

Thematic Suffixes in Şavşat Georgian

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There are different proposals regarding the function of the thematic suffixes (TS) in Modern Georgian. While Lomashvili (2010) argues that TSs are formants inserted for morphological well-formedness, McGinnis (2016) takes them to be the head of an AspectP which is reserved for [\pm bounded]. Nash (2017), on the other hand, considers TSs to be imperfective markers occupying the head of EventP, while Baker (2020) argues that the distribution of TS is based on manner vs. result features denoted by different verb types. In this study, we will take a look at Şavşat dialect of Georgian (ŞG), which is an endangered dialect spoken in Turkey and argue that TSs in ŞG simultaneously mark both inner aspect and outer aspect à la Travis (2010), hence they present evidence for the combination of the proposals by McGinnis (2016) and Nash (2017).

As in Standard Georgian, the TSs have several realizations in ŞG too, though, the most commonly observed ones are *-eb*, *-ob*, *-av* and *-ev*, which denote imperfectivity both in the present and in the past as in (1):

- (1) a. Ahmet-ay saxl a-şen-**eb**-s. b. Ahmet-ay saxl a-şen-**eb**-d-a.
Ahmet-Nom house.Dat PV-build-TS-Pres.3sg Ahmet-Nom house.Dat PV-build-TS-Past-3sg
Ahmet is building a house. Ahmet was building a house.

In addition to denoting imperfectivity, we also clearly see that TSs in ŞG interact with the lexical aspect of the verb used. We find *-eb* on verbs denoting accomplishments (1) and achievements (2), which are both bounded eventualities denoting a change of state. The TS *-ob*, on the other hand, is reserved for statives such as *think*, *regret*, *have* as in (3a). We also find *-ob* with verbs of sound/light/smell emission, such as *purl*, *shine*, *smell*, as in (3b):

- (2) sq-d-**eb**-a (3) a. sahab-**ob**-s b. pkriyal-**ob**-s
pop-INCH-TS-Pres.3sg have-TS-Pres.3sg shine-TS-Pres.3sg
It is popping. S/he has (it). It is shining.

The TS *-av* on the other hand is used for both transitive and intransitive activities, such as *swim*, *drink*, *crawl*, *wipe* as shown in (4). Finally, two-phase transitive achievements specifically require *-ev*, such as with verbs like *throw*, *topple*, *ignite*, as in (5):

- (4) a. boç-**av**-s b. sv-**av**-s (5) i-kn-**ev**-s
crawl-TS-Pres.3sg drink-TS-Pres.3sg PV-throw-TS-Present.3sg
S/he/it is crawling. S/he/it is drinking it. S/he is throwing it.

As the above data show, the TSs are closely associated with lexical aspect. For example, the introduction of an end point to an activity verb via spatial prefixes may lead to a change in the TS selection. As seen in (6), when the preverbal spatial marker *ga-* is added to (4a), the TS *-av* turns into *-eb*, which is the TS required by accomplishments. Given this pattern, we assume that TSs head the inner aspect projection ($\text{AspP}_{\text{inner}}$), which intervenes between the lexical VP and VoiceP:

- (6) ga-boç-d-**eb**-a (7) a. a-şen-eb-a ‘(the act of) building’ (masdar)
PV-crawl-INCH-TS-3sg b. a-m-şen-eb-eli ‘the builder’ (active participle)
S/he/it crawls to a certain point. c. a-şen-eb-u-li ‘the built thing’ (perfect participle)

