, the argument cross-referenced by set II affixes has none of these properties. In the possessor raising construction, the potential/non-volitional derivation and with verbs including a frozen preroot vowel *a-*, the argument cross-referenced by set II affixes shows these properties: it triggers number agreement and occurs in the first position.

Subject properties of the argument cross-referenced by set II affixes

	triggers number agreement	occurs in first position
applicative derivation	no	no
potential/non-volitional	yes	yes
frozen vowel <i>a-</i>	yes	yes

Historically, it is likely that the preroot vowel *a-* was first used to derive applicative forms. The potential/non-volitional derivation must have developed from the facilitative meaning of the mediopassive voice:

varidziren (facilitative) ‘it is not visible, it cannot be seen’

↓

varmadziren (facilitative + applicative) ‘it is not visible for me’

↓

varmadziren (potential) ‘I cannot see’

In the course of time, the dative argument of some of the constructions involving the preroot vowel *a-* took up subject properties (number agreement, word order). Different stages of this process are retained synchronically. The verb *a-nji* ‘fall asleep’ has gone further in this process: its subject is no more in the dative, but in the absolute, the case of prototypical intransitive subjects.

Abbreviations

ABL	ablative	PL	plural
ABS	absolutive	POPT	past optative
ALL	allative	POSS	possessive
AOR	aorist	PPFT	pluperfect
APPL	applicative	PV	preverb
DAT	dative	REL	relativizer
DEM	demonstrative	SFX	suffix
ERG	ergative	THS	thematic suffix
EVD	evidential	TR	transitive
GEN	genitive	VN	verbal noun
IMP	imperative	I1	set I, 1 st person singular and plural
IMPFT	imperfect	I3S	set I, 3 rd person singular
INSTR	instrumental	I3P	set I, 3 rd person plural
MP	medio-passive	II1	set II, 1 st person singular and plural
NEG	negation	II2	set II, 2 nd person singular and plural
PARTCL	particle	II3	set II, 3 rd person singular and plural

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