Changing valency
Case studies in transitivity

EDITED BY
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# Contents

*List of contributors*  page xi  
*Preface*  xiii  
*List of abbreviations*  xiv  

## 1 Introduction  
by R.M.W. Dixon and Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald  
1 Predicate arguments and clause types  2  
2 Verb classes  4  
3 Changing valency  6  
4 Valency reduction  7  
5 Valency increase  12  
6 An integrated approach  16  
7 Semantic classes of verbs  19  
8 Alternative construction types  21  
9 The studies in this volume  22  
10 Topics for further investigation  25  
References  28  

## 2 A typology of causatives: form, syntax and meaning  
by R.M.W. Dixon  30  
1 Introduction  30  
2 Formal mechanisms  33  
2.1 Morphological processes  33  
2.2 Two verbs in one predicate  34  
2.3 Periphrastic causatives  35  
2.4 Lexical causatives  38  
2.5 Exchanging auxiliaries  41
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3 Syntax</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Of intransitives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Of transitives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Of ditransitives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Double causatives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Semantics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Meaning–mechanism correlations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Summary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| 3 Valency-changing derivation in Central Alaskan Yup’ik by Marianne Mithun |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| 1 Basic morphological structure | 84 |
| 2 Stem types | 84 |
| 3 Valency-reducing derivation | 86 |
| 3.1 Agent omission | 89 |
| 3.2 Patient omission | 93 |
| 4 Valency-increasing derivation | 98 |
| 4.1 Causatives | 98 |
| 4.2 Other agent addition | 105 |
| 5 Applicatives | 108 |
| 6 Summary | 111 |
| References | 113 |

| 4 Transitivity and valency-changing derivations in Motuna by Masayuki Onishi |
|--------------------------|------------------|
| 1 Introduction | 115 |
| 2 The structure of basic verbal clauses | 115 |
| 3 Verb structure and verb classes | 117 |
| 3.1 Verb structure | 118 |
| 3.2 Verb classes | 119 |
| 4 Valency-changing derivations | 126 |
| 4.1 Valency-increasing derivations | 126 |
| 4.2 Valency-reducing derivations | 137 |
| 4.3 Valency-rearranging (stimulative) | 138 |
| 5 Conclusion | 139 |
| Appendix: examples of verbs in each class (§3.2) | 140 |
| References | 143 |
5 **Transitivity in Tariana** by Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald 145
1 Introduction 145
2 Typological characteristics of Tariana 145
  2.1 Grammatical relations 146
  2.2 Verb structure 147
  2.3 Verb types 148
3 Decreasing transitivity 150
  3.1 Passive 150
  3.2 Reciprocal -kaka 152
  3.3 Summary 154
4 Increasing transitivity 154
  4.1 Morphological causatives 155
  4.2 Causative serial verb constructions 159
  4.3 Periphrastic causatives 161
  4.4 Causative mechanisms in Tariana: a comparison 164
  4.5 Argument-adding derivation 166
5 Transitivity and grammatical relations in Tariana 169
  Appendix 5.1: word classes and functional slots in Tariana 171
  Appendix 5.2: Tariana verbal categories 171
  References 172

6 **Voice and valency in the Athapaskan family**
by Keren Rice 173
1 Background 173
2 Background on the argument system 174
  2.1 Grammatical roles 174
  2.2 Lexical verb classes 176
3 On argument-transferring constructions in Athapaskan languages: background 177
4 On marking middle voice: d 178
  4.1 Middle construction types 180
  4.2 Summary 191
  4.3 Passive revisited 192
  4.4 Summary 199
5 Causatives 199
  5.1 Intransitive verbs with patientive subjects 200
  5.2 Intransitive verbs with agentive subjects 204
  5.3 Transitive verbs 209
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contents</th>
<th>ix</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 Conclusions</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References</td>
<td>310</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9 **Valency-changing and valency-encoding devices in Amharic** by Mengistu Amberber 312
1 Introduction 312
2 Argument-reducing derivations 313
   2.1 Passive 314
   2.2 Anticausative 315
3 Argument-adding derivations 317
   3.1 Causatives 317
   3.2 Applicative 321
4 Reflexives and reciprocals 325
   4.1 Reflexives 325
   4.2 Reciprocals 327
5 Valency-encoding devices 327
6 The valency of complex predicates 328
7 Conclusion 330
References 331

10 **Complex verb collocations in Ngan'gityemmeri: a non-derivational strategy for encoding valency alternations**
   by Nicholas Reid 333
1 Preliminaries 333
2 Overview of verbal structure 335
   2.1 Transitivity 339
   2.2 Pronominal cross-referencing on the verb 340
   2.3 Finite verb transitivity 341
   2.4 Coverb valency/transitivity 342
3 Finite verb plus coverb combinations 343
   3.1 ‘Intransitive’ finite verbs plus monovalent coverbs 343
   3.2 ‘Transitive’ finite verbs plus monovalent coverbs (causative effect) 344
   3.3 ‘Intransitive’ and ‘transitive’ finite verbs plus low transitive bivalent coverbs 344
   3.4 ‘Transitive’ finite verbs plus high transitive coverbs 346
   3.5 ‘Intransitive’ finite verbs plus high transitive coverbs (anticausative effect) 347
   3.6 ‘Reflexive’ finite verbs plus bivalent high transitive coverbs 347
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Preface

This volume includes revised versions of ten of the sixteen presentations at the International Workshop on Valency-changing Derivations, held at the Research Centre for Linguistic Typology of the Australian National University, 18–23 August 1997. The position paper for the workshop was Dixon and Aikhenvald’s ‘A typology of argument-determined constructions’ (pp. 71–113 of *Essays on language function and language type*, edited by J. Bybee, J. Haiman and S. Thompson. Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1997). Contributors were also sent a short paper by Dixon on the semantics of causatives; this was later revised and greatly expanded, and is chapter 2 below.

All of the authors have pursued intensive investigation of languages, most of them rather little-known in the literature. They were asked to write in terms of basic linguistic theory – the cumulative theoretical framework in terms of which most descriptive grammars are cast – and to avoid formalisms (which come and go with such frequency that any statement in terms of them will soon become dated and inaccessible).

We thank all of the authors included here, for taking part in the Workshop, for getting their chapters in on time, for revising them according to recommendations of the editors and of the publisher’s referees, and for completing their revisions on schedule.

We are also grateful to Jennifer Elliott, Administrator of the Research Centre for Linguistic Typology, who organized the Workshop with care and flair, coordinated the gathering of papers, and prepared a collated list of abbreviations. To Suzanne Kite, who prepared the indices. And to Kate Brett, our Cambridge editor – sympathetic and yet firm – who played a critical role in getting this volume into its present shape.
List of abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1st person</th>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>--------------</td>
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<td>focus</td>
<td>NGR nasalizing grade</td>
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<td>immediate</td>
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<td>OBJ object case</td>
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<td>OBLQ oblique (non-subject)</td>
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<td>impersonal</td>
<td>OPT optative</td>
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<td>IMPFV</td>
<td>imperfective</td>
<td>PARTICLE participle</td>
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<td>PART passive</td>
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<td>independent</td>
<td>PAUC paucal</td>
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<td>INDEPT</td>
<td>indirect directive</td>
<td>PERF perfect</td>
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<td>INDIC</td>
<td>indicative</td>
<td>PERF perfect</td>
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<td>indirect directive</td>
<td>PERF perfect</td>
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<td>infinitive</td>
<td>PFL plural</td>
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<td>POSI positional</td>
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<td>INS, INST</td>
<td>instrumental</td>
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<td>intransitive</td>
<td>POT potential</td>
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<td>local gender/derivational suffix</td>
<td>PREP preposition</td>
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<td>LAT</td>
<td>lative (motion towards)</td>
<td>PRES present</td>
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<td>level-pitch grade</td>
<td>PROG progressive</td>
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<td>LINK</td>
<td>linker</td>
<td>PROH prohibitive</td>
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<td>LOC</td>
<td>locative</td>
<td>PRSNTV presentative</td>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>masculine/male</td>
<td>PURP purposive</td>
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<tr>
<td>Q</td>
<td>interrogative/question</td>
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</table>
### List of abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<td>S_o</td>
<td>S marked like indirect object</td>
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<td>S_{irr}</td>
<td>irregular S</td>
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<tr>
<td>S_{o}</td>
<td>S marked like O</td>
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<tr>
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<td>simple verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>tense–aspect–mood</td>
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<td>past tense marker, 1 day to 1 year ago</td>
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<td>past tense marker, within today</td>
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<td>past tense marker, years ago</td>
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<td>TOP.ADV</td>
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</tr>
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</table>
Valency-changing and valency-encoding devices in Amharic

MENGISTU AMBERBER

1 Introduction

Amharic belongs to the Ethio-Semitic subgroup of the Semitic language family. As a typical Semitic language, it employs root-and-pattern morphology as its main word-formation strategy. It is a nominative–accusative language with a mixture of head- and dependent-marking. The verb shows subject (S/A) and object / indirect object (O/IO) agreement. Subject agreement is obligatory, whereas object and indirect object agreement is often optional.

Accusative case depends on definiteness: only definite object NPs take the accusative suffix. In fact, definite object NPs must take the accusative suffix. Subject NPs are not marked for case. The indirect object is marked by a prepositional particle which also marks the beneficiary peripheral argument.

Number distinction (singular and plural) is made in all persons (1st, 2nd and 3rd), whereas gender distinction (masculine and feminine) is made in 2nd and 3rd person singular only.

