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Aspect and Verbal Action in Albanian - Activity Verbs

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Abstract

In this article, we introduce and analyze the morphosyntactic behaviour of activity verbs in standard Albanian. The grouping of verbs by their lexical-semantic meaning deals with the study of the way the development of the action is presented. We refer to verbal action when we analyze and classify the lexical meanings of different verbs, which are grouped or separated by means of word formation. Even in cases where special syntactic constructions are used for the expression of verbal action, these are still a function of their respective lexical meaning. However, they do not deal with the grammatical meanings but with the lexical meanings of these constructions. In the case of aspect, there are grammatical oppositions expressed by grammatical means, and therefore by different forms of the same verb. Aspect in the Albanian language is realized, above all, by the change of tenses, such as between the imperfective and the perfective (aorist), unlike verbal action, which is generally not indicated by means of conjugation. Finally, we will study the meanings related not to individual lexical meaning, but to general lexical meaning. It is this feature that makes verbal action in Albanian an objective category, different and distinguishable from the subjective category of aspect.

Keywords: activity verbs, verbal action, Albanian, aspect, lexical meaning

> *1 Alimhilli Prendushi (2009), in her comprehensive monograph has treated the semantic-syntactical analyses of the verbal classes according to the verbal action of the Albanian language.*

Verbs of Continuative Action

1.1. The verbs *eci* 'walk', *luaj* 'play', *dua* 'want', *këndoj* 'sing', *punoj* 'work', *bredh* 'divagate', *gjurmoj* 'track', *këshilloj* 'counsel', *flas* 'speak', *lexoj* 'read', *shkruaj* 'write',

etc., which present the verbal action as ongoing, are activity verbs. No indication is given with respect to the beginning and the conclusion of the action, but only regarding its continuation. However, in these verbs, in fact, in addition to the time of the beginning of the action, we also have that of the conclusion, presented in the form of a possibility that the process will be completed, because there cannot be an indefinite continuation of it. Furthermore, the aforementioned processes can be interrupted a few times by the subject within the same event or the same episode. In the examples:

[1] Ka javë që ajo është duke studiuar.

Are weeks that she is studying.

[2] Ai punon në këtë uzinë që prej një viti.

He has been working at this plant for one year.

we do not want to suggest that the subject of the action in (1) has never rested, or been distracted even for a second, or that the person in (2) has never gone outside the walls of the plant, because it is known that all activities comply with basic standards of living as well as certain social relations. Similar moments are acceptable for activity verbs, and the continuation of the process does not necessarily involve a change in the subject's state, not having as its aim the attainment of a goal or a particular result.

1.2. The extension of the verbal action is expressed, in some cases, by the use of the present tense, the imperfect (in two variants – indeterminate imperfective and determinate perfective), and, in just a few cases, the simple past.

- The present tense is used for:

Actions with general, timeless, or continuous value. Such actions are expressed by activity verbs that denote prolonged actions, processes that continue without interruption, and, as such, include the time of speech:

[3] Kush *gënjen, gënjen* veten.

Who lies, lies himself/herself.

[4] Armiku të *shikon* ndër këmbë, miku të *vështron* ndër sy.

The enemy looks at your feet, the friend looks at your eyes.

[5] Hëna *rrotullohet* rreth Tokës.

The moon rotates around the Earth.

Thus, this form is used with this value first in proverbs, in axioms, and in general truths.

Actions that began before the time of utterance are also continuing at the present time and will continue thereafter (this kind of action is influenced by the semantics of the verb):

[6] *Kam* shumë kohë që *punoj*.

I have a lot of time that I work.

[7] *Kemi* shumë kohë që *po mendojmë* për këtë projekt.

We have a lot of time that we are thinking about this project.

Constructions that indicate the progressive development of the action:

The girl is becoming more and more stubborn.

[9] Ti *po qesh*, por unë *po them* të vërtetën.

You're laughing, but I'm telling the truth.

[10] Ai *është duke shkruar* diçka për jetën studentore.

He is writing something about student life.

- The imperfect is used for:

An action in progress at a given moment in the past, with no indication of the beginning or the end:

[11] Plaku *gërhiste*.

