

1. An accurate syntactic analysis and an interesting diachronic perspective on the syntax of the Amharic argument structure are afforded by a segmentation of the Amharic causative marker *as-* into two morphemes: the transitivizing morpheme *a-* and the causative morpheme *-s-*. Syntactically representing *a-* and *-s-* as two separate verbal heads, v and V_{CAUS} , we can account for the distributional patterns of *as-* and *a-* in Amharic and also shed important light on the diachronic question of how Amharic (Ethio-Semitic) came to possess *as-* alongside the *a-* morpheme whose counterpart in another Ethio-Semitic language, ^ʔ*a-* in Classical Ethiopic (Ge'ez), is apparently utilized both as a transitivizer and causativizer.

2. The *a-* and *-s-* verbal morphemes in Amharic map biuniquely to grammatical functions: the application of *a-* transitivizes unaccusative stems and *-s-* causativizes a stem of any type (cf. 1); no other morphemes in the language have the same functions. The one-to-one correspondences between the two morphemes and their grammatical functions in Amharic are a unique feature. Ge'ez seems to employ both ^ʔ*a-* and *-s-* as causative morphemes: cf. (i) the default causative morpheme is *a-* and (ii) *-s-* appears in so-called reflexive-of-causative forms, ^ʔ*asta-V* form (Dillmann 1899); cf. (2). Moreover, the Ge'ez prefix ^ʔ*a-* seems to function both as a transitivizer and causativizer (cf. 2ab&3). These differences between Amharic, on the one hand, and Ge'ez, on the other, can be schematized as in (4).

3. Adopting a Chomsky (1995) type approach to the syntactic representation of complex argument structures, I analyze the Amharic morpheme *-s-* as a [+affixal] lexical verb (V_{CAUS}) taking as its host the transitivizing light verb, v^0 , realized as *a-* (cf. 5). The morphological dependency of causative *-s-* on transitive *a-* correctly ensures the fact that in Amharic, direct causativization of verbal roots is impossible (cf. 1c,6), even when the base verb does not otherwise combine with *a-* (cf. 7). Extending these morphological affairs of the two verbal morphemes in Amharic to the ^ʔ*a-* and *-s-* of Ge'ez, I hypothesize a uniform morphological analysis for the two Ethio-Semitic languages: (i) the (^ʔ)*a-* morpheme is uniformly the realization of transitivizer v^0 (cf. 9,10,11); (ii) the *-s-* morpheme is uniformly an affixal causative verb (productive in Amharic but limited in Ge'ez to the reflexive-of-causative form), hosted by its own phonetically realized light verb v^0 , transitivizer *a-* in Amharic and its reflexive counterpart, *ta-*, in Ge'ez (cf. 9,10). I also hypothesize that, in the *a-V* causative constructions of Ge'ez, the causative V remains null and is licensed by its light verb, realized as ^ʔ*a-* (cf. 11).

4. The above morpho-syntactic analysis allows us to treat the (^ʔ)*a-* verbal prefix in Amharic and Ge'ez uniformly as the realization of v^0 , not ambiguously as a transitivizer and causativizer, and the *-s-* verbal affix uniformly as the spell-out of the affixal causative verb. This uniform analysis that is proposed for the verb-morphology of the two Ethio-Semitic languages will be also tried out with other Semitic languages outside Ethiopia, namely, Akkadian, Ugaritic and Standard Arabic.

5. One thing that makes Amharic differ from Standard Arabic and Ge'ez is the distribution of the spelled-out causative, *-s-*. Its appearance is severely limited in Standard Arabic and Ge'ez (it occurs only in the reflexive-of-causative), whereas it is the general causative morpheme in Amharic, where V_{CAUS} is never allowed to be null. The strengthening of *-s-* into the regular causative morpheme can be understood from a language contact perspective, on the basis of an inspection of the morphological causative construction of some Cushitic languages that are geographically adjacent to Amharic. In the Central and East Cushitic families, the morphological causative verbs is systematically spelled out as *s-*. Especially in East Cushitic, the affairs of the transitivizing and causativizing morphology strikingly resemble those of Amharic: direct causativization of verbal roots is impossible; *-s-* causation is always supported by the spell-out of a light verb (which in East Cushitic is also realized as *-s-*), even when the base verb does not otherwise combine with the transitivizer (cf. 6,12). We may thus interpret Amharic's general usage of the form *-s-* as the realization of its affixal V_{CAUS} as being the result of language contact. This confirms Leslau's (1945) conclusion that Amharic is an Ethio-Semitic language strongly influenced by the Cushitic language family.

DATA

(1) **Amharic**

- | | | | | | |
|----|---------------------------|----|------------------------------------|----|--|
| a. | fāla
<i>boil.UNACC</i> | b. | <i>a</i> -fāla
<i>boil.TR</i> S | c. | <i>a-s</i> -fāla
C made A <i>boil</i> B |
|----|---------------------------|----|------------------------------------|----|--|

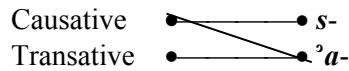
(2) **Ge'ez**

- | | | | | | |
|----|------------------------------|----|--|----|---|
| a. | qatala
<i>killed.TR</i> S | b. | ^ʔ <i>a</i> -qtala
C made A <i>kill</i> B | c. | ^ʔ <i>a-s</i> -ta-rkaba
C _i made A _i <i>want</i> B |
|----|------------------------------|----|--|----|---|

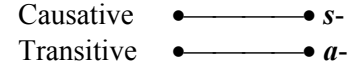
(3) **Ge'ez**

- | | | | |
|----|----------------------------|----|--|
| a. | falḥa
<i>boil.UNACC</i> | b. | ^ʔ <i>a</i> -fləḥa
<i>boil.TR</i> S |
|----|----------------------------|----|--|

(4) a. **Ge'ez**



b. **Amharic**



- (5) a. ... [VP ... *a*- / ^ʔ [VP ... -s/CAUS⁰ ...

(6) **Amharic**

- a. **s*-fāla
*CAUS-boil.TR*S
'C made A *boil* B'

- (7) a. (**a*)-gāzza
*TRS-bought.TR*S
'A bought B'

- b. **s*-gāzza / *as*-gāzza
**CAUS-buy* / *TRS-CAUS-buy*
'C made A *buy* B'

- | | | | |
|------|---|---|---------------------|
| (10) | a. ... [VP ... ^ʔ [VP ... CAUS ⁰ ... | b. ... [VP ... ^ʔ [VP ... V _{UNACC} ... | Skeleton |
| (11) | a. ... [VP ... <i>a</i> - [VP ... -s ... | b. ... [VP ... <i>a</i> - [VP ... V _{UNACC} ... | Amharic |
| (12) | a. ... [VP ... <i>ta</i> - [VP ... -s ... | b. ... [VP ... ^ʔ <i>a</i> - [VP ... V _{UNACC} ... | G. Ref-Caus. |
| (13) | ... [VP ... ^ʔ <i>a</i> - [VP ... ∅ ... | | G. 'a-Caus. |

(14) **Oromo**

- a. Ḍug-e
*drink.TR*S-PAST
'A drank B'

- (9) a. *Ḍug-s-e
*drink.TR*S-*TRS*-PAST
'A drank B'

- b. Ḍug-s(ii)-s-e
drink-TRS-CAUS-PAST
'C made A drink B'

REFERENCE

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