1 I would like to thank Sasha Aikhenvald, Bob Dixon, Debbie Hill and two anonymous referees for their useful suggestions and comments on an earlier draft of this chapter. I would also like to thank the participants of the International Workshop on Valency-changing Derivations, Canberra, 1997, for their insightful comments and questions. Of course, I am responsible for remaining shortcomings.

2 Root-and-pattern morphology is a typical Semitic word-formation strategy. It is basically characterized by a root which consists of consonantal radicals and a pattern which comprises vowels. In general, the roots encode lexical meaning, whereas the patterns encode grammatical meaning. For example, the verb sabbara ‘he broke (tr)’ consists of the triradical root šbr ‘break’, and the pattern C₁C₂C₃ encoded the perfect conjugation with the 3rd person masculine. The infinitive of šbr ‘break’ is masbar ‘to break’ which is formed by attaching the prefix ma- to the pattern -C₁C₂C₃. Traditionally, Amharic verbs are classified into three morphological (conjugational) classes – Type A, Type B and Type C – on the basis of the vocalic pattern of the stem and gemination: whether or not the 2nd radical of the root is geminated throughout the conjugation (cf. Leslau 1995: 280ff.).
The language makes a distinction between basic intransitive and transitive verbs. The relevant transitivity classes are listed in (1):³

(1) (a) **INTRANSITIVE**
   (i) Unaccusative  k'omə ‘stand’
   (ii) Unergative  ča'ffərə ‘dance’
(b) **TRANSITIVE**  səbbərə ‘break (tr)’
(c) **AMBITRANSITIVE**  balla ‘eat’
(d) **EXTENDED TRANSITIVE**  sət'tər ‘give’

There are two sets of intransitive verbs which I will refer to as ‘unaccusative’ and ‘unergative’. The unaccusative class includes verbs which encode state (e.g. k'omə ‘stand’), change of state (e.g. k'allefə ‘melt’) and motion (e.g. mət'tə ‘come’); the unergative class includes verbs which encode activities such as čə'ffərə ‘dance’. There is a small set of ambitransitive (or ‘labile’) verbs of the S = A subtype which almost exclusively contains ingestive verbs such as balla ‘eat’ and tərt'tə ‘drink’. Extended transitive (or ditransitive) verbs which have three core arguments include verbs such as sət'tə ‘give’. In addition, Amharic has copula clauses which express equation, possession, attribution and identity, among other things.

In this chapter, I will discuss valency-changing and valency-encoding devices of Amharic. Essentially, my aim is to make three main points. First, I will show that the lexical semantic distinction between unergatives and unaccusatives is crucial in the organization of transitivity classes in Amharic.

Second, I will argue that the presence of an external causer in bringing about an event is an important parameter in determining whether a verb can have the anticausative form or not.

Third, I will demonstrate that at a descriptive level a distinction should be made between two types of morphosyntactic devices: those which change valency and those which encode valency.

The chapter is organized as follows. In §2 and §3, argument-reducing and argument-adding derivations are discussed respectively. In §4, the reflexive and reciprocal derivations are briefly examined. In §5 valency-encoding devices and bound verbs are discussed. In §6, the valency of complex predicates is addressed.

### 2 Argument-reducing derivations

There are three types of argument-reducing derivations which are derived by attaching the detransitivizer prefix $tə$- ($t$- before a vowel), to a basic transitive verb.

³ The citation form of the verb is inflected in the 3rd person masculine perfect which is the unmarked conjugation.
stem (see also Demoz 1964). They are: (a) the passive, (b) the anticausative and (c) the reflexive. In this section, the derivation of the passive and the anticausative is discussed. As a reflexive clause can also be derived without the use of the detransitivizer prefix, the derivation of the reflexive is discussed in §4 with that of the reciprocal.

2.1 Passive

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRANSITIVE</th>
<th>PASSIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(2) (a) k’orrət’o ‘cut’</td>
<td>tə-k’orrət’o ‘be cut’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) matta ‘hit’</td>
<td>tə-matta ‘be hit’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) gənəbbə ‘build’</td>
<td>tə-gənəbbə ‘be built’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the passive, the O argument of the transitive verb becomes S and the A argument is either omitted or placed in a prepositional phrase (headed by bə-‘by’) as shown in (3b):

(3) (a) aster gəmdə-u-n k’orrət’o-čə
A. rope-def-acc cut+perf-3F
Aster cut the rope

(b) gəmdə-u [bə-aster] tə-k’orrət’ə
rope-def (by-A.) pass-cut+perf+3M
The rope was cut (by Aster)

Typically, the passive does not apply to intransitive verbs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTRANSITIVE</th>
<th>PASSIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(4) (a) hɛdo ‘go’</td>
<td>*tə-hɛdo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) tənə ‘sleep’</td>
<td>*tə-tənə</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) mət’tə ‘come’</td>
<td>*tə-mət’tə</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, a passive-like derivation of intransitive verbs is acceptable with a special shade of meaning: it expresses irony or sarcasm (cf. Leslau 1995: 467). Thus, consider the following example:

(5) wədə bet tə-hɛdo
to home pass-go+perf+3M
So you are going home!

The sarcastic passive has a special rising intonation and is often employed to address the 2nd person. Note that the verb has the default 3rd person masculine agreement.
2.2 Anticausative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TRANSITIVE</th>
<th>ANTICAUSATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(6) (a) sōbbərə ‘break (tr)’</td>
<td>tə-səbbərə ‘break (intr)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(b) kəffətə ‘open (tr)’</td>
<td>tə-kəffətə ‘open (intr)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(c) bəttənə ‘scatter (tr)’</td>
<td>tə-bəttənə ‘scatter (intr)’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The anticausative simply derives intransitive verbs: the O argument of the transitive verb becomes S and there is no A (either demoted or implicitly implied).

The distinction between the passive and the anticausative can be subtle as the same formal strategy (the detransitivizer prefix t(ə)-) is used to derive both constructions. Thus, for instance, the verb tə-səbbərə, like all of the anticausative verbs in (6), can have either a passive reading (‘be broken’) or an anticausative reading (‘break (intr)’). However, it is possible to force a passive reading syntactically as in (7):

(7) tərmus-u bə-lij-u tə-səbbərə
bottle-DEF by-boy- DEF PASS-break+PERF+3M
The bottle was broken (by the boy)

In (7), the presence of the agent (occurring in the peripheral ‘by’-phrase) forces the passive reading alone. Furthermore, it is possible to force the passive reading by placing agent-oriented adverbial phrases like bə-t'iniŋ'k'ak'ẽ ‘with care, with attention’:

(8) (a) bər-u tə-kəffətə
door-DEF ANTC/PASS-open+PERF+3M
The door opened / was opened

(9) If an event encoded by a transitive predicate can be conceptualized as taking place without the intervention of an external causer, the event can be cast in the anticausative.

Thus, by examining the lexical semantic content of the basic verb, it is generally possible to predict whether the anticausative is possible or not. Consider the verbs in (10):

(9) If an event encoded by a transitive predicate can be conceptualized as taking place without the intervention of an external causer, the event can be cast in the anticausative.

Thus, by examining the lexical semantic content of the basic verb, it is generally possible to predict whether the anticausative is possible or not. Consider the verbs in (10):
The events encoded by the transitive verbs *sənat'takə* ‘split’ and *kəddədə* ‘tear’ have an external causer that brings about the event. However, the events can also come about without the intervention of an external causer. For instance, consider the verb *sənat'takə* ‘split’ in (11):

(11) (a) anas'i-w t'awla-w-in *sənat'takə*
carpenter-DEF plank-DEF-ACC split+PERF+3M
The carpenter split the plank

(b) t'awla-w tə-*sənat'takə*
plank-DEF ANTC/PASS-split+PERF+3M
The plank split / was split

The event of ‘a plank splitting’ can come about by an external causer as in (11a), or can happen naturally, for example due to excessive heat. Thus, (11b) can have an anticausative or a passive reading. On the other hand, consider the semantically close verb *fəllat'ə* in (12), which refers to the splitting of wood as a result of using an instrument such as an axe (it also has the meaning ‘chop (wood)’ and ‘quarry (stone)’):

(12) (a) anas'i-w t'awla-w-in *fəllat'ə*
carpenter-DEF plank-DEF-ACC split+PERF+3M
The carpenter split the plank

(b) t'awla-w tə-*fəllat'ə*
plank-DEF PASS-split+PERF+3M
The plank was split

The event encoded by the verb *sənat'takə* ‘split’ differs from that of *fəllat'ə* ‘split/chop’ in one crucial respect: the latter cannot come about without an external causer and as a result it cannot be cast in the anticausative.

The same contrast pertains to a number of verbs in other languages such as English. For instance, as pointed out by Haspelmath (1993: 93), in English the event encoded by *cut* requires an ‘agent-oriented meaning component’ (usually involving a sharp object as an instrument). On the other hand, the event encoded by the verb *tear* can occur without the involvement of an external causer. Thus, the intransitive (‘inchoative’) form of the verb *cut* is ungrammatical – e.g. *the cloth cut* – as opposed to the intransitive form of the verb *tear* – e.g. *the pants tore*.

Most verbs of creation such as *s'afə* ‘write’ and *gənəbbə* ‘build’ do not allow the anticausative interpretation. This follows directly from the
assumption that such verbs require the involvement of an external causer. Thus, ṭa-s'afə can only have the passive meaning ‘be written’.

It appears that if a verb allows the anticausative, it also allows the passive but not vice versa. Hence: anticausative implies passive.

