Some valency-neutral applicatives in the Americas
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The literature on voice has occasionally noted the existence of applicatives that appear not only to add new objects to the syntactic core but also to add non-objects (or at least non-canonically marked objects) and even, most strikingly, to clearly reduce the valency of the predicate. The following examples illustrate these three cases with the Yup’ik applicatives -(g)i and -(u)te:

1. Central Alaskan Yup’ik (Eskimo-Aleutian; Mithun 2000: 96f, 109f)
   a. Ui-ka  
      tuqu-i-gaqa.
      husband-1SG.PSR  die-APPL-IND.3SG→1SG
      ‘I have lost my husband.’ (lit. ‘My husband died on me.’)
   b. Elag-i-uq  
      avelngar-nek.
      dig-APPL-IND.3SG  mouse-ABL.PL
      ‘He dug to the disadvantage of the mice.’
   c. bivalent ikayur- ‘help (sbdy.)’ vs. monovalent ikayur-ute- ‘help out’
      bivalent ulligte- ‘cut (fish) for drying’ vs. monovalent ulligte-i- ‘cut fish for drying’

   Similar phenomena have also been found in South American languages that are arguably areally related (Wise 2002). The Chayahuita morpheme -të, for instance, is used to perform quite different valency-related operations (3rd person singular objects are zero-marked):

2. Chayahuita (Cahuapanan; Wise 2002: 330)
   a. Ama-r-in.  
      vs. Ama-të-r-in.
      bathe-IND-3SG.SBJ  bathe-X-IND-3SG.SBJ
      ‘S/he bathes.’  ‘S/he bathes him/her.’
   b. Tashi-r-in.  
      vs. Tashi-të-r-in.
      become.night-IND-3SG.SBJ  become.night-X-IND-3SG.SBJ
      ‘It becomes night.’  ‘It becomes night in the place where s/he is.’
   c. Nati-r-in.  
      vs. Nati-të-r-in.
      obey-IND-3SG.SBJ  obey-X-IND-3SG.SBJ
      ‘S/he obeys him/her.’  ‘S/he obeys.’
   d. A’pa-r-in.  
      vs. A’pa-të-r-in.
      send-IND-3SG.SBJ  send-X-IND-3SG.SBJ
      ‘S/he sends it.’  ‘S/he sends it to someone.’

   Perhaps also somewhat surprisingly, some such operators can have no discernible valency-related effect with specific verbs, like the applicatives -ye and -tu in Mapudungun:

3. Mapudungun (unclassified; Zúñiga 2009)
   a. kuñül- ‘look after, pity (tr.)’ vs. kuñül-ye- ‘look after as if they were family (tr.)’
      pe- ‘see, find (tr.)’ vs. pe-ye- ‘picture, imagine (tr.)’
   b. chali- ‘greet, report (tr.)’ vs. chali-tu- ‘greet, report (tr.)’
      kansha- ‘get tired (itr.)’ vs. kansha-tu- ‘rest (itr.)’

   The present paper explores possible synchronic and diachronic rationales behind such multifunctional operators in several languages of North and South America.

References