Deobliquative: a new valence-decreasing category

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The object of study:
The semantics of the Tura verbal affix |-LÁ| (-lä-ná-áh)

The claim:
I argue that the primary function of the derivational affix |-LÁ| is to mark on the verb the deletion (or sometimes facultativity) of the argument which is normally obligatorily expressed with the base verb as an indirect object or an adverbial.

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**Common morphosyntactic properties:**

- **transposition**: |-LÁ| can be detached from the verb and function as a kind of support verb to give the verb it is part of the combinatorial possibilities of a noun, e.g. for purposes of focalization (cf. Bearth 1971:171-176). I consider this to be an instance of (partial) antimorphologization (cf. Idiatov 2005:64-67, forthcoming).

**gbáá ‘thunder’**

1. gbáá ‘thunder’ → ‘It thundered again.’

- **transposition** (‘do’-periphrasis)

2. gbáá ‘thunder’ → ‘It thundered again.’

- **[LÁ] transposition**

3. gbáá ‘thunder’ → ‘It thundered again.’

**Quasi-synonymous pairs:**

| (1) hánná ‘fall (of a group, mass)’ | bín ‘fall (of a group, mass)’ |
| hánná ‘fall (fast)’ | bín ‘fall (fast)’ |
| daálá ‘fall’ | daa ‘enter; fall’ |
| dólálá ‘stop; wait’ | aa ‘stand; wait; stop’ |
| giinná ‘roll (up)’ | gini ‘roll’ |
| gbíelá ‘drag, trail’ | gbíe ‘pull, draw’ |
| ma(a)nná ‘fall (with a blow)’ | maa ‘hit, strike, beat; fall (of a bird of prey)’ |
| wrínná ‘throw (here and there)’ | wrin ‘throw (away)’ |

**A new account of the semantics of |-LÁ|:**

Bearth (1970:170) analyses |-LÁ| as a derivational suffix with an intensive meaning (“valeur intensive”). I argue that the primary function of the derivational affix |-LÁ| is to mark on the verb the deletion (or sometimes facultativity) of the argument which is normally obligatorily expressed with the base verb as an indirect object or an adverbial.
The derivation with |-LÁ| in Tura concerns motion verbs and (change of) posture verbs.

- The suppressed indirect object or adverbial has locative semantics (typically, it is the goal).
- The argument may be suppressed because it is referentially indefinite, as with yalá ‘sit down’ and bâná ‘fall’.
- In a few cases, the argument may be suppressed because it is coreferential to the subject or the direct object, as with dôlô in the meaning ‘wait’.

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### Example

(11) a. yalá
    
    ‘Sit down!’

(12) a. yaa gbààn tâ!
    sit.down chair on
    ‘Sit down on the chair!’

In a few cases, the argument may be suppressed because it is coreferential to the subject or the direct object, as with dôlô in the meaning ‘wait’.

### Example

(15) dôlô/*dôlôj gô̂n, án mú-ì!
    wait 1SG for 1SG.SUBJ.TAM come-PROG
    ‘Wait for me, I’m coming.’

(16) ǐ dôlô/*dôlôj, e tū-à
    2SG.SUBJ.TAM wait/TAM-TAM 1SG.SUBJ.TAM come-FUT
    ‘If you wait, he’ll come.’

(17) e dôlô/*dôlôj wèê gô̂n
    3SG.SUBJ.TAM wait-PROG money for
    ‘He’s waiting for the money.’

### A label for |-LÁ|

- some terms used for comparable derivations: deobjective, indefinite object deletion, absolutive, reflexive, and sometimes more generally suppressive

- (locative) deobliquative/deoblique

- (locative) oblique suppressive

- (with two subtypes: indefinite & coreferential)

### Why the proposed analysis of the semantics of |-LÁ| is better?

- It offers a straightforward account of the examples such as the ones just presented.
- It squares well with the fact that the derivation with |-LÁ| in Tura concerns motion verbs and (change of) posture verbs.
- It suggests a plausible etymology for |-LÁ|, viz. a demonstrative root *tá ’there’.
- Similarly, the cognate affixes in Busa -tê, Boko -(l)ê and Bokobaru -tê can be brought back to another demonstrative root *tê ’there’.

### |-LÁ| from a typological perspective:

- the kind of derivation expressed by |-LÁ| appears to be typologically unique

  “[valence changes involving] removal of an indirect object or an oblique argument are untested”

  (Haspelmath & Müller-Bardey 2004)
Is \(|-LÁ|\) really so unique?

YES...

- I know no exact analogues to the Tura derivation in \(|-LÁ|\) outside of Eastern Mande
- I know no languages with affixes whose main function would be mark on the verb the suppression of an indirect object or adverbial

BUT...

actually, some parallels can be found...

Some cross-linguistic parallels:

indirect object reflexives

Russian

(19) a. Ivan 
strói 
sebe 
dom
Ivan builds  oneself.DAT house.ACC
b. Ivan 
strói 
sebe 

Ivan builds-REFL
'Ivan is building a house for himself.'

(20) a. Ivan 
zađajot 
sebe 
svpresp
Ivan asks  oneself.DAT question.ACC
b. Ivan 
zađajot 
sebe 

Ivan builds-REFL question.INST
'Ivan is asking himself a question.'

French

(18) Bon, moi, j’y vais
well I I-there go
‘Well, I’m leaving (lit.: ‘Well, I, I go there’).’

References:


