On the Question of Deep Ergativity: The Evidence from Lezgian*

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This paper argues that Lezgian (Nakho-Daghestanian) is not, despite an interesting claim by Mel'čuk 1988b, semantically deep ergative. Three syntactic arguments that were adduced for this claim are refuted, and it is shown that Lezgian verbs are not all intransitive. On the contrary, Lezgian turns out to be much like English: It has intransitive verbs, transitive verbs, and a small class of labile verbs that can be used both transitively and intransitively. After showing that Lezgian is not deep ergative, some arguments for syntactic accusativity are examined but shown to be mostly inconclusive, except for one rather marginal criterion. On the whole, Lezgian turns out to be much less 'exotic' than Mel'čuk claims it is, but it is no longer a threat to universal syntactic and semantic theories of clause organization.

1. Deep ergativity

For almost two decades now the problem of "deep ergativity" has been hotly debated among linguists interested in a universal theory of clause organization. The problem can be formulated in the following way:

> Are there languages in which the core participants (abbreviated A, P, S[1]) are organized according to the ergative pattern (opposing A to P and S) not only with respect to the morphological marking of the NP, but also with respect to syntactic rules such as coordination reduction, control of infinitives, raising, causativization, etc.?

The Dyirbal language of North Queensland owes its linguistic fame to Dixon's 1972 claim that Dyirbal is indeed a case of a deep ergative language in this sense. The Dyirbal data have been cited again and again and have been subjected to numerous reinterpretations (e.g., Van Valin 1977, Mel'čuk 1979, 1988d, Marantz 1984:169-221). One of the reasons that the Dyirbal data was regarded as so astonishing by many linguists is probably the fact that there seem to be so few languages that are like Dyirbal in this respect.

Universal theories of clause organization should be as restrictive as possible. Before 1972, it was possible to claim that the mapping of semantic roles onto syntactic relations is uniform across languages: the A is universally the syntactic subject without exception. The facts of Dyirbal seemed to force a major revision of this theoretical position.

In this context it is highly desirable to examine as many other languages that are candidates for deep ergative languages. A number of further cases have been mentioned in the literature (Hurrian, cf. Anderson 1976, Eskimo, cf. Marantz 1984), but none of these is as clear and as convincing as Dyirbal in Dixon's presentation. In this paper, I would like to examine the evidence for deep ergativity in Lezgian, a Nakho-Daghestanian language of southern Daghestan and northern Azerbaijan in the northeastern Caucasus. For Lezgian, Mel'čuk 1981 and 1988b has effectively posited a deep ergative analysis (although in his terminology Lezgian is neither syntactically nor even morphologically ergative).

What is remarkable about Mel'čuk's analysis of Lezgian is that it makes Lezgian not so much a syntactically ergative language as a "semantically ergative" language.[2] This means that it is not the mapping of semantic roles onto syntactic relations that treats S and P alike, but the verb semantics itself. Verbs with P arguments like 'dig' and 'bake', etc. are just as semantically intransitive in Lezgian as verbs with an S argument, according to Mel'čuk. Indeed, he claims that Lezgian completely lacks semantically transitive verbs, and that the A in such verbs as 'dig' and 'bake' is analogous to optional instrumental or causal adverbials like 'with a shovel' or 'because of the heat'.

This analysis is thus "deep ergative" in a different sense, but it is equally threatening to universalist theories of the conceptualization of events. For instance, Croft 1990 claims that events are conceived of within an idealized cognitive model in which individuals asymmetrically transmit force on other individuals. The cognitive model allows three basic event structures: "causative" (*The rock broke the window.*), "inchoative" (*The window broke.*), "stative" (*The window is broken.*) The vast majority of simple verbs falls into one of these categories, and ideal events are expressed in basically the same way across languages. If Mel'čuk's analysis of Lezgian were correct, it would constitute a counterexample to Croft's otherwise well-motivated and convincing theory.

In the following sections I will discuss each of Mel'čuk's arguments, and I will conclude that his analysis is untenable.[3] Lezgian turns out to be neither semantically nor syntactically ergative. This means that this particular language is less interesting than Mel'čuk claims it is, but on the

other hand extremely interesting universal semantic theories such as Croft's 1990 can be saved.

2. Lezgian as a semantically ergative language: three arguments

Examples 1 and 2 show simple Lezgian sentences, with the S in 1 marked as Absolutive and the A in 2 marked as Ergative.

(1)   *Zamira*   *q^{h}üre-na.*
         Zamira(abs)   laugh-aor[4]
         'Zamira laughed.'
(2)   *Zamira.di*   *get'e*   *xa-na.*
         Zamira(erg)[5]   pot(abs)   break-aor
         'Zamira broke the pot.'

Now Mel'čuk claims that not only is *Zamira.di* in 2 not the subject of its clause, it is not even a core argument of the verb *xun* 'break'. Thus, 2 really means something like 'The pot broke caused-by-Zamira', and the Ergative NP is only a semantically peripheral agentive phrase. To quote Mel'čuk 1988b:209:

> "The peculiarity of Lezgian sentences of type [2], when compared to, e.g., their English equivalents, resides not in the syntax but is rather to be found on a much deeper level, namely, in their semantics. In such Lezgian sentences all the verbs denote states, not genuine 'transitive' actions; action verbs simply do not exist in the language. Thus, instead of 'kill' Lezgian actually says 'die (maybe from somebody's hand)'; 'eat' is in Lezgian 'disappear swallowed', 'bake' is 'change [=become different] under the action of heat', and 'plow' is 'undergo plowing'."

Since Mel'čuk uses the term *ergative* in a restricted sense (cf. Mel'čuk 1988a), referring only to constructions where the grammatical subject is in an ergative case, he does not take 2 as an ergative construction. I use the term ergative in a broader sense, encompassing both syntactic ergativity and "semantic ergativity". Once this terminological difference has been made explicit, it becomes clear that the really surprising claim that Mel'čuk makes is not that Lezgian lacks an ergative construction, but that Lezgian is even more radically deep ergative than Dyirbal, namely on the semantic level.