3 Argument-adding derivations

3.1 Causatives

There are two types of causatives: (a) morphological causatives and (b) the periphrastic causative. In morphological causatives, explicit derivational affixes are employed to increase the valency of a verb: a one-place predicate becomes a two-place predicate and a two-place predicate becomes a three-place predicate. In the periphrastic causative an independent causative verb is used to introduce a causer argument. In addition, there are lexical causatives (also referred to as the ‘suppletive’ causative (cf. Haspelmath 1993)), i.e., verbs whose intransitive and transitive forms are morphologically unrelated. Typical examples of lexical causatives in Amharic are presented in (13):

(13) (a) waddockə ‘fall’ t'ala ‘drop (tr)’
    (b) motə ‘die’ gaddə ‘kill’

In this chapter, I will not discuss lexical causatives as they are not relevant to the issue of valency-changing derivations. The following two sub-sections will deal with morphological and periphrastic causatives.

3.1.1 Morphological causatives

There are two types of productive causative prefixes. They are: (a) the causative a- and (b) the causative as-, exemplified in (14a) and (14b) respectively:

(14) (a) ma't'ə ‘come’ a-ma't'ə ‘bring’
(b) k'wərrətə ‘cut’ as-k'wərrətə ‘make x cut y’

The distribution of the two causative prefixes is, by and large, predictable from the lexical semantics of the basic verb.

(a) Causative a- In general, the causative a- attaches only to unaccusatives, as in (15), and not to unergatives as in (16):

(15) (a) k'oma ‘stand (intr)’ a-k'oma ‘stand (tr)’
(b) k'allaətə ‘melt (intr)’ a-k'allaətə ‘melt (tr)’
More examples of unaccusative verbs (including verbs of state, change of state, and motion) which take the causative *a- are presented in (17–19). The category labels for the verb classes are taken from Levin’s (1993) study of English verb classes.

(17) Verbs of Inherently Directed Motion

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ḡabbā‘enter (intr)’</td>
<td>a-ḡabbā ‘insert’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ṭarrā‘descend’</td>
<td>a-ṭarrā‘bring down’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ṭatt’a‘exit’</td>
<td>a-ṭatt’a ‘take out’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(18) Verbs of Emission

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>light ṭaddā‘burn (intr)’</td>
<td>a-ṭaddā ‘burn (tr)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sound ṭānaddā‘explode (intr)’</td>
<td>a-ṭānaddā ‘explode (tr)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>smell t’ānabbā‘stink (intr)’</td>
<td>a-t’ānabbā ‘stink (tr)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>substance ḍemma‘bleed (intr)’</td>
<td>a-ḍemma ‘bleed (tr)’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(19) Verbs of Existence and Appearance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>norō‘exist’</td>
<td>a-norō ‘let exist, put’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bak’k’ālō‘grow’</td>
<td>a-bak’k’alō ‘grow (tr)’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the causative *a-, the causee does not have control over the event (see Dixon’s discussion of the semantic parameters of causatives in chapter 2 of this volume). The causer acts directly and may achieve the result volitionally or non-volitionally. The causer is always involved in the event and can be initiating a natural process or may exert effort.

The alignment of arguments in the causative *a- is quite straightforward: the newly introduced argument and the old S are realized as A and O respectively:

(20) (a) k’ibe-w k’āllat’ō
        butter-DEF melt+PERF+3M
        The butter melted

(b) aster k’ibe-w-in a-k’āllat’ō-čč
        A. butter-DEF-ACC CAUS-melt+PERF+3F
        Aster melted the butter

---

4 The reader should keep in mind that the meaning given in the gloss of a given verb is only the central meaning amongst a number of possible related meanings. For instance, the verb a-ḡabbā, which is the causative of ḡabbā ‘enter’, can have a range of meanings including: ‘bring in’, ‘insert’, ‘take a spouse (in marriage)’, among others.
As already mentioned, the causative \textit{a}- does not attach to unergatives, nor to transitives. However, there is one systematic exception to this generalization. A small class of transitive verbs which express ingestion, such as \textit{b"olla} ‘eat’ and \textit{t\'at\'t\'o} ‘drink’, can take the causative \textit{a}-.

Consider the verb \textit{b"olla} ‘eat’ in (21):

\begin{enumerate}
\item[(21)] (a) \textit{lij-u dabbo b\textaccent"olla} \\
\text{child-DEF bread eat+PERF+3M} \\
\text{The child ate some bread}
\item[(b)] \textit{aster lij-u-n dabbo a-b\textaccent"olla-\textsc{c}-iw} \\
\text{A. child-DEF-ACC bread CAUS-eat+PERF-3F-3MO} \\
\text{Aster fed the child some bread}
\end{enumerate}

Notice in (21b) that when the verb \textit{b\"olla} ‘eat’ takes the causative \textit{a}-, it essentially becomes a three-place predicate with the meaning ‘feed’ (or ‘give to eat’).

Interestingly, these same verbs exhibit special behaviour in a number of languages including Berber (Guerssel 1986: 36ff.), Chichewa (Baker 1988: 461n.31) and Malayalam (Mohanan 1983: 105–6).

\textbf{(b) Causative as-} The causative \textit{as}- has a wider distribution – it applies to transitive and (both unaccusative and unergative) intransitive verbs:

\begin{enumerate}
\item[(22)] (a) \textit{k\textaccent"orr\textaccent\textasciitilde't\textaccent\textasciitilde} ‘cut’ \textit{as-k\textaccent"orr\textaccent\textasciitilde't\textaccent\textasciitilde} ‘cause to cut’
\item[(b)] \textit{mat\textaccent\textasciitilde't\textaccent\textasciitilde} ‘come’ \textit{as-mat\textaccent\textasciitilde't\textaccent\textasciitilde} ‘cause to come’
\item[(c)] \textit{\textaccent\textasciitilde'aff\textaccent\textasciitilde're} ‘dance’ \textit{as-\textaccent\textasciitilde'aff\textaccent\textasciitilde're} ‘make dance’
\end{enumerate}

With intransitive verbs, the new argument introduced by the causative \textit{as}- becomes the A of the derived verb, and the old S of the intransitive verb becomes O:

\begin{enumerate}
\item[(23)] (a) \textit{aster \textaccent\textasciitilde'aff\textaccent\textasciitilde're-\textaccent\textasciitilde'} \\
\text{A. dance+PERF-3F} \\
\text{Aster danced}
\item[(b)] \textit{lemma aster-in as-\textaccent\textasciitilde'aff\textaccent\textasciitilde're-at} \\
\text{L. A.-ACC CAUS-dance+PERF+3M-3FO} \\
\text{Lemma made Aster dance}
\end{enumerate}

In the case of transitive verbs, the new argument introduced by the causative \textit{as}- becomes the A of the derived verb and the old A becomes the new O. The O of the basic verb is either retained or omitted:

\begin{enumerate}
\item[(24)] (a) \textit{aster siga-w-in k'orr\textaccent\textasciitilde't\textaccent\textasciitilde'o-\textaccent\textasciitilde'} \\
\text{A. meat- DEF-ACC cut+PERF-3F} \\
\text{Aster cut the meat}
\end{enumerate}
Lemma made Aster cut (some meat)

When the O of the basic verb is retained, it is often realized as indefinite, due to a tendency to avoid double-accusative NPs (though this does not mean that a clause with double-accusatives is ungrammatical). Note that the causee is always definite and thus obligatorily marked as accusative.

In some cases, omitting the object of the basic verb may cause ambiguity. For instance, in (24b), if the NP *sig* `meat` is omitted, the construction could mean either: (a) `he made her cut (something unspecified)` or (b) `he had her be cut (by someone)`.

The causer of the causative *as*- may act directly or indirectly, volitionally or non-volitionally. Although typically the causer of the causative *as*- exerts force, it need not be coercive. However, the causer itself is often not involved in the event. This property of the causer of the causative *as*- is in marked contrast to that of the causative *a*- where the causer is always directly involved in the event. Consider the verb *wa*t'a* `exit/leave` in (25):

(25) (a) aster *wa*t'a-čč
A. exit_PERF+3F
Aster exited

(b) Lemma aster-in a-*wa*t'a-t
L. A.-ACC CAUS-exit_PERF+3M-3fO
Lemma took Aster out (as in `out of the house`)?

(c) Lemma aster-in as-*wa*t'a-t
L. A.-ACC CAUS-exit_PERF+3M-3fO
Lemma made Aster exit
Lemma let Aster exit

In (25b), with the causative *a*-,, the causer is directly involved in the event, e.g. the causer physically transports the causee. In (25c), with the causative *as*-,, the causer is not directly involved in the event, e.g. the causer can simply issue an order.

Notice that the causative *as*- can also have a permissive interpretation (`let`) where the causer is conceptualized as helping the causee, or at least not obstructing the efforts of the causee.

5 It is possible to analyse the causative *as*- as a three-place predicate (as argued in Alsina 1992 for Chichewa) with an agent, a causee (an affected object) and an event, where the causee is also an argument of the basic verb. The causee can be identified either with the subject or the object of the basic verb. It is when the causee is identified with the object of the basic verb that the subject takes an oblique position.

