

# Ditransitive Constructions in Laz

René Lacroix

Université Lumière Lyon 2

[lacroix\\_r@hotmail.com](mailto:lacroix_r@hotmail.com)

November 2007

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. There are different dialects. The data presented here is from the dialect of Arhavi.

## 1. The basic alignment type

### 1.1 Full NPs

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

- (1) bere-k      otsxoj      me-Ø-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 indexed on the verb by a set I affix.

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

Therefore, as far as case marking is concerned, S behaves like O (both are in the absolutive). On the other hand, S behaves like A with respect to indexing (both are indexed by set I affixes). The basic alignment of Laz is thus of the mixed type.

Case marking	O = S (absolutive) ≠ A (ergative)
Indexing	S = A (set I) ≠ O (set II)

### 1.2 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronouns split

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

- (3) ma    si    e-k-č'op-are  
1S    2S    PV-II2-marry-FUT.I1S  
'I will marry you.'

- (4) si guruni ye-i  
 2S donkey be.I2S-INT  
 ‘Are you a donkey?’

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

### 1.3 S<sub>a</sub> 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.

- (5) 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.’

## 2. The applicative derivation

### 2.1 Morphosyntax

In Laz, the 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 vowels *i-/u-* are used to derive applicative forms. In this derivation, the licensed argument (*beres* in sentence 6) is in the dative and is indexed on the verb by a set II affix.

- (6) badi-k bere-s ar k'ai dolokun d-u-xen-u  
 old.man-ERG boy-DAT one good garment PV-II3.APPL-make-AOR.I3S  
 ‘The old man made a nice garment for the boy.’

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

- (7) P'oli-šen kart'ali mo-m-i-č'ar-i  
 Istanbul-ABL letter PV-II1-APPL-write-IMP  
 ‘Write a letter to me from Istanbul.’

m-i- II1-APPL  
 g-i- II2-APPL  
 u- II3.APPL

Applicative derivation by means of the preroot vowels *i-/u-* is possible with transitive as well as intransitive verbs.

In the literature, the term “applicative” is often restricted to constructions in which the licensed argument is treated as the O argument of prototypical monotransitive verbs, which is not the case in Laz, since the licensed argument is in the dative case. However, some authors 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 indexed 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 Semantics

The *u*-applicative has a wide range of meanings. It may express different types of beneficiary (plain beneficiary, deputative beneficiary and recipient beneficiary, cf. Van Valin & LaPolla : 1997) and malefactive:

### ◆ Plain beneficiary

- (8) onjire d-u-pağ-u oxori d-u-kos-u  
 bed PV-II3.APPL-clean-AOR.I3S house PV-II3.APPL-sweep-AOR.I3S  
 ‘She cleaned the bed and swept the house for her.’

### ◆ Deputative beneficiary

- (9) mo-m-č-i do ma do-g-i-naxv-a-ya  
 PV-II1-give-IMP and 1S PV-II2-APPL-wash-OPT-QUOT  
 ‘‘Give me (the linens), I’ll wash it for you,’’ she said.’

### ◆ Recipient beneficiary

- (10) bozo-k hentepe-s k’ahve d-u-gub-um-s  
 girl-ERG 3P-DAT coffee PV-II3.APPL-boil-THS-I3S  
 ‘The girl makes coffee for them.’

### ◆ Malefactive

- (11) k’ui g-i-ntxo-es nek’na-s tudele  
 hole II2-APPL-dig-AOR.I3P door-DAT under  
 ‘They have dug a hole under the door (for you to fall in it).’  
 (literally: ‘they have dug you a hole under the door’)

### ◆ Possessor raising construction

- (12) 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.’

### ◆ Other

A number of other verbs use the *u*-applicative:

resemble sb  
 call sb

listen to sb  
work for / by sb  
hide from sb  
sit down near sb

As we will see, the *u*-applicative is used in derived ditransitives.

### 3. Lexical properties of ditransitives

#### 3.1 Derived and non-derived ditransitives

Ditransitives may be derived and non-derived. Derived ditransitives are *u*-applicatives.