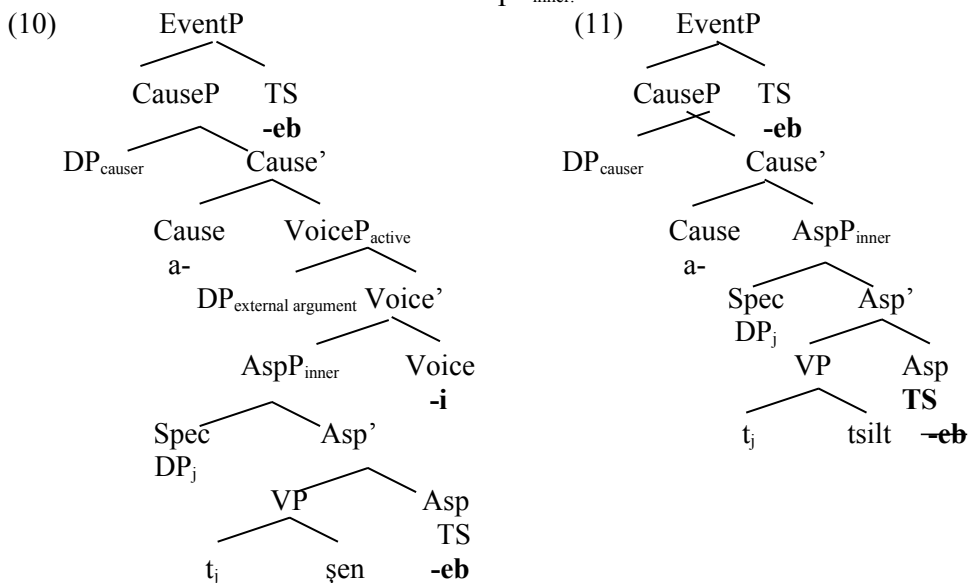
The fact that TSs are also found in masdar and participle forms, as shown in (7), supports such an analysis, as this suggests that they have a very local relation with the root of the verb. Hence, unlike what Nash (2017) assumes for Standard Georgian, TSs in ŞG cannot be directly merged into EventP just to denote imperfectivity. The head $\text{AspP}_{\text{inner}}$ is endowed with the feature [\pm bounded] and the TS is selected according to the value it has. In the case of bounded events (achievements and accomplishments) the inner argument raises into Spec, $\text{AspP}_{\text{inner}}$ to check this feature (cf. Travis 2010).

Yet, it is true that the presence of TSs signals imperfectivity both in the present and in the past in ŞG. We assume that this is achieved via movement of the TS into the EventP head, which encodes imperfectivity. As Nash (2017) does, we adopt EventP from Ramchand & Svenonius (2013). They argue that while the perfective belongs to a higher zone, imperfective (e.g. the progressive in English) imposes selectional restrictions on the lexical aspect of the verb and hence should belong in the lower verbal zone located above the merge position of the external argument.

The evidence for raising of TS to EventP comes from the interaction of the TSs with causative voice in ŞG. When a transitive verb with active voice requiring an external argument is further causativized in ŞG as in (8), we observe not only the causative prefix *a-*, but also we see an overt realization of the active voice head *-(n)i*. Unaccusatives which lack such an intervening overt voice head, on the other hand, would only take the causative prefix *a-* but not *-(n)i* as shown in (9).

- (8) *a-şen-eb-i-eb-s*
 caus-build-TS-voice-TS-pres.3sg
 S/he is making him/her build it.
- (9) *a-tsilt-eb-s*
 caus-get.red-TS-pres.3sg
 It is making it get red.

Recall that the TS that achievements and accomplishments require is *-eb* in ŞG. When an unaccusative verb denoting an achievement event is causativized as in (9), we see that the TS *-eb* (the TS which is also compatible with causative voice) surfaces only once. We argue that this is because it can move up into the head of EventP (where imperfective aspect is encoded) in the absence of an intervening voice head. This is shown in the tree representation in (11). However, in causativized transitive accomplishments, there is an intervening overt active voice head *-(n)i*, as shown in (10). We argue that an overt head blocks the raising of *-eb* from AspP_{inner} to EventP, causing the TS to be realized twice, in the head of EventP and the head of AspP_{inner}.



To summarize, we argue that thematic suffixes in ŞG can serve as both inner aspect markers and outer aspect markers. We take them to encode inner aspect because their allomorphic variation synchronically correlates with the values for inner aspect features such as $[\pm\text{bounded}]$. We also take them to encode outer aspect because their presence is the unique PF signal for imperfectivity. We hypothesize that ŞG relates the two by raising the TS from the head of AspP_{inner} into the head of EventP. The evidence for TS-raising comes from cases where it actually fails. First, in masdar and participle forms, EventP is not in the structure, with the consequence that TS cannot raise, remaining in AspP_{inner}. As a result of that, the imperfective semantics does not arise, either. Second, the TS raising can be blocked by an overt/structurally intervening head as in causatives of transitives. In this configuration, ŞG realizes two TSs, the inner one encoding inner aspect and the outer one encoding the outer aspect. To corroborate our hypothesis that ŞG features TS-raising, we will also bring in comparative data from the cognate TS system of Laz, another endangered South-Caucasian language. In Laz, the two clues for detecting that TS-raising has failed (i.e. the use of TS in the absence of EventP, and the double realization of TS in case of intervention) are *both* absent, suggesting that the two properties only exist in ŞG because it *has* TS-raising.

Selected References:

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