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**Mengistu Amberber**

(b) lemma aster-in (sig) as-k′orrat′-at
L. A.-ACC (meat) CAUS-cut+ PERF+3M-3fO
Lemma made Aster cut (some meat)
3.1.2 Periphrastic causative
The periphrastic causative is formed by the independent verb \textit{adəṛrəgo} ‘make’. The semantically basic verb is marked by a complementizer particle:

\begin{equation}
\begin{array}{l}
\text{aster lamma ʷədə bet ind-i-hed adəṛrəgo-čč}\\
\text{A. L. to home COMP-IMPERF+3M-go+IMPERF make+PERF-3F}\\
\text{Aster made Lemma go home}
\end{array}
\end{equation}

The periphrastic can apply to both intransitive and transitive verbs and its meaning is often indistinguishable from the causative \textit{as}-. However, one important difference between the periphrastic causative and the causative \textit{as}- is seen with negation. Consider the examples in (27):

(27) (a) kasa aster ind-a-ti-hed adəṛrəgo\\
\text{K. A. COMP-NEG-IMPERF+3F-go+IMPERF make+PERF+3M}\\
\text{Kasa prevented Aster from going (lit. he made her not go)}

(27) (b) kasa aster-in al-as-hed-at-imm\\
\text{K. A.-ACC NEG-CAUS-go+PERF+3M-3FO-NEG}\\
\text{Kasa did not make Aster go}

As (27a) shows, the periphrastic causative allows for the polarity of the embedded verb to be different from that of the matrix verb. Thus, negation can have scope over the embedded verb alone. In the causative \textit{as}-, on the other hand, negation has scope over the entire clause.

3.2 Applicative
Amharic has one type of construction which can be described as applicative. Consider the examples in (28–29):

(28) aster bə-matˈrəgiya-w dajj tˈərəṛ-gə-čč-[ɪbət]\\
\text{A. with-broom-DEF doorway sweep+PERF-3F-(with-3M0)}\\
\text{Aster swept a doorway with the broom}

(29) aster matˈrəgiya-w-in dajj tˈərəṛ-gə-čč-ɪbb-ət\\
\text{A. broom-DEF-ACC doorway sweep+PERF-3F-with-3MO}\\
\text{Aster swept a doorway with the broom (lit. Aster, the broom, she swept a doorway with it)}

In (28), the instrumental NP occurs with the prepositional element \textit{bə-} ‘with’ (which also has a range of different prepositional meanings including ‘by’, ‘at’, ‘on’). The verb is optionally marked by the form -\textit{bb}-, which is similar to the prepositional form \textit{bə-}, followed by a pronominal agreement suffix which cross-references the instrumental NP (see also Haile 1970). In this construction, the form -\textit{bb}- and the pronominal suffix that follows it occur as a unit, i.e., one cannot occur without the other.
Notice that (29) is different from (28) in two important ways: (a) the instrumental NP occurs without the prepositional particle $b\theta$- and is marked by the accusative suffix, and (b) the prepositional suffix -$bb$- and the pronominal agreement suffix that follows it are no longer optional. Although the term ‘applicative’ has not been used in the description of Amharic, it is used here to refer to constructions such as (29) where an erstwhile peripheral argument occurs as a core argument. For ease of exposition, the prepositional suffix in (29) will be glossed as the applicative marker as in (30):

\begin{align*}
\text{(30)} & \quad \text{aster mat'ragiya-w-in dajj t'arrago-\text{-}ibb-at} \\
& \quad \text{A. broom-DEF-ACC doorway sweep+PERF-3F-APPLIC-3MO} \\
& \quad \text{Aster swept a doorway with the broom}
\end{align*}

The applicative is quite productive in that it applies to both transitive and intransitive verbs as the following examples show:

\begin{align*}
\text{(31) (a)} & \quad k"\text{arrat'ø} \quad \text{‘cut’} \quad k"\text{arrat'ø-}bb-\text{at} \quad \text{‘cut with/on’} \\
\text{(b)} & \quad sak'ø \quad \text{‘laugh’} \quad sak'ø-\text{bb-at} \quad \text{‘laugh at’} \\
\text{(c)} & \quad w\text{oaddak'ø} \quad \text{‘fall’} \quad w\text{oaddak'ø-}bb-\text{at} \quad \text{‘fall on’}
\end{align*}

Thus, the applicative derivation applies to a range of peripheral arguments including instrument, malefactive and locative. There is another prepositional suffix, namely -$ll$- (similar to the prepositional particle $l\theta$- ‘for’, ‘to’), which often occurs with beneficiary arguments as in (32):

\begin{align*}
\text{(32)} & \quad \text{aster-in farrado-ll-at} \\
& \quad \text{A.-ACC judge+PERF+3M-APPLIC-3FO} \\
& \quad \text{He judged in Aster’s favour (i.e., he acquitted her)}
\end{align*}

In general, the applicative marker -$ll$- marks a beneficiary argument, thus paradigmatically contrasting with -$bb$- which can mark the malefactive. This contrast can be seen by comparing (32) with (33):

\begin{align*}
\text{(33)} & \quad \text{aster-in farrado-}bb-\text{at} \\
& \quad \text{A.-ACC judge+PERF+3M-APPLIC-3FO} \\
& \quad \text{He judged to the disadvantage of Aster (i.e., he convicted her)}
\end{align*}

The applicative marker -$bb$- has a wider distribution, marking the instrumental, locative and malefactive arguments, whereas -$ll$- is generally restricted to benefactive arguments.

There is an interesting interaction between the malefactive applicative and the two types of intransitive verbs. Consider the unergative verb sak'ø ‘laugh’ in (34):
(34) (a) astemari-wa ba-lij-u sak'iãočč
teacher-DEF+F at-boy-DEF laugh+PERF-3F
The teacher laughed at the boy

(b) astemari-wa lij-u-n sak'iãočč-ibb-át
teacher-DEF+F boy-DEF-ACC laugh+PERF-3F-APPLIC-3MO
The teacher laughed at the boy

In (34a), the malefactive argument occurs with its prepositional marking.
In (34b), which is the applicative construction, the malefactive argument
is marked as accusative, as expected. Now, consider the unaccusative verb
Tašaabær ‘break (intr)’ in (35):

(35) (a) *t'armus-u ba-aster tə-saabær
bottle-DEF on-A. ANTC-break+PERF+3M
(for ‘the bottle broke to the disadvantage of Aster’)
(OK as: ‘the bottle was broken by Aster’)

(b) aster-(in) t'armus-u tə-saabær-bb-at
A.-((ACC) bottle-DEF ANTC-break+PERF+3M-APPLIC-3MO
The bottle broke to the disadvantage of Aster

Notice that there are two important differences between (34) and (35). First,
unlike the malefactive of the unergative verb sak'ió ‘laugh’, the malefactive of
the unaccusative verb Tašaabær ‘break (intr)’ cannot occur in the preposi-
tional phrase (marked by ba-) as shown in (35a). Note that the construction
is grammatical only as a passive, i.e., if the preposition ba- is interpreted
as ‘by’.

Second, the malefactive argument occurs with an (optional) accusative case
and occupies a clause-initial position as shown in (35b). If the malefactive argu-
ment of the unaccusative verb does not occur in a clause-initial position, the
construction becomes ungrammatical as shown in (36):

(36) *t'armus-u aster-(in) tə-saabær-bb-at
bottle-DEF A.-((ACC) ANTC-break+PERF+3M-APPLIC-3MO

This structural pattern of unaccusative verbs is quite productive. In fact, it
occurs even with unaccusatives which do not normally take any referential
argument. Consider the verb Maššá ‘become night’ (or ‘become dark’) in
(37):

(37) aster-(in) maššá-bb-at
A.-((ACC) become.night+PERF+3M-APPLIC-3MO
It became night (it got dark) to the disadvantage of Aster
(lit. Aster, it became night on her)
Normally, the verb $m\ddot{a}\ddot{s}{\check{e}}$ ‘become night’ does not take any referential argument. However, through the applicative construction, the event can be cast as adversely affecting someone as shown in (37).

Hence, the question is: what is the cause of the variation between the two intransitive predicates? A detailed analysis of the phenomenon is beyond the scope of this chapter. However, I believe that the key to the solution resides in the lexical semantics and argument structure of the predicates in question. The malefactive argument has a different conceptual status depending on the lexical semantics of the basic predicate along the following lines:

(38) (a) The malefactive of unergatives is an implicit argument which specifies the stimulus of the event.
(b) The malefactive of unaccusatives is an experiencer (‘undergoer’) argument.

Thus, consider the event encoded by the verb $sak\hat{o}$ ‘laugh’. When someone laughs, there is often a stimulus for the event. I suggest that the malefactive argument specifies that stimulus. On the other hand, with unaccusatives, the malefactive is simply an experiencer (or ‘undergoer’) argument.

The difference between the malefactive of the two predicates (unergative vs unaccusative) can be highlighted by content questions:

(39) (a) Who was she laughing at?
(b) Who was affected by the breaking of the bottle?

If you see somebody laughing, you can ask the question in (39a). This question is normal, because the malefactive argument is implicitly part of the lexical semantics of the basic verb – it is an argument which elaborates the activity event.

On the other hand, if you see a bottle breaking, the question in (39b) is quite odd, at least without prior background information. This is so because the malefactive argument is not part of the lexical semantics of the basic verb.

We have seen that the malefactive of the unaccusative verb occurs with an optional accusative marker and is cross-referenced by an obligatory object pronominal suffix on the verb. I argue that this fact is connected to the experiencer status of the malefactive argument. The evidence for this assumption comes from the argument structure of the so-called ‘impersonal’ verbs of sensation, emotion and perception which have quirky subjects. Consider the verbs $amn\ddot{e}\ddot{m}$- ‘be/become ill’, $r\ddot{a}b\hat{o}$- ‘be/become hungry’ and $b\ddot{e}r\ddot{r}\ddot{a}d\hat{e}$ ‘be/become cold’ in (40):
It is obvious that the arguments of the impersonal verbs are undergoing a physical and/or mental experience. Notice that the arguments occur with an optional accusative case and control obligatory object agreement, exactly like the malefactive arguments of the unaccusatives. The argument which controls subject agreement can be regarded as the physical and/or mental state itself which is represented by it in the literal English translations.