##### Non-derived ditransitives

give      č (with preverb *me-* or *mo-*)  
sell      č (with preverb *gama-*)  
feed      č (without preverb)  
show      ts'ir  
teach      gur  
ask      k'itx  
dress      kun ('put a garment on sb')

##### Derived ditransitives

buy      č'op  
send      škv, njğon  
throw      mval  
bring      yon (animate T), ģ (inanimate T)

##### Non-derived ditransitive including a frozen preroot vowel

tell      ts'v

#### (13) Non-derived ditransitive

si    mušeni    ma    va-m-k'itx-om    si    soni    re  
2s   why      1s    NEG-II1-ask-THS   2s   where.from   be.I2s  
'Why don't you ask me where I am from?'

#### (14) Derived ditransitive

bozo-k    xalva    ko-y-u-č'op-u  
girl-ERG   helva    PV-PV-II3.APPL-buy-AOR.I3S  
'The girl bought helva from him.'

### 3.2 Suppletion

In Laz, suppletion does not occur according to the person of the Recipient. One verb ('bring') shows suppletion according to the animacy of the Theme: with an animate Theme, the root is *yon*; with an inanimate one, the root is *ğ*:

(15) *oxorja-k he bozo ko-m-u-yon-u*  
 woman-ERG DEMD girl PV-PV-II3.APPL-bring-AOR.I3S  
 'The woman took the girl to him.'

(16) *ar orč'ay k'oči-k oxorja muši-s*  
 one from.Orč'i man-ERG woman POSS3S-DAT  
  
*yali m-u-ğ-u-doren*  
 mirror PV-II3.APPL-bring-AOR.I3S-EVD  
 'A man from Orč'i brought a mirror to his wife.'

The verb 'have' uses the same two roots: *yon* 'have somebody' and *ğ* 'have something'.

(17) *padišahi-s sum bič'i u-yon-u-t'u*  
 sultan-DAT three boy II3.APPL-have-THS-IMPFT.I3S  
 'The sultan had three sons.'

(18) *ma para var-m-i-ğ-u-n*  
 1S money NEG-II1-APPL-have-THS-I3S  
 'I don't have any money.'

The verb 'say' shows suppletion according to the number of arguments: in a monotransitive construction ('say sth'), the root is *tkv*; in a ditransitive construction ('tell sb sth'), the root is *ts'v*.

(19) *bič'i go-y-šaš-u ama mutu va-tk-u*  
 boy PV-MP-be.amazed-AOR.I3S but something NEG-say-AOR.I3S  
 'The boy was amazed but didn't say anything.'

(20) *mundes b-ğur-are do-m-i-ts'v-i*  
 when II-die-FUT.I1S PV-II1-APPL-say-IMP  
 'Tell me when I'll die!'

#### 4. Ditransitive alignment

In a ditransitive construction, the Theme is in the absolutive and the Recipient in the dative. The indexing, on the other hand, is sensitive to the person hierarchy  $1^{st} > 2^{nd} > 3^{rd}$ .

Most commonly, in a ditransitive construction the Theme is 3<sup>rd</sup> person. I will first examine this case, and then the case of 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> person Themes.

##### 4.1 General case (3<sup>rd</sup> person T)

Sentence 21 illustrates the basic ditransitive construction. The Theme (*matsk'indi*) is in the absolutive and is not indexed on the verb; the Recipient is in the dative and is indexed by a set II affix:

- (21) 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.'

The comparison of this construction with the transitive construction shows that with respect to case marking, the alignment is indirective: the T, like the O, is in the absolutive, while the R is in the dative. On the other hand, with respect to indexing, the alignment is secundative: the R is indexed by a set II affix, like the O, while the T is not indexed. The basic ditransitive alignment is thus of the mixed type.

#### Basic ditransitive alignment

Case marking	T = O (absolutive) ≠ R (dative)	→ indirective alignment
Indexing	R = O (set II) ≠ T (not indexed)	→ secundative alignment

#### 4.2 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronouns

Recall that 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person pronouns do not distinguish between ergative, absolutive and dative. The pronoun *ma* '1<sup>st</sup> person singular' is the O in sentence 22, the R in 23 and the T in 24.