Mel'čuk adduces three syntactic arguments in favor of his view that the P in sentences like 2 is the grammatical subject in Lezgian — coming from indispensability, coreferential omission in coordinate structures, and agreement. In the next sections I show that each of these arguments is invalid.

2.1. Indispensability

According to Keenan 1976:313, "a non-subject may often be simply eliminated from a sentence with the result still being a complete sentence. But this is not usually true of subjects". In Lezgian, the Ergative A may be omitted, unlike the English subject:

(3) a. *Zamira.di   get'e   xa-na.*
       Zamira(erg) pot(abs)   break-aor
       'Zamira broke the pot.'

    b. *Get'e   xa-na.*
       pot(abs) break-aor
       'The pot broke.'

(4) a. *Musa.di   q̇üǧür   q'e-na.*
       Musa(erg) hedgehog(abs) kill/die-aor
       'Musa killed the hedgehog.'

    b. *q̇üǧür   q'e-na.*
       hedgehog(abs) kill/die-aor
       'The hedgehog died.'

(5) a. *Farid.a   ktab   q̇aču-na.*
       Farid(erg) book(abs) take-aor
       'Farid bought the book.'

    b. *Ktab   q̇aču-na.*
       book(abs) take-aor
       'The book was bought/One bought the book.'

However, this only shows that the Ergative NP lacks the typical subject property of indispensability in Lezgian. What Mel'čuk would have to show is that the Absolutive NP does have this property. But in fact the Absolutive NP may be omitted as freely as the Ergative NP. Example 6 shows a sentence where the P is omitted, and 7-8 show sentences where the S is omitted.

(6) a. *Alfija.di   gazet   k'el-zawa.*
       Alfija(erg) newspaper(abs) read-impf
       'Alfija is reading a newspaper.'

    b. *Alfija.di   k'el-zawa.*
       Alfija(erg) read-impf
       'Alfija is reading.'

(7) *Za-z   čil.e-l   hawajda jašamiš te-že-zwa-j-di   či-da.*
    I-dat [earth-sress in.vain living neg-be-ptp-sbst:abs] know-fut
    'I know that one does not live in vain on earth.' (DD85,5:5)[6]

(8) *Ik'   anžax   artistka.di-z   kilig-zawa* (N88:74).
    thus   only   actress-dat   look-impf
    'Like this one looks only at an actress.'

In 9-11 NPs in cases other than Ergative and Absolutive are omitted — Dative (9), Adelative (10), Adessive (11).

(9) *K'wal-er.l-n   dak'ar-r-aj-ni   Ø   ekw-er   akwa-zwa .*
    house-pl-gen   window-pl-inel-too Ø(dat) light-pl(abs) see-impf
    'From the windows of the houses, too, one sees the lights.' (J84:19)

(10) *T'ebiat.di-q^h   galaz   Ø   aq̇až-iz   že-da-č.* (K86,3:15)
     [nature-poess   with   Ø(adel) compete-inf] be-fut-neg
     'One cannot compete with nature.'

(11) *q̇üǧür-r.i   Ø   čeb   rehät-diz q'a-z   tu-na.*
     hedgehog-pl(erg) Ø(adess) [themselves(abs) easy-adv   catch-inf]let-aor
     'The hedgehogs were easily caught (lit. 'allowed one to catch them easily)'.' (M83:44)

The fact that we are dealing with the same type of omission here can be seen from examples like the following, where in one sentence two NPs in different cases are omitted but must clearly be understood to refer to the same generalized "one".

(12) Ergative & Absolutive
     Ø   čarad.a-n   šej?.ini-z   ǧil   jarǧi   awu-r-la,
     [Ø(erg) stranger-gen thing-dat   hand(abs) long   make-ptp-temp]
     Ø   xalq'.di-n   wilik   bejabur   že-da (S83:36).
     Ø(abs) people-gen   before   shameless   become-fut
     'When one steals someone else's things, one disgraces oneself before the people.'

(13) Absolutive & Dative
     Hül   aq'wan jeke-di   ja ži, eger Ø   ada-n sa
     sea(abs) so   big-sbst:abs   cop that [if   Ø(abs)   it-gen one
     q̇erex.d-al   aq̇waz-aj-t'a   Ø   mükü   q̇erex   akwa-da-č.
     shore-sress   stand-ptp-cnd]   Ø(dat)   other   shore(abs)   see-fut-neg
     'The sea is so big that if one stands on one of its shores one doesn't see the other one.' (N57:7)

(14) Ergative & Absolutive
     Hi   hül-e,   Ø   simaw   t-awu-r-t'a-ni,
     which   sea-iness   [Ø(erg)   swimming neg-do-aop-cnd]-also
     Ø   batmiš   že-da-č ? (K84,2:16)
     Ø(abs) sinking be-fut-neg
     'In which sea does one not sink even if one doesn't swim?'

I conclude that no argument for Mel'čuk's hypothesis can be derived from the omissibility of the Ergative NP.

2.2. Coreferential omission in coordinate structures

The next subject property that Mel'čuk cites is the possibility of coreferential omission of verbal arguments in coordinate structures.[7] In languages like English, a condition on this type of coordination omission is apparently that the two coreferential phrases must bear the same syntactic relation:

(15) a. *The boy$_i$ returned and Ø$_i$ took the book.*
      b. *The boy$_i$ took the book and Ø$_i$ returned.*
(16) **The boy beat Ahmed$_i$ and Ø$_i$ went away.*

15 is possible, whereas 16 is ungrammatical because Ahmed is the direct object in the first conjunct but has been omitted from the subject position in the second conjunct.

According to Mel'čuk's source, Gadžiev 1954:190, the Lezgian equivalents of 15a-b, are ungrammatical, because several main verbs may be conjoined in Lezgian only if all of them are either transitive or intransitive:

(17) a. *Gada$_i$ xta-na   wa Ø$_i$ ktab   q̇aču-na.*
          boy(abs)   return-aor and Ø(erg) book(abs) take-aor
          'The boy returned and took the book.'
      b. *Gada.di$_i$ ktab   q̇aču-na wa   Ø$_i$ xta-na.*
          boy(erg)   book(abs) take-aor and Ø(abs)   return-aor
          'The boy took the book and returned.'

