Studies in Caucasian Linguistics: Selected papers of the Eighth Caucasian Colloquium

edited by Helma van den Berg
STUDIES IN CAUCASIAN LINGUISTICS:

SELECTED PAPERS OF THE EIGHTH CAUCASIAN COLLOQUIUM

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Research School of Asian, African and Amerindian Studies (CNWS)
Universiteit Leiden
The Netherlands
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1. Two agreement patterns in the Abkhaz verb

Case-inflection is almost non-existent in Abkhaz, but grammatical relations are encoded by verbal prefixes. There are two main sets of personal prefixes termed in the Caucasian tradition 'D-set' and 'L-set' (D-rjad and L-rjad) according to the form of the 3SG.M prefix, whereby the latter is represented by two slightly different variants. Hewitt (1979: 101-103) labels the D-set and two variants of the L-set 'column I, II and III', respectively. These three sets map onto grammatical relations as follows: column I corresponds to subjects of intransitive verbs or direct objects of transitive verbs, column II to indirect objects, column III to subjects of transitive verbs ('ergative').

The great majority of forms, including all finite and most of non-finite1 forms, follow this mapping pattern, which might be referred to as the basic agreement-type: each of the three grammatical relations - subject, direct object (DO) and indirect object (IO) - is 'copied' by a personal agreement prefix in the verbal form, cf.2:

\[(1) \text{wɑ-sɔ-pq'ajt'}\]
\[2SG.M-1SG-hit:PR\]
'I hit you'

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* The data discussed in this paper have been collected during the fieldwork trip to the village X'ap, situated in the Bzyp dialect area (Abkhazia, Gudauta district). The expedition under the guidance of Professor A.E. Kibrik was granted by Moscow State University.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks to A.E. Kibrik, Ja.G. Testelec, V.F. Vydrin and other members of our “linguistic team” for their valuable comments and assistance during the fieldwork, in particular to T.V. Vaks and L.P. Zosimova, who shared with me in investigating several aspects of the action nominal constructions.

A preliminary version of this paper was submitted to the XIIth Regional Session on 'Ibero-Caucasian' languages (Teberda, 21-23 September 1988), see Kulikov (1989). I would like to thank the audience of the VIIIth Caucasian Colloquium in Leiden, in particular to M. Cherchi, C.L. Ebeling and A. Spruit for their critical remarks and comments. Last but not least, I am much indebted to V.A. Chirikba, B.G. Hewitt and I.A. Nikolaeva for their valuable comments on earlier drafts of this paper.

1 For instance, purposive form (uslovno-celevoe naklonenie) in -rc, gerund (deepričastie) in -wa; cf. e.g. Grammatika (1968: 62-63); Aristava (1982: 203-209).

(2)  wo-lɔ-s-toj’t
   2SG.M-3SG.F-1SG-give:PR
‘I give you to her’

This type is well described in grammars; cf., for instance, Grammatika (1968: 66-71, 89-92); Hewitt (1979:101-103); Spruit (1986:90, 108).

The second pattern, henceforth labeled masdar agreement-type, occurs with a few non-finite forms: the masdar (also referred to as ‘infinitive’; cf. Hewitt (1979:112)) in -ra, the verbal noun in -s’a, which I gloss in my examples as MANNER, and perhaps some rarer formations, like the form in -xa (cf. Čkadua 1988). The verbal forms of this type either do not have personal prefixes at all, the first position (slot) in the verbal form being occupied by the article a-, cf.:

(3)  a-pq’a-ra
    ART-hit-MAS
   ‘to hit’

or have only one (more rarely two) prefix(es) belonging to column II of the L-set, i.e. indirect object prefixes, which I list in table 1 for the sake of convenience:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>singular</th>
<th>plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st person</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
<td>s(ə)-</td>
<td>h-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td>b(ə)-</td>
<td>r/l(ə)-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd person</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>human male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>human female</td>
<td>l(ə)-</td>
<td>r/l(ə)-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-human</td>
<td>a-</td>
<td>r/l(ə)-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: prefixes in column II of the L-set (indirect object prefixes)

