Diathesis, Aspect and Stativity in Taqbaylit Berber

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Introduction

Taqbaylit Berber is a head-marking Afroasiatic language spoken in the North of Algeria. Its lexis is based on consonantal roots, and derivation is used extensively in the verbal system, notably to modify verb valency, or to create new aspectual (imperfective) forms.

In this paper, we will investigate the values of those derived forms compared to their bases, and the relationship between diathesis, argument structure and aspect to which they seem to point. This characterization will lead us to state that the basic opposition which informs the whole verbal system is the stative/dynamic opposition. Our claim is that it is the first element of the opposition which is the attractive pole of the system, a polarity which is at play at various stages of the evolution of the verbal system.

1 The derivational system of Taqbaylit Berber

In Taqbaylit Berber, the arguments are marked on the verb itself, and consequently the verb alone (with those markers) can constitute an entire sentence:

(1) \( y\-\-\-\-\-\- \) : 3sgmasc-eat(perf.) : 'he ate/has eaten' = personal affix (\( y\-\) ) + stem (\( \-\-\-\-\-\- \) )
    stem : \( \-\-\-\-\-\- \) = root (\( \-\-\-\-\-\- \) ) + aspectual scheme (here perfect/ive, realized -a).

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1 In order to facilitate reading, a schwa (\( \-\) ) has been used in the phonological transcription of examples.
Abbreviations: aor = aorist, perf. = perfect/ive, imperf. = imperfective, Qlt : qualitative verb, Ambitr. = ambitransitive verb, Intrans. = stative/intransitive verb, Caus = causative (S- prefix), Pass = passive (TTW- prefix), prox. = proximal particle, dist. = distal particle, anaph. = anaphoric particle, 3SM = 3rd person singular masculine, ACC = accusative, DAT = dative.
As in other languages of the Afroasiatic family, there are bases and derived forms. According to Cohen (1984, 1988), the latter are formed in the following way:
- augmentation of the basic theme ("thème de base"), through consonant or vowel lengthening, or through total or partial copy of the stem; for example, gəl (‘stagnate’) has two derived forms, gəlləl (‘stagnate, be set’) and gəllələ (‘be flooded, soaked’).
- affixation of a derivational morpheme, for example rwi (‘move, be active’) can be derived with a b- prefix, bərwi (‘be upside-down’).

Those derivational processes are often expressive, and are at the root of the renewal of the verbal system, be it at the level of aspect or diathesis (voice or causativity).

1.1 Diathesis

As far as diathesis is concerned, the following morphemes can be encountered:
- an alveolar-fricative prefix (noted here S-), considered as a causative prefix\(^2\);
- an alveolar-plosive+semi-vowel prefix (noted here TTW-), considered as a passive prefix\(^3\);
- a bilabial-nasal prefix (noted here M-), considered as a reciprocal or reflexive prefix\(^4\).

There are other prefixes or combinations of prefixes, but they are marginal\(^5\).

All the verbs do not have three derived forms. Verbs with a short stem have in general two derived forms, whereas verbs with a long stem only have one, in general the causative one (Chaker 1973: 225).

1.2 Aspect

We have just seen that derivation is used to build passive, causative or reciprocal forms.

The domain of aspect is also touched by derivation, but only through one of its forms, the imperfective. The difference with diathesis lies in the fact that whereas causatives, passives or reciprocals come from the direct association of a scheme ("schème") with a root (Galand 1987, Cadi 1993), imperfectives are derived from aorists.

\(^2\) For instance ali (‘go up’) is derived in ss-ali (‘make go up’).
\(^3\) For instance t\(\mu\)af (‘hold’) is derived in t\(\mu\)-t\(\mu\)af (‘be held’).
\(^4\) For instance t\(\mu\)af (‘hold’) is derived in myu-t\(\mu\)af (‘hold each other, do a favour to each other’).
\(^5\) See Chaker (1973) for the list of those prefixes and their values.
Table 1: Aspectual forms of bases

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ROOT</th>
<th>AORIST</th>
<th>PERFECT/IVE</th>
<th>NEGATIVE PERFECT/IVE</th>
<th>IMPERFECTIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>KRZ</td>
<td>(ad) <em>y-kræ</em></td>
<td><em>y-kræ</em></td>
<td><em>y-kriż</em></td>
<td><em>i-koɔræ</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DD</td>
<td>(ad) <em>y-ədəd</em></td>
<td><em>y-əddæ</em></td>
<td><em>y-əddi</em></td>
<td><em>i-τɔddu</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Vocalic opposition</td>
<td>Vocalic opposition</td>
<td>Vocalic opposition</td>
<td>prefixation of <strong>f</strong> or gemination of root consonants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As is shown by table 1, the imperfective is marked either through consonantal gemination (*koɔræ* ‘plough’), or through prefixation (*τɔddu* ‘come’) of an alveolar plosive (TT-). The other oppositions are marked by apophony.

2 Diathesis

Let us now study in more detail the system of diathesis, in order to assess its basic semantic principles.

2.1 Taqbaylit verb types

In Taqbaylit as in other languages, some verbs are stative and transitive (e.g. *hmoţ* ‘love’), others are intransitive and dynamic (e.g. *azzal* ‘run’), while others still are both transitive and dynamic (*nəy* ‘kill’).

But a few hundred verbs are ambidiahtetical (or ambitransitive), in that they allow both the dynamic and the stative reading, the dynamic reading being correlated to transitivity, and the stative one to intransitivity. There are also a number of intransitive verbs which encode states that can be reconstructed cognitively (but not linguistically) as the results of processes. To our knowledge, those classes have not been characterized semantically.

For instance, *yərəs* (intransitive) means ‘be-cut’. And *kræ* (ambitransitive) means either ‘plough’ or ‘be-ploughed’.

(2)  Ixid  yə-yərəs
     thread  3SM-be-cut(perf.)
     ‘the thread is cut’

(3)  iɡər  yə-kræ
     field  3SM-plough(perf.)
     ‘the field is ploughed’
(4)  afollah  i-kərəz  i⁶
farmer  3SM-plough(perf.) ACC-3MS
‘the farmer (has) ploughed it’

The last two examples raise the following question: which of the two readings is primary – the stative or the dynamic one? In other words, semantically (because for ambitransitive verbs there is no overt morphological marking), is the stative reading derived from the active one or vice versa?

Chaker (1996: 2680) describes the predicate as neutral with respect to transitivity «le verbe berbère (comme d’ailleurs l’émoncé prédicatif nominal) pose simplement l’existence d’un fait d’expérience. L’indice de personne indique seulement que le procès est attribué à une réalité extérieure au lexème verbal lui-même; il n’implique aucune information quant à la nature de ce rapport. » To a certain extent, we agree with this definition of the predicate, but since all verbs are finite (and marked by aspect) in Berber, we do not consider that they are un-oriented. Instead, we consider that attributing the verbal predicate to a subject in a non-dynamic way comes down to orienting it. And we claim that this attributive orientation triggers a stative default reading, and that this basic orientation informs the whole verbal system of Taqbaylit, at the level of diathesis and aspect.

Indeed, if we base our semantic analysis on the linguistic facts of Taqbaylit, without the bias of translation into English or French, we can propose the following lexical decomposition, based on Van Valin & LaPolla (1997)⁷ for the verb in example (2):

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cut' (thread)
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Along the same lines, we propose, for yə-krəz (3) the following decomposition (based on its Aktionsart in the sentence):

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ploughed' (field)
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We therefore have two verb classes in which the stative reading is either obligatory, or privileged (as the default reading, with a minimal utterance, composed of the verb and its obligatory personal marker).

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⁶ The position of the [ə] is only due to accentuation rules when the verb is followed by a clitic.
⁷ "Following the conventions of formal semantics, constants (which are normally predicates) are presented in boldface followed by a prime, whereas variable elements are presented in normal typeface. [...] The elements in all capitals, INGR and BECOME, are modifiers of the predicate in the logical structure" (Van Valin & LaPolla 1997: 102).
Those decompositions show that it is possible to posit, for two fundamental verb classes of Tqbaylit Berber, in the perfect/ive and the aorist, a basic predication structure that is stative.