Instead, the personal pronoun *am* must be used in the appropriate case form:

(18) a. *Gada$_i$ xtana wa ada$_i$ ktab q̇ačuna.*
      b. *Gadadi$_i$ ktab q̇ačuna wa am$_i$ xtana.*

This could be explained by the same principle that rules out 16 in English if the S, but not the A, were the subject and would thus provide evidence for Mel'čuk's hypothesis.

But the facts are more complicated. When one looks at modern Lezgian texts or asks Lezgian native speakers, one finds hardly any evidence for the ungrammaticality of 16a-b. Some speakers even observe that the additional pronoun in 18a-b sounds redundant. It is not difficult to find such examples in written texts, e.g.

(19) *Gada   dide.di-n   pataw q̇hfe-na*
      boy(abs) mother-gen   to   go.back-aor
      wa Ø   ada-z   pačah.di-n bujruǧ.di-kaj sühbet-na. (AM87:23)
      and Ø(erg)   she-dat   king-gen   order-sbel   tell-aor
      'The boy returned to his mother and told her abot the king's order.'

Now it is quite possible that the grammaticality of 19 must be attributed to language contact, i.e. the influence of Russian. It must be noted here that the whole construction of 17-19, clause coordination with *wa* 'and', was borrowed along with the coordinating conjunction.[8] This borrowing obviously happened in the written language first and it may not even have reached the spoken language yet. Significantly, speakers who are not

literate in Lezgian and therefore know only spoken Lezgian, tend to reject 17-19 entirely and prefer a construction using converbs:

(20) *Gada.di xta-na   ktab   q̇aču-na.*
      boy(erg) [return-aor.conv]   book(abs) take-aor
      'The boy, having returned, took the book.'
(21) *Gada   ktab   q̇aču-na   xta-na.*
      boy(abs)   [book(abs) take-aor.conv] return-aor
      'The boy, having taken the book, returned.'

If the coordination construction is a non-native device used mainly in translations and bookish Lezgian, it is clear that syntactic arguments based on it cannot be very strong.

But Mel'čuk's argument is completely killed by a fact that he himself notes: The Lezgian equivalent of 16, where a P and an S are coreferential, is ungrammatical (22), although it should be grammatical according to Mel'čuk's hypothesis because the P and the S are both grammatical subjects in Lezgian.

(22) **Buba.di   Ahmed$_i$ gata-na   wa Ø$_i$ q̇hfe-na.*
      father(erg) Ahmed(abs)   beat-aor   and Ø(abs)   go.away-aor
      'Father beat Ahmed and Ahmed went away.'

I would like to suggest a completely different explanation of the data in Gadžiev 1954, based on morphological or even phonological identity. If we look at 23, the presumable underlying structures before coordination deletion, we see that the forms to be deleted are morphologically different.

(23) a. *Gada$_i$ xtana wa gadadi$_i$ ktab q̇ačuna.*
      b. *Gadadi$_i$ ktab q̇ačuna wa gada$_i$ xtana.*
(24) *Bubadi Ahmed$_i$ gatana wa Ahmed$_i$ q̇hfena.*

This reminds one of German cases like 25b-c: Here coordination omission is blocked because the two prepositions *ohne* 'without' and *mit* 'with' govern different cases, although the syntactic relation of the prepositional complement is in each case the same (cf. Pullum & Zwicky 1986 on such cases).

(25) a. *ohne dich oder mit dir* 'without you or with you'
      b. **ohne oder mit dir*   'without or with you'
      c. **mit oder ohne dich*   'with or without you'

This does not account for the impossibility of omitting *Ahmed* in 24 yet, but there are other plausible reasons for that. We could assume that Lezgian is an ordinary syntactically accusative language after all (some evidence for this analysis will be presented below in 4.2.), so 22 would be ruled out by the same principle that rules out 16 in English. Or it could have to do with word order: the coreferential NP in the first conjunct is not at a margin of

the clause. Unfortunately, there is no way to test these hypotheses because there do not seem to be any speakers representing Gadžiev's dialect anymore. But I hope that enough has been said to make Mel'čuk's interpretation look very implausible

2.3. Number agreement

The third and final argument that Mel'čuk gives comes from number agreement. He claims that only the Absolutive NP, that is the S and P, controls participial agreement which would be evidence that S and P are the grammatical subject.

Number agreement is very restricted in Lezgian — it occurs only in predicate nominals. Predicative adjectives do not normally agree with their subject, as shown in 27-28(a), but they do agree if they are substantivized, as shown in 27-28(b). Such substantivized predicative adjectives are quite common and the meaning difference between the a and b cases of 27-28 is very slight.

(27) a. *I   ktab   qʰsan ja.*
          this book(abs) good cop
          'This book is good.'
      b. *I   ktab   qʰsan-di   ja.*
          this book(abs) good-sbst:abs cop
          'This book is good (lit. is a good one).'
(28) a. *I   ktab-ar   qʰsan ja.*
          these book-pl(abs) good cop
          'These books are good.'
      b. *I   ktab-ar   qʰsan-bur   ja.*
          these book-pl(abs) good-sbst.pl(abs) cop
          'These books are good (lit. are good ones).'

Like adjectives, finite verbs are frequently replaced by the corresponding substantivized participles, again with only a slight meaning difference, as shown in 29a-b.

(29) a. *Fizuli   aniz   fi-da.*
          Fizuli(abs) there go-fut
          'Fizuli will go there.'
      b. *Fizuli   aniz   fi-da-j-di   ja.*
          Fizuli(abs) there go-fut-ptp-sbst:abs cop
          'Fizuli will go there (lit. is one who will go there).'

Now Mel'čuk claims that the agreement in such participial periphrastic constructions is with the Absolutive argument, the S as in 29b, or the P as in 30b, but not with the Ergative argument or A, as in 31b.