It is interesting to note that the experiencer arguments of the impersonal verbs and the malefactive argument of the unaccusative verbs lack volitional control over the event. Thus, sentences such as (35b) can be employed to express events that are accidental or unexpected – for example, if the bottle broke after slipping out of one’s grip.

4 Reflexives and reciprocals

4.1 Reflexives
The reflexive applies to transitive verbs. The prefix t(ə)-, which we have seen in the passive and anticausative, is also used to derive the reflexive:

(41) (a) aster t-at'təbə-čč
A. refl-wash+PERF-3F
Aster washed herself

Note that, as in the anticausative, the reflexive verb can have a passive interpretation as well. However, with verbs such as at'təbə ‘wash’ and laččə ‘shave’ which express events that normally affect a bodypart, the preferred reading is that of the reflexive.
A reflexive clause can be derived without applying a valency-changing derivation. Amharic has a strategy of reflexivization which maintains the valency of the predicate and employs reflexive pronouns. The reflexive pronouns are formed by the root *(i)ras* ‘self’ (which also means ‘head’) plus possessive pronominal suffixes.

(42)  ləmma ras-u-n  mətta
     L.  self-poss+3M-ACC hit+PERF+3M
     Lemma hit himself

Notice that the reflexive pronoun occurs in the O slot and is marked by the accusative suffix. The verb *mətta* ‘hit’ can take the prefix *t*- as in *tə-mətta* but it has only the passive interpretation. Thus, there is no reflexive of *mətta* ‘hit’:

(43)  *ləmma tə-mətta
     L.  refl-hit+PERF+3M
     (for ‘Lemma hit himself’)
     (OK as: ‘Lemma was hit’)

Thus, verbs which do not take the reflexive prefix occur with reflexive pronouns to form the reflexive. The set of transitive verbs which take the prefix *t(ə)*- but do not have a reflexive meaning include verbs such as *mətta* ‘hit’ and *gəddəə* ‘kill’. On the other hand, the set of transitive verbs which take the the prefix *t(ə)*- and have a reflexive meaning include verbs such as *atʰəəbə* ‘wash’ and *lač’əə* ‘shave’. Thus, the reflexive verbs refer to actions that are normally performed on one’s own bodypart.

Interestingly, with verbs which encode events that affect parts of the body, the reflexive verb can take an accusative-marked argument:

(44)  ləmma ras-u-n  tə-lač’əə
     L.  head-poss+3M-ACC refl-shave+PERF+3M
     Lemma shaved his head
     (*for ‘Lemma shaved himself’*)

However, note that the sentence in (44) is acceptable only if the form *(i)ras* is interpreted as ‘head’ (instead of as ‘self’). Thus, the equivalent of ‘he shaved his beard’ involves the relevant body part in the O slot as in (45):

(45)  ləmma si’m-u-n  tə-lač’əə
     L.  beard-poss+3M-ACC refl-shave+PERF+3M
     Lemma shaved his beard
It is also important to note that the reflexive pronouns can have an emphatic function and occur in subject or object position:

(46) (a) \( \text{iras-u mat't'a} \)
    self-poss+3M come+perf+3M
    He (not anyone else) came

(b) aster \( \text{iras-u-n ayyə-č-iw} \)
    A. self-poss+3M-ACC see+perf-3f-3Mo
    Aster saw him (not anyone else)

4.2 Reciprocals

Reciprocity is expressed by the prefix \( t(ə) \)- plus a special reduplicative stem inflected in the plural. For a triradical verb such as \( nəkkəsə \) ‘bit’, the reduplicative pattern is \( tə+C_1əC_2əC_3əC_3ə- \):

(47) \( \text{wiśš-očč-u tə-nəkakkəs-u} \)
    dog-pl-def recip-bit+recip+perf-3pl
    The dogs bit each other

In addition to the reciprocal stem, there are reciprocal pronouns formed by the stem \( ərsbərs \) plus a plural possessive suffix:

(48) \( \text{səww-očč-u ərsbərs-aččəw tə-ðəbaddəb-u} \)
    person-pl-def each.other-poss+3pl recip-hit+recip+perf-3pl
    The people hit each other

The reciprocal pronoun cannot take the accusative case suffix:

(49) \( *səww-očč-u ərsbərs-aččəw-in tə-ðəbaddəb-u \)
    person-pl-def each.other-poss+3pl-ACC recip-hit+recip+perf-3pl

The absence of an accusative-marked NP in the O slot indicates that the reciprocal derivation always reduces valency.

5 Valency-encoding devices

In Amharic, one has to distinguish strictly valency-changing devices from valency-encoding devices.

Valency-changing devices are involved in directional alternation (in the sense of Haspelmath 1993: 91), i.e., either an intransitive form is formally basic and the transitive is derived from it or else the transitive is basic and the intransitive is derived from it. In addition to this pattern, we need to recognize non-directed alternation, or what Haspelmath (1993) calls ‘equipollent
alternation’ in which both the intransitive and transitive forms of a verb are derived from a common stem by employing different affixes or auxiliary verbs.

Amharic and other Ethio-Semitic languages have a number of verbs which do not occur in their basic forms despite their phonological well-formedness. Such verbs can be described as bound because they are not well formed unless they occur with a derivational prefix. Consider the following examples:

(50) (a)  ta-dassətə  ‘be pleased, be happy’
         as-dassətə  ‘please (tr), make happy’
         (*-dassətə)
(b)    tə-k'əmmətə  ‘sit (intr), be placed’
         as-k'əmmətə  ‘sit (tr), put’
         (*-k'əmmətə)

Both the transitive and intransitive verbs are derived by attaching the relevant prefix to the same bound form. Thus, bound verbs occur with valency-encoding prefixes. Note that it is not possible to predict the class of verbs that require valency-encoding prefixes on morphophonological or lexical semantic grounds.

6 The valency of complex predicates

A study of transitivity classes in Amharic would not be complete without examining the valency of complex predicates. There is a productive complex predicate which essentially involves the juxtaposing of the verb alə ‘say’ or the verb adərrəqə ‘make/do’ with a verbal noun:

(51)  t'ərmus-u sibbir  alə
       bottle-DEF break+VN say+PERF+3M
       The bottle broke

In (51), it is only the verb alə ‘say’ that is inflected for tense/aspect and pronominal agreement. The element which co-occurs with the verb alə ‘say’ takes no verbal inflection. I will employ the terms ‘verbal noun’ (VN) and ‘simple verb’ (SV) to refer to the non-inflected constituent of the predicate (e.g. sibbir ‘break+VN’) and the inflected verb (e.g. alə ‘say’) respectively. The latter is sometimes known by the term ‘light verb’ – a term familiar from the study of similar constructions in languages such as Japanese (cf. Grimshaw and Mester 1988). See also Reid’s chapter in this volume for a similar complex verb formation in Ngan'gityemerri and other Daly/Kimberley languages.
Although the verbal noun does not have the usual verbal inflection, it occurs with distinct templates. In a typical triradical root, the.vn appears in two different templates, which can be identified as intensive and attenuative respectively (cf. Beyene 1972):

(52) (a) Intensive: $C_1^iC_2^iC_3$
(b) Attenuative: $C_1^oC_2^oC_3$

Although the intensive and attenuative templates encode a range of related meanings, the most common meaning component has to do with the manner in which the event is realized: for instance, whether the patient argument is completely affected or not or whether the action is more intense or not. Thus, in (51) where the predicate occurs with the intensive template, there is a sense in which the action is rather intense.

Synchronically, there are a number of constructions in which the position of the.vn is filled with onomatopoeic items:

(53) (a) zinab-u  t‘abb t‘abb alɔ
   rain-DEF ‘drip’ say+PERF+3M
   The rain dripped
   (lit. the rain said: ‘t‘abb t‘abb’)
(b) gomma-w sit’it’t’ alɔ
   tyre-DEF ‘squeak’ say+PERF+3M
   The tyre squeaked
   (lit. the tyre (of a car) said: ‘sit’it’t’’)

Interestingly, the complex predicate formed by the verb alɔ ‘say’ occurs only in intransitive clauses. Thus, the simple verb alɔ ‘say’ cannot occur in transitive clauses:

(54) (a) *aster t‘armus-u-n sibbir alɔ-čč
   A. bottle-DEF-ACC break+VN say+PERF-3F
   (for ‘Aster broke the bottle’)
(b) *anas‘i-w t‘awla-w-in sint’t‘iık’ alɔ
   carpenter-DEF plank-DEF-ACC split+VN say+PERF-3F
   (for ‘the carpenter split the plank’)

The transitive variants of the above constructions involve another simple verb, namely the verb adərrəgo ‘make/do’:

(55) (a) aster t‘armus-u-n sibbir adərrəgo-čč
   A. bottle-DEF-ACC break+VN do+PERF-3F
   Aster broke the bottle
The carpenter split the plank

Notice that the same verbal noun can occur with either *alọ* ‘say’ or *adəraqọ* ‘make/do’ with a corresponding difference in transitivity. For instance, compare (54a) with (55a). In both clauses, the verbal noun (*sibbir* ‘break+vn’) is constant and the valency of the predicate is indicated by the simple verbs. Thus, the simple verbs are valency-encoding devices parallel to the valency-encoding prefixes discussed in §5.

7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed valency-changing and valency-encoding devices in Amharic.