- (22) ma      ko-m-dzir-u  
 1S      PV-II1-see-AOR.I3S  
 'He saw me.'
- (23) xoja-k      ma      mo-m-č-u                    kart'ali  
 hoja-ERG    1S      PV-II1-give-AOR.I3S    letter  
 'The hoja has given me a letter.'
- (24) ma      ha      bere-s      ko-me-m-č-i  
 1S      DEMD    boy-DAT    PV-PV-II1-give-IMP  
 'Give me to that boy.'

Pronouns thus show neutral alignment:

Pronouns	T = R = O	→ neutral alignment
----------	-----------	---------------------

It should be noted that when a 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> person affix is co-referent with an NP inflected for core syntactic case, the latter exhibits the case triggered by its function. In sentence 25, for instance, *iri* 'all (of you)' refers to a 2<sup>nd</sup> person plural Recipient and takes the dative case:

- (25) iri-s          titotito          me-k-č-aten  
 all-DAT   one.to.each   PV-II2-give-FUT.1/2P  
 ‘I will give one to each of you.’

### 4.3 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person T and the personal hierarchy

In all the examples above, the Theme was 3<sup>rd</sup> person. In such a case, we have seen that the verb indexes the Recipient and not the Theme (secundative alignment).

The verb ‘give’ may take a human Theme. It then means ‘marry (a girl) to sb’. With this verb, indexing is sensitive to the personal hierarchy 1<sup>st</sup> > 2<sup>nd</sup> > 3<sup>rd</sup>: of the Theme and the Recipient, the one which stands higher in the hierarchy is indexed, while the other is not.

- (26) 1<sup>st</sup> person Recipient > 3<sup>rd</sup> person Theme

tsk’ar    mo-m-č-i  
 water    PV-II1-give-IMP  
 ‘Give me some water!’

- (27) 1<sup>st</sup> person Theme > 3<sup>rd</sup> person Recipient

ma    ha          bere-s          ko-me-m-č-i  
 1S    DEMD   boy-DAT    PV-PV-II1-give-IMP  
 ‘Give me to that boy.’

- (28) 1<sup>st</sup> person Theme > 2<sup>nd</sup> person Recipient

baba-k          var-me-m-č-am-s  
 father-ERG    NEG-PV-II1-donner-THS-I3S  
 ‘My father won’t give me to you.’

- (29) 1<sup>st</sup> person Recipient > 2<sup>nd</sup> person Theme

baba    skani-k          si    ma    va-mo-m-č-ase  
 father    POSS2S-ERG    2S    1S    NEG-PV-II1-give-FUT.I3S  
 ‘Your father won’t give you to me.’ (elicited)

The personal hierarchy also appears with the verb ‘show’.

- (30) 1<sup>st</sup> person Recipient > 2<sup>nd</sup> person Theme

Ali-k          si    ma    m-o-ts’i-ase  
 Ali-ERG    2S    1S    II1-TR-show-FUT.I3S  
 ‘Ali will show you to me.’ (elicited)

### 4.4 Oblique Recipient

We have seen that the Recipient is marked by the dative. There are, however, some constructions where the Recipient takes the allative.

In the “potential” derivation, marked on the verb by the preroot vowel *a-*, the subject is in the dative and is indexed by a set II affix.

- (31) miti-s                  var-∅-a-dzir-u                  matsk’indi    muši

nobody-DAT NEG-II3-POT-find-AOR.I3S ring POSS3S  
 ‘No one could find his ring.’

- (32) k’oč var-m-a-dzir-u  
 man NEG-II1-POT-find-AOR.I3S  
 ‘I could not find anybody.’

In Laz, a verb cannot simultaneously have two core arguments marked by the dative and indexed by a set II affix. Thus, when a ditransitive verb is in the potential form, the Recipient cannot be marked by the dative and cannot be indexed on the verb by a set II affix since the dative subject already is. The Recipient must undergo demotion: it is encoded as an allative oblique and is not indexed on the verb.