(30) a. *Za   gzaf   ktab-ar   k'el-na.*
          I:erg many book-pl(abs) read-aor
          'I read many books.'
      b. *Za   gzaf   ktab-ar   k'el-aj-bur   ja.*
          I:erg many book-pl(abs) read-aop-sbst.pl(abs) cop
          'I have read many books.'
(31) a. *Čna   sa   ktab   k'el-na.*
          we:erg one book(abs) read-aor
          'We read one book.'
      b. **Čna   sa   ktab   k'el-aj-bur   ja.*
          we:erg one book(abs) read-aop-sbst.pl(abs) cop
          'We have read one book.'

Unfortunately for Mel'čuk's argument, it turns out that sentences like 30b are in fact ungrammatical. They never occur in texts and they were rejected by all of my native speaker consultants. Instead of 30b, one has to say either 32, preserving the word order, or 33, preserving the case marking.

(32) *Zun   gzaf   ktab-ar   k'el-aj-di   ja.*
      I:abs [many book-pl(abs) read-ptp-sbst:abs] cop
      'I have read many books (lit. I am one who read many books).'
(33) *Gzaf   ktab-ar   za   k'el-aj-bur   ja.*
      many book-pl(abs) [I:erg read-ptp-sbst.pl(abs)] cop
      'Many books have been read by me (lit. ... are ones that I read).'

But in all predicative participial constructions the syntactic structure of a copular clause is preserved. Lezgian does not have number agreement with a core argument of a verb, it has only number agreement of the predicate nominal with its subject. Thus, no argument for a particular analysis of verbal sentences can be derived from number agreement.[9]

3. Does Lezgian have labile verbs?

In the preceding section I showed that Mel'čuk's syntactic arguments are based on incorrect data (in the case of number agreement), incomplete data (in the case of indispensability), or unclear data (coreferential omission) that are best explained otherwise. In this section I show that Mel'čuk's hypothesis is built on the mistaken presupposition that Lezgian does not have labile verbs and that examples 4b and 5b (reproduced here) have the same grammatical status. This is an additional blow to the intuitive plausibility of Mel'čuk's analysis.

(4) a. *Musa.di   q̄üǧür   q'e-na.*
         Musa(erg) hedgehog(abs) kill/die-aor
         'Musa killed the hedgehog.'

b. *q̇üǧür   q'e-na.*
hedgehog(abs) kill/die-aor
'The hedgehog died.'

(5) a. *Farid.a   ktab   q̇aču-na.*
Farid(erg) book(abs) take-aor
'Farid bought the book.'

b. *Ktab   q̇aču-na.*
book(abs) take-aor
'The book was bought/One bought the book.'

Mel'čuk's analysis looks quite plausible for verbs in which a causative/processual alternation is readily available, like 'kill/die' (cf. 4a-b) or 'break(tr.)/break(intr.)' (cf. 3a-b above). In English, *Zamira broke the pot* and *The pot broke caused-by-Zamira* are more or less equivalent, but the same analysis appears completely counter-intuitive when applied to verbs like 'buy', 'eat', 'bake', 'plow', etc. This feeling is expressed by Job 1985: 167:

> "I have considerable difficulty, to say the least, conceiving of an intransitive reading of such Lezgian verbs as that in [i], not to mention a state instead of an action reading:
>
> [i] a. *Itim.di   sur   eǧün-nawa.*
>   man(erg)   grave(abs) dig-perf
>   'The man has dug the grave.'
>
>   b. *Sur   eǧün-nawa.*
>   grave(abs) dig-perf
>   'The grave has been dug.'"

But it is precisely Mel'čuk's argument that Lezgian speakers do not have this difficulty. We need syntactic arguments to show that the alternation in 5a-b is different from the alternation in 4a-b in the grammar of Lezgian, not just for our intuitions.

According to Gadžiev 1954:98-103, 4b and 5b are only superficially similar — syntactically they are as different from each other as their English or Russian translations. In 4, we have a transitivity alternation of the verb *q'in,* which belongs to the small set of **labile** verbs that can be either intransitive, denoting a processual scene, or transitive, denoting a causative scene. In 5, on the other hand, we have a **generalized-subject construction** in which the subject NP can be omitted and be understood as having generic reference.

The following are the labile verbs listed by Gadžiev 1954:100 and Šejxov 1987:

(34)	transitive-causative	intransitive-processual
q'in	'kill'	'die'
xun	'break(tr.); give birth to'	'break (intr.); be born'
čurun	'bake'	'ripen'
kun	'burn (tr.)'	'burn (intr.)'
at'un	'cut, tear off (tr.)'	'tear off (intr.)'
rugun	'boil, cook (tr.)'	'boil, cook (intr.)'
q̇azunun	'tear (tr.)'	'tear (intr.)'
reǧün	'grind (tr.)'	'be ground'
eǧičun	'spill (tr.)'	'spill (intr.)'
rut'un	'astringe (mouth)'	'become astringent'
ruwun	'set (teeth) on edge'	'be set on edge'

Unfortunately, Gadžiev does not give any syntactic arguments in favor of his interpretation. Thus it is quite natural to suspect, as Mel'čuk 1988b:242 does, that the distinction between labile verbs used intransitively/processually (as in 4b) and the generalized-subject construction (as in 5b) is not a fact about Lezgian but was erroneously imposed on Lezgian by Gadžiev under the influence of Russian. In effect, Mel'čuk assumes that all transitive verbs in Lezgian are like the labile verbs in 34 in that they have both a transitive-causative meaning and an intransitive-processual meaning. But if all verbs have this double meaning, it becomes simpler to assume that all verbs have only the intransitive-processual meaning, and that the transitive-causative meaning resides entirely in the Ergative NP. Thus, given the incomplete data of Gadžiev 1954, Mel'čuk's conclusion is only a logically consistent use of Occam's razor. His conclusion is certainly to be preferred over Mejlanova & Talibov's 1977 result, who take all verbs that behave like *q̇ačun* 'buy' in 5b as labile and therefore arrive at the very high number of "more than 150" labile verbs. But they do not give any syntactic behavior and they do not say which transitive verbs, if any, do not allow the generalized-subject construction — apparently they counted all transitive verbs and simply stopped counting beyond 150.

