

## Aspect and Verbal Action in Albanian - Activity Verbs

Prof. Gjilda Alimhilli Prendushi  
University of Bari "Aldo Moro" (Italy)

### Abstract

In this article we introduce and analyze the morfo-syntactic behaviour of activity verbs in standard Albanian. The grouping of verbs by their lexical-semantic meaning deals with the study of the way of presentation of the action development. To the verbal action we refer when we are looking to analyze and classify the lexical meanings of different verbs, which are grouped or separated by the means of word formation. Even in the cases when for the expression of verbal action are used special syntactic constructions, these are, still, as a function of their respective lexical meaning. However, they don't deal with the grammatical meanings but with the lexical meanings of these constructions. In the case of aspect there are grammatical oppositions, expressed with grammatical means, therefore with different forms of the same verb. The aspect in the Albanian language is realized, above all, by the change of tenses, as amongst the imperfective and the perfective (aorist), instead of the verbal action that, generally, it is not indicated by the means of conjugation. Finally, we will study the meanings related not from individual lexical meaning, but from the general lexical meaning. It is this feature that makes the verbal action in Albanian an objective category, different and distinguishable from the subjective category of aspect<sup>1</sup>.

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### Verbs of continuative action

1.1. The verbs *eci* 'walk', *luaj* 'play', *dua* 'want', *këndoj* 'sing', *punoj* 'work', *breth* 'divagate', *gjurmoj* 'track', *këshilloj* 'counsel', *flas* 'speak', *lexoj* 'read', *shkruaj* 'write', etc., which present the verbal action in ongoing are activity verbs. It is not given any indication with respect to the beginning and to the conclusion of the action, but only on its continuation. However, in these verbs, in fact, in addition to the time of beginning of the action we have also that of the conclusion, presented in the form of a possibility that the process will be completed, because there cannot be an indefinitely continuing of it. Furthermore, the aforementioned processes can be interrupted a few times by the subject within the same event or the same episode. In the examples:

[1] Ka javë që ajo është duke studiuar.

Are weeks that she is studying.

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

He works at this plant from one year

we do not want to suggest that the subject of the action in (1) has never rested, or distracted even for a second or that the person in (2) was never gone outside the walls of the plant, because it is known that all activities comply with basic standards of living as well as certain social relations. Similar moments are acceptable for activity verbs, and the continuation of the

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

process does not necessarily involve a change in the subject's state, not having as aim the attainment of a goal or a particular result.

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

• It is used the present tense for:

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

[3] Kush *gënjën*, *gënjën* veten.

Who lies, lies himself/herself.

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

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

[5] Hëna *rrotullohet* rreth Tokës.

The moon rotates around the Earth.

So, this form is used with this value firstly in proverbs, in axioms and in general truths.

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

[6] Kam shumë kohë që *punoj*.

I have a lot of time that I work.

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

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

Constructions that indicate the progressive development of the action:

[8] Vajza sa vjen e *po bëhet* më kokëforte.

The girl is becoming more and more stubborn.

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

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

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

He is writing something for students life.

• It is used the imperfect for:

An action that is developing at a given moment in the past, with no indication about the beginning or the end:

[11] Plaku *gërhiste*.

The old man snored.

[12] Uji *ziente* dhe *nxirrte* avull.

The water boiled and steamed

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

[13] Djali *ëndërronte* si një fëmijë.

The boy dreamed as a child.

[14] Ajo *shquhej* nga të gjithë.

She distinguished from all the people.

[15] Lumi *gjarpëronte* në fushë.

The river meanders in the field

Constructions that indicate the progression of the action:

[16] *Po afrohej* dalëngadalë vjeshta.

Slowly the autumn was coming.

[17] Entuziazmi sa vinte *po shtohet*.

Enthusiasm was increasing more and more.

[18] Ditët *ishin duke shkuar*.

The days were running.

The action expressed in this form, sometimes gets a timeless value:

[19] Ujkun *po e qethnin* që t'i vinin mendtë.

They were shearing the wolf to recover his reason.

• It is used the simple past for:

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

[20] Ai *përjetoi* një histori të dhimshme.

He experienced a painful story.

Actions in progressive extension:

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

Their friendship grew every day more and more.