First, I showed that the lexical semantic distinction between unergatives and unaccusatives is important in determining transitivity. Second, I argued that the presence of an external causer in bringing about an event is a crucial lexical semantic notion that is responsible for the presence of the anticausative derivation. Third, I suggested that at a descriptive level valency-encoding devices should be recognized as distinct from valency-changing devices.

Excluding the applicative, the morphological derivations which we have seen so far can be categorized into two broad classes: (a) micro-derivations and (b) macro-derivations. Micro-derivations apply to a relatively restricted class of verbs and are more sensitive to the lexical semantic property of the basic predicate (for instance, whether or not the event can come about without the involvement of an external causer). Macro-derivations are relatively free in their application:

(56) (a) Micro-derivations
    (i) anticausative
    (ii) causative *a-*
    (iii) reflexive/reciprocal

(b) Macro-derivations
    (i) passive
    (ii) causative *as-*

6 For the applicative, one has to examine the interaction between the peripheral arguments (including locative, benefactive, malefactive, instrumental) on the one hand, and transitivity classes on the other – a task which is beyond the scope of this chapter.
It can be argued (as pointed out to me by Masayoshi Shibatani) that the anticausative, the passive and the reflexive can be grouped in one class under the label ‘middle’ (see also Kemmer 1993):

\[(57) \quad \text{middle} \]
\[\begin{align*}
(a) & \quad \text{anticausative} \\
(b) & \quad \text{passive} \\
(c) & \quad \text{reflexive}
\end{align*}\]

The grouping of these three derivations under the label ‘middle’ can be justified mainly on morphological grounds: the prefix \(t(\ddagger)\)- is employed in all cases. (Note that the reciprocal is excluded from the class because it requires reduplication in addition to the prefix.)

However, from a syntactico-semantic perspective, the verbs that take the prefix \(t(\ddagger)\)- hardly constitute a homogenous (‘middle’) class in Amharic. Indeed, we have seen that the anticausative applies only to a restricted class of transitive verbs, whereas the passive applies to any basic transitive verb. The reflexive typically applies to events that normally affect a bodypart. Unlike the anticausative and the passive, the reflexive does not necessarily reduce valency because the bodypart NP can occur in the O position.

Needless to say, a chapter of this size cannot cover all of the intricacies of valency-changing and valency-encoding devices in Amharic. However, I hope that the chapter presents a general overview of the transitivity designs of the language which would be of interest for linguistic typology.

References


Abbott, M. 36
Abbott, M. L. 49, 60
Afcan, P. 84
Aissen, J. 37
Alcalay, R. 43
Allen, B. J. 44
Allen, J. 115
Allen, W. S. 57
Alsina, A. 320
Amberber, M. 5, 11–12, 14, 23, 34, 51, 63, 312–32
Arce-Aranales, M. 178
Arokianathan, S. 67
Aronson, H. I. 34
Austin, P. 11, 21, 32, 70
Axelrod, M. 178, 183, 189–90, 211, 223–4, 226–7
Ayres, G. 276
Baker, M. C. 44, 53, 63, 319, 389
Barber, E. J. A. 375
Barnard, J. T. O. 282
Bauer, W. 64
Benedict, P. K. 296, 308
Beyene, T. 329
Bhatia, T. K. 55
Bokarev, E. A. 362
Booker, K. M. 378
Borgman, D. M. 55
Bre´en, J. G. 396
Bruce, L. 69, 73
Campbell, L. 8, 10, 15, 23, 34, 64, 236–81
Capell, A. 334

Chapman, S. 43
Clifton, J. R. 68
Cole, P. 50–1, 66
Comrie, B. 5, 23–4, 26, 32, 35, 48, 51, 54–5, 74, 77–8, 357, 360–74, 377
Cook, A. 334
Cook, E.-D. 184, 193–4
Cooreman, A. 10
Corbett, G. G. 176
Croft, W. 375, 378, 386, 389, 391, 394
Crowley, T. M. 34, 44, 63, 159
Crystal, D. 375
Curnow, T. J. 57, 71
Dai Qingxia 282, 308
Dayley, J. P. 248, 250, 262, 273
Demoz, A. 314
Derbyshire, D. C. 43, 57, 62
Dimmendaal, G. 43
Driem, G. van 308
Dubinsky, S. 59
Durie, M. 160
Egede, P. 84
England, N. C. 16
Eva, H. 51
Evans, N. 63, 352
Fenyvesi, A. 55
Fodor, J. A. 40
Foley, W. 39, 64, 68, 159
Fortescue, M. 55, 93
Fox, B. 178
Frantz, D. G. 44
Frawley, W. 30, 358

Gair, J. W. 55
Gardiner, D. B. 44
Gibson, J. 53
Givón, T. 74, 77
Goddard, P. E. 177
Golla, V. 174–5, 180–1, 185, 187, 189, 195, 201–2, 218–19, 221–2
Golovko, E. V. 73
Gordon, L. 379
Grayson, G. W. 397
Grimes, C. E. 69
Grimshaw, J. 328
Guerssel, M. 319
Guirardello, R. 49
Gwynn, J. P. L. 49

Haas, M. R. 38, 375, 378, 381, 402
Haile, G. 321
Haiman, J. 70, 74, 77, 165
Hale, K. 37, 157, 199, 204, 206, 208, 236, 251, 258
Hardy, D. E. 378, 381
Hargus, S. 179, 230
Haspelmath, M. 11, 120, 316–17, 327, 367
Haviland, J. 26
Hetzron, R. 43, 46, 69
Hewitt, B. G. 55, 57
Hinton, L. 70
Hohier, H. 187
Holes, C. 34
Hopper, P. J. 19, 124, 229–30, 342, 346
Hurd, C. 115
Hyslop, C. 64

Imnjavili, D. S. 362
Jacobson, S. A. 84, 90, 92, 97, 100–1, 104, 107, 109–10
Jelinek, E. 175
Jespersen, O. 376
Jetté, J. 180, 182, 184, 188, 190, 200, 202, 205, 209, 212, 214, 220
Jeyapaul, V. Y. 60
Jones, E. 180, 182, 184, 188, 190, 200, 202, 205, 209, 212, 214, 220
Joseph, B. D. 38

Kachru, Y. 67
Kakumasu, J. 63
Kari, J. 175–6, 179–85, 188–9, 200, 203–5, 210–13, 220, 225, 230
Karjalainen, M. 55

Kaufman, T. 240, 279
Kazenzin, K. I. 6, 21
Keenan, E. L. 54
Kemmer, S. 11–12, 122, 179, 191, 230, 290, 331, 381
Kenesei, I. 55
Keyser, S. J. 11
Kibrik, A. A. 177–8, 185, 192, 194, 197–9, 203, 220, 223–4, 226–8
Kimenyi, A. 4
Klaiman, M. H. 120, 122, 386
Kleinschmidt, S. 84, 96
Koehn, E. 55, 61
Koehn, S. 55, 61
Konaré, M. 31, 57
Kornfilt, J. 54, 55
Koul, O. N. 34
Kozinsky, I. 51
Krauss, M. 84, 177
Krishnamurti, Bh. 49, 68
Kulikov, L. I. 59, 71

LaPolla, R. J. 3, 8, 11–12, 15, 23, 26–7, 43, 50, 57, 61, 282–311
Larsen, T. W. 236, 240, 243, 250–4, 256–8, 261, 263, 267, 277
Lee, Y. 73
Leslau, W. 312, 314
Levin, B. 315, 318
Li, C. N. 38, 117
Li, F.-K. 194
Liu, J. 282
Llorret, M.-R. 59
Lo, C. 282
Lord, C. 34
Lyons, J. 11

