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Verb-Drop in Svan

In the Cholur dialect of Svan there are a number of cases where the imperfect sentences lacking predicates are used. That's why it is significantly different from other traditionally known dialects of the Svan language and the other Kartvelian languages.

The illustrations showing the issue of discussion is represented on the basis of the data collected during the field work over the years by us which is mainly based on the speech of the elderly because the imperfect sentences lacking predicates occur systematically in the speech of elderly respondents in contrast to the speech of the younger generation.

The imperfect sentences lacking predicates can mainly be found in the dialogues; however, there are also cases of missing verbal as well as nominal parts of a compound predicate in the monologues. There are also the cases of missing a simple predicate.

I. **The imperfect sentences lacking predicates in the dialogues**: I.

(1)

_ mačūbi	sgiri	sgāmen	žašqidma	xočāmd?
N., Gen., SG	N., Gen., SG	ADVPL	PRS 2, SG	ADVM

_ Do you remember well the inside of the first floor of Machubi?

_ xočāmd	{mašqid}	eži	mag	ser!
ADVM	PRS 1, SG	DEM	DEF	ADV

_ I [remember] everything very well!

_ imxen	lok	xi?
ADVPL	ISM	PRS 2, SG

_ Where are you from?

_ lentxaxeniž	{xwi}!
ADVPL + P	PRS 1, SG

_ I [am] from Lentekhi!

In the dialogues the imperfect sentences are the ones expressing an answer but there are also cases when an interrogative sentence lacks a verb-predicate:

(2)

_ ale	qanar	xedi	lix	xočil?
DEM, Nom	N., Nom., PL	Inter PRON (Q)	PRS 3, PL	ADG (SUP)

 _ Which one is better between these bulls?

_ sulertia	lok	lix,	simāre,	aljar	jerqda	xoča	lok	lix!
PRED	ISM	PRS 3, PL	APPLγ	DEM, Nom, PL	NUM	ADG (SUP)	ISM	PRS 3, PL

 _ It does not matter, man. Both of them are good!

_ ešī	lok	xedi	{li},	ešī?!
ADV	ISM	Inter PRON (Q)	PRS 3, SG	ADV

 _ Still, which one [is] better?

_ jaγo,	ale	lok	{li}!
PTC	DEM, Nom	ISM	PRS 3, SG

 _ Well, this one [is] better!

A separate imperfect sentence expressing an answer lacks understanding. In order to understand such a sentence we should take an interrogative question into account.

In addition to the dialogues, in the Cholur speech the imperfect sentences lacking the verbal parts of compound predicates (**xwi** „am", **xi** „are", **li** „is" in the forms of the different screeves) are largely attested. Such an imperfect sentence can be simple, combined, coordinated (any of its clauses), a part of a hypotactic or an intermixed sentence.

II. **Lacking the verbal part of a compound predicate: II.**

(3)

ale	liparteliănar	xonḳwida	naqad	{lix}	mərāmxen
DEM, Nom	N., Nom., PL	ADVT	PTCP	PRS 3, PL	ADVPL

The Liparteliani had come from somewhere before that.

(4)

Zurāl	lēžri	{li}	mēwar,	usašwelod
N., Nom., SG	PTCP	PRS 3, SG	ADVM	ADVM

The woman [is] very poor.

(5)

ežjarķali	mezge	čōlurs	dār	{ārda}
DEM	N., Nom., SG	ADVPL	NegPron	IMP 3, SG

Nobody lived like them in Cholur.

(6)

xoča	lardas	xwasqidad,	ceķwa-tamaš	{las}	nebozs
ADG (SUP)	PTCP, Dat	IMP 1, PL	N., Nom., SG	AOR 3, SG	ADVT

We [were] cooking, dancing, playing in the evening…

III. **Lacking the nominal and the verbal part of a compound predicate:**

In rare cases the first clause of a sentence lacks the verbal as well as the nominal part of a compound predicate the restoration of which is possible by means of the nominal part of the final clause. For example:

(7)

ser	ečūnɣo	laxwte	līzi	{las},	ečxen	naqid	i	ale
ADV	ADVT	ADVPL	INF	AOR 3, SG	ADVPL	PTCP	CONJ	DEM, Nom

ču šṭexnōl	i	musī	čwīnōl,	ečka	laxwte	līzi	{las}
IMP 3, SG	CONJ	N, nom, SG + PTC	IMP 3, SG	ADVT	ADVPL	INF	AOR 3, SG

We [went] to the mountains when the product brought from there was