(4-6) are examples of forms with the masdar agreement:

(4)  jo-pq’a-ra
    3SG.M-hit-MAS
   ‘to hit him’

(5)  h-ra-ta-ra
    1PL-3PL-give-MAS
   ‘to give us to them’

(6)  ra-ta-ra
    3PL-give-MAS
   ‘to give it to them’

Unlike the basic agreement-type, some of the arguments are not represented by verbal prefixes in the masdar forms. This agreement-type has until now been neglected in grammatical descriptions and the only mention of it which I was able to locate is in Hewitt’s grammar (1979:112). No rule for choosing the argument(s) which trigger(s) the agreement has thus far been suggested. In what follows I will try to formulate a
rule for the masdar agreement. For the sake of simplicity, I will be concerned with only one type of sentence: the masdar appears as the embedded verb, whereby its subject, being coreferential with the matrix subject, is deleted. In other words, I will focus on sentences like ‘the boy wants to hit you’, ‘the boy likes to shoot’, ‘the boy agrees to give you the child’, etc.

2. The masdar agreement-type and syntactic classes of verbs
To begin with, I will formulate preliminary rules separately for verbs of different syntactic types.

2.1. Monovalent (intransitive) verbs
Verbs which have only one argument, i.e. the subject (S), represent the easiest and most trivial case:

Rule 1: The masdar does not agree with its only argument (Subject)

Cf. examples (7-9), with the relevant masdar forms in bold face:

(7) *wu*  jo-s-taXwp’  a-xøs-ra
   I 3SG.N-1SG-want:PR ART-shoot-MAS
   ‘I want to shoot’

(8) *wu*  jo-w-taXwp’  a-c’a-ra
   you 3SG.N-2SG.M-want:PR ART-sleep-MAS
   ‘You want to sleep’

(9) ac’k’’en  a-c’’ɔwa-ra  d-alagoit’
   boy ART-cry-MAS 3SG.M-start:PR
   ‘The boy starts crying’

2.2. Verbs with two arguments
In the case of the verbs with two arguments the agreement properties of the masdar do not pose any problems either: the masdar agrees with the object.

2.2.1. Simple transitives

Rule 2: The masdar agrees only with DO

(10) anxaj’ɔ  jo-ɔ  a-ɛ’ah’a-ra  d-a-lagoit’
   farmer  his-cow 3SG.N-tie-MAS 3SG.H-3SG.N-start:PR
   ‘The farmer starts tying his cow’

(11) arpɔs  h-ga-ra  map’ (ѳ-)ac’ajk’ojt’
   lad 1PL-take-MAS refuse:AOR
   ‘The lad refused to take us’
2.2.2. Intransitive verbs with indirect object (IO)

Rule 3: The masdar agrees only with IO

(13) 
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>dog</th>
<th>boy</th>
<th>bite-MAS</th>
<th>want:PR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ala</td>
<td>ac’k’ən</td>
<td>jə-cha-ra</td>
<td>a-taXəwp’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘The dog wants to bite the boy’

(14) 
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>son</th>
<th>his-relatives</th>
<th>help-MAS</th>
<th>start:AOR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>apa</td>
<td>jə-tahc’a</td>
<td>rə-cXraa-ra</td>
<td>d-a-lagajt’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘The son started to help his relatives’

Here also belongs the verb afəj’ra ‘smell’, which behaves as an intransitive with indirect object in forms with basic agreement-type, unlike its English equivalent, which is transitive:

(15) 
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>girl</th>
<th>like:AOR</th>
<th>smell-MAS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a3yəb</td>
<td>jə-l-g’apxajt’</td>
<td>aš’it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘The girl liked to smell the flower’