Mahootian, S. 36
Maran, L. R. 68
Martin, J. B. 4, 8, 12, 14, 24, 27, 51, 65, 375–403
Masica, C. P. 68
Matisoff, J. A. 34, 59, 284
Mauldin, M. M. 385, 393
McDonough, J. 178
McGregor, W. 334, 336
Mei, T. 296
Merlan, F. 328, 334
Mester, A. 328
Michailovsky, B. 308
Midgette, S. 188, 190, 197–8, 203, 206–8, 210–11, 216–17, 221
Mithun, M. 5, 6, 7, 10, 15, 17–18, 22, 26, 32, 48, 72, 84–114, 266
Miyao, O. 84
Mohanan, K. P. 319
Moravcsik, E. 61
Morgan, W. 175, 180–2, 184, 186–8, 190, 197–8, 201, 203, 206–8, 210–11, 216–17, 221, 227–8
Morice, A. G. 181, 183, 186, 189–90, 195, 203, 205, 210, 221
Morse, R. H. 283–4, 296
Mosel, U. 52
Munro, P. 377, 379
Nathan, M. 378
Nedjalkov, I. 56
Nedjalkov, V. P. 43, 48, 60, 62, 64, 74, 92
Newman, P. 59
Nichols, J. 17, 19, 32, 112
Nik’te’, M. J. S. L. 245–6, 255, 265
Norman, W. M. 240, 242, 250, 252, 254, 256, 259–60, 273, 277
O’Connor, M. C. 32, 112
Oliver, D. 122
Olson, M. 159
Onishi, M. 5, 12, 15, 16, 22, 45, 61, 64, 71, 115–44
Oswalt, R. L. 17, 32, 112
Otaina, G. A. 43, 48, 60, 62
Owens, J. 51
Palmer, F. R. 54
Pandharipande, R. V. 45, 55, 65
Pastika, W. 64
Payen, D. L. 51, 60
Payne, T. E. 51
Philippaki-Warbuton, I. 38
Platero, P. 199, 204, 206, 208
Polinsky, M. 51, 362, 370, 374
Popjes, J. 36
Rajabov, R. 362
Rappaport, M. 315
Reed, I. 84
Reid, N. 8, 15, 21, 23, 26, 41, 328, 333–59
Rice, K. 5, 8, 12, 18, 21, 23, 27, 61, 64–5, 173–235
Robinson, S. 9, 64
Roeper, T. 11
Saksena, A. 67, 73
Saltarelli, M. 57
Sam Colop, L. E. 236, 239, 243, 248, 251, 253–4, 256–61, 264–5, 267–9, 272–3, 278
Saqijix, C. D. L. I. 243, 245–6, 255, 265
Sastry, G. D. P. 47
Saxon, L. 175, 192–3, 196
Schachter, P. 160
Schaub, W. 53
Schultze-Berndt, E. 334
Seki, L. 55
Senn, A. 34
Shaler, D. 170
Sharma, J. C. 68
Shibatani, M. 9, 12, 16, 30, 65, 90, 331
Shopen, T. 31, 57
Siewierska, A. 9
Silnitsky, G. G. 64, 74
Smith-Stark, T. 250, 266
Sohn, H.-M. 31
Song, J. J. 33, 44
Sridhar, S. N. 45, 55
Stanley, R. 179
Storto, L. 236, 251, 258
Story, G. 174
Suhandano 34, 52, 71
Sulkala, H. 55
Sumbatova, N. R. 46, 56
Sun, H. 282
Svantesson, J.-O. 53, 70
Tampubolon, D. P. 63
Tamura, S. 43
Tavares, P. 46
Tenenbaum, J. 195
Thomas, D. D. 69
Thomas, D. M. 69–70
Thompson, S. A. 19, 38, 117, 125, 229–30, 342, 346
Tonoiike, S. 65
Trechsel, F. R. 236, 240, 251, 255, 258–9, 261–2, 266, 272–3, 275
Trithart, M. 53
Tsujimura, N. 65
Tuttle, S. 230
Vago, R. M. 55
Vitale, A. J. 53, 66
Vogel, A. 53
Wali, K. 34
Watkins, L. J. 35
Willie, M. 175
Wise, M. R. 73
Woodbury, A. C. 84, 93
Xolodovič, A. A. 43, 48, 60, 62
Xu, X. 308
Young, R. W. 175, 180–2, 184, 186–8, 190, 197–8, 201, 203, 206–8, 210–11, 216–17, 221, 227–8
Index of languages and language families

Abaza 57
Abkhaz 57, 65, 76, 376
Afroasiatic 51
Ainu 43
Akan 160
Alabama 378
Alambalak 69, 73, 76–7
Aleut 73
Amazonian languages 154
Ambae 64
Amharic 5, 8, 11–12, 14–15, 23, 34, 51–2, 63, 75–6, 312–32
Andi 360
Andic 360
Anung 282–3
Apachean 173
Apalachee 378
Apalai 55, 60, 62, 68, 75–7
Arabic 64
Arawá 43, 53
Arawak 22, 73, 145–6, 159
Armenian 64
Asiatic Eskimo 21
Athapaskan 5, 8, 12, 18–19, 21–3, 27, 61, 64, 173–235
Australian languages 11, 17–18, 21, 23, 26, 31–2, 39, 41, 44, 63, 70, 333–4
Austroasiatic 53
Austronesian 34, 38, 43, 52–3, 64, 69, 76, 115
Avar 361
Awa Pit 53, 57–8

Babungo 53
Bahasa Indonesian 63, 76

Balinese 64
Bambara 21
Bandjalang 44
Baniwa 157
Bantu 52–3, 389
Barbacoan 57
Bare 157, 159
Basque 57, 65, 76, 376
Bats 64
Bengali 45
Berber 319
Bezhta 360
Bodic 47
Bolivian Quechua 66
Buin 115
Buru 69, 76–7

Campa 170
Canela-Kraho 36
Capanawa 60
Carib 36, 46, 55, 57, 62
Carrier 65, 181, 183, 186, 189–90, 195, 203–5, 210, 212, 216, 221–2, 231–2
Catalan 35
Central Alaskan Yup'ik, see Yup'ik
Chamorro 53
Chechen-Ingush 17, 19, 32, 112, 360
Chichewa 53, 319, 320
Chickasaw 378, 389
Chinese 283–4, 291
Chippewyan 230
Choctaw 378, 389
Ch'irau 69–70, 75–7
Chukchee 32, 64
Classical Chinese 38
Colonial K'iche' 238
Coptic 112
Index of languages and language families

Creek 4, 8, 12, 14–15, 24, 27, 51–2, 75–6, 375–403
Cushitic 51

Daghestanian 23, 55, 360, 364, 366
Daly languages 328, 336
Dargwa 360
Dena’ina 195, 232
Dido 360
Diyari 11, 70
Dogrib 8, 174, 192–3, 196, 230
Dravidian 45, 49, 68
Dulong 23, 282–3, 291, 296, 303
Dulong-Rawang 3, 11–12, 15, 17, 23, 26, 27, 57, 61, 65, 282–311
Dutch 51, 290
Dvru 283
Dyirbal 4, 17, 27, 39

East Bougainville 115
East Caucasian 360
East Tucano 146, 153, 154
English 2, 4, 11, 20–1, 24, 32, 36–9, 40–2, 52, 59, 69, 72, 74, 76, 125, 148, 291, 295, 305, 316, 318, 325, 339, 350, 366–7, 380–1, 388, 401
Eskimo 22, 84–5, 94; and see West Greenlandic Eskimo, Yup’ik
Eskimo-Aleut 84, 93
Ethio-Semitic 23, 312, 328
European languages 237
Evenki 179

Fijian 5, 21, 38, 64, 72, 76
Finnish 55
French 35, 37, 54–5, 59, 74, 174, 289, 381

Galice 187, 231, 232
Gamo 51, 52
Ganung 283
Georgian 34, 56
Gojri 68
Goonyandy 336
Grassfields Bantu 53
Greek 11, 12, 38, 120
Greenlandic 84, 93
Gulf Arabic 34
Guugu-Yimidhirr 20, 26

Hausa 64
Hebrew 43, 52
Hindi 67, 70, 73, 75–7
Hinukh 360
Hitchiti-Mikasuki 378
Hixkaryana 57, 62

Hungarian 43, 45, 55, 60–1, 70
Hunzib 360
Hupa 173–5, 180–1, 185, 187, 189, 195, 201–2, 216, 218–19, 221–2, 228, 231–2

Hungarian 43, 45, 55, 60–1, 70
Hunzib 360
Icelandic 381
Imbabura Quechua 51, 52
Indo-European 45, 55, 68, 120
Ingush, see Chechen-Ingush
Iroquoian 63
Italian 35, 54, 381

Jakaltek 240
Japanese 9, 26, 45, 55–6, 66, 76
Jarawara 4, 21, 22, 53, 59, 64
Javanese 34, 52, 71
Jé 36
Jinghpaw 68, 70, 75–7, 282, 308

Kabardian 49, 60
Kamaiurá 55–6, 73, 75
Kamnu 53, 70, 74, 76
Kannada 45, 55
Karbi 60
Kartvelian 46
Kashmiri 34
Kaya 63
Khwarshi 360
K’iche’ 8, 10, 15, 23, 34, 64, 236–81
K’ichean 236
Kimbrel languages 328, 336
Kinyarwanda 4
Kiowa 35, 37
Kiowa-Tanoan 35, 44
Koasati 378
Korean 31, 65, 70, 73, 76–7
Kriol 339
Kuku-Yalanji 18
Kurdish 64
Kwinpang 282–3

Lahu 34, 59, 284
Lak 360
Latin 4
Lezgian 360
Lezgic 360
Lithuanian 34
Longmi 283
Lower Sepik 39

