CAUSATIVES, DECAUSATIVES AND LABILITY IN AGUL

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The paper investigates the valency increase and decrease mechanisms in Agul (Lezgic, Nakh-Daghestanian). We deal with agentivization of intransitive and deagentivization of transitive predicates; in other words the problem setting is limited to the conventional causative ~ labile ~ decausative domain. The paper focuses on non-derived (i.e. non-prefixed and non-composite) Agul verbs.

1. CAUSATIVES. The only productive causativization pattern in Agul is a combination of the infinitive of the main verb with (a)q’as ‘do’ (‘do’-causatives below). The causer NP is Ergative. With an intransitive predicate, the causee NP keeps its Nominative or Dative (with experiential predicates) marking. With a transitive predicate the causee NP is marked Apudessive (one of the spatial cases). The ‘do’-causative is a default causativization pattern. It is available for all verbal lexemes except stative verbs (which do not form causatives); only ‘do’-causatives are available for transitive predicates.

In intransitive predicates, there are three non-productive valency increase patterns in addition to the ‘do’-causatives.

(a) A closed set of intransitive predicates have morphological causative correlates: composite forms including an -r suffixed verbal stem plus the stem q’as ‘do’ (cf. Ruzas ‘stop (intr)’ > Ruza-r-q’as ‘stop (tr)’), uq’as ‘sit down’ > uq’a-r-q’as ‘seat’, ruRas ‘get cold’ > ruRa-r-q’as ‘make cold’, ruq’as ‘dry (intr)’ > ruq’a-r-q’as ‘dry (tr)’, ʒik’as ‘find (occasionally)’ > ʒik’a-r-q’as ‘find (as a result of a search)’, ag,as ‘see’ > ag,a-r-q’as ‘show’ and several others.

(b) A closed set of predicates may be used both in transitive and intransitive constructions; these are called labile verbs (cf. arfas ‘break (tr, intr)’; ruxexes ‘cook (tr, intr)’). For convenience they are viewed as pairs of formally identical verbs expressing related intransitive and transitive meanings; see the following section for details.

(c) Finally, there is a small number of lexical (suppletive) pairs causative ~ decausative, including for instance ʃ,as ‘go, move’ ~ Xas ‘bring, fetch’, adaf,as ‘roll over (intr)’ ~ adad,as ‘roll over (tr)’, ke’as ‘wake up (intr)’ ~ keRkas ‘wake up (tr)’, Raj’as ‘stand up, get up’ ~ Rahad,as ‘lift, pick up’ and some other.

All intransitive predicates in (a) through (c) also have the productive ‘do’-causative. The two causatives of one and the same verb are contrasted semantically. Non-productive causative (composite verb or the transitive ‘member’ of the labile pair or the lexical causative in a suppletive pair) expresses direct, intentional causation (cf. 1a, 2a). The ‘do’-causative expresses indirect or unintentional causation (cf. 1b) or has other additional semantic components (2b).

1. q’eša-r-q’as ‘moisten, make wet’ vs. ‘do’-causative of q’ešas ‘moisten, become wet’
   a. zun kun-ar q’ešarq’u-ne.
      I:Erg clothes-Pl(Nom) moisten(Tr)-Pft
      ‘I put the clothes/linen into water (to soak).’
   b. zun lak-ar q’eša-s q’u-ne.
      I:Erg foot-Pl(Nom) moisten(Intr)-Inf do-Pft
      ‘I got my feel wet (i.e. did not prevent them from becoming wet).’

2. uq’a-r-q’as ‘seat’ vs. ‘do’ causative of uq’as ‘sit down’
   a. uq’arq’-e Hilleșuw.
      seat-Imp guest(Nom)
      ‘Let the guest sit down (show him his place)’.
   b. uq’a-s q’e ge.
      sit-Inf do-Imp he(Nom)
      ‘Make him sit (e.g. a child who misbehaves and runs about all the time). //
Let him wait (= sit) for a while (i.e. make him be seated while I am away).

With labile predicates, the ‘direct’ causation of the intransitive meaning (the intransitive member of the pair) is expressed by the same verbal form in the transitive construction (the transitive member of the pair). As in (1) and (2), ‘indirect’ causation is expressed by the ‘do’-causative:

(3) $ar'as$ ‘break (intr)’ vs. its causative
   a. gur $ar'yu-ne$
      plate(Nom) break-Pft
      ‘The plate shattered.’
   b. gadaji gur $ar'y-a-s$ q'q-ne.
      boy:Erg plate(Nom) break-Inf do-Pft
      ‘≈ The plate shattered because of the boy (for instance, he left it on an unsteady table).’

(4) $ar'as$ ‘break (tr)’ vs. its causative
   a. gadaji gur $ar'yu-ne$
      boy:Erg plate(Nom) break-Pft
      ‘The boy broke the plate.’
   b. dada gadaji-w gur $ar'y-a-s$ q'q-ne.
      father:Erg boy-Apud plate(Nom) break-Inf do-Pft
      ‘The father made the boy break the plate.’

Similar contrast is observed between ‘do’-causative of an intransitive predicate and its lexical causative in a ‘suppletive pair’:

(5)a. $\text{šünük}$ Rahad-u!
    child(Nom) lift-Imper
    ‘Lift the baby!’
   b. $\text{šünük}$ Rajša-s q'-e!
    child(Nom) stand.up-Inf do-Imper
    ‘Make the baby get up! (e.g. tell him to do so)’

To sum up, ‘direct’ causation prefers morphological and lexical means, if available (morphological derivation, lability, lexical causatives), while distant causation is expressed by means of a periphrastic construction (‘do’-causative).