2.2.3. Inversive verbs

This small syntactic class includes amazaara ‘have’, ac’əmyra ‘hate’ and other verbs referring to emotions, feelings or possession. Morphologically, inversive verbs look very much like intransitives with indirect objects: the basic agreement-type forms have two verbal prefixes referring to intransitive subject and indirect object, whereby the latter corresponds to the recipient of emotion, feeling or to the possessor, cf.:

(16) d-sə-cXraawajt’
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>help:PR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3SG.M-1SG</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘He helps me’ (intransitive with IO)

(17) d-sə-g’apxajt’
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>like:PR</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3SG.M-1SG</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘I like him’ (inversive)

However, several syntactic criteria reveal subject properties of the noun phrase referring to the recipient/possessor, and for that reason Grammatika (1968:100-102) labels it real’nyj sub’ekt ['real subject'], in spite of the ‘indirect object’ prefix. Correspondingly, the object of emotion, feeling or possession is labelled real’nyj

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3 Cf. the translations of (16-17) into Russian, which are morphologically similar: (16’) On mne pomogaet and (17’) On mne nravitsja.

4 The problem of subjecthood in Abkhaz requires a separate study; for some details, see Testelec (1988).
"ekt [‘real object’]. The masdar agreement is with the latter of these two arguments, that is with the ‘real object’, cf.:

(18) Saida nö jö-mazaa-ra (Œ-)l-taXwp
Saida son 3SG.M-have-MAS (3SG.N-)3SG.F-want:PR
‘Saida wants to have a son’

(19) Adg°r ax°č“k’ä rë-mazaa-ra (Œ-)jö-taXwp
Adgur children 3PL-have-MAS (3SG.N-)3SG.M-want:PR
‘Adgur wants to have children’

Thus, the agreement rule is basically the same as those formulated in two previous sections:

Rule 4: The masdar agrees only with the object

2.3. Bitransitive verbs

We face the most serious difficulties when examining constructions with two objects, i.e. DO and IO. At first sight, there is no strict regularity at all, and verbal forms of the masdar type can agree either with one of the objects (IO) or with both of them. For the sake of convenience, in what follows I will divide all examples with bitransitives into three groups, according to which object(s) the verb agrees with: both IO and DO, IO only, or both possibilities.

2.3.1. IO & DO

In many cases the masdar has two personal prefixes, thus agreeing with both objects. Cf.:

(20) ab d-a-kšahatwp’ ak°ľaj’c’ä h-ř-ň-ta-ra
father 3SG.H-3SG.N-agree:PR robber:PL 1PL-3PL-give-MAS
‘The father agrees to give us to the robbers’

(21) Adg°r jö-dwódaj’t ak°ľaj’c’ä h-ř-ň-mx-š’ä
Adgur 3SG.M-knows:PR robber:PL 1PL-3PL-take.away-MANNER
‘Adgur knows how to take us away from the robbers’

(22) arsö d-cojt’ ac’k”ön ak°ľź’mä j-a-mx-ra
lad 3SG.H-go:PR boy wolf 3SG.M-3SG.N-take.away-MAS
‘The lad goes to take away the boy from the wolf’

(23) arsö d-coj’t’ ax°č“k’ä ak°ľź’mä r-a-mx-ra
lad 3SG.H-go:PR children wolf 3PL-3SG.N-take.away-MAS
‘The lad goes to take away the children from the wolf’

Thus, for examples (20-23) the agreement rule still remains as simple as for intransitives and transitives:
Rule 5: The masdar agrees with IO and DO

Obviously, rules 1-5 can be generalized as the following simple rule:

Rule 6: The masdar forms agree with all non-subject arguments

2.3.2. IO only

In the following examples the masdar form agrees with the indirect object only and lacks a DO prefix:

(24) wara jé-w-Xašt̢jt' ah'esba sē-ta-ra
    you 3SG.N-2SG.M-forget:AOR knife 1SG-give-MAS
    ‘You forgot to give me the knife’