## 2. Verbal groups of continuative action

During the analysis that we did to aspect, the examination of uses of the present tense, the imperfect and the simple past in some cases, there were evidenced cases that express verbal action extension for a certain time. In addition to these cases, the extension of the verbal action is expressed by:

## 2.1. Repeating of the same verb<sup>1</sup>

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

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

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

The verb can also be on the imperative desemantised. We say desemantised, because through this form is not given any order but it is just prolonged the action. Depending on the context it can refer to any person:

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

Step down - step down and finally they arrived.

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

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

[24] *Dhe unë pres e pres...*(present tense) 'And I wait and wait ...' / *Shikonte e shikonte pa thënë asnjë fjalë* (imperfect) 'Looked and looked without saying a word' / *Profesori foli e foli gjithë pasion* (simple past) 'Professor spoke and spoke passionately'.

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

Action extensions are expressed as well by constructions with the use of the imperative form, where we have different subjects:

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

Pass night and pass day, the girl became a woman

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

Repeated conjunctive is mainly used with intensity and extension value:

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

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

<sup>1</sup> For more see, Alimhilli Prendushi (2001: 372-378), (2009: 58-64, 159-167); Dhrimo (1996: 157-170).

<sup>2</sup> Lafe (1966: 123-124).

• In the structure - verb + conjunction *sa* 'as' + verb - participle just verbs repeated at different tenses of indicative and conjunctive:

Indicative

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

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

Repeating of the conjunctive in these constructions it is less frequent, mainly to show that in the present case it is not so important the duration of action than its evidence:

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

• Construction - verb + indefinite pronoun *ç* 'that' + verb<sup>1</sup> - in the semantic plan is parallel to the conjunctive constructions with the repetition of the simple past (*foli e foli* 'talked and talked', *eci e eci* 'walked and walked', etc.)

The value of this construction lies in the non qualification of the object of the action, the object expressed by the indefinite pronoun *ç* 'that'. This non qualification of the object, the inattention to the object, has caused that in this construction also the pronoun *ç* is addressed towards its further desemantizing, so, acquiring the value of a particle. In addition, in two groups of this construction, with verbs *bej* 'do' / *shoh* 'see', not only the indefinite pronoun *ç* gradually is desemantised, but the whole group of words has been moved towards a phraseology value. That is, by this construction, it is expressed essentially the idea of the extension of the efforts to achieve something and not the denomination of the concrete measures implemented.

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

In these constructions can be used only the simple past of the indicative. If, in fact, we use the present tense or the imperfect, the construction would end in highlighting the repetition of the consecutive action, and not to express the idea of the intensive extension of the specific action.

2.2. The verb *rri* 'stay' in the constructions - *rri* 'stay' + conjunction *e* (*dhe*) 'and' + verb that express an action which is prolonged - can be in the present tense or imperfect of indicative mood, (perfective) determinate or (imperfective) indeterminate. As well as its coordinated verb which express the prolonged action, it is at the same tense and mood with it:

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

<sup>1</sup> As Floqi notes (1968: 23), the value of this construction lies in the non qualification of the object of the action, object expressed by the indefinite pronoun *ç* 'that'. This non qualification of the object, not giving importance to the kind of object, has made that in this construction the pronoun *ç* goes to his further desemantizing, towards the value of a particle. Also, in two clusters of this construction, with the verb *bëj* 'do' and *shoh* 'see', not only the indefinite pronoun *ç* it is been progressively desemantized, but the entire phrase has gone towards the value of an idiom. So, through this essential construction it is expressed the idea of extending the effort to do something and not the nominating of the performed operations.

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

[31] *Ti ri dhe prit këtu!*

Stay and wait here!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It became a custom to ask for everything

2.6. Constructions - perfect of indicative + conjunction *dhe* (e) 'and' + present tense of indicative – as conjunctive subordinative give the idea of an uninterrupted continuity of action, which started in the past, continues in the present and will continue in the future:

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

He has lived and lives in this city.

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

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

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

[38] *Ka qenë dhe mbetet* më i miri.

It has been and remains the best.

### 3. CONCLUSION

As conclusion in Albanian<sup>1</sup> there are no characteristic formations of words to express this verbal action, but rather special syntactic constructions:

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

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<sup>1</sup> Demiraj, Sh. mentions it in the brief treatment that makes to the modes of action in "Gramatika e gjuhës shqipe I" (1995: 264-265); some means for the expression of this mode, but without looking to them as mode of action, are mentioned by Floqi (1958: 114), Çeliku (1963: 161, 172), Lafa (1966: 122-123).

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