Note, however, that for some intransitive non-labile verbs (e.g. $ac'as$ ‘become full’, $kuras$ ‘become dirty’ and other) ‘do’-causatives are the only causativization pattern available and express both direct and indirect causation:

(6)a. berHem kuru-ne.
    dress(Nom) become.dirty-Pft
    ‘The dress became dirty.’
   b. ruša berHem kura-s q'u-ne.
    girl:Erg dress(Nom) become.dirty-Inf do-Pft
    ‘The girl got the dress dirty (1. on purpose put it in a dirty place // 2. unintentionally let it become dirty, was not careful enough to prevent it from becoming dirty).’

2. Labile Verbs. Characteristic of Agul (and probably of other Lezgic languages) is a vast number of labile predicates. (We understand here lability narrowly as P-labile predicates, alias S=O ambitransitives). At the present moment we are aware of 30 labile verbs, their share in the non-derived verbal vocabulary amounting to as much as 20%. Two major groups of labile verbs may be distinguished in Agul, including:

(a) predicates designating situations which may occur spontaneously or result from actions of an agent (cf. $ar'as$ ‘break (tr, intr)’, $\text{čurXas}$ ‘tear apart (tr, intr)’, $a'tusas$ ‘stop burning (tr, intr)’, $ak'aq'as$ ‘close (tr, intr)’; cf. also $k'es$ ‘die, kill’ etc.) – the majority of the Agul labile verbs;
(b) autonomous processes which are initiated by an agent and then may go on autonomously (rīkses ‘cook (tr, intr)’, uņas ‘bake, fry (tr, intr)’); cf. also ruXas ‘give birth to, be born’.

It has been observed that, cross-linguistically, the predicates in these two classes are relatively likely to be labile; cf., among others, [Dixon & Aikhenvald (eds.) 2000: 20]. In other words, one should start looking for lability by examining the predicates within these two groups. What is peculiar about Agul, is that there are considerable discrepancies between statistical generalizations suggested by M. Haspelmath with regard to the choice of verbal meanings within the two classes [Haspelmath 1993]. At the same time, the set of labile verbal meanings in Agul seems to be typical of the Daghestanian; cf. [Ljutikova 2002].

Although the two domains of lability cannot be delimited in a clear-cut way, these predicates behave differently, reflecting the described difference in the situational pattern. For instance, a dedicated non-intentional agent construction (‘an animate participant A performs an action accidentally, without noticing it’) is more available with the verbs of the first group than with the verbs of the second.

A thorough analysis of the Agul verbal vocabulary also shows that lability is not simply a lexical property of the verb, but may to a certain extent depend on its interpretation in a specific context. Thus, at’as ‘cut (tr)’ has only one intransitive usage ‘cut one’s hand, finger etc.’ (the only argument being the designation of the damaged body part), while uc’as ‘melt (intr), dissolve (intr)’ in transitive construction is only interpreted as ‘melt (tr)’ (e.g. a piece of ice), but not ‘dissolve (tr)’ (e.g. sugar in water). Sometimes, the meaning of one of the members of the labile pair is lexicalized; thus, uc’as ‘rot’, typically intransitive, when used with an Ergative agent is only interpreted metaphorically ‘maltreat, vex, harass’. The literal causative sense ‘let/make rot’ (e.g. potatoes) may only be expressed by a ‘do’-causative.

3. DECASUATIVES. There is no decausative derivation in Agul. It should be noted, however, that in some types of contexts, as in fairy tales, where an inanimate patient is recategorized as animate, a transitive verb may become intransitive. These are first of all verbs designating cultural activities (‘sew’, ‘weave’, ‘cut (wool)’ etc.). Cf. the following examples with intransitive and (primarily) transitive predicates; the composite pronoun uć učildi in (7a) and (8b) is an equivalent of the English itself (literally, a combination of uć ‘self’ in Nominative with the same pronoun in Superlative which, in Agul, encodes the role of instrument):

(7) a. dar adarxu-ne uć ući-l-di.
   tree(Nom) fall-Pft self(Nom) self-Super-Lat
   ‘The tree fell by itself.’
 b. dar, adarx!
   tree(Nom) fall:Imp
   ‘Tree, fall down!’

(8) a. berHem duq’a-a uć ući-l-di.
   dress(Nom)sew-Prs self(Nom) self-Super-Lat
   ‘The dress is being sewn by itself.’
 b. duq’ sara, berHem!
   sew:Imp well dress(Nom)
   ‘Dress, do be sewn!’

For a situation in which the agent himself is affected by the situation, such as ‘eat’, ‘drink’ etc., this kind of recategorization is virtually impossible. This phenomenon of ‘contextual decausativization’ shows (or at least is an argument in favor of the opinion) that the lability, i.e. a capability of a verb to be used in both transitive and intransitive contexts, is a scale rather than a binary feature. The verb ‘drink’ is then non-labile; ‘cook’ and ‘break’, labile, while ‘sew’ etc. are in between.

4. CLASSIFYING AGUL PREDICATES. We have started the description of valency increase/decrease mechanisms as based on the traditional classification of predicates into transitive, intransitive and labile. Using some standard contexts, one comes to a more detailed classification, zooming into the transitivity scale. For instance, only a part of intransitive verbs are used in the non-intentional agent construction (agent
coded by Apudelative), while other verbs designate situations where an agent’s control is absolutely indispensable. In other words, the degree of agentivity of intransitive verbs may be different (transitive verbs may not be used in this construction altogether).

On the other hand, only a part of transitive predicates (mainly designations of various cultural activities) allow decausative interpretation (see above). Similar contexts with verbs designating situations which affect the agent (such as ‘drink’) are much less interpretable.

REFERENCES