However, it can be shown that Gadžiev was right after all: The labile verbs in 34 have two different valence patterns and meanings, and 5b shows a type of participant omission in which the participant is understood as unknown or irrelevant, but not as completely eliminated as in 4b (cf. 7-14 above for more examples of the same construction). I have one semantic argument (3.1.) and two syntactic arguments showing that labile verbs form a special class (3.2-3.).

3.1. A semantic argument: the scope of negation.

Consider a sentence like 35, where the labile verb is negated.

(35) *Indija.d-a   kal-er   req'i-zwa-č.*
India-iness cow-pl(abs) kill/die-impf-neg
(i) 'In India cows don't die.'
(intransitive labile)
(ii) 'In India cows are not killed/one doesn't kill cows.'
(generalized-subject construction)

This sentence is ambiguous: On the first reading, the verb is intransitive-processual and no argument is omitted; on the second reading, the verb is transitive-causative, and the agent is omitted. This ambiguity affects all sentences with labile verbs in which there is no Ergative NP present — e.g. 4b could also mean 'The hedgehog was killed/one killed the hedgehog.' But in such ordinary cases it is difficult to prove that there is real ambiguity in Lezgian, and not just two different Russian or English equivalents that correspond to no difference in Lezgian. However, when the verb is negated, as in 35, the semantic difference is so striking that translation is not necessary to bring out the ambiguity. On the intransitive reading, Indian cows are (falsely) said to be immortal, while on the transitive reading only that part of the lexical meaning of the verb is negated which specifies that death is caused by an agent. All native speakers that I consulted confirmed that 35 can have two meanings, the true meaning ('are not killed') and the false meaning ('do not die'). This shows that the meaning 'caused by an agent' is indeed part of the lexical meaning of a the transitive-causative member of a labile verb pair.

3.2. The imperative addressee

As in all languages (cf. Dixon 1979:112), the Imperative addressee is the S or the A (the Absolutive NP of intransitive verbs or the Ergative NP of transitive verbs).

(36) a. *Ja   Farid, ša!*
pcl Farid come:impv
'Farid, come!'
b. *Ja   Zamira, za-z gazet   q̇aču!*
pcl Zamira I-dat newspaper buy:impv
'Zamira, buy me a newspaper!'

The P (the Absolutive of transitive verbs) cannot be the Imperative addressee (37a), not even where this would not be completely implausible semantically, as in 37b. This is unexpected for an analysis like Mel'čuk's.

(37) a. **Ja gazet,   (Zamira.di) za-z   q̇aču!*
pcl newspaper Zamira(erg) I-dat buy:impv
'Newspaper, be bought (by Zamira) for me!'
b. **Ja Allahğuli, policija.di jaqʰ!*
pcl Allahquli police(erg) catch:impv
'Allahquli, get caught by the police! (i.e. surrender to the police).'

If labile verbs were not different in any way from purely transitive verbs like *qačun* 'take, buy', *q'un* 'hold, catch', we would expect them to behave similarly. But in fact labile verbs do allow an S (intransitive Absolutive) addressee, even in cases where this is not very plausible semantically, as shown in 38b and 39b.

(38) a. *Ja   Musa, q̇üğür   jiq'!*
pcl Musa hedgehog(abs) die/kill:impv
'Musa, kill the hedgehog!'
b. *Ja   dušman, jiq'!*
pcl enemy die/kill:impv
'Enemy, die!'

(39) a. *Ja   Gülmehamed, get'e   xu-x!*
pcl Gülmehamed pot(abs) break-impv
'Gülmehamed, break the pot!'
b. *Ja   get'e,   xu-x!*
pcl pot   break-impv
'Pot, break!'

3.3. The Involuntary Agent Construction

Lezgian has a construction in which the agent is in the Adelative case and the additional meaning is 'involuntarily, unwittingly, or in a very indirect manner'. I call this the Involuntary Agent Construction, illustrated by 40.

(40) *Zamira.di-waj get'e   xa-na.*
Zamira-adel   pot(abs) break-aor
'Zamira broke the pot accidentally/involuntarily.'

Mel'čuk 1988b:227 states that this type of sentence is syntactically identical to transitive sentences like 41

(41) *Zamira.di   get'e   xa-na.*
Zamira(erg) pot(abs) break-aor
'Zamira broke the pot.'

and that the only difference is the case-marking of the agent NP, with the Ergative case meaning 'caused by', and the Adelative meaning 'caused accidentally/indirectly by'.

However, Gadžiev 1954:98 correctly noted that the Adelative construction is only possible with labile verbs. Thus, 42 is possible, whereas 43 is ungrammatical, although semantically just as plausible. This is again clear syntactic evidence for the class of labile verbs.

(42) Labile verbs
    a. Zi   dust.di-waj   balk'an   q'e-na.
        my friend-adel   horse(abs)   die/kill-aor
        'My friend accidentally killed the horse.'
    b. Za-waj   ada-n   perem   ka-na.
        I-adel   he-gen   shirt(abs)   burn-aor
        'I accidentally burnt his shirt.'
(43) Ordinary transitive verbs
    a. *Dide.di-waj   gam   xkaž-na.
        mother-adel   rug(abs)   lift-aor
        'Mother accidentally lifted the rug.'
    b. *Talbat.a-waj   rak   aqʰaj-na.
        Talbat-adel   door(abs)   open-aor
        'Talbat accidentally opened the door.'

Although the Involuntary Agent Construction is not possible with ordinary transitive verbs, it is not restricted to the small class of labile verbs. An involuntary agent can be added quite generally to intransitive verbs which denote a non-agentive process, as illustrated by sentences 44a-c, which contain ordinary, non-labile intransitive-processual verbs.

(44) a. Dide.di-waj   nek   alax̂-na.
          mother-adel   milk(abs)   boil.over-aor
          'Mother involuntarily allowed the milk to boil over.'
     b. Mu?minat.a-waj   wiči-n   ktab   stol.di-laj   alat-na.
          Mu'minat-adel   self-gen   book(abs)   table-srel   fall.off-aor
          'Mu'minat accidentally caused her book to fall from the table.'
     c. Maisa.di-waj   cükw-er   q'ura-na.
          Maisa-adel   flower-pl(abs)   wilt-aor
          'Maisa involuntarily allowed the flowers to wilt.'

The verb of the Involuntary Agent Construction need not even be intransitive — it is enough if the event is semantically non-agentive and potentially under the control of the Adelative NP, as illustrated by 45.

(45) Dide.di-waj   perde.di   c'aj   q'u-na.
      mother-adel   curtain(erg)   fire(abs)   catch-aor
      'Mother accidentally caused the curtain to catch fire.'

Thus, the Adelative NP in 40 is not at all parallel syntactically to the Ergative NP in 41. While the Ergative NP behaves like an English subject in most

respects, the Adelative NP can be likened to English on-phrases ('The curtain caught fire on mother;' 'The flowers wilted on Maisa.') or to the German dativus incommodi ('Die Blumen sind ihr verwelkt.'). In section 4.2. a further syntactic argument is given which shows that the Adelative NP is not the syntactic subject in the Involuntary Agent Construction.

3.4. The universal semantic motivation for lability

In the preceding subsections we saw clear syntactic evidence that a class of labile verbs exists in Lezgian and was not just invented by Gadžiev under the influence of Russian. This is what Mel'čuk 1988b:242 suspects, observing that "all Lezgian verbs that Gadžiev lists as labile happen to have two different equivalents in Russian: q'in = umirat' 'die' or ubivat' 'kill', ...xun = razbivat'sja 'break (intr.)' or razbit' 'break (tr.)', ... [etc.]. For other verbs, such as xurun 'weave' ... Russian lacks such obvious proof of ambiguity." This interesting observation makes one wonder whether the correlation between the Lezgian labile verbs and the existence of two equivalents is a coincidence after all. I believe it is not.

Note that much the same can be said for English — in almost all cases, English has either two different verbs (e.g. kill/die) or has a labile verb pair itself (e.g. burn (tr.)/burn (intr.), spill (tr.)/spill (intr.)). The main difference between English and Russian is that Russian makes extensive use of anticausative derivations (cf. Haspelmath 1987 for general discussion of anticausatives), where the intransitive-processual member of the verb pair is specially marked by the suffix -sja, and does not have labile verbs at all.[10] Other languages, e.g. German, have both labile verbs (e.g. verbrennen 'burn (tr.)/burn (intr.)') and anticausative derivations (e.g. drehen 'turn (tr.), sich drehen 'turn (intr.)').[11]

Thus, languages differ as to which type of morphosyntactic alternation is used for which verb —different roots, anticausative derivations or labile verbs, but the semantic classes of verbs that show such alternations involving an intransitive-processual and a transitive-causative verb are very similar across languages. Such an alternation is pervasive for 'break', 'open', 'turn', 'split', 'sink', 'pour', 'tear', 'begin', 'change', 'rise/raise', 'fill', 'thicken', 'blacken', etc., but it is quite unusual for 'eat', 'wash', 'bite', 'throw', 'dig', 'cut', 'murder', 'irrigate', etc.

There is a universal semantic motivation for this distinction: Verbs with lexical transitivity alternations denote a change of state that can be conceptualized both with and without the involvement of a causing agent. These verbs describe only patient-related properties, and the agent's

contribution in the transitive-causative member of the pair is pure causation. In contrast, those transitive verbs that do not show a lexical transitivity alternation are generally more specific as to the role of the agent. For instance, in 'throw' the agent carries out the action with her arm, 'bite' involves the agent's teeth, 'cut' involves the use of a sharp instrument, etc. The difference becomes very clear when one contrasts minimal pairs, e.g. 'kill' : 'murder', or 'clean' : 'wash'. In both cases the non-alternating verb differs from the alternating verb in that its meaning is more specific, adding agent-related properties (murdering = killing willfully and maliciously, washing = cleaning by means of water), whereas the effect on the patient is pretty much the same in both cases. A transitive verb that describes such agent-related properties cannot have an intransitive-processual counterpart because an event that is conceptualized as occurring spontaneously cannot at the same time involve agent-related properties.

This semantic motivation of the dichotomy between alternating transitive verbs and non-alternating transitive verbs does not explain why some languages have a large number of labile verbs and other languages have a smaller number of them (much less why some languages prefer anticausatives to labile verbs), but it does provide a sensible explanation for the fact noted by Mel'čuk that all Lezgian labile verbs have two different equivalents in Russian. As different as Lezgian and Russian may be typologically, they are subject to the same semantic universals and therefore show striking similarities in unexpected areas.

4. Is Lezgian syntactically accusative or syntactically neutral?

In the preceding we have shown that Mel'čuk's arguments for the subject status of the P are invalid and that the assumption that all transitive verbs are labile verbs is also incorrect. We can safely conclude that Lezgian is not syntactically or semantically ergative.

But can we show that Lezgian is syntactically accusative? Does the A have any subject properties that it shares only with the S? In this section I will consider some properties that are generally characteristic of subjects across languages. Most of these properties turn out not to be applicable to Lezgian, so that the question arises whether Lezgian is syntactically neutral, i.e. neither ergative nor accusative, as has been claimed for Archi by Kibrik 1979.

4.1. Some subject properties

Following Keenan 1976, we can divide subject properties into coding properties and behavior properties. Of the most important coding properties (besides case marking), we have already seen the lack of any verb agreement (section 2.3.). Word order in transitive sentences is usually A P V, but it is syntactically quite free and pragmatically determined. P A V is just as possible when the P represents old information, so this is very weak evidence for the subject status of the A.

Of the most important behavior properties, we have seen the unclear evidence from coordination omission (section 2.2.) and the lack of evidence from indispensability (section 2.1.). Valence changing rules do not provide evidence because they affect either exclusively intransitive verbs (like the Causative, e.g. *žuzu-n* 'move (intr.)' → *žuzu-r-un* 'move (tr.)') or exclusively transitive verbs (like the Anticausative, e.g. *batmišun* 'sink (tr.)' → *batmiš ʔun* 'sink (intr.)'). There are no relation-changing rules like subject raising or possessor raising.