- (33) juma-pe-s xoja-še mutu var-Ø-a-tkv-es  
 brother-PL-DAT hoja-ALL something neg-II3-POT-say-AOR.I3S.II3P  
 ‘The brothers couldn’t say anything to the hoja.’

#### 4.5 Word order

The basic word order in Laz is SOV:

- (34) bere-k otxoc me-Ø-tk’oč-u  
 boy-ERG comb PV-II3-throw-AOR.I3S  
 ‘The boy threw the comb.’

According to the informational structure of the clause, word order may undergo modifications. The main regularity is that topicalized terms are fronted, and focalized terms occur in immediate preverbal position.

- (35) ma **nana** **čkimi-k** mo-m-o-šk-u  
 1S mother POSS1S-ERG PV-II1-TR-send-AOR.I3S  
 ‘It is my mother who sent me.’

- (36) hats’i-š-kule nana skani **ma** b-ore  
 now-GEN-after mother POSS2S 1S I1-be  
 ‘From now on, I am your mother.’

In a ditransitive construction, the most frequent word orders are A T R V and A R T V. In general, the order is T-R with definite Themes, and R-T with indefinite Themes.

##### ◆ Definite T → T-R

- (37) avji-k ha vesiyeti oxorja muši-s ko-me-č-u-doren  
 hunter-ERG DEMD will woman POSS3S-DAT PV-PV-give-AOR.I3S-EVD  
 ‘The hunter gave the will to his wife.’

- (38) bere-k zabun doxtori-s mend-u-yon-u-don  
 boy-ERG sick.person doctor-DAT PV-II3.APPL-bring-AOR.I3S-EVD  
 ‘The boy took the sick person to the doctor.’

◆ Indefinite T → R-T

(39) bozo-k kčini-s jurnečdovit altun ko-me-č-u  
 girl-ERG old.woman-DAT fifty golden.coin PV-PV-give-AOR.I3S  
 ‘The girl gave fifty golden coins to the old woman.’

(40) bere muši-s ar beği-ši bozo ko-me-č-u  
 child POSS3S-DAT one bey-GEN girl PV-PV-give-AOR.I3S  
 ‘He gave the girl of a bey to his son.’

### 5. Preverbs *me-* and *mo-*

Laz has a rich system of spatial preverbs. The preverb *me-* (or *n-* before a vowel) indicates a movement away from the reference point (*me-bulur* ‘I am going’); the preverb *mo-* indicates a movement toward the reference point (*mo-bulur* ‘I am coming’). With the verb ‘give’, the choice between *me-* and *mo-* depends on the person of the Recipient: *mo-* with 1<sup>st</sup> person Recipients, *me-* with 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> person Recipients:

**mo-**m-č-u he gave it to me  
**me-**k-č-u he gave it to you  
**me-**∅-č-u he gave it to him

It is interesting to compare the behavior of these preverbs with their Georgian equivalents. In Georgian, the preverbs of some ditransitives are also related to the person of the Recipient, but in a different way: the preverb *mo-* is used with 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> person Recipients, while the preverb *mi-* is used with 3<sup>rd</sup> person Recipients:

**mo-**m-mart-a he addressed me  
**mo-**g-mart-a he addressed you  
**mi-**mart-a he addressed him

	Recipient		
	1 <sup>st</sup> person	2 <sup>nd</sup> person	3 <sup>rd</sup> person
Laz	mo-	me-	
Georgian	mo-		mi-

### 6. Does Laz violate the Ditransitive Person-Role Constraint?

A number of languages have restrictions on bound pronoun combinations with ditransitive verbs. Martin Haspelmath formulates what he calls the Ditransitive Person-Role Constraint in the following way: “Combinations of bound pronouns with the roles Recipient and Theme are disfavored if the Theme pronoun is first or second person and the Recipient pronoun is third person” (weak version). French is a case in point:

- (41) Pierre me la présentera  
 Peter 1S.DAT 3S.FEM.ACC present.FUT.3S  
 ‘Peter will introduce her to me.’
- (42) \*Pierre me lui présentera  
 Peter 1S.ACC 3S.DAT present.FUT.3S  
 ‘Peter will introduce me to her.’
- (43) Pierre me présentera à elle  
 Peter 1S.ACC present.FUT.3S to her  
 ‘Peter will introduce me to her.’