(25) ač'k'w'n d-cojt' anxaj'o ajxa jē-ta-ra
    boy 3SG.H-go:PR farmer axe 3SG.M-give-MAS
    ‘The boy goes to give the axe to the farmer’

(26) anxaj'o d-a-k'Sahat̢wp' ax'ōč'k'a ala rē-ta-ra
    farmer 3SG.H-3SG.N-agree:PR children dog 3PL-give-MAS
    ‘The farmer agrees to give the dog to the children’

(27) Adgšär d-a-k'Sahat̢wp' Daw̢r j-ah'sa jē-ta-ra
    Adgur 3SG.H-3SG.N-agree:PR Daur his-sister 3SG.M-give-MAS
    ‘Adgur agrees to give his sister to Daur’

2.3.3. IO & DO or IO only

The last group of examples poses the most serious difficulties: native speakers hesitate between forms with one or two prefixes, often disagreeing with each other. Cf. examples (28-34) below; forms considered by informants ungrammatical or less acceptable are marked with an asterisk or question mark, respectively:

(28a) ajah'sa d-a-k'Sahat̢wp' l-pa jē-so-ta-ra
    sister 3SG.H-3SG.N-agree:PR her-son 3SG.M-1SG-give-MAS

(28b) ajah'sa d-a-k'Sahat̢wp' l-pa sō-ta-ra
    sister 3SG.H-3SG.N-agree:PR her-son 1SG-give-MAS
    ‘The sister agrees to give her son to me’

5 Or, in other words, with all arguments which are referentially non-identical with the subject of the matrix clause and therefore are not deleted.
(29a) s-aša  jō-j-dərwait'  ax’oč’k’a
my-brother  3SG.N-3SG.M-know:PR children
r-wə-mx-š’a
3PL-2SG.M-take.away-MANNER
(29b) s-aša  jō-j-dərwait’  ax’oč’k’a
my-brother  3SG.N-3SG.M-know:PR children
wə-mx-š’a
2SG.M-take.away-MANNER
‘My brother knows how to take away the children from you’

(30a) Adg’or  Saida  lə-phə    lə-mx-ra
Adgur  Saida  her-daughter  3SG.F-take.away-MAS
(Ø-)jə-təXəwp’
(30b) Adg’or  Saida  lə-phə  ?l-lə-mx-ra
Adgur  Saida  her-daughter  3SG.F-3SG.F-take.away-MAS
(Ø-)jə-təXəwp’
‘Adgur wants to take away her daughter from Saida’

(31a) sara  s-ab  ax’oč’k’a  jō-tə-ra
I  my-father  children  3SG.M-give-MAS
(Ø-)sə-ləsawait’
(31b) sara  s-ab  ax’oč’k’a  ?rə-j-tə-ra
I  my-father  children  3PL-3SG.M-give-MAS
(Ø-)sə-ləsawait’
‘I can give the children to my father’

(32a) wara  məp’ (Ø-)ač’əwək’waıt’  ač’k’ən
you  refuse:PR  boy  his-relatives
ro-mx-ra
3PL-take.away-MAS
(32b) wara  məp’ (Ø-)ač’əwək’waıt’  ač’k’ən
you  refuse:PR  boy  his-relatives
jō-ro-mx-ra
3SG.M-3PL-take.away-MAS
‘You refuse to take away the boy from his relatives’

(33a) ah  (Ø-)jə-təXəwp’
king  (3SG.N-)3SG.M-want:PR  Adg’or  jō-tə-ra
jō-pa  Adg’or  jō-tə-ra
3SG.M-give-MAS
(33b) ah  (Ø-)jə-təXəwp’
king  (3SG.N-)3SG.M-want:PR  Adg’or  jō-tə-ra
jō-pa  Adg’or  jō-tə-ra
3SG.M-3SG.M-give-MAS
‘The king wants to give his son to Adgur’
Let us summarize the preliminary results of examination of constructions with bitransitives. Examples (20-34) fall into the following three groups:

(i) the masdar agrees with both DO and \(10\) (20-23);
(ii) the masdar agrees with \(10\) only (24-27);
(iii) native speakers hesitate between (i) and (ii) (28-34). Some informants merely avoid using masdars and prefer forms with the basic type of agreement, e.g. the purposive form in -rc, cf.:

(28c) \text{ajah} \text{'}a\ d-a-k\text{'}ahat\text{'}wp' \ l-pa \ d-s\text{'}-l-ta-rc

sister 3SG.H-3SG.N-agree:PR her-son 3SG.H-1SG-3SG.F-give-PURP

‘The sister agrees to give her son to me’

Strictly speaking, group (iii) might be further divided into a number of subgroups, in terms of more minute features, for instance: (iii.a) the agreement preferably with both IO and DO; (iii.b) the agreement preferably with IO only (24-27); (iii.c) both strategies (i) and (ii) (i.e. two or one personal prefix) are equally possible; (iii.d) forms with two prefixes are rejected by some native speakers, etc. etc. For the sake of simplicity, I group all these subtypes together as one single, albeit rather heterogeneous, class (iii).

3. Masdar agreement in bitransitive verbs and Person / Animacy Hierarchy

A closer examination of examples belonging to groups (i-iii) reveals that the parameter which is most important for the choice between strategies (i) and (ii) (i.e. “two prefixes” vs. “one \(10\) prefix”) is the position of DO and IO in the Person and Animacy Hierarchy:

1st & 2nd person > HUMAN SG > PL > NON-HUMAN SG

The higher a noun phrase is on this hierarchy, the greater its access to the masdar agreement control. In the cases where DO refers to 1st or 2nd person, the masdar always agrees with both IO and DO, cf. (20-21). If DO is a human singular or plural noun masdar forms appear either with two (IO and DO) prefixes or with one (IO) prefix, cf. (22-23, 27-34). Finally, the non-human singular nouns occupy the lowest position and never control the masdar agreement, cf. (24-26).

Most serious difficulties are posed by intermediary cases, that is when DO is a human singular or plural (regardless of feature \([\pm \text{HUMAN}]\)) noun. It is in these cases that constructions with masdar are typically avoided. The exact location of HUMAN...
SG and PL in the hierarchy is unclear, but a comparison of examples where DO refers to a HUMAN SG noun (cf. (28, 32, 34)) vs. a PL noun (cf. (29, 31)), reveals that the agreement with singular nouns is a little more common than that with the plural DOs. Correspondingly, PL can be placed somewhat closer to the right margin of the hierarchy than HUMAN SG.\footnote{1}

Thus, the choice of the trigger(s) of the masdar agreement can be described in terms of the position of DO in the above-discussed hierarchy as follows:

Rule 7: - if DO occupies the leftmost position in the hierarchy (= 1st or 2nd person), the masdar agrees with both IO and DO;  
- if DO occupies the rightmost position in the hierarchy (= non-human singular nouns), the masdar agrees with IO only;  
- if DO occupies an intermediary position, native speakers often hesitate between forms with two or one prefix and avoid using masdar.

The latter case belongs to the periphery of the usage of the masdar-constructions and requires an additional rule. As it seems, the main parameter which is relevant for the choice between the two strategies (one or two prefixes) is the relationship between \textit{DO} and \textit{IO} in terms of the Person and Animacy Hierarchy. A tentative rule can be formulated as follows:

Rule 8: - if IO > DO, i.e. IO is higher on the hierarchy than DO (IO = 1st or 2nd person, DO = plural or human singular noun), the masdar usually agrees with both IO and DO, cf. (28-29);  
- if IO = DO, i.e. both DO and IO are located in the middle of the hierarchy (plural noun, human singular noun), the masdar agrees with IO only or, more rarely, with both IO and DO, cf. (30-34); quite often, native speakers avoid using masdar;  
- if IO occupies the rightmost position in the hierarchy (i.e. IO = non-human singular noun), the masdar typically agrees with both IO and DO, cf. (22-23).

