

Occurrence of the markers *-ld-* and *-lc-* in Kalmyk¹

In the Kalmyk language (Mongolic, Altaic) the meaning of plurality of participants can be expressed by verbal suffixes *-ld-* and *-lc-*. They can also have some additional meaning that depends on the type of context and properties of the verb. As the meaning of plurality and the additional meaning are often expressed by some other means (plural form of subject, reciprocal pronoun ‘each other’ and others), suffixes *-lc-* and *-ld-* are used rather rarely.

According to the grammar of Kalmyk [Sanzheev 1983: 202] the main meaning of the suffix *-lc-* is sociative. But according to the data the main (and for some speakers the sole) meaning of this marker is assistive. Suffix *-lc-* in this occasion increases valency of the verb. Assistive means that there is a person (agent) performs an action with someone else (assistees).

(1) *Enə namdə gerə shirdə-lc-nä.*
This 1SG.DAT house paint-SOC-PRS
‘He helps me to paint the house’.

(2) *Enə gerə shird-nä.*
This house paint-PRS
‘He paints the house’.

An important point is that the agent and the assistee do the same activities. Thus, sentences (1) and (2) differ in their meaning because of the presence of the suffix *-lc-*. In the sentence (2) only one participant performs the action, while in the sentence (1) the agent helps the assistee to perform a particular type of action. The assistee is expressed by a noun with the dative case marker. It seems that it is impossible to use another word with dative marker in sentences with such argument structure as in (1). For instance, the sentence ‘A mother helps her son to read a book to a girl’ should be translated as

(3) *Ekə kövü-n-d-än kүүikə-n-də degtər*
Mother boy-EXT-DAT-P.REFL girl-EXT-DAT book
umsh-xə nökäd bol-dha-na.
read-PC.FUT helper become-PROG-PRS

but not as

(4) **Ekə kövü-n-d-än kүүikə-n-də degtər umshə-lc-cha-na.*
Mother boy-EXT-DAT-P.REFL girl-EXT-DAT book read-SOC-PROG-PRS

The assistive meaning can be expressed lexically by means of another verb (example (3)). What is more interesting, this assistive meaning can be expressed both lexically and grammatically in the same sentence:

(5) *Enə nandə ger shirdə-x-də nökäd bolə-lcə-dha-na.*
this 1SG-DAT house paint-PC.FUT-DAT helper become-SOC-PROG-PRS
She helps me to paint the house.

This suffix may also have sociative meaning which is very close to assistive. But the assistee is expressed by a noun with comitative case marker:

(6) *Badma Bajrta-ta duul-lc-na / duul-na*
Badma Bajrta-with sing-SOC-PRS / sing-PRS
‘Badma sings with Bajrta’.

The plurality of agents may be expressed by subject:

(7) *Ämtə-n inä-lc-nä / inä-nä*
People-EXT laugh-SOC-PRS / laugh-PRS
‘People are laughing’.

Since the sociative meaning is also expressed by comitative case or by plural form, the suffix *-lc-* becomes optional.

In Buryat and Khalkha-Mongol the similar suffix *-lsa-* can also express the so called “attendant” action: “...the agent performs action A alongside (“together”) with action B” [Nedyalkov 2007: 1325]. This seems to be impossible in the case of the Kalmyk *-lc-*:

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- (8) *Qolə or-xlarn xälä-çkə / * xälä-lçə-çkə*
 river enter-CV.SUCC.P.REFL look-PRF.TR / * look-SOC-PRF.TR
mörə-n tend bää-nä.
 horse-EXT there be-PRS

‘When you walk to the river, see also if the horse is there’.

The suffix *-lc-* can be also (but very occasionally) used in reciprocal meaning:

- (9) *Bi üür-täqän bichəg avə-lç-na-v / * av-na-v.*
 1SG.NOM friend-with.P.REFL letter take-SOC-PRS-1SG / * take-PRS-1SG
 ‘I am in correspondence with my friend’.

It seems that this suffix supposes some dynamic, not stative action:

- (10a) *Tedən neg neg-än med-nä.*
 3PL one one-P.REFL know-PRS
 ‘They know each other’.
- (10b) *Tedən neg neg-än medə-lç-nä.*
 3PL one one-P.REFL know-SOC-PRS
 ‘They communicate with each other’.

The suffix *-ld-* can have the reciprocal meaning but if this reciprocal derives from a transitive verb. The derivatives from intransitive verbs have the sociative meaning, and this suffix becomes optional as the plurality of participants is expressed somehow in the subject:

- (11) *Ämtən inä-ld-nä / inä-nä.*
 People laugh-RECP-PRS / laugh-PRS
 ‘People laugh’.

The derivatives from transitive verbs can be both transitive and intransitive. Transitive derivatives have the sociative meaning. In this case *-ld-* is optional.

- (12) *Ämtə-n noxa çkə-ld-na.*
 People-EXT dog hit-RECP-PRS
 ‘People hit the dog’.

Intransitive derivatives have the reciprocal meaning. The marker *-ld-* is obligatory.

- (13) *Ämtə-n çkə-ld-na.*
 People-EXT hit-RECP-PRS
 ‘People are fighting’.

It seems that this suffix can’t be used with mental verbs. Derivatives from such verbs get the meaning of controlled action.

- (14a) *Madən neg neg-än üz-dhä-nä-vidən / * üzə-lç-dhä-nä-vidən.*
 1PL one one-P.REFL see-PROG-PRS-1PL / * see-RECP-PROG-PRS-1PL
 ‘We see each other’.
- (14b) *Madən (neg negə-n-tä-qän) üzə-lç-ü-vidən.*
 1PL (one one-EXT-with-P.REFL) see-RECP-PST-1PL
 ‘We met (each other)’.

Thus, the suffixes *-lc-* and *-ld-* have the meaning of plurality of participants and can have some additional meaning. The marker *-lc-* is used mostly in the assistive meaning and supposes dynamic action. The marker *-ld-* is often used in sociative or reciprocal meaning.

References

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