It follows from the definition above that a language where only the Theme or only the Recipient is indexed on the verb cannot be subject to the constraint. This is the case of Laz and Georgian. In all the examples we have seen, the verb indexes either the Theme or the Recipient, but never both at the same time. However, we have seen that in some ditransitives the preverb indicates the person of the Recipient. A form such as *komemči* ‘give me to him’ indicates the person of the Theme by means of the indexing affix (*m-*) and the person of the Recipient by means of the preverb (*me-*). Thus, although Laz and Georgian cannot be subject to the DPRC strictly speaking, it remains that these languages are among the few ones where combinations of morphemes indicating first or second person Theme and third person Recipient have grammaticalized.

### Abbreviations

ABL	ablative	OPT	optative
ACC	accusative	PL	plural
ALL	allative	POSS	possessive
ABS	absolutive	POT	potential
AOR	aorist	PV	preverb
APPL	applicative	QUOT	quotative
DAT	dative	THS	thematic suffix
DEMD	demonstrative determiner	TR	transitive
ERG	ergative	I1	set I, 1 <sup>st</sup> person
EVD	evidential	I1S	set I, 1 <sup>st</sup> person singular
FEM	feminine	I2S	set I, 2 <sup>nd</sup> person singular
FUT	future	I3S	set I, 3 <sup>rd</sup> person singular
GEN	genitive	I3P	set I, 3 <sup>rd</sup> person plural
IMP	imperative	II1	set II, 1 <sup>st</sup> person
IMPFT	imperfect	II2	set II, 2 <sup>nd</sup> person
INT	interrogative	II3	set II, 3 <sup>rd</sup> person
MP	medio-passive	1/2P	set I and II, 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> person plural
NEG	negation		

### References

Dixon, R.M.W. & A. Y. Aikhenvald (eds.), 2000. *Changing valency: case studies in transitivity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Dumézil, Georges, 1937. *Contes lazès*. Travaux et mémoires de l'Institut d'Ethnologie, XXVII, Paris.
- 1967. *Documents anatoliens sur les langues et les traditions du Caucase, IV. Récits lazès (dialecte d'Arhavi)*. Paris, PUF.
- Harris, Alice C. (éd.), 1991. *The indigenous languages of the Caucasus*, Volume 1, Kartvelian Languages. Academic Ressources Corporation.
- Haspelmath, Martin, 2004. Explaining the Ditransitive Person-Role Constraint: a usage based account. *Constructions* 2/2004, 49 pp. (free online journal, University of Düsseldorf)
- Jğent'i, Sergi, 1938. *Č'anuri t'ekst'ebi (arkabuli k'ilok'avi)* [Laz texts (dialect of Arhavi)]. Tbilissi, SSRK' MASPG.
- K'art'ozia, Guram, 1972. *Lazuri t'ekst'ebi* [Laz texts]. Tbilissi, SSSR MAG.
- Malchukov, Andrej, Martin Haspelmath & Bernard Comrie, 2007. Ditransitive constructions: a typological overview. ms.
- Qipšidze, Ioseb, 1939. *Č'anuri t'ekst'ebi* [Laz texts]. Tbilissi, SSRK' MASPG.
- Vamling, Karina, 1988. A feature-based analysis of Georgian morphology. Case study: object agreement. In Thordarson, Fridrik (ed.) *Studia Caucasologica I. Proceedings of the Third Caucasian Colloquium*, Oslo, July 1986. Oslo: Norwegian University Press. 309-319.
- Van Valin, Robert & Randy LaPolla, 1997. *Syntax. Structure, meaning and function*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Vogt, Hans, 1971. *Grammaire de la langue géorgienne* (Instituttet for sammenlignende kulturforskning. Serie B. Skrifter 57). Universitetsforlaget, Oslo.