Another set of behavior properties are various control properties, such as control of reflexive pronouns and of infinitival complements (equi-control). According to Kibrik 1980a, Lezgian is syntactically accusative with respect to some of these properties. In particular, reflexivization is controlled by the "Actor" (i.e. a hyperrole comprising A, S and Dative Experiencers) in Lezgian (cf. 46), while the P does not control reflexivization (cf. 47) (the reflexive pronoun is optionally preceded by another instance of the reflexive pronoun which copies the case of the controller).

(46) a.   *Gada.di (wiči=)wič*   *gata-na.*
      boy(erg) self(erg)=self(abs)   beat-aor
      'The boy beat himself.'

    b.   *Gada*   *(wič=)wiči-z*   *kilig-na.*
      boy(abs)   self(abs)=self(dat)   look-aor
      'The boy looked at himself.'

    c.   *Gada.di-z (wiči-z=)wič*   *aku-na.*
      boy-dat   self-dat=self(abs) see-aor
      'The boy saw himself.'

(47) *Gada   wič=wiči*   *gata-na.*
    boy(abs)   self(abs)=self(erg)   beat-aor
    'Himself beat the boy.'

However, the A, the S and the Dative Experiencer are not the only NPs that can control reflexivization. The examples in (48) were found in Lezgian texts.

(48) a.   *Ada-n₁ ǧast*   *wiči-z₁   sa   werč*   *wa ja*
      he-gen   wish(abs)   [self-dat one chicken(abs) and or

       sa   fere   Žaǧur-un   tir (AM87:12).
       one hen(abs) find-msd] cop.pst
       'His wish was to find himself a chicken or a hen.'

b. *Žuw$_i$ sehne.d-a   ǫuǧwa-zwa-j-di   zi$_i$ rik'-elaj   alat-na.*
       [self(abs) stage-iness play-impf-ptp-sbst] my heart-surel fall.off-aor
       'I forgot that I was playing on a stage.' (S88:157)

c. *I   xür-er.i-n   q'üzü-bur.u-n$_i$ gaf-ar-aj,*
       these village-pl-gen old-sbst.pl-gen word-pl-inel
       čeb$_i$ inriq^h Daǧustan.d-aj at-aj-bur   ja (Du68,2:113).
       selves(abs) here Daghestan-inel come-aop-pl(abs) cop
       'According to the old people of these villages, they came here from Daghestan.

In each case the controller is a Genitive NP used attributively within another NP and therefore a very unlikely syntactic subject. But note that the head noun on which the controller NP depends refers to a "mental situation" which is spelled out in the rest of the sentence. The controller NP is therefore pragmatically very salient, and any generalization concerning possible controllers of reflexivization in Lezgian must refer to pragmatic factors. Thus, control of reflexivization does not provide evidence for or against syntactic accusativity.

    Another potentially relevant behavior property is equi-omission in infinitival complement clauses. The A and S can be omitted in this context (49a-b), but the P cannot (50).

(49) a. *Pačah.di ležber.di-z balk'an   ǧu-n   bujruǧ-na.*
         king(erg) peasant-dat [horse(abs) bring-msd] order-aor
         'The king ordered the peasant to bring a horse.'

      b. *Pačah.di ležber.di-z atu-n   bujruǧ-na.*
         king(erg) peasant-dat [come-msd] order-aor
         'The king ordered the peasant to come.'

(50) *Pačah.di uǧri.di-z policija.di Ø   q'u-n   bujruǧ-na.*
      king(erg) thief-dat [police(erg) Ø(abs) hold-msd] order-aor
      'The king ordered the thief to be arrested by the police.'

But this is not a reliable subject property because, as Dixon 1979:114 has pointed out, such 'jussive complement clauses' universally allow only agents to be equi-omitted for semantic reasons.

    Summarizing this discussion, we can say that a considerable number of properties that clearly identify syntactic subjects in languages like English do not give clear results in Lezgian. So do we have to conclude that Lezgian is syntactically neutral?

    I have found one isolated piece of syntactic evidence which clearly distinguishes between the A, the S and the Dative Experiencer, i.e. subjects, and all other NPs, and is apparently not semantically or pragmatically determined. This is switch-reference with 'want'-complements.

4.2. Switch-reference with 'want'-complements

Complements to *k'an* 'want' are in the Infinitive form when the subject of the complement clause is coreferential with the wanter (i.e. the matrix subject). 51a shows an A complement subject, and 51b shows an S complement subject. Both complement subjects are equi-omitted.

(51) a. *Nabisat.a-z ktab   k'el-iz   k'an-zawa.*
         Nabisat-dat [book(abs) read-inf] want-impf
         'Nabisat wants to read a book.'

      b. *Nabisat.a-z q^{h}üre-z   k'an-zawa.*
         Nabisat-dat [laugh-inf] want-impf
         'Nabisat wants to laugh.'

But when the complement subject is not coreferential with the matrix subject, the complement verb is in the Aorist Converb form (cf. 52). The Infinitive form is not possible here.

(52) a. *Nabisat.a-z ruš.a   ktab   k'el-na/*k'el-iz   k'an-zawa.*
         Nabisat-dat [girl(erg) book read-conv/read-inf] want-impf
         'Nabisat wants her daughter to read a book.'

      b. *Nabisat.a-z xwa   k'wal.i-z   xta-na/*xkwe-z*
         Nabisat-dat [son(abs) house-dat come.back-conv/come.back-inf]
         k'an-zawa.
         want-impf
         'Nabisat wants her son to come home.'

This is thus a sort of syntactic switch-reference system in which the Infinitive is the same subject form and the Aorist Converb is the different subject form. This criterion clearly shows that the P behaves differently from the A and S:

(53) **Musa.di-z dide.di   šeher.di-z raǧur-iz   k'an-zawa.*
      Musa-dat [mother(erg) town-dat send-inf] want-impf
      'Musa wants to be sent to town by his mother.'