Macushi 36
Malay 63, 76
Malayalam 319
Index of languages and language families

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language/Family</th>
<th>Page Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mam</td>
<td>17, 240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mangarayi</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maori</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marathi</td>
<td>45, 55, 65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Margany</td>
<td>396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mattole</td>
<td>194–5, 231–2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mayan</td>
<td>9, 10, 17, 23, 64, 76, 236–81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mesoamerican languages</td>
<td>242</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mishmi</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Misumalpan</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixtec</td>
<td>70, 76–7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mixtecan</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern Hebrew</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mohawk</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motuna</td>
<td>3, 5, 12, 22, 61, 64, 71–2, 115–44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muskogean</td>
<td>24, 378, 389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mvtwang</td>
<td>283, 288, 291, 302–3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Na-Dene</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naasioi</td>
<td>115, 120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagovisi</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nahualá</td>
<td>237, 261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nakh</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nakh-Daghestanian</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navajo</td>
<td>65, 174–5, 180–1, 182, 184, 186–8, 190, 192, 194–8, 201, 203–4, 206–12, 214, 216–18, 220–2, 227–8, 230–2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newari</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngan'gikurunggurr</td>
<td>333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngan'gityemerri</td>
<td>8, 15, 21, 23, 26, 41, 328, 333–59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngen'giwumirri</td>
<td>333</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nilo-Saharan</td>
<td>31, 43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nivkh, or Gilyak</td>
<td>43, 46, 48, 59–60, 62, 68, 75–7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nomatsiguenga</td>
<td>73, 75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Austronesian languages</td>
<td>22, 115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-Arawak</td>
<td>153, 157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-east Caucasian</td>
<td>23–4, 55, 360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North-west Caucasian</td>
<td>49, 57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nujiang Dulong</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nung</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceanic</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old Norse</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Omotic</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oromo</td>
<td>51–2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paamese</td>
<td>34–5, 159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Coast languages</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pajonal Campa</td>
<td>14, 170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pano</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papuan languages</td>
<td>22, 69, 115–16, 120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paumari</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persian</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Petats</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pomo</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pomoan</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portuguese</td>
<td>37, 164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proto-Arawak</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proto-Athapaskan</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proto-K'ichean</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proto-Mayan</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proto-Na-déné</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proto-Sino-Tibetan</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjabi</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qiang</td>
<td>43, 49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiche, see K'iche</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rawang, see Dulong-Rawang</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romance</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>71, 76, 290, 367, 381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanskrit</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sanuma</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sekani</td>
<td>174, 230, 232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semitic</td>
<td>51, 312</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinhalese</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sino-Tibetan</td>
<td>284, 296, 308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Songhai</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sonrai</td>
<td>31, 57, 65, 376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South-Arawak</td>
<td>14, 170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asian languages</td>
<td>45, 68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Tiwa</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish</td>
<td>35, 71, 237, 381</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Svan</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swahili</td>
<td>52–3, 59, 66–7, 75–6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangkhul Naga</td>
<td>67, 74, 76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tangsarr</td>
<td>283</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tariana</td>
<td>4, 5, 8, 15, 17, 22, 32, 34–5, 42–3, 46, 51, 64, 67, 71–2, 75–7, 145–72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telugu</td>
<td>49, 68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tibetan</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tibeto-Burman</td>
<td>23, 43, 47, 49, 59–60, 67–8, 282, 289–90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tlingit</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tok Pisin</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolai</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolkapyapa</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tonga</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trumai</td>
<td>3, 49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsez</td>
<td>5, 23, 24, 55, 360–74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsezic</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsouva Tush</td>
<td>360</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tsuut’ina</td>
<td>184, 193, 195, 232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tucano</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tungusic</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language/Family</td>
<td>Page Numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunica</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tupi</td>
<td>55, 63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tupi-Guarani</td>
<td>55, 63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkan</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>54–6, 60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tututni</td>
<td>231–2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tzotzil</td>
<td>9, 64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Greenlandic Eskimo</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Romance</td>
<td>37, 54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolof</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wvdamkong</td>
<td>282–3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yagua</td>
<td>51, 52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yanomami</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yidiny</td>
<td>18, 19, 31, 63, 396</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yimas</td>
<td>35, 37, 41, 64, 68, 70, 75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoruba</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yucatec</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yup'ik</td>
<td>6–7, 10, 15, 18, 22, 26, 32, 48, 70, 72, 84–114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zulu</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warekena</td>
<td>157, 159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wargamay</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wayana</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bougainville</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Index of languages and language families**
Subject index

ablative 10, 85, 89–90, 94, 109–10, 113, 362
accusative 11, 21, 24, 32, 36, 44–6, 49–51, 56, 65–6, 68–9, 73, 146, 312, 320, 322–7, 334
action verbs 63
active verbs 146–7, 149–50, 155, 160–2, 164–5, 273, 275
adessive 55
adversative 9, 26, 90, 92–3, 111, 296, 308–9
affectedness 62–3, 67, 76–8, 137, 158, 226, 229, 309
agent addition 105–8
agent omission 89–93
allative 55, 85, 90, 102, 105, 107, 113, 289
ambitransitives 4, 6, 24, 27, 33, 38–9, 64, 87, 91–2, 119, 126–9, 137, 140–1, 148, 154, 166, 170, 242, 271–3, 284, 289, 294, 310, 313
agentive, see $S = A$ below
patientive, see $S = O$ below
$S = O 5–6, 8, 20, 38–9, 64, 71–2, 87–9, 91, 96–8, 110–13, 126, 149, 284–5, 366, 377
$ 
$S = A 5–6, 20, 22, 24, 38–9, 64, 87–8, 91–4, 96–8, 101, 111, 113, 148, 166, 175, 284–5, 313, 366, 377, 386, 401
$ 
$S = P, see S = O above
anticausative 1, 6–8, 10–12, 20–1, 23–4, 185, 313–17, 325, 330–1, 343, 347, 358, 366
absolutive 10–11, 250–1, 266–71, 273, 280
agent-focus 10–11, 250–69, 274–5, 280
patientless 9–10, 24
benefactive 14, 23, 44, 295–6, 304–8
dative 14, 27, 389–92, 401
instrumental 14–15, 23, 27, 236, 278, 392–3, 401
locative 335, 346, 356–7
malefactive 322
presentative 14, 333, 335, 346, 356–7
atelicity 230
auxiliary verb 41, 59, 74, 78, 150–1, 288, 293–4, 296, 303, 305–7, 328, 334, 364, 381
analytical 35, 74, 296, 299, 302–3
derivational 98
direct 67–8, 296, 298, 394–401
double 59–61, 155, 158–9, 164, 299
indirect 67–8, 70, 296, 298–9, 301, 397–401
lexical 38–40, 59, 65, 72, 74, 78, 317
inflectional 302
classifiers 115–16, 145, 173, 176–8, 184, 334, 336
comitative 14–15, 26–7, 109, 152–3, 170, 304
complement clause 36–7
complex predicate 74, 147–8, 160, 313, 328–30
complex verb 328, 333–59
coreferential noun phrase 24, 369, 372–3
dative 3, 15, 17–18, 45–6, 50, 52, 54–9, 65–6, 73, 265, 267, 284, 286, 289, 291, 296–7, 303–4, 306, 400
dependent-marking 115, 145, 312
detransitivizer 23, 44, 96–7, 112, 313–15
directness 62, 67–70, 75–8
ditransitive 3, 30, 42–4, 47–8, 52, 54–63, 65, 76, 148, 150, 154, 285, 296–9, 313, 363, 368, 376
eventive 12, 19, 189–91, 228, 232
eventuality 34, 147–8, 160
finite verb 21, 23, 334–49, 354–5, 357–8
focus 239, 256–7, 261–3, 275
genitive 45, 55, 85, 292, 362, 364
grammaticalization 37, 240
head-marking 115, 145, 312
impersonals 43, 324–5, 335, 349–51, 358, 377, 383, 387–9, 399–401
inchoative 101, 121, 242, 248, 367, 386, 394, 396
incorporated body parts 183–4, 191, 232, 333, 335, 350–4, 356
intention 62, 68, 70–1, 76–8, 213
intransitivizer 5, 8, 12
inverse 7, 22, 262
involvement 62–3, 73, 75, 78
iterative 12, 19, 188–9, 191, 218, 228–9, 232
lexicalization 26, 178, 223–8
lexical verb 33, 35–7, 41–2, 47, 67, 74, 176–7, 334, 336, 339, 364, 366
locative 14, 18, 50, 55, 85, 170, 224–5, 265, 278, 284, 286, 289, 291, 296–9, 303–4, 306, 322, 330, 380
markedness 358, 367
mediopassive 184–5, 192, 232, 271–2
naturalness 62–3, 71–2, 76–8
nominalization 266, 287
nominative 45, 312, 334, 378, 397
noun incorporation 26, 266, 289
agentive 192, 197–9
gentless 7, 9, 24, 31, 347, 350
complete 8, 246, 248–50, 276, 280
impersonal 8, 21, 151, 192–7
personal 8, 21, 192–7
simple 8, 244–9, 253, 273, 280
Subject index

patient omission 93–8
perambulative 12, 19, 190–1, 232
periphrastic verb 7, 38, 69–70, 364
permissive 299, 320
pivot 10, 16–18, 21–2, 24, 32, 238, 251, 254, 257
possession 85, 133, 242, 265, 278, 305, 313
presentative 14
punctuality 230
reciprocal 1, 6–7, 11–12, 18, 22–4, 26–7, 109, 116, 126, 137, 140, 147, 152–4, 169–70, 179, 181–2, 188, 191, 228–9, 232, 276–7, 288, 313, 325, 327, 330–1, 382, 386
reduplication 34, 71, 74, 331, 396
relative clause 54, 251, 253–5, 257, 261
relativization 250–4, 256
repetitive 12, 147, 171, 190–1, 232
resultative 92, 121, 147, 202–4
S, 8, 22, 46, 64, 118, 120–1, 126–8, 131, 133, 138, 140–1, 146–9, 154–6, 162, 164–6, 170
sempassive 197–9, 209, 221, 232
serial verb constructions 23, 32, 34–5, 43, 68–9, 74–5, 147–8, 154, 159–66, 169
S∞, 22, 146–7, 149–50, 154, 156, 160–1, 164–5, 170
S, 8, 22, 46, 64, 71, 117–18, 120–1, 126–7, 131, 133, 138, 140–1, 146–9, 154–6, 160, 162, 164–5, 170
split-S system 5, 8, 46, 116, 139
state verbs 63, 77
stative verbs 63, 146–9, 155, 160, 162–5, 170, 203, 218–19, 248, 284
stimulative 22, 116, 126, 138–40
subordinate clause 36–7, 86, 151–2, 378
subordination 160
subordinative mood 86, 103, 111–12
switch-reference marking 17, 37, 116–17, 147, 151–2, 172, 378
telicity 230
topicalization 243, 262, 370
transitivity value 15, 17, 19, 21, 39, 169, 342
transitivizer 166, 395
unaccusative 20, 206–8, 273, 313, 317–19, 323–5, 330
unergative 20, 206–8, 313, 317, 319, 322–4, 330
valency-decreasing derivations 19–22, 111, 170, 310, 347
valency-rearranging derivations 22, 138–40
verb compounding 154
voice/valency 173, 176–80, 216–19, 222–30
double voice 216–19

word order, see constituent order