This fact, in our opinion, gives the key to the behaviour of the whole predicative system, in which it is more illuminating to consider that dynamic predications tend to be derived from stative ones, in a diachronic cycle which we are ultimately going to try to reconstruct, from the traces that it has left in contemporary Tqbaylit Berber.

If the verb is in a transitive construction *i-kærz it* (4), we propose to see it as a covert causative\(^8\), since it creates an induced state. We therefore propose the following logical structure, with an underlying activity pattern:

\[
[do' \text{ (farmer) } [\text{plough}' \text{ (farmer, field) } ] ] \text{ CAUSE } [\text{BECOME ploughed'} \text{ (field) } ]
\]

The reason for this choice is that clearly, at the level of *Aktionsart*, ‘plough’ is an activity. This must appear in the decomposition. Besides, we can notice two features in this reading, that of telicity (BECOME) and that of causativity (CAUSE). Those two features have been brought about by the organisation of the predication, which constructs the patient as the aim of a process, whose initiator is an agent.

Contrary to what happens with ambitransitive verbs, it is impossible to build a dynamic predication with a stative–intransitive verb, like *yʁəs*, alone. The only possible way of predicing the following structure:

\[
\text{INGR } \text{cut'} \text{ (mother, thread) } \text{CAUSE } [\text{BECOME cut'} \text{ (thread) } ]
\]

is by using the S-derived form:

\[
(5) \quad \begin{array}{c}
yəmmas \quad t-səyyəs \\
\text{her-mother } 3FS-\text{be-cut(Caus(Intr)-perf.)DAT-3FS thread}
\end{array}
\]

‘her mother had cut the thread’

For ambitransitive verbs, in most cases, the dynamic reading is achieved thanks to the mention of an object clitic or NP\(^9\), whereas for intransitive–stative verbs, it is achieved thanks to S-derivation. In both

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\(^8\) Also called lexical causative (Kulikov 2001).

\(^9\) If we adopt Dixon’s (1994) terminology and consider S (the sole obligatory participant in an intransitive clause), A (the instigator of the action in a transitive clause) and O (the patient or undergoer of the action in a transitive clause), we can say that the predicate construction associates the S role with O, thus pointing towards ergative properties of this class of verbs, in the perfect/ive and the aorist (split-ergativity).
cases, an agent appears in the predication. It is interesting to note that the agent is, in a way, defined by the fact that there is a goal (represented by the object clitic or NP) to be reached.

It is necessary at this point to say a word about the terms “dynamic” and “stative”. In fact, those ambidiathe tic verbs are usually described in terms of transitivity: both the transitive and the intransitive readings are possible. But what is interesting is the fact that for this class of verbs, transitive implies dynamic, and intransitive implies stative. The number of arguments is correlated to their semantic role.

2.2 The causative prefix S-

The causative prefix is by far the most frequent. Its value is different depending on the type of verb to which it is attached. Cadi (1993) shows that the agentive status of the subject, and the transitivity of the clause, are correlated to the S- prefix « agentivité et transitivity semblent constituer une corrélation fondamentale pouvant servir de base à l’analyse des formes verbales en S- » (1993: 187). A thorough study of various diathetical structures in Tarifit Berber leads him to state that the only roots which accept prefix S- are those to which no patient or undergoer role is attached in deep structure « seules les racines verbales auxquelles n’est pas associé, en structure profonde, un argument direct supportant le rôle thématique siège, peuvent admettre l’incorporation du marqueur s- » (1993: 188). Taqbaylit data support this interpretation, since only a few transitive verbs accept the causative prefix.

On the contrary, many intransitive verbs accept the s- prefix, which apparently “transitivizes” the structure. For example, the verb ɣraɣ (‘be cut’) is transitivized through the use of the S- prefix.

(6)  lḥid  y-ɣraɣ
    thread  3SM-be-cut(Intr.perf.)
    ‘the thread is cut’

(7)  yəmmas  t-sɣraɣ
    her-mother  3FS-be-cut(Caus(Intr)-perf.)DAT-3FS thread
    ‘her mother had cut the thread’

According to Chaker (1973 : 252), « Dans plus de 80% des cas10, [le] rôle [du préfixe S-] est de transformer un verbe simple intransitif en un verbe transitif […] Pour ce qui est de ces verbes statifs, ce pré-

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10 Those figures concern frequencies in the lexis, not in discourse or actual use. Those 80% refer to the number of lexical entries in the dictionary that possess an S-derived form.
fixe a pour fonction de passer d’un énoncé non orienté (prédicat d’existence) à un énoncé orienté par un objet. De plus, sur le plan sémantique, il permet de remplacer le complément explicatif\(^{11}\) de l’énoncé statif qui est généralement un patient, par un complément explicatif agent dans l’énoncé processif. Ce préfixe a donc aussi pour rôle de transformer des verbes statifs en verbes dynamiques. » One may therefore be tempted to characterize the S- prefix as a transitivizer, instead of a causative (Chaker 1973). But there are still a number of uses of the S- prefix which are not ascribable to transitivation. Indeed, that prefix can be associated with onomatopoeic nouns to form a verb\(^{12}\). Hence the term « verbalisateur » chosen by Chaker.

*mieeu* (‘miaow’) *smieeu* (‘to mew’)\(^{13}\)

What is interesting in those cases is the fact that, even for noun-to-verb derivations, the semantic feature which accompanies the S- prefix is agentivity. We are therefore led to conclude that S- is neither a true causative (even if it marks causativity), nor a true transitivizer (even if it marks transitivity), but an “activizer”, if one may coin this term. It introduces agentivity in the predication. In this we fully meet Cadi’s analysis.

The fact that the S- derivation is not fundamentally transitivizing is even clearer when the prefix bears on an ambitransitive base. Indeed, in that case the derived form seems to be redundant with the base form, since the base form can have both orientations, stative or dynamic. The S- prefix therefore has another role, which is illustrated in the following examples.

In the first example, ambitransitive verb KS (‘remove/be removed’) has a transitive–dynamic reading, and in the second it is S-derived:

\[
\begin{align*}
(8) & \quad y-\text{\`a}kks \quad iyi \quad t\text{\`i}mec \quad t\text{\`i}bib \\
& \quad 3\text{MS}-\text{remove(Ambitr.-perf.) DAT-1S espoir docteur} \\
& \quad \text{‘the doctor took all hope from me’}
\end{align*}
\]

\[
\begin{align*}
(9) & \quad y-\text{ssukkas} \\
& \quad 3\text{MS}-\text{remove(Caus(Ambitr.-perf.) prox. his-son from jail} \\
& \quad \text{‘he managed to take his son out of jail’}
\end{align*}
\]

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\(^{11}\) « Complément explicatif » is the term coined by Galand to refer to the NP that is the lexical expansion of the personal subject affix, when it is in postverbal position.

\(^{12}\) Boumalke (in preparation) also considers that causativity and transitivation are not the only roles of the S- prefix, and that its importance in word formation has been underevaluated.

\(^{13}\) Example taken from Chaker (1973: 253).
The comparison between the two examples shows that in the S-predicate a volitional dimension appears that is not present in the first example. Of course, in the S-predicate one can reconstruct a causative dimension in the traditional sense of the term, with a third party who would be an instrument in freeing the son from jail. But the semantic analysis of such examples rather points towards another dimension, that of telicity (in its etymological sense of aiming towards a goal). This notion of a goal targeted by the main actor in the predication is also visible in semantic modifications that some verbs undergo (whatever their type) when they are S-derived. For instance, ḡēč (‘eat’), when derived (ḏāḡēč), can mean to poison, that is to say ‘make someone eat something with the aim of harming them’.

2.3 The passive prefix TTW-

The same type of analysis can be conducted for the TTW- prefix. One can oppose ṇjər (‘carve, trim’) to ṭwi-ṇjər (‘be carved, trimmed’).

This prefix undoubtedly serves the purpose of changing the diathetic orientation of the utterance and centering predication on the undergoer. However, the contextual values that arise show that valency or even topicalization are not the only issues.

The case of ambitransitive verbs here again helps us to examine further the role of the passive prefix: since one of the two readings of ambitransitive predicates is stative, what difference is there between this stative form and the passive one?

The following examples underline that difference:

(10) ḡər  nni  y-краz
field  anaph. 3MS-plough(Ambitr.-perf.)
‘the field in question is ploughed’

(11) ḡər  nni  y-ʨwa-краz
field  anaph. 3MS-plough(Pass(Ambitr.).-perf.)
‘the field in question has (finally) been ploughed’

In both cases, it is the undergoer which is topicalized. With the ambigu-diathetical intransitive reading the agent is never mentioned, but this holds true of the derived passive in the majority of cases, too. However, even if the agent is not explicit, the implications are different: the ambitransitive base states a fact while the passive derived form implies that the state of the field is the result of an action or activity initiated by an agent. Let us see this in an attested example:

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14 And its contextual variants ṭwə-, ṭwi-, ṭwi-, ṭwa-, ...
Diathesis, Aspect and Stativity in Taqbaylit Berber

(12) \( t\text{wa}-\text{t\text{\text{-}}}\text{raf-}\gamma \quad n \quad y\text{\text{-}}\text{\text{-}}r \quad \text{im\text{\text{\~n}}}\text{\text{-}}\text{s}i \)

hold-1S(Pass-perf.) dist. to supper

'I got kept back (they had me stay) for supper’

The simple mention of a fact would be achieved by \( \text{t\text{\text{-}}}\text{\text{-}}\text{raf-}\text{n \ iyi \ yor \ im\text{\text{\~n}}}\text{\text{-}}\text{s}i \) ('they kept me for supper'). The derived form underlines the telic, goal-directed dimension of the process. This marked value of the passive derived form, which is close to that of the "get"-passive in English, may explain its relative scarcity in discourse.

Concerning the position of the derived passive in the system of derived forms, we can state that the TTW- prefix organizes predication around the semantic role of undergoer, whereas the S- prefix centers the utterance around the semantic role of agent. In that respect, S- and TTW- are opposite members of a pair. But they share a feature in that they both signal that the predication is a dynamic one, that it implies a goal to be reached for an agent.

What is interesting to note at this point is the asymmetrical distribution of the S- prefix as opposed to the TTW- prefix. Indeed, the latter is much rarer in discourse than the former, a situation which is unexpected if we base our view of the system on the situation of languages such as English, in which the causative is far less frequent than the passive.

This situation is not only due to the broader functional scope of the S- prefix, but also to the fact that the numerous ambitransitive verbs of Berber can have an intransitive reading, thus relegating the passive derived form to marked contexts.

We consider that the number of intransitive bases and stative readings of ambitransitive bases is a consequence of the fundamental stativity of the Berber predication: there is less need to build attributive predications when most predicates have a stative reading. Conversely, such a situation triggers the need for active-dynamic predicates. When the verb is ambitransitive, it is used in its dynamic format, but when it is intransitive, it has to be S-derived. The latter derivation seems more frequent in narratives than in conversations (except for lexicalized S-forms), a fact which might point to a correlation between S-derived forms and a special need for action-type verbs rather than state-type verbs.
3 Aspect

Aspectual forms also seem to follow the same pattern: the synchronic imperfective is a derived form which has been introduced in the system later than the other aspectual forms, whose oppositions are based on apophonia (vocalic contrasts). Our claim is that this morphological asymmetry of the aspectual system is linked to the same phenomenon as that which informs the system of diathesis, namely the fundamental stativity of Berber predications, and its corollary, the creation of dynamicizing strategies.

Table 1 (section 1.2) shows the themes that constitute the aspectual system of the bases. The imperfective is morphologically derived from the aorist by gemination of root consonants (*karr₃* : plough[imperf.] is based on *kr₃* [aorist]), or prefixation of a dental consonant (*ttali* : go up[imperf.] is based on *ali*[aorist]). Both forms are in complementary distribution in the system.

Table 2 below shows that for derived forms the imperfective is based on apophonia, and more specifically on the use of a /ay/, /a/ or /i/ vowel, or on the reduplication of a vowel.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DERIVED</th>
<th>AORIST</th>
<th>PERF.</th>
<th>NEG. PERF.</th>
<th>IMPERF.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S-</td>
<td></td>
<td>==</td>
<td></td>
<td>affix. /a/, /i/ or /ay/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TTW-</td>
<td></td>
<td>==</td>
<td></td>
<td>affix /a/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MY-</td>
<td></td>
<td>==</td>
<td></td>
<td>prefix ụ + /a/ or vowel repetition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MS-</td>
<td></td>
<td>==</td>
<td></td>
<td>prefix ụ + affix /a/, /y/ or /ay/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(reciprocal)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For instance, the imperfective of *ssukkas* (S-derived aorist or perfect/ive of KS ['remove/be removed']) is *ssukkus*. Similarly, the imperfective of *twi-kkas* or *twa-kkas* (TTW-derived aorist or perfect/ive of KS) is *twakkas*. This may point to an original form of the imperfective which was part of the apophononic system.

We consider with Cohen (1989) that the geminated and prefixed forms of the imperfective were introduced at a later stage of the development of the system, which was originally apophononic. Of the two non-apophononic processes, gemination appears to have been the more ancient. Indeed the study of the morphological distribution of the two processes shows that bisyllabic (triconsonantal) roots favour gemination, whereas trisyllabic (quadriciconsonantal) roots favour prefixation.

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15 The equal-sign « = » means that the derived form has the same stem as the base. For instance in the aorist, the base *ali* ('go up') is derived into *s-ali*.
(Taine-Cheikh 2001). The fact that the shorter roots are the more ancient points to an earlier introduction of gemination in the system.

The introduction of derived forms was motivated by the loss of vocalic distinctions, but one may wonder why those particular processes (gemination and prefixation) were used. According to Cohen (1984, 1988) for Afroasiatic in general:

- derivation by augmentation of the basic theme corresponds to an expressive reinforcement (« renforcement de l’expressivité »);
- derivation by affixation corresponds to the mode of participation of the subject in the process (« les modifications exprimées par l’adjonction de morphèmes dérivatifs concernent le mode de participation du sujet au procès ») (1988: 22).

We consider that prefixed derived forms all have in common a feature of dynamicity (as shown in section 2 for diathesis), and that expressiveness and intensity are related to agentivity and its goal-oriented or volitional feature. This feature differentiates the progressive from the other imperfective values. We can therefore hypothesize that both derivational processes are the vectors of a marked imperfective value, that of the progressive/intensive. All of the imperfective values (habitual and progressive) are synchronically carried by the imperfective (geminated or prefixed), but we propose to hypothesize that originally, when the imperfective was apophonic, the derived forms only marked the progressive.

The motivation of the introduction of those two derived forms in the system is the drift of the old imperfective towards characterizing and habitual values. A point in favour of this hypothesis is the fact that the progressive is currently being renewed by a preverbed form (la + imperfective). We thus have:

- \( k\varrho r\bar{a} \) or \( \ddot{t}\text{i}l\bar{i} \): habitual, characterizing and progressive values,
- \( la + k\varrho r\bar{a} \) or \( \ddot{t}\text{i}l\bar{i} \): progressive value.

We are therefore witnessing a grammaticalization process which is probably a second “imperfective cycle”, whereby the drift towards stative values is once again compensated for by the introduction of a marked dynamic form, which is a preverbed form this time.

**Stage n-1**

- apophonic imperfective ← geminated and prefixed imperfective
- habitual + progressive ← progressive

**Stage n (current stage)**

- geminated and prefixed imperfective ← preverbed imperfective
- habitual + progressive ← progressive
4 “Quality” verbs

This attractiveness in the system of the stative pole is also to be found in the fact that in Taqbaylit Berber, there is a class of verbs called « verbes de qualité », which correspond semantically to states (in the perfect/ive) and to accomplishments (in the imperfective). There are approximately sixty\(^{16}\) verbs in that class, and examples are ‘be-red/redden’, ‘be-grown/grow’, etc. Their morphological peculiarity, in the perfect/ive only, is to appear with a zero marker in the third person singular masculine, with a suffixed (instead of prefixed) marker in the third person singular feminine, and to have a common suffix for all plurals, regardless of person\(^{17}\).

\[(13) \quad mqq\text{-}t \quad t\text{aq}\text{\'}i\text{\'}i\text{t} \]
\[\quad 3\text{FS-be-big(Qlt-Perf.)} \quad \text{girl} \]
\[\quad \text{‘the girl was big’} \]

The semantic representation of this utterance is: \text{big}' (girl).

In the imperfective, those verbs have an accomplishment reading, yielding a progressive meaning, and appear with the regular person markers.

\[(14) \quad di \quad s\text{\'}t\text{\'}\text{wa} \quad \text{\textquoteleft t}\text{\textquoteright im}\text{\textquoteleft y}\text{\textquoteright r-n} \quad \text{wudan} \]
\[\quad \text{in winter be-big-3PLM(imperf.)} \quad \text{nights} \]
\[\quad \text{‘in winter the nights grow longer’} \]

The semantic representation of this utterance is: \text{BECOME big}' (night).

With the causative prefix S-, and the regular person markers, those verbs indicate that the resulting state is provoked and concerns an argument which is not the subject of the utterance:

\[(15) \quad y\text{-}\text{\textquoteleft s}\text{\textquoteright myr} \quad \text{tisri} \]
\[\quad 3\text{MS-be-big(Caus(Intrans)-perf.)} \quad \text{matter} \]
\[\quad \text{‘he magnified/exaggerated the matter’}\(^{18}\) \]

The semantic representation of this utterance is: [do' (he, O)] \text{CAUSE [BECOME big]' (matter)].

Which we can compare to:

\(^{16}\) An inventory can be found in (Chaker 1978: 117-118).
\(^{17}\) For instance, \text{mqq} \text{\textquoteleft h}\text{\textquoteright e is big’}, \text{mqq} \text{\textquoteleft m}\text{\textquoteright e is big’}, \text{et mqq} \text{\textquoteleft w}\text{\textquoteright e, you are, they are big’}. The first two persons singular are marked in the same way as for the other verb classes.
\(^{18}\) Those examples are borrowed from Dallet (1982: 508).
(16) $mqq'\tau-t$ \hspace{1cm} tisri

3FS-be-big(Qlt-Perf.) matter

‘the matter was important’

With a semantic representation in: big (matter)

The behaviour of this verb class shows striking correlations between dynamicity, argument structure and aspect. Its very existence demonstrates the pregnancy of stativity in the verbal system of Taqbaylit Berber.

Conclusion

At this point, we hope to have provided evidence for the claim that the use of derivation in Berber, be it aspectual or causative or passive, is fundamentally correlated to the stative–dynamic opposition, and more specifically to the drift of the verbal system towards the stative pole.

Base forms, especially in the aorist and the perfect/ive, massively denote states, or more generally attributive predications. Derived forms introduce a dynamic element, which is either diathetic (causative, passive, reciprocal) or aspectual (progressive). Our claim is that in Taqbaylit Berber, dynamic predications are derived from stative ones and not vice versa. This assumption comes down to claiming that grammaticalization processes favour the stative pole, and the introduction of new marked forms is motivated by the restoration of the balance in the dynamic pole.

The fact that Taqbaylit Berber extensively uses non-verbal predications and possesses a class of quality verbs, is another argument in favour of the fundamentally stative/dynamic nature of the predicational system and of the fact that it is the stative pole of the system which is attractive.

As a conclusion, we may wonder whether this analysis is not also valid more generally for the characterization of ergative versus accusative systems, ergativity being a type of answer to a drift towards the stative pole, whereas accusativity is an answer to dynamically drifting languages.

References