The old man snored.

The water boiled and steamed

Actions that continue throughout the entire past period of time, or permanent characteristics of people or objects to which related actions are attributed:

The boy dreamed as a child.

[14] Ajo *shquhej* nga të gjithë.

She stood out from all the people.

[15] Lumi *gjarpëronte* në fushë.

The river meanders through the field.

Constructions that indicate the progression of the action:

[16] *Po afrohej* dalëngadalë vjeshta.

ët *ishin duke shkuar*.

The action expressed in this form sometimes takes on a timeless value:

They were shearing the wolf to recover his reason.

- The simple past is used for:

Actions which, extending for a certain time, have become a characteristic of people or objects for that period:

He experienced a painful story.

Actions in progressive extension:

[21] Miqësia e tyre *u rrit* çdo ditë e më shumë.

Their friendship grew more and more every day.

Verbal Groups of Continuative Action

During our analysis of aspect and the examination of the uses of the present tense, the imperfect, and the simple past, cases expressing the extension of verbal action for a certain time were evidenced. In addition to these cases, the extension of the verbal action is expressed by:

2.1. Repetition of the same verb[1]

- verb + verb (+ verb): here the verb can be repeated two or three times in the same tense and mood.

Constructions with the repeated present tense and the imperfect in the indicative mood, in general, express actions that last for a long period of time, while actions expressed with the repeated simple past usually have a finite extension:

[22] *Lexon… lexon* por më kot (present tense) 'Reads ... reads but in vain' / *Ecte… ecte* rrugë pa rrugë (imperfect) 'Walked ... walked streets without streets' / *Durova, durova* dhe pastaj fola (simple past) 'Waited, waited and then I spoke'.

The verb can also be in the desemantised imperative. We say desemantised because through this form no order is given, but the action is merely prolonged. Depending on the context, it can refer to any person:

[23] *Zbrit-zbrit* dhe arritën më në fund.

Step down - step down and finally they arrived.

- Verb + conjunction *e (dhe)* 'and' + verb (+ verb): in this case, there are repeated verbal forms in the same tense and in the same mood.

The verb can be in the present tense, imperfect, or simple past of the indicative mood:

[24] Dhe unë *pres e pres*…(present tense) 'And I wait and wait ...' / *Shikonte e shikonte* pa thënë asnjë fjalë (imperfect) 'Looked and looked without saying a word' /

Profesori *foli e foli* gjithë pasion (simple past) 'Professor spoke and spoke passionately'.

In addition to the constructions with simple tenses[2] already mentioned, constructions with the repetition of compound tenses can also be used, as for example: Ai *ka pritur e ka pritur* dhe pastaj ka ikur (perfect) 'He has waited and has waited and then he is gone'/ Ai *kishte sharë e kishte sharë*, pastaj i kishte rënë inati (plusperfect) 'He had insulted and had insulted, then his anger fell', or *Do të qajë e do të qajë* dhe do të pushojë (simple future) 'Will cry and will cry and will cease'.

Action extensions are also expressed by constructions using the imperative form, where we have different subjects:

[25] *Shko* natë e *shko* ditë, u bë vajza grua (second person singular).

Pass night and pass day, the girl became a woman. To express this verbal action, groups of different verbs in the imperative are also used, such as: *ec e truaj* 'walk and shout', *ec e shaj* 'walk and curse', *ec e mallko* 'walk and execrate'; *qaj e ik* 'cry and flees', *qaj e rend* 'cry and run', *qaj e klith* 'cry and yowl', *shaj e mallko* 'insults and execrate', etc.

The repeated conjunctive is mainly used with an intensity and extension value:

[26] Jam e detyruar *të pres e të pres* (present tense) 'I`m obligated to wait and to wait' / Ishte mësuar *të punonte e të punonte ...* (imperfect) 'Was accustomed to work and to work ...'.

The mode of extending the action is very often intertwined with the intensive mode of action. In such constructions, depending on the discourse circumstances, the two modes can be expressed simultaneously, further emphasizing one of them.