It also shows that the Dative Experiencer of experience verbs has subject status (54a) and the Absolutive Stimulus does not have subject status (54b).

(54) a. *Nabisat.a-z xwa   akwa-z   k'an-zawa.*
         Nabisat-dat [son see-inf] want-impf
         'Nabisat wants to see her son.'

      b. **Nabisat.a-z wič   ǧül.ü-z   akwa-z   k'an-zawa.*
         Nabisat-dat [self(abs) husband-dat see-inf] want-impf
         'Nabisat wants to be seen by her husband.'

Other experiencers, however, are not subjects. 55 shows an experiencer NP which is in the Genitive and dependent on *rik'* 'heart'.

(55)   *Nabisat.a-z   wilikan   ğül   wič̣.i-n rik'-elaj*
      Nabisat-dat [former   husband   self-gen heart-srel
      alat-na/*alat-iz   k'an-zawa.
      fall.off-conv/fall.off-inf] want-impf
      'Nabisat wants to forget her former husband (lit. wants her former husband to disappear from her heart).'

Finally, switch-reference provides one more argument that the Adelative NP in the Involuntary Agent Construction is not the subject: In 56, which is semantically rather odd but was accepted as syntactically well-formed by my consultants, only the Aorist Converb is possible.

(56)   *Salim.a-z   wič̣.i-waj   ğüğür   q'e-na   k'an-zawa.*
      Salim-dat [self-adel   hedgehog(abs) die/kill-conv] want-impf
      'Salim wants to accidentally kill the hedgehog.' (Lit. 'Salim wants the hedgehog to die caused-by-himself accidentally.')

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, we can say one thing for sure: The hypothesis that all Lezgian verbs are intransitive-processual is wrong, and universal semantic theories of the conceptualization of events are saved. Instead, Lezgian is much like English: some verbs are only intransitive, some verbs are only transitive, and a smaller class of verbs has two valence patterns and two meanings associated with it, the labile verbs.

The class of Lezgian labile verbs is rather small, compared to the corresponding English class (which is even open and productive). It would be interesting to compare Lezgian labile verbs with the corresponding class in other Nakho-Daghestanian languages. For some languages, e.g. Avar, it has been claimed that most transitive verbs are labile (Saidov 1967:773), but the only criterion that is usually given is the possibility to omit the A. However, as we have seen above, this is not a very good criterion because omission of NPs could be free as in Lezgian (cf. section 2.1.). Certainty about the classes of labile verbs in individual languages can only be reached by applying independent semantic and syntactic criteria like the ones used here in section 3.

Concerning the status of Lezgian as syntactically neutral or syntactically accusative, I conclude that Lezgian is almost syntactically neutral, with a slight tendency toward syntactic accusativity which is manifested clearly only in switch-reference in clausal complements of 'want'.

Notes

1.   A = transitive agent, P = transitive patient, S = single argument of intransitive verb.
2.   Note that "semantically ergative" is used here in a rather different sense from Aleksandr Kibrik's notion of "semantically ergative", cf. Kibrik 1980b, 1985.
3.   Mel'čuk's analysis has already been criticized by Job 1985. I agree with Job that Mel'čuk is wrong, but for different reasons.
4.   The following abbreviations for grammatical categories are used in the morphemic translations: abs = Absolutive case, adel = Adelative case, adess = Adessive case, adv = Adverbializer, aoc = Aorist converb, aop = Aorist participle, aor = Aorist tense, cnd = Conditional mood, conv = Converb, cop = copula, dat = Dative case, erg = Ergative case, fut = Future tense, gen = Genitive case, impf = Imperfective aspect, inel = Inelative case, iness = Inessive case, inf = Infinitive, msd = Masdar (verbal noun) neg = negation, pcl = particle, prf = Perfect,   pl = Plural, poess = Postessive case, ptp = Participle, sbel = Subelative case, sbst = Substantivizer, srel = Superelative case, sress = Superessive case, temp = Temporal Subordination form. Subordinate clauses are marked by brackets in the morphemic translations.
5.   A dot separates the semantically empty oblique stem suffix which occurs in all non-Absolutive cases, e.g. *Zamira.di-z* Zamira-dat 'to Zamira' (a more accurate but more cumbersome morphemic transcription would be: *Zamira-di-z* Zamira-obl-dat). Note that the Ergative case is equal to the oblique stem without any further suffix.
6.   Abbreviations in parentheses following some of the Lezgian examples refer to the texts from which they are taken. The abbreviations are explained in Haspelmath (in preparation).
7.   Mel'čuk calls this "gapping collapsibility". I do not use the term *gapping* here because it is normally used only for the omission of a central part of a coordinate constituent, as in *Tereza wanted Thomas and Thomas, freedom.*
8.   At the time of the borrowing, the main contact language of Lezgian was Azerbaijani. (*wa* is a loan in Azerbaijani as well, going back ultimately to Arabic *wa*.) In the 1930s, Azerbaijani was replaced by Russian as the main language of contact, at least in Daghestan, where the standard language is based.
9.   Even if there were number agreement with clause participants in Lezgian participial constructions, this would be only a very weak argument for the subjecthood of the P argument, because agreement in number and/or noun class with the S and P arguments is common in ergative and accusative constructions in many languages for which no one would advocate a deep ergative analysis, e.g. Italian:

(i)   a.   *Luca non gli ha portat-i (viz. i libri).*
          'Luca has not brought them (viz. the books).'
     b.   *Maddalena è venut-a.*
          'Maddalena has come.'

This type of agreement is typically a consequence of the use of a resultative (P/S-oriented) participle in a periphrastic construction (cf. Haspelmath 1990).

10. This is because Russian is of the **fundamentally transitive** language type of Nichols 1982.
11. Lezgian is like German – examples for Lezgian anticausative derivations are *xkaž̆ x̂un* 'rise' from *xkaž̆un* 'raise, lift', *batmiš x̂un* 'sink (intr.)' from *batmišun* 'sink (tr.)' (cf. 14 above).

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