Rules 7-8 can be schematized in table 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DO</th>
<th>IO</th>
<th>1st &amp; 2nd person</th>
<th>human SG</th>
<th>plural</th>
<th>non-human SG</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st &amp; 2nd person</td>
<td></td>
<td>DO + IO</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>human SG</td>
<td></td>
<td>DO + IO/IO</td>
<td>IO/(DO + IO)</td>
<td></td>
<td>DO + IO/(\textsuperscript{3}IO)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plural</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>non-human SG</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2

\footnote{1}{I refrain from discussing and explaining the less privileged position of the plural nouns. Perhaps, it can be accounted for by the fact that plural nouns are often employed in a collective sense, thus being less individuated than singular nouns, and, on the other hand, the low referential status is correlated with the low position on the Person and Animacy Hierarchy.}
In spite of the abundance of rules and the seeming complexity of interacting features and parameters one may formulate the following simple principle which, in my opinion, underlies all the above regularities and works as the main organizing parameter responsible for the choice of the trigger(s) of the masdar agreement:

Rule 9: DO is able to trigger the masdar agreement only in the cases where its position on the Person and Animacy Hierarchy is sufficiently high, as compared to that of IO.

To conclude this section, I would like to draw attention to yet another feature, of a totally different nature, which may account for why masdar-constructions are avoided by native speakers in cases where DO and IO occupy the same position in the hierarchy. As it seems, forms like l-lə-mx-ra (cf. (30)) or jə-jə-ta-ra (cf. (33)) are especially uncommon and the very pronouncing of them may cause difficulties. I think, this points to the following rule:

Rule 10: Masdar forms with two identical personal prefixes (l-lə-mx-ra, jə-jə-mx-ra, r-rə-mx-ra, etc.) should be avoided.

Unlike rules 7-9, this rule does not operate with semantic parameters, being purely phonological, and plays a secondary role; nevertheless, in some idiolects it seems to be important, too.

4. Remarks on idiolectal variations
To conclude, a few remarks on the differences between individual dialects (idiolects) may be appropriate. As I mentioned earlier, native speakers face difficulties in the cases where both DO and IO are in the middle of the Person and Animacy Hierarchy. No wonder that in such cases we observe the greatest variations between individual dialects. In order to reveal such idiolectal fluctuations, I conducted the following experiment: six native speakers were invited to translate eight sentences of similar structure, i.e. I want to take away X from Y, whereby DO (X) and IO (Y) occupy the same or nearly the same position in the Person and Animacy Hierarchy (for instance, both are human singular nouns, or one is a human singular noun, while another is a plural noun). The results of this experiment are presented in table 3 below. For brevity, only prefixal parts of the masdar forms are given; dashes or bracketed prefix(es) indicate that the informant rejects or avoids the masdar-construction, respectively; letters in the left column are abbreviations for the first names of the informants:
Note that informant N. seems to manage with rule 5 only: masdar forms derived from bitransitive verbs always agree with both IO and DO, irrespectively of their position in the Person and Animacy Hierarchy. On the contrary, S. quite consistently places only one prefix when DO ~ IO, and D. merely rejects the masdar-constructions. The form d-ra-mx-ra recorded from Mr. is abnormal. As B.G. Hewitt pointed out to me (p.c.), the ‘column I’ prefix d- may betray non-finite Future I (which looks like masdar but belongs to the basic agreement-type), perhaps erroneously employed by the informant instead of masdar.

### Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informant</th>
<th>DO = IO</th>
<th>DO &gt; IO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S.</td>
<td>jə-</td>
<td>lə-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>jə-</td>
<td>rə-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>rə-</td>
<td>?lə-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a-/ra-</td>
<td>j-ə-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>rə-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>?lə-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a-/ra-</td>
<td>j-ə-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>(jə-)</td>
<td>(lə-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(jə-)</td>
<td>ra-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>?lə-</td>
<td>(jə-lə-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ra-/a-</td>
<td>j-ə-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mr.</td>
<td>(jə-)</td>
<td>lə-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>jə-</td>
<td>rə-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(?ra-)</td>
<td>lə-</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a-/ra-</td>
<td>j-ə-</td>
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<td>Mf.</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>(lə-)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(ra-)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(?lə-)</td>
<td>(?ra-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(ra-)</td>
<td>(j-ə-)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N.</td>
<td>jə-ja-</td>
<td>l-ə-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>r-ja-</td>
<td>r-ra-</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>l-ra-</td>
<td>?j-ə-</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>ra-</td>
<td>j-ə-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. **Concluding remarks**

The features of the Abkhaz masdar-constructions discussed above can be placed within a wider context of a problem thus far neglected in Abkhaz descriptive grammar, namely hierarchical relationships between direct and indirect objects. DO is generally said to be a more privileged grammatical relation than IO, and this assumption can be supported by ample typological evidence, such as syntactic behaviour of objects in relative clauses, causative and passive constructions etc. Yet, in several syntactic processes IO seems to obtain priority, which obviously contradicts the above-mentioned commonplace assumption. Agreement in bitransitive verbs in languages with object-agreement is likely to be one such process, and the case of Abkhaz is not exceptional. Similar phenomena occur, for instance, in Huichol (Uto-Aztecan): in verbs like ‘give’ object agreement is always with the recipient (Comrie 1982: 107-112). In passive constructions the recipients and benefactives become subjects, thus again taking precedence over patients. For that reason Comrie prefers the term ‘prime object’ rather than more traditional ‘direct object’.

Further evidence is furnished by some Bantu languages, where benefactives and recipients have greater access to object properties than patients (Hyman and Duranti 1982: 223-227). Borg and Comrie (1984) notice for Maltese that some of the DO properties are shared by both patients and recipients, which leads the authors to conclude that the grammatical relation of ‘object’ is *diffuse*. 


To sum up. The grammatical relation traditionally termed ‘indirect object’ can take preponderance over ‘direct object’ and marking the indirect object as though it were the direct object (‘DO type marking’) is not rare (for instance, in English, Hausa, Kinyarwanda; cf. Faltz 1978). Moreover, as Faltz (op.cit., p.82) points out, in cases where direct and indirect objects are in competition, the latter often wins. These facts require an explanation. Reconsidering the traditional grammatical relation hierarchy, as posited by Keenan and Comrie (1977) (S \(\rightarrow\) DO \(\rightarrow\) IO \(\rightarrow\) ... ), and, specifically, placing IO higher than DO on the hierarchy (S \(\rightarrow\) IO \(\rightarrow\) DO ...) would be a straightforward and obviously unsatisfactory solution. A more complex but probably more adequate explanation would be to assume that certain syntactic processes can be better accounted for in terms of the pragmatic hierarchy of semantic roles and their likelihood to become topics, as suggested, for instance, by Givón (1984): Agent > Dative/Benefactive > Patient > ...

Let us return to Abkhaz. While the basic agreement-type can be adequately described in terms of grammatical relations, the masdar agreement requires a different approach. In bivalent verbs discussed under 2.2 the agreement is with object only, so that we can handle solely with the subject/object dichotomy. The case of bitransitive verbs is more intricate. The doubtless priority of IO, which refers to Dative/Benefactive, clearly points to the relevance of the pragmatic hierarchy (Dative/Benefactive \(\rightarrow\) Patient), which interacts with the Person and Animacy Hierarchy, while the Grammatical Relations Hierarchy has much less (if any) impact.

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