- In the structure - verb + conjunction *sa* 'as' + verb - only verbs repeated in different tenses of the indicative and conjunctive participate:

(present tense) 'He reads as reads and close ...' / Fëmijët *bënin sa bënin* dhe na vështronin në sy (imperfect) 'Children did as did and look us in the eyes' / *Mallkoi sa mallkoi* e pastaj u lodh (simple past) 'Cursed as cursed and then get tired' / *Ka qarë sa ka qarë* dhe e paska zënë gjumi (perfective) 'Cried as cried and fall asleep' / *Do të ketë pritur sa do të ketë pritur* dhe ka ikur (future perfect) 'He will have waited as will have waited and he is gone'.

As can be seen from the examples, regardless of the tense of the verb, this construction expresses the extension as well as the idea that the action is prolonged for a period of time and ends, but another action starts immediately after.

Repetition of the conjunctive in these constructions is less frequent, mainly to show that in the present case the duration of the action is not as important as its evidence:

[28] Ai ka ardhur dhe *të punonte sa të punonte* (imperfect) 'He has come and he worked as worked'.

- The construction – verb + indefinite pronoun *ç`* 'that' + verb[3] – on the semantic plane is parallel to the conjunctive constructions with the repetition of the simple past (*foli e foli* 'talked and talked', *eci e eci* 'walked and walked', etc.).

The value of this construction lies in the non-qualification of the object of the action, the object expressed by the indefinite pronoun ç` 'that'. This non-qualification of the object, the inattention to the object, has caused the pronoun *ç`* in this construction to move towards further desemanticization, thus acquiring the value of a particle. In addition, in two groups of this construction, with the verbs *bej* 'do' / *shoh* 'see', not only is the indefinite pronoun *ç`* gradually desemanticized, but the whole group of words has moved towards a phraseological value. That is, through this construction, what is essentially expressed is the idea of the extension of efforts to achieve something, and not the denomination of the concrete measures implemented.

[29] *Bëri ç'bëri* ajo, është puna e saj **'**She did that she did, it is her business**'** / *Tha ç'tha*, neve nuk na duhet 'She said that she said, it is not our business'.

In these constructions, only the simple past of the indicative can be used. If, in fact, we used the present tense or the imperfect, the construction would end up highlighting the repetition of the consecutive action, rather than expressing the idea of the intensive extension of the specific action.

2.2. The verb *rri* 'stay' in the construction – *rri* 'stay' + conjunction *e* (*dhe*) 'and' + verb that expresses a prolonged action – can be in the present tense or imperfect of the indicative mood, (perfective) determinate or (imperfective) indeterminate. Likewise, its coordinated verb, which expresses the prolonged action, is in the same tense and mood as it:

[30] *Rri e mendoj* se si iken koha 'Stay and think how time escapes'; *Rri e pres* me durim (present tense determinate or indeterminate) 'Stay and wait patiently' / ... *rrinte e lozte* me kukulla '... stayed and played with dolls'; Ato *rrinin e dëgjonin* me vëmendje 'They stayed and listened attentively' (imperfect determinate or indeterminate).

The verb *rri* 'stay' may also be in the imperative mood, but in these cases its semantic autonomy is greater than in constructions with its present tense:

Stay and wait here!

A cluster with the verb *rri* 'stay' in the imperative mood followed by the same verb in the conjunctive mood, in addition to the idea of extending the action, includes the idea of its intensive development, such as *Rri të rrimë* 'Stay to stay'.

2.3. In terms of meaning, the construction – *rri* 'stay' + the verb that expresses the ongoing action, in the gerund – is completely parallel to the above construction. There is only a structural difference: the verb that expresses the ongoing action is in the gerund:

[32] Rri duke ndjekur lajmet tërë ditën (present tense) 'Stay following the news all day' / Rrinte duke mësuar me orë (imperfect) 'Stayed studying for hours'.

In cases with a participle, other members of the sentence can also be inserted between the verb *rri* 'stay' and the meaningful verb expressing the prolonged action, without prejudice to the idea of the extension of the given action, as in: *Rrija* me të *duke biseduar* ... 'I stayed with her talking...'.

2.4. The idea of extending the action is also given by constructions with the verb jam 'be', followed by an abstract noun, which indicates a process or a state, headed by the preposition në 'in' – jam 'be' + preposition në 'in' + an action noun – for example: Studentët janë në studim 'Students are in the study'.

The verb *jam* 'be' can be found in different tenses from those of the indicative; not infrequently, the expression *e sipër* 'under' is added after the abstract noun.

[33] Qyteti është në ndërtim e sipër (present tense) 'The city is under construction' / Rruga ishte në ndërtim e sipër (imperfect) 'Street was under construction'.

2.5. In the constructions – *kam zakon* 'I used' + the verb that expresses the action that continues – the verb *kam* 'have' can occur in different tenses of the indicative mood, while the second verb, the one that expresses the action that continues, appears in the present tense and in the imperfect of the conjunctive. The specified action can be prolonged or repeated; here, the unlimited continuity is emphasized:

[34] Ajo e ka zakon të flasë me zë të lartë 'She has used to talk loudly' / E kish zakon të lahej përditë 'He/she used to bathe daily' / Ata e kanë pasë zakon të shkonin atje për festa 'They had used to go there for holidays'.

Similar to the above construction is also the following, with the only distinction that, as the first term, we have the verb *bej* 'do', which is also used in the passive form:

[35] Atij iu *bë zakon të pyeste* për çdo gjë.

It became a custom to ask about everything.

2.6. Constructions – the perfect of the indicative + conjunction *dhe* (*e*) 'and' + the present tense of the indicative – as conjunctive subordinates, give the idea of an

uninterrupted continuity of action, which started in the past, continues in the present, and will continue in the future:

[36] Ai *ka jetuar dhe jeton* në këtë qytet.

He has lived and lives in this city.

Of the same value is the construction – present tense (simple past or perfect) of the indicative + conjunction *dhe* (*e*) 'and' + future of the indicative:

[37] Ne *punojmë e do të punojm*ë përherë kështu 'We work and will work always so' / *Jetuam e do të jetojmë* me ndershmëri 'We lived and will live honestly' / I *kam respektuar dhe do t'i respektoj* mësuesit e mi 'I have respected and will respect my teachers'.

Similar constructions to the above are those where the same verb is not repeated:

[38] *Ka qenë dhe mbetet* më i miri.

It has been and remains the best.

3. CONCLUSION

Conclusion

In conclusion, in Albanian[4], there are no characteristic word formations to express this verbal action, but rather special syntactic constructions:

- verb + conjunction *sa* 'as' + verb
- verb + indefinite pronoun *ç`* 'that' + verb
- *rri* 'stay' + conjunction *e* (*dhe*) 'and' + verb that expresses an action which is prolonged
- *rri* 'stay' + the verb that expresses the action that continues, in the gerund
- *jam* 'be' + preposition *në* 'in' + an action noun
- kam zakon 'I used' + the verb that expresses the action that continues
- perfect of the indicative + conjunction *dhe* (*e*) 'and' + present tense of the indicative
- present tense (simple past or perfect) of the indicative + conjunction *dhe* (*e*) 'and' + future of the indicative

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Notes

1. For more see, Alimhilli Prendushi (2001: 372-378), (2009: 58-64, 159-167); Dhrimo (1996: 157-170).
2. Lafe (1966: 123-124).
3. As Floqi notes (1968: 23), the value of this construction lies in the non qualification of the object of the action, object expressed by the indefinite pronoun *ç`* 'that'. This non qualification of the object, not giving importance to the kind of object, has made that in this construction the pronoun *ç`* goes to his further desemantizing, towards the value of a particle. Also, in two clusters of this construction, with the verb *bëj* 'do' and *shoh* 'see', not only the indefinite pronoun *ç`* it is been progressively desemanticized, but the entire phrase has gone towards the value of an idiom. So, through this essential construction it is expressed the idea of extending the effort to do something and not the nominating of the performed operations.
4. Demiraj, Sh. mentions it in the brief treatment that makes to the modes of action in "Gramatika e gjuhës shqipe I" (1995: 264-265); some means for the expression of this mode, but without looking to them as mode of action, are mentioned by Floqi (1958: 114), Çeliku (1963: 161, 172), Lafe (1966: 122-123).

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