

AGENTLESS TRANSITIVE VERBS IN GEORGIAN

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§1. Grammars and dictionaries of Georgian customarily classify verbs by transitivity and/or voice, in order to accommodate, at least partially, the complexities of verbal morphology and case assignment. As is well known, the Georgian case inventory includes an *ergative* (a.k.a. *narrative*) case, assigned to the agents of certain verbs, but only when the latter are in the aorist or optative paradigms. As a consequence, descriptive grammars of Georgian characteristically feature tables such as the one below, in which the assignment of case to the principal clausal arguments is correlated with two parameters: (i) verb class, which Georgian linguists usually refer to as “voice” (Geo. *gvari*), and many non-Georgian linguists as “conjugation”; (ii) tense/aspect/mode paradigms, grouped into three “series” according to stem form and case-assignment properties. The verb classification scheme formulated by A. Shanidze in his highly-influential *Fundamentals of Georgian grammar* (1953) separates those verbs which can assign the ERG from those which cannot, as well as applying a cross-cutting distinction between “medial” (*sašualo*) verbs, and those with an active/passive distinction (Table I).

Table I. Georgian verb classes & case-assignment [after Shanidze 1953]
(case-shift in blue)

VOICE (<i>gvari</i>)	1. active			2. passive		3. medioactive		4. mediopassive	
SERIES	agent	patient	IO	theme	IO	agent	IO	theme	IO
I (present, future, imperfect)	NOM	DAT	DAT	NOM	DAT	NOM	DAT	NOM	DAT
II (aorist, optative)	ERG	NOM	DAT	NOM	DAT	ERG	DAT	NOM	DAT
III (perfect, pluperfect)	DAT	NOM	(—)	NOM	DAT	DAT	(—)	NOM	DAT

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Whereas Shanidze’s voiced-based verb-classification scheme and others like it are used in grammatical works destined for native Georgian speakers, a considerable number of linguists writing for general (and therefore mostly non-Georgian) readerships reconfigure the classification to include a separate class of “indirect” or “inverse” verbs (Tschenkéli 1958: 446-90; Aronson 1982a: 332-44, see table II). As indicated by the choice of label, the most noteworthy feature of indirect verbs, at least for native speakers of West-European languages, is the apparent inversion of the “normal” relation between case (and also agreement) marking and grammatical roles. The NP assigned DAT case by indirect verbs has subject-like attributes, such as the capacity to govern reflexive and reciprocal pronominals:

bavšv-eb-sk *ertmanet-ik* *u-q'var-t*
 children-PL-DAT each.other-NOM O3:VM-love-PL
 “the children love each other.”

Table II. Aronson’s (1982a: 344) Georgian verb classes (conjugations), including “indirect verbs” (class 4)

CONJUGATION	<i>1. active</i>			<i>2. passive</i>		<i>3. middle</i>		<i>4. indirect</i>	
SERIES	Subj.	DO	IO	Subj.	Obj.	Subj.	IO	Subj.	Obj.
<i>I. Present, Future</i>	NOM	DAT	DAT	NOM	DAT	NOM	DAT	DAT	NOM
<i>II. Aorist</i>	ERG	NOM	DAT	NOM	DAT	ERG	DAT	DAT	NOM
<i>III. Perfect</i>	DAT	NOM	(—)	NOM	DAT	DAT	(—)	DAT	NOM

The recognition of “indirect verbs” as a distinct class or conjugation strikes me as problematic for several reasons. First of all, it introduces a syntactic feature — grammatical subjecthood — into what is otherwise a purely formal classification of verbs according to stem morphology and case assignment. Secondly, the dative-subject intransitive verbs classified by Tschenkéli, Aronson et al as “indirect” are formally quite heterogeneous (see the detailed study of Georgian indirect verbs by Cherchi 1997), and the morphological properties they do share, such as the

shape of their future and aorist stems, do not exclude a small number of nominative-subject verbs. Finally, indirect syntax, as indicated by subject properties accruing to an argument marked as a morphological object (according to case assignment and agreement), is by no means limited to “indirect verbs”. A significant number of bivalent intransitive verbs (which Tschenkéli and Aronson group into Class 2) attribute syntactic subject privileges to their formal indirect-objects. Furthermore, there are even a handful of transitive verbs (i.e. Class 1) characterized by indirect syntax, as in the example below. As a consequence, I prefer to retain a classificational scheme such as Shanidze’s, based on the crosscutting criteria of ERG-case assignment (Classes 1 & 3) and the form of the future/aorist stem (Classes 3+4 vs. 1+2), without consideration of syntactic criteria.²

<i>bavšv-eb-sk</i>	<i>ertmanet-ik</i>	<i>a-int’eres-eb-t</i>
children-PL-DAT	each.other-NOM	VM-interest-SM-PL
“the children are interested in each other” (lit. “each other interests the children”)		

The topic of this paper is a subtype of Georgian indirect transitive verb that has received little attention from linguists, the agentless transitive verb (ATV). The ATV is characterized by transitive morphology (most often that characteristic of causative verbs: version vowel /a-/³ and present-series marker /eb-/); but only one argument, formally marked as an object, is subcategorized. In other words, ATVs look like ordinary Georgian transitive verbs, but are not accompanied by overt grammatical subjects. Their one surface argument is assigned dative case,

² Harris (1981: 131) makes a similar argument, although on the basis of different presuppositions about the relationship between deep and surface structure.

³ On the Kartvelian grammatical category traditionally called “version”, which in many respects corresponds to middle-voice and applicative categories in other languages, see, among others, Boeder 1968, Aronson 1982b, Lacroix 2009.

and controls object agreement marking in the verb. Here are three examples of ATVs, two of them from Georgian-language Internet chat groups, and one from a short story by a popular contemporary writer. The single argument of each of these verbs is marked by the 1sg object marker m-. Each ATV also ends with a S3SG suffix (present & subjunctive -s, past-indicative -a), which is not cross-indexed to a surface NP.

- (1) *ertxel kimi-is lekcia-ze da=m-a-mtknar-a*
 once chemistry-GEN lecture-at PV=O1SG-VM-yawn-AOR.S3SG
 “Once **I yawned** at a chemistry lecture” (chat group *Tbilisi forum*)

- (2) *dzalian a=civ-d-a, gač'irvebul-ma maisur-i-c k'i čamo=v-i-č'im-e,*
 very got.cold-S3SG distressed-ERG T-shirt-NOM-also Prt PV-S1-VM-stretch-AOR
m-a-k'ank'al-eb-d-a mainc
 O1SG-VM-shiver-SM-IMP-S3SG nonetheless
 “It got very cold. Suffering (from the cold) I stretched my T-shirt downward, but still **I was shivering**” (Guram Dočanišvili *Erti ramis siq'varuli*)

- (3) *v-k'vd-eb-i liv t'ailer-ze m-a-bod-eb-s mas-ze!!*
 S1-die-SM-PRS L. T.-on O1SG-VM-craze-SM-S3SG her-on
 “I’m dying over Liv Tyler, **I am crazy** about her” (chat group *Netgamer*)

Compare the syntactic frame of the ATV *a-xvel-eb-s* “X coughs” to that of an ordinary causative verb, such as *a-myer-eb-s* “X makes Y sing”:

- (4) *bič'-s a-xvel-eb-s*
 boy-DAT VM-cough-SM-S3SG
 “The boy is coughing”
- (5) *megobar-i bič'-s a-myer-eb-s*
 friend-NOM boy-DAT VM-sing-SM-S3SG
 “A friend makes the boy sing”

The verbs *a-xvel-eb-s* and *a-myer-eb-s* have identical morphology, but whereas the latter subcategorizes for both a DAT-case NP denoting the singer and a NOM-case argument denoting the person or situation that causes the singer to sing, *a-xvel-eb-s* is only accompanied by a single NP, designating the one who coughs. At first glance, sentence (4) looks like it ought to mean “X makes the boy cough”, but no “X” ever appears with the habitual markers of a causative agent (NOM case in the present series of paradigms, ERG case in the aorist and optative). The author of example (3) claims to be driven crazy, and specifies the actress Liv Tyler as the proximal cause, but the NP referring to her is marked by a postposition (*-ze* “on, at”), and does not occupy the role of grammatical subject. For all intents and purposes, *a-xvel-eb-s*, *a-bod-eb-s* and other ATVs are monovalent.⁴

I have so far identified around three dozen ATVs in Modern Georgian, which are shown in Table III. In semantic terms, Georgian ATVs appear to form a coherent group: All examples that I have found denote observable — but usually involuntary — responses to internal physiological conditions. One subset clusters around the physiological symptoms of fever or chills: shivering, trembling, delirium and the like. Another group, semantically less tightly centered, refer to the experience of sharp pains, stomach distress, or muscular discomfort. A third subset — to which I will devote particular attention further on in this paper — comprises a small, semantically-focused group of verbs denoting different types of audible reaction to internal stimuli: coughing, sneezing, belching, yawning, hiccupping and vomiting.

⁴ Not everyone would agree that Georgian agentless transitive verbs are monovalent. Hewitt (2008: 97-8) postulates the existence of phantom agents — denoting the medical condition, “Providence”, “the circumstances”, or whatever a folk-semantic theory would hold responsible for the condition described — somewhere in the deep semantic structure of these verbs. Such an account, however, fails to provide an explanation for the shift in case-assignment behavior discussed below and illustrated in (12b).

Table III. Georgian agentless transitives and causatives.

[cp B. Jorbenadze 1985: 164-165; N. Jorbenadze 2006: 26; Melikishvili 2001: 239-240].

I. FACULTATIVE AGENTLESS TRANSITIVE VERBS

Ia. CAUSATIVE

Ø=/ga=m-a-caxcax-eb-s “I tremble”
Ø=m-a-taxtax-eb-s “I am overcome by quivering, trembling”
Ø=m-a-dzagdzag-eb-s “I tremble”
Ø=m-a-dzigdzig-eb-s “I tremble”
ga=/da=m-a-zrial-eb-s (t’anši) “I am overcome by shaking, trembling (in my body)”
ga/=še=m-a-žrial-eb-s (t’anši) “I am overcome by shuddering, my whole body trembles”
m-a-trtol-eb-s “I am overcome by shaking, trembling”
a=/ga/=še=m-a-žržol-eb-s (t’anši) “I am overcome by shuddering, my whole body trembles”
a=/ga/=še=m-a-k’ank’al-eb-s “I begin to shake, am overcome by shaking”
Ø=/a=m-a-baban-eb-s “I shiver”
Ø=/ga/=še=m-a-ci(v)-eb-s “I have/get hot & cold spells”
še=m-a-mcivn-eb-s “I shiver (esp. from fever)”
m-a-cxel-eb-s “I have a fever (from malaria)”
m-a-cxro-eb-s (< cxro “malaria”)
Ø=m-a-bod-eb-s “I am delirious (from fever)”
ga=/da=m-a-zmor-eb-s “I feel the need to stretch out”
amo=/da=m-a-zid-eb-s “I am nauseous”
m-a-payarat-eb-s “I have diarrhea”

Ib. NON-CAUSATIVE

da=m-cecxl-av-s “I have a hot flash”
ga=m-q’in-av-s “I feel ice-cold”
m-zrzn-i-s “I am overcome by shuddering, trembling”
m-čxvlet’-(av)-s “I feel a stabbing, sticking pain”
m-c’ic’k’n-i-s “I feel a stabbing, knifing pain”
da/=še=m-xut-av-s (muxlebši) “my knees fell stiff (e.g. from rheumatism)”

II. LEXICAL AGENTLESS TRANSITIVE VERBS

(all formally causative)

da=/amo=m-a-xvel-eb-s “I cough”
Ø=/da=m-a-mtknar-eb-s “I yawn”
amo=/da=m-a-boq’in-eb-s “I belch”
da=m-a-bloq’in-eb-s “I belch”
c’amo=m-a-žloq’in-eb-s “I belch”
Ø=/da=m-a-slok’in-eb-s “I have the hiccups”
Ø=/da=m-a-cemin-eb-s (cxvirs) “I sneeze”
Ø=/da=m-a-cxik’v-eb-s “I sneeze”
Ø=/amo=/gadmo=m-a-rc’q’-ev-s “I vomit”
amo=/c’amo=m-a-zid-eb-s “I vomit”
Ø=m-a-yebin-eb-s “I vomit”

§2. Impersonal transitives. Similar types of verbs have been identified in other languages. In dependent-marking languages of nominative-accusative alignment, such as Latin, Icelandic, Russian or German, ATVs — usually referred to in the literature as “impersonal transitives”, “transimpersonals” or “accusative-subject verbs”— assign accusative case, as do ordinary transitive verbs, but are accompanied by non-referential nominative-case arguments (typically 3sg neuter pronouns) or no nominative-case NP at all (Fay 1917; Lehmann 1974: 40; González 1984; Babby 1994, 1998; Bowers 2002; Barðdal & Eythórsson 2003; Creissels 2007).⁵

(6) Impersonal transitives in three Indo-European languages

(a) LATIN

<i>me paenitet</i>	I regret, repent
<i>me pudet</i>	I am ashamed
<i>me taedet</i>	I am weary

(b) RUSSIAN

<i>menja znobit</i>	I feel chilly, feverish
<i>menja rvët</i>	I vomit (“X rends me”)
<i>menja tošnit</i>	I feel sick

(c) GERMAN

<i>Mich friert (es).</i>	I am freezing.
<i>Mich hungert.</i>	I am hungry.
<i>Mich gelüstet (es) nach X.</i>	I have a craving for X.

In Amharic, which is double-marking, the single surface argument of ATVs is assigned ACC case, and governs object agreement in the verb.

⁵ I note in passing that impersonal constructions are discussed in a genre of linguistic literature distinct from that employed in this paper, in connection with their alleged link to certain facets of the mentality or world-view of speakers of languages in which such constructions occur frequently (Sériot 2000).

(7) AMHARIC (Amberber 2000, 2002):

rabb-ə-ññ

hunger.PERF-3MASC-1SGOBJ

‘I am hungry.’ (Lit.: ‘It hungers me.’)

The phenomenon of accusative-subject predicates has been extensively studied with respect to Icelandic, which, for a West-European language, has an unusually high number of verbs specifying non-nominative subjects (Barðdal 2001, Eythórsson 2000, Svenonius 2001). Besides monovalent ATVs, the Icelandic lexicon includes twenty or so bivalent verbs which assign accusative case to both core arguments, the grammatical subject as well as the object.

(8) ICELANDIC (Barðdal 2001: 203)

a. *Ána lagði.*

river.ACC froze

‘The river froze.’

b. *Mig dreymdi ömmu.*

I.ACC dreamt grandma.ACC

‘I dreamt of grandma.’

The identification of ATVs in dependent-marking languages of consistently ergative alignment cannot in principle be based on case assignment alone, since the single argument of an ATV would receive the same absolutive marking as the subject of an intransitive verb. Johanna Nichols (p. c.) has nonetheless detected a small number of ATVs in the Northeast Caucasian language Ingush. These expressions either employ a transitive auxiliary verb (*loac* ‘catch, capture’, *C.u* ‘make’ [C = class-agreement marker]), or are transitive verbs which are facultatively agentless.

Ingush agentless transitives (Johanna Nichols, p.c.)

maalx/but loac ‘solar/ lunar eclipse occurs’ [lit. “X catches sun/moon”] *loac* “catch, capture”
dosh d.uuc ‘go on trial, be on trial’ [lit. “X narrates word/matter”]

AGENTLESS CONSTRUCTIONS WITH AUXILIARY VERB *C.u* “make” [C = class prefix]

muq=d.u ‘rust, get rusty, rust through, be rust-eaten, corrode’
sha=b.u ‘freeze, turn to ice’ [lit. “X makes ice (*sha*)”]
qeika=d.u ‘cough’; ‘be sick, have a cough’ (*qeik* ‘cry, shout’)
sotta=d.u ‘stretch (on waking)’ (*sott* ‘bend, curve’)
loarha=d.u ‘make up one’s mind (to); decide, dare’ (*loarh* ‘count, respect, consider, decide’)
sa=got(ta)=d.u ‘be worried, be upset’ (*sa* ‘soul’, *gotta* ‘narrow, cramped’)
qoa=d.u ‘manage, find time, manage to find time, manage to finish’

The number of ATVs in languages for which I have information ranges from a handful (3 to 5) to the two or three dozen ascribed to Icelandic (see Table IV). More importantly, the semantic characteristics of these verbs, in Indo-European and non-Indo-European languages alike, are strongly similar. On the whole, ATVs denote sensations, symptoms and changes of state which normally occur spontaneously, or without the experiencer’s volition:

- (i) psychophysiological sensations (*be cold, hungry, tired*)
- (ii) symptoms of illness or other internal states (*shiver, sneeze, have cramps*)
- (iii) emotional reactions, almost always negative (*feel fear, disgust, shame*)
- (iv) changes of weather, state, bodily health or life-cycle phase (*freeze, rust, age, die*)
- (v) passive movement (only described for Icelandic, as far as I know: *drift, be carried*)

Table IV. Semantic range of ATVs in various languages.

	GEO	LAT	RUS	ICE	GER	AMH	SHI	NGA	ING
I. PSYCHOPHYSICAL SENSATIONS									
hunger, thirst				X	X	X	X		
heat, cold	X			X	X	X	X	X	X
dizziness, delirium	X			X					
pain	X			X		X		X	
sleepiness, exhaustion							X		
II. OBSERVABLE SYMPTOMS									
shivering, fever, chills	X		X						
audible (cough, belch, &c)	X					X			X
nausea, diarrhea, cramps	X		X	X		X			
paralysis, stiffness	X		X				X		X
swelling, fatness							X		
stumble, fall						X	X		
III. EMOTIONS (NEGATIVE)									
fear, worry, sorrow				X		X	X	X	X
shock, surprise				X		X	X		
moral reaction		X		X				X	
need, lack, longing				X		X			
boredom							X		
positive emotion (happiness)						X		X	
IV. COGNITIVE									
memory				X					
dream				X	X				
think, imagine					X				
V. SPONTANEOUS CHANGE									
freeze, thaw				X					X
rust, rot, curdle				X			X		X
life cycle: be born, die, age							X		X
weather, celestial event							X		X
VI. PASSIVE MOVEMENT									
				X					

languages : Georgian, Latin, Russian, Icelandic, German, Amharic, Shina, Ngan'gityemerri, Ingush

Whereas the inventory of ATVs for some languages spreads over most or all of the semantic fields enumerated above, those of other languages cluster in one or two fields. The five Latin impersonals which assign accusative case describe negative reactions of an emotional and/or moral nature. The half-dozen lexical ATVs of Russian, like the larger group in the Georgian lexicon, denote physical symptoms.⁶

I note in passing that the classification of some of the verbs described above as ATVs has been contested by certain linguists. Moravcsik (1978: 241-2; see also Plank 1984: 352, Wunderlich 2006, Creissels 2007) characterizes Latin, German and Amharic ATVs as instances of the “extension of accusative markers to intransitive subjects”, and as such, comparable to the “split-ergative” or “split-S” alignments described for numerous languages (Dixon 1994: 73). According to this analysis, a phrase such as *me pudet* or *mich hungert* is generated by an intransitive verb which assigns accusative case to its subject. A similar interpretation has been proposed for the class of superficially monovalent verbs in head-marking languages such as Wichita (Rood 1971), Lakhota (Mithun 1991: 514-8) and Caddo (Mithun 1991: 525-8), which crossreference their single argument with object-agreement affixes. In Caddo, for example, the prefix ku- crossreferences the 1sg patient of transitive verbs such as (9a), and also the single surface argument of certain verbs denoting states and involuntary events, such as (9b):

⁶ Here are glosses of ATVs reported for three more languages: (i) Amharic (Bender & Fulass 1978) *worry, be tired, be sick, feel gloomy, bleed (nose), be bored, be comfortable, be thirsty, yawn, have a cramp, stumble, be disturbed*; (ii) Ngan’gityemerri (Australia; Reid 2000): *feel sad, feel shamed, be cold, be happy, need to get one’s breath back, have a toothache, feel ill at ease, feel uncomfortable talking together*; (iii) Shina (Indic; Hook & Zia 2005): *feel hungry, thirsty, bored, ashamed, afraid, hot, cold, weak, cloyed, dizzy, exhausted; become old, fat, blind, paralyzed, startled, restless, tormented, rusty, gassy, fed up [with X]; stumble, fall, swell up, curdle, shine, die.*

(9) Caddo (Mithun 1991: 525, 527)

(a) *ku:wida:kuhnah* “He grabbed **me**”

(b) *kukah?w?nah* “**I** burped”

Since 3sg subject/agent agreement in these languages is zero, such verbs could equally well be regarded as ATVs. I do not know if there are independent, language-internal grounds in Caddo and the other languages mentioned which would compel analysis of (9b) and similar verbs as intransitive rather than impersonal transitive; they may well in fact be indistinguishable for languages of this type.⁷

§3. Facultative ATVs. Georgian ATVs divide into two groups on the basis of morphological and syntactic properties. Most verbs of the first group are formally causative, as marked by the transitivity version vowel a- and the series marker -eb-. Many have expressive roots, as indicated by full or partial reduplication and phonetic symbolism (Holisky 1981). Shanidze (1953: 195-6) qualified the ATVs of the first group as “polysemic”, since they allow both mono- and bi-valent syntactic frames.

[INDIRECT TRANSITIVE, BIVALENT FRAME]

(10a) *šiš-ma* *isev* *a=m-a-k'ank'al-a*
 fear-ERG again PV=O1SG-VM-shiver-AOR.S3SG
 “Fear made me tremble again” (T’erent’i Graneli *yame otaxši*)

[AGENTLESS TRANSITIVE, MONOVALENT FRAME]

(10b) *siciv-isa-gan* *a=m-a-k'ank'al-a*
 cold-GEN-from PV=O1SG-VM-shiver-AOR.S3SG
 “I trembled from the cold”

⁷ On the distinction between impersonal transitives and intransitives with oblique subjects, and instances where the former has given rise to the latter, see Malchukov 2005.

Most of the bivalent homologues of ATVs are associated with indirect syntax, that is, the formal direct object — which tends to refer to human experiencers — takes on certain of the syntactic attributes of a grammatical subject at the expense of the agent, which almost invariably has inanimate or abstract reference (Tuite 1987). In accordance with the split-ergative patterning characteristic of Georgian and some of the other Kartvelian languages, the case assignment properties of transitive verbs (and some intransitives) shift from an accusative alignment in the present series of conjugational paradigms — where the DAT case doubles as an accusative marker — to an ergative alignment in the aorist and optative. Bivalent indirect intransitives conform to this pattern:

- (11a) *kal-s usiamovno mogoneba-Ø a-žržol-eb-s*
woman-DAT unpleasant recollection-NOM VM-shudder-SM-S3SG
“An unpleasant memory makes the woman shudder”
- (11b) *kal-i usiamovno mogoneba-m še=a-žržol-a*
woman-NOM unpleasant recollection-ERG PV=VM-shudder-AOR.S3SG
“An unpleasant memory made the woman shudder”

When the same verbs are employed with monovalent syntactic frames, however, their case-assignment properties change. The single argument is assigned dative case in both the present and aorist series:

- (12a) *xazarula-s siciv-isa-gan a-žržol-eb-s*
X.-DAT cold-GEN-from VM-shudder-SM-S3SG
“The *xazarula* (name of an apple tree) shudders from the cold”
- (12b) *xazarula-s siciv-isa-gan še=a-žržol-a*
X.-DAT cold-GEN-from PV=VM-shudder-AOR.S3SG
“The *xazarula* shuddered from the cold” (Nodar Dumbadze *Xazarula*)

The shift from direct-object (DO) to indirect-object (IO) marking brings the ATVs into conformity with the vast majority of Georgian verbs which display indirect syntax. Most such verbs belong to the passive (Class 2) or mediopassive (Class 4) types, which do not undergo case shift. The morphological subject is assigned NOM case, and the morphological IO — which, in the case of indirect verbs, receives the syntactic attributes of subjecthood — is assigned DAT case. The case-assigning properties of the two types of indirect transitives are juxtaposed to those of indirect passive and mediopassive verbs in Table V.⁸ (A typical construction with bivalent indirect passive would be *gogo-s deda e-nat’r-eb-a* [girl-DAT mother:NOM VM-miss-SM-S3SG] “the girl-DAT misses her mother”; a typical monovalent indirect passive would be *gogo-s e-myer-eb-a* [girl-DAT VM-sing-SM-S3SG] “the girl-DAT feels like singing”).

Table V. Case-assignment by Georgian indirect verbs
(syntactic subject marked in **boldface**)

	<i>indirect transitive (bivalent), e.g. (11a, b)</i>		<i>agentless transitive), e.g. (12a, b)</i>		<i>bivalent (medio)- passive</i>		<i>monovalent indirect (medio)-passive</i>	
	agent	patient	agent	patient	theme	experiencer	theme	experiencer
present series	NOM	DAT	—	DAT	NOM	DAT	—	DAT
aorist series	ERG	NOM	—	DAT	NOM	DAT	—	DAT
perfect series	(DAT	NOM)	(—	DAT)	NOM	DAT	—	DAT

The phenomenon described above seems not to have spread to agentless transitives in wish and curse formulas, which are generated by the impersonal optative construction described by Suxishvili (1979; 1986: 90-3) and Amiridze (2005). In such formulas — particularly common in the highland dialects of northern Georgia — the optative particle *net’avi* or its variants is

⁸ Transitive verbs in the present perfect and pluperfect (Series III) undergo “inversion” of the case and agreement marking assigned to their agents and patients. The agent NP receives DAT case and controls object agreement in the verb. Series III forms of ATVs are accepted by at least some speakers (albeit rejected by Melikishvili 2001: 240), but without genuine inversion.

combined with a transitive verb in the aorist tense. The agent of the verb was formerly expressed as an indefinite pronoun (*vin*, traces of which subsist in the particle *net'avi*, *net'ain* < *net'ar* “blessed” + *vin* “someone”; Shanidze 1953: 636), but its presence is no longer apparent to speakers, and in fact the particle can be dispensed with entirely, as in (13b). Impersonal optatives, which could be classified as quasi-agentless transitives — in order to distinguish them from those which undergo DO-to-IO shift as in (12b) — can be created in principle from any verb stem:

- (13a) *net'ain ma=m-k'l-a mta-šia, da=m-marx-a buneba-šia ...*
 OPT PV=O1SG-kill-AOR.S3SG mountain-in PV=O1SG-bury-AOR.S3SG nature-in
 “May **I die** in the mountains, may **I be buried** in nature”
 (lit. “May [someone] **kill me** ... **bury me** ...”, Xornaui 1949: 216; translation Tuite 1994 #67)

- (13b) *dačokili mexvec'eboda — erti dye šen-tan m-a-mq'op-a*
 kneeling he.begged.me one day you-with O1SG-VM-be-AOR.S3SG
 “On his knees he begged me, ‘May **I spend** one day with you!’” [Giorgi Leonidze *Pupala*]

As would be expected on pragmatic grounds, the beneficiary of wish formulas is generally in the 1st, or less often, the 2nd person. Impersonal optative constructions with a single 3rd-person NP are very rare in spontaneous speech or literature. In the few examples I have come across, the single NP receives DO coding (i.e. NOM case):

- (14) *net'amc k'i okros tavgav-ad gada=a-kci-a q'vela-o!*
 OPT indeed golden ear-ADV PV=VM-turn-AOR.S3SG **everyone:NOM-QUOT**
 “May **everyone** turn into golden ears (of grain)” (Šio Myvimeli *Okros tavgavi*)

§4. Lexical agentless causatives and syntactic flip-flop. The ten or so verbs composing the second group of ATVs in Table III are lexically agentless, that is, they are always monovalent. Although membership in this group is determined by morphosyntactic criteria, the verbs cluster around a semantic prototype as well: audible actions of the mouth or nose, sometimes accompanied by the expulsion of a gaseous or liquid substance, and usually involuntarily provoked by internal states of the body, although most of the denoted actions can be controlled by the subject. All lexical agentless transitives (LATVs) known to me are morphologically causative. Unlike the other types of ATVs, and indeed, unlike any other verb type described for Georgian, the single argument of LATVs can flip from morphological subject to morphological object status (Melikishvili 2001: 117, 240; Jorbenadze 2006: 26-39). The verb meaning “yawn”, for instance, has the following two paradigms in the present tense:

(15)	INDIRECT CONJUGATION		DIRECT CONJUGATION	
	<i>me</i>	<i>m-a-mtknar-eb-s</i>	<i>me</i>	<i>v-a-mtknar-eb</i> “I yawn”
	I/me	O1SG-VM-yawn-SM-S3SG	I/me	S1-VM-yawn-SM
	<i>šen</i>	<i>g-a-mtknar-eb-s</i>	<i>šen</i>	<i>a-mtknar-eb</i> “you (sg.) yawn”
	<i>mas</i>	<i>a-mtknar-eb-s</i>	<i>is</i>	<i>a-mtknar-eb-s</i> “he/she yawns”

What is so unusual about the above two paradigms is not their form, but rather their near-equivalence in meaning. The single argument in each instance denotes the one who yawns. Formally comparable paradigms can also be formed from ordinary causative verbs, but the role of the argument varies according to the agreement marker it governs:

(16)	<i>me</i>	<i>m-a-myer-eb-s</i>	(<i>is</i>)	<i>me</i>	<i>v-a-myer-eb</i>	(<i>mas</i>)
	I/me	O1SG-VM-sing-SM-S3SG	(s/he:NOM)	I/me	S1-VM-sing-SM	(s/he:DAT)
	“S/he makes me sing”			“ I make him/her sing”		

All eleven LATVs known to me can undergo syntactic flip-flop as in (15). The alternation between the indirect and direct conjugations has certain semantic implications. According to Nino Amiridze (p. c.), “whereas direct-syntax forms can be used for an unintentional (*uneburi*) action as well as for sneezing or coughing on purpose, the indirect-syntax forms are only for unintentional [actions]”. Note the contrast between the indirect and direct uses of *axvelebs* “coughs” in the two examples in (17), both from the play *Šebindebidan gatenebamde* by Bačo K’virt’ia. On the other hand, the direct use of the verb in (18), from an anti-smoking tract posted on the web page of the Georgian Orthodox patriarchate, does not appear to be correlated with intentional coughing.

(17a) *c’amosvl-is dye-s gaciebuli vq’opilvar; sašinlad m-a-xvel-eb-d-a.* [INDIRECT]
 leaving-GEN day-DAT chilled I.was.PERF terribly **O1SG-VM-cough-SM-IMP-S3SG**
 “The day I was to leave I had a cold; I was coughing terribly”

(17b) *didi k’ac-ivit muč’-ši v-a-xvel-eb.* [DIRECT]
 big man-like palm-in **S1-VM-cough-SM**
 “Like an adult I cough into my hand”

(18) *dyes gacilebit uk’et vgrdznob tavs, ayarc v-a-xvel-eb da*
 today considerably better I.feel myself no-longer **S1-VM-cough-SM** and
ayarc naxveli m-a-xrčob-s
 no-longer coughed it.chokes.me (<http://www.patriarchate.ge/su/312/7text.htm>)
 “Today I feel much better, I am no longer coughing and no longer gagging on sputum”

According to the small sample of Georgian speakers whom I consulted, the indirect conjugations of LATVs tend to be more frequent in the imperfective paradigms, such as the present and

imperfect, than in the aorist-series paradigms.⁹ Perfect-series paradigms formed from indirect LATVs are uniformly judged unacceptable. According to Jorbenadze (2006: 29), some speakers consistently employ the indirect conjugation in the present and imperfect tenses, and the direct conjugation in the aorist. A sampling of Georgian texts found on the internet (mostly chat groups) implied that actual usage frequencies might vary significantly from one verb to another, but the greater likelihood of the aorist to be used in the direct conjugation was confirmed (Table VI).

(19) TENSE	INDIRECT CONJUGATION		DIRECT CONJUGATION
present	<i>m-a-xvel-eb-s</i>	>	<i>v-a-xvel-eb</i> “I cough”
aorist	<i>da=m-a-xvel-a</i>	<	<i>da=v-a-xvel-e</i> “I coughed”
present perfect	(* <i>da=v-u-xvel-eb-i-var</i>)		<i>da=m-i-xvel-eb-i-a</i> “I have coughed”

Table VI. Internet survey of Georgian LATVs (1st-person singular only), February 2010

		INDIRECT	DIRECT
(1) “I yawn(ed)” [- <i>mtknar</i> -]	<i>present</i>	56	87
	<i>imperfect</i>	11	21
	<i>aorist</i>	29	57
(2) “I cough(ed)” [- <i>xvel</i> -]	<i>present</i>	155	76
	<i>imperfect</i>	47	35
	<i>aorist</i>	25	29
(3) “I hiccup(ed)” [- <i>slok'in</i> -]	<i>present</i>	54	19
	<i>imperfect</i>	32	1
	<i>aorist</i>	8	4

Superficially similar phenomena have been described in other languages. One might juxtapose the syntactic flip-flop of Georgian LATVs to the shift from indirect to direct syntax for so-called Psych-verbs in Middle English, such as the oft-discussed transition from *þam cyngre licoden*

⁹ As is the case with facultative ATVs, LATVs assign DAT case to their single NP in the aorist series, that is, it is coded as an IO rather than a DO:

(i) *mas* *da=a-xvel-a* (Lela Samushia, p. c.)
 s/he:DAT PV=VM-cough-AOR.S3SG “s/he coughed”

peran [the:DAT king:DAT liked-3pl pears:NOM] to its modern equivalent *The king liked pears* (Trask 1996: 138-9). In reality the two cases have different causes. The shift from indirect to direct syntax in English and some other Germanic languages was associated with the erosion and eventual loss of case suffixes and the increasingly rigid preference for SVO word order. Nothing of the sort is happening in Georgian. Its double-marking morphosyntax has been remarkably stable since the earliest attestation of the language fifteen centuries ago, and not even the slightest indication of a generalized syntactic drift away from indirect constructions can be detected in any Georgian dialect. Dative-subject verbs number in the hundreds, and new ones are easily (and frequently) added to the lexicon. They are also among the very first verbs acquired by children (Imedadze & Tuite 1992: 63-4).

Typical causatives, like *a-myer-eb-s* “X makes Y sing” in example (5), as well as facultative ATVs such as *a-k’ank’al-eb-s* “X makes Y shake; Y shakes” (example 10), are derived from intransitive medial (medioactive) verbs, or sometimes nouns or adjectives. Their stems also appear in inchoative-intransitive verbs such as *a-myer-d-eb-a* “begins to sing”, *a-k’ank’al-d-eb-a* “begins to shake” (Table VII). Compared to other types of causatives, the LATVs are derivationally rather isolated. Except for *slok’inebs* “hiccups”, *boq’inebs* “burps” and the obsolete *iqwels (ixvels)* “coughs”, attested in medieval medical texts (Panask’ert’eli-Cicišvili 1978), Georgian LATVs lack medioactive or inchoative counterparts.¹⁰

¹⁰ Whereas many medioactive verbs are also accompanied by an indirect intransitive derived from the same root meaning “feel like X-ing” (e.g. *m-e-myer-eb-a* “I feel like singing”), almost no Georgian ATVs have such counterparts. This might well reflect a perceived incompatibility between the blind psychophysical compulsion to shake, tremble, vomit, etc., signalled by ATVs; and the typical entailments of indirect passives in *e-*, which are used to indicate the perception of a quality (*m-e-bevr-eb-a* “it seems a lot to me”), or the possibility or desire to act in a certain way (Shanidze 1953: 299-301).

Table VII. Georgian agentless transitive and associated verb forms

	medioactive “I am X-ing”	inchoative intransitive “I will begin X-ing”	causative “(Y) makes me X”
I. Ordinary medioactive			
“sing”	v-myer-i-(var)	a=v-myer-d-eb-i	m-a-myer-eb-s
II. Facultative agentless transitive			
“tremble”	v-caxcax-eb	a=v-caxcax-d-eb-i	m-a-caxcax-eb-s
“quake”	v-dzagdzag-eb	a=v-dzagdzag-d-eb-i	m-a-dzagdzag-eb-s
“shake”	v-k’ank’al-eb	a=v-k’ank’al-d-eb-i	m-a-k’ank’al-eb-s
“quiver”	v-trt-i	a=v-trtol-d-eb-i	m-a-trtol-eb-s
III. Lexical agentless transitive			
“hiccup”	v-slok’in-eb	a=v-slok’in-d-eb-i	m-a-slok’in-eb-s
“cough”	(v-i-xvel)	a=v-xvel-d-eb-i	m-a-xvel-eb-s
“belch”	v-boq’in-eb	a=v-boq’in-d-eb-i	m-a-boq’in-eb-s
“belch”	—	—	m-a-žloq’in-eb-s
“yawn”	—	—	m-a-mtknar-eb-s
“sneeze”	—	—	m-a-cemin-eb-s
“sneeze”	—	—	m-a-cxik’v-eb-s
“vomit”	—	—	m-a-rc’q’-ev-s
“vomit”	—	—	m-a-yebin-eb-s

How did syntactic flip-flop arise? The near-synonymy of *maxvelebs* and *vaxveleb* is unlike anything else in Georgian morphosyntax.¹¹ This is not to say that the alternation between direct and indirect syntax is limited to the small group of LATVs. Quite a few Modern Georgian verb types, mostly bivalent intransitives but also a few dozen transitives, allow either of their principal arguments to accrue some or all of the attributes of syntactic subjecthood, such as the capacity to bind reflexive and reciprocal pronouns, and number agreement with the verb in all three persons

¹¹ Constructions that resemble Georgian flip-flop, at least at first glance, do occur in other languages (J. Colarusso, pers. comm.). Some languages of the North Caucasus have a sort of antipassive construction which results in an inversion of the cases assigned to the principal clausal arguments. Ordinary transitive verbs in these languages assign ergative case to their subjects and absolutive case to their direct objects, whereas their antipassive counterparts assign absolutive case to their subjects, and an oblique case identical to the ergative case to their direct objects. An especially striking instance is the Dargi antipassive verb form, which has no special morpheme distinguishing it from the corresponding transitive (Colarusso 1992: 177-8; Berg 2005: 178; Hewitt 2005: 123-5). Much of the similarity of these constructions to Georgian *maxvelebs/vaxveleb* pairs, however, results from language-specific morphophonemic rules relating to case paradigms and person agreement.

(Tuite 1998: 36-9). Consider the following syntactic minimal pair. In the first example (20a), the NOM-case argument (intransitive subject) has the properties of syntactic subjecthood, and controls plural number agreement in the verb. In (20b), the roles are reversed: *dedebs* “mothers”, formally an IO, has most of the privileges of syntactic subjecthood, including the control of number agreement in the 3rd person.

- (20a) DIRECT: *bavšv-eb-i* *e-mal-eb-i-an* *ded-eb-s*
 child-PL-NOM O3.VM-hide-SM-S3pl mother-PL-DAT
- (20b) INDIRECT: *ded-eb-s* *e-mal-eb-a-t* *bavšv-eb-i*
 mother-PL-DAT O3.VM-hide-SM-S3SG-PL child-PL-NOM
 “The children are hiding from (their) mothers.” [elicited]

The change of meaning between the direct and indirect variants of *emaleba* “X hides from Y” is difficult to characterize precisely. According to native speakers consulted in Tbilisi, the direct variant implies intentional activity on the part of the hiders, whereas the indirect variant does not. A similar semantic entailment was noted earlier for the direct variants of LATVs. The crucial difference between instances of direct/indirect syntactic alternation such as (20) and the flip-flop associated with LATVs is at the level of argument structure. In both sentences in (20), the NOM NP denotes the ones who hide, and the DAT NP denotes those from whom they hide. Though the shift in subjecthood between the two arguments is linked to the meaning difference mentioned above, and sometimes a shift in discursive focus or “empathy” as well, the thematic roles remain unchanged. LATVs, being monovalent, specify a single argument — designating the one who coughs, yawns, etc. — but both the thematic and syntactic roles linked to that argument change from one variant to the other.

According to information supplied by Lela Samushia (University of Frankfurt), the closely-related Mingrelian language does not have syntactic flip-flop as such. Mingrelian LATVs, some of them based on roots cognate with those of Georgian LATVs (e.g. *m-o-xval-ap-u-an-s* ‘I cough’ [cp. Geo. *m-a-xvel-eb-s*]; *m-o-šik’in-ap-u-an-s* ‘I hiccup’ [cp. Geo. *m-a-slok’in-eb-s*]), are indeed in contrast with direct-syntax constructions, but these latter are medioactive rather than causative in form (*xval-un-s* ‘coughs’, *šik’in-un-s* ‘hiccups’). See also Kajaia 2001 I: 255; III: 260, 537). Comparative evidence from Mingrelian, therefore, would lead one to expect that the original alternation was between a medioactive (such as the obsolete *v-i-xvel* ‘I cough’) and an indirect causative (*m-a-xvel-eb-s* ‘it makes me cough’ > ‘I cough’). If this was the case, then it is the origin of the direct-syntax variant (*v-a-xvel-eb*) which requires explanation.

Table VIII. Georgian and Mingrelian lexical agentless transitives and associated medioactives (Lela Samushia, p.c.; Kajaia 2001)

		agentless transitive	medioactive
“belch”	GEO.	<i>a-boq’in-eb-s</i>	<i>boq’in-ob-s</i>
	MING.	<i>o-boʔin-ap-uan-s</i>	<i>boʔin-un-s</i>
“hiccup”	GEO.	<i>a-slok’in-eb-s</i>	<i>slok’in-eb-s</i>
	MING.	<i>o-šik’in-ap-uan-s</i>	<i>šik’in-un-s</i>
“cough”	GEO.	<i>a-xvel-eb-s</i>	<i>(i-xvel-s)</i>
	MING.	<i>o-xval-ap-u-an-s</i>	<i>xval-un-s</i>
“sneeze”	GEO.	<i>a-cxik’v-eb-s</i>	—
	MING.	<i>o-čion-ap-uan-s</i>	<i>čion-un-s</i>

Unfortunately but understandably, verbs meaning “belch”, “hiccup” and “vomit” are not especially frequent in the textual genres composing the bulk of the medieval Georgian corpus. A preliminary search in Georgian medical manuals, such as the 15th-century *Samk’urnalo c’igni* ‘‘Book of healing’’ (Panask’ert’eli-Cicišvili 1978) has yielded a handful of examples, but so far not nearly enough to begin sketching out the history of how *v-a-xvel-eb* and similar causatives came to be interpreted as synonymous with the simple medioactives they later supplanted.

Semantics may provide the crucial clue. The Georgian LATVs comprise a small set of verbs with strongly similar meanings: All denote some sort of expulsion of sound and/or fluid from the mouth. As such, they resemble what Blake (1994: 69) called “bodily-emanation” predicates. In many languages, verbs of this type have unexpressed or optional patient arguments denoting the emanating substance or phenomenon, and the case-assigning properties of transitives. Several LATVs are in fact commonly used with such object NPs, e.g. *amo=v-a-xvel-eb* “I cough sthg up”, *amo=v-a-rc’q’-ev* “I vomit up (blood, food)”. By contrast, the facultative ATVs, which denote a condition manifested by motion (trembling or shivering) or an internal sensation of cold/heat/pain, do not subcategorize for a patient argument of this kind.

(21a) *zog-i* *haer-s* *iolad* *amo=a-boq’in-eb-s*
some-NOM air-DAT easily PV=VM-burp-SM-S3SG
“Some (babies) burp up air easily” (chat-group)

(21b) *sisxl-i* *amo=v-a-xvel-e*
blood-NOM PV= S1-VM-cough-AOR.S1SG
“I coughed up blood”

Georgian “bodily-emanation” verbs can also be used without an expressed object; this is almost always the case for the two Georgian verbs denoting the expulsion of intestinal gas: *ga=a-k’u-eb-s* “fart audibly” and *ga=a-cu-eb-s* “fart silently”, both of which have the form of causatives but rarely if ever appear with an overt direct object.

If my hypothesis comes close to the truth, then *m-a-xvel-eb-s* and *v-a-xvel-eb* had their origins in distinct constructions with different argument structures. The former variant would have had the same structure as *m-a-k’ank’al-eb-s* “I am shivering” and the other facultative ATVs, and would

morphological class would assign to a different syntactic role, or even leave unexpressed. For example, the subject of a typical Class 2 verbs in *i-* is the patient of the corresponding active verb, whereas the agent is either omitted or relegated to a postpositional phrase. It is precisely the agent, by contrast, that serves as the subject of a Class 2 deponent. Of the two types of sneezing/coughing verbs, the direct-conjugation variant represents a case of syntactic marginality of the same kind as that just described. The indirect-conjugation variant, on the other hand, retains the same mapping of thematic relations to grammatical roles as the Georgian transitive causative, albeit with omission of the agent. The syntactically marginal Class 2 and Class 1 verb types are compared in the following table:

Table IX. Two Georgian verb classes and their syntactic variants
 a. argument structure (S, O = person markers; subject = syntactic subjecthood; (*backgrnd*) = demoted to oblique object status or unexpressed)

Class 2 prefixal intransitives			Class 1 causative transitives		
AGENT		PATIENT	CAUSER		EMITTER/EFFECTOR ¹²
passive	(<i>backgrnd</i>)	S/subject	Class 1 transitive	S/subj.	O
deponent	S/subject	(<i>backgrnd</i>)	ATV (<i>maxvelebs</i>)	—	O/subject
			<i>vaxveleb</i>	—	S/subject

b. semantic properties

BASIC VERB CLASS	SYNTACTIC VARIANT	SEMANTICS	CONTRASTING FORM
Class 2 passive (<i>v-i-bad-eb-i</i> “I [PATIENT] am born”)	deponent (<i>v-i-yeč'-eb-i</i> “I [AGENT] chew, masticate”)	antipassive (focus on contours of activity as characteristic of agent)	Class 1 transitive or Class 3 medial (<i>v-yeč'-av</i> “I [AGENT] chew, masticate sthg”)
Class 1 causative (<i>v-a-t'ir-eb</i> “I [CAUSER] make sb [EMITTER/EFFECTOR] cry”)	Class 1 monovalent (<i>v-a-xvel-eb</i> “I [EMITTER] cough”)	nearly synonymous with agentless transitive, but can also denote intentional coughing	Class 1 agentless transitive (<i>m-a-xvel-eb-s</i> “I [EMITTER] cough unintentionally”)

In the contours of emerging paradigms one can detect evidence of diachronic shifts observable

¹² These terms for actant roles have been adopted from Van Valin 2002.

elsewhere in Georgian morphosyntax over the fifteen centuries of documented history of the language. It was mentioned earlier (Table V) that the single argument of Georgian agentless transitives assumes the properties of an indirect object. Readers familiar with Germanic historical syntax might wonder if such a shift from DO to IO marking would indicate that Georgian is suffering from a case-assignment malady similar to the “dative sickness” said to afflict Icelandic and related languages (Eythórsson 2000; Barðdal & Eythórsson 2003). This term, invented by prescriptive grammarians, labels the tendency for impersonal transitives which once marked their primary argument with accusative case (e.g. German *mich hungert, mich dürstet*) to assign dative instead (**mir hungert, *mir dürstet*). Any such crosslinguistic comparison must however take into account certain changes undergone by the Georgian dialects over the past several hundred years, many of them manifestations of a drift away from the ergative-absolutive alignment apparent in Old Georgian morphology and syntax (Harris 1985). One such change is the increasing morphosyntactic prominence of core arguments with human reference, accompanied by a decline in the prominence of the NP assigned nominative case, especially when the latter has the status of direct object (Tuite 1998). A possible correlate of the greater prominence of animacy might be a marked dispreference in Modern Georgian to assign the role of patient to NPs with human reference when the agent is demoted or absent. Whereas the patients of ordinary transitive verbs very commonly have human reference in Georgian, this is not the case when there is no agent among the core arguments of the clause. Shanidze (1953: 290-1) observed a growing tendency for Georgian Class 2 verbs (the verb class traditionally labelled “passive”) to allow a genuinely passive interpretation — in the strict sense of a patient promoted to subjecthood and a demoted agent — only when the patient NP has nonhuman reference. The Old Georgian corpus contains numerous instances of Class 2 verbs with human subjects that have passive meaning, such as *mo=i-k’l-a* “he was killed” [2 Kings 11:26] or *mi=i-*

q'van-a “he was taken away” [Luke 16:22]. Such constructions are more and more rare, if not impossible, in the modern literary language.¹³ The assignment of indirect-object status to the single argument of ATVs (which almost always has human or at least animate reference) manifests a similar avoidance by animate NPs of patienthood — or at least, avoidance of the direct-object syntactic role assigned to patients by transitive verbs — when there is no agent, whether due to syntactic demotion (as in passives), or absence from the initial case frame (as in ATVs).

This phenomenon can also be interpreted as further evidence of the morphosyntactic marginality of direct objects in comparison to indirect objects in Georgian. Third-person direct objects no longer govern agreement in most varieties of Modern Georgian. When both are present in the clause, IOs are favored over DOs in competition for the preverbal object-agreement slot in the verb (Boeder 2002: 96-8).¹⁴ In general, the Georgian IO plays a particularly prominent role in both clause-internal and -external syntax. Many DAT-case NPs function as syntactic subjects outright, and many others share at least some features with subjects: their tendency to refer to humans, to appear toward the front of the clause, and to govern agreement in the verb. Especially in contrast to the particularly close relation between the DO (more precisely, the absolutive argument) and the verb, IOs come across as tantamount to secondary subjects. When no initial

¹³ Modern Georgian Class 2 verbs certainly can be used with human subjects, but this almost invariably imposes a middle or even active interpretation. This trend may well have contributed to the growth of the minor class of deponents mentioned above.

¹⁴ Plank (1984: 343-5) characterized the canonical direct object as the “polar opposite” of the most active participant (agent) specified by bi- or trivalent predicates, in the sense that it denotes the participant which is “least active, completely under the control/influence” of the agent. The Modern Georgian DO, it would appear, is very much a “polar opposite” in Plank’s sense, in that it requires the co-presence of an agent in argument structure; otherwise it undergoes movement to subject or IO position.

external argument is assigned by the verb — as can be assumed for the large number of passive and mediopassive verbs that have formal IOs — the IO takes on all or most privileges of subjecthood, while at the same time signalling, through its DAT marking, various shades of contrast to canonical agenthood (experiencer or beneficiary role, decreased volitionality, indirect evidentiality, etc.).¹⁵

As phenomena emergent from and renewed by the communicative practice of a speech community, the association of verb morphology to argument structure, and the grouping of verb forms into paradigms (i.e. the perception that a suite of forms pertain to the “same” verb), are susceptible to change, reconfiguration or the spawning of new form-meaning links. In earlier writings, I likened the emergence of new verb paradigms in Kartvelian to the coalescence of planets and moons from swirling clouds of dust (Tuite 1996). I still find the simile useful, although now I would modify it to allow the seemingly solid bodies representing well-established verb classes to occasionally lose matter, which in turn can condense into smaller objects, or be drawn into new formations by material from other planets.

¹⁵ It is noteworthy in this respect that some linguists working within the Minimalist tradition have sought to capture the syntactic prominence of indirect objects and datives in many languages by assigning them configurational positions outside of the VP, such that IOs are treated as external arguments of a sort, albeit not as “external” as syntactic subjects (see, among others, Pytkäinen 2000 on “high applicative” constructions, McGinnis 1998 and Woolford 2006).

Abbreviations

ACC	accusative
ADV	adverbial case
AOR	aoist
ATV	agentless transitive verb
DAT	dative
DO	direct object
ERG	ergative
GEN	genitive
IMP	imperfect
IO	indirect object
LATV	lexical agentless transitive verb
NOM	nominative
O1SG	object marker (1 st -person singular)
OPT	optative particle
PL	plural
PV	preverb
QUOT	quotative
S3SG	subject marker (3 rd -person singular)
SM	series marker
VM	version marker

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AGENTLESS TRANSITIVE VERBS IN GEORGIAN

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Abstract

The Georgian language has an unusual abundance of indirect (dative-subject) verbs. Most of these are intransitive, but several dozen are formally transitive. The focus of this paper is on the subset of Georgian indirect transitives which lack overt grammatical subjects (e.g. *mak'ank'alebs* “I shiver”, lit. “it makes me shiver”). The semantic, morphological and syntactic features of Georgian agentless transitives will be presented, and compared to those of similar verb types from other languages. Of particular interest is a small group of “bodily-emanation” verbs, such as *mamtknarebs* “I yawn”, *maboq'inebs* “I belch”, which are paired with syntactically inverse direct-transitive verb forms. I will reconstruct a scenario for the origin of such direct/indirect pairings, which are otherwise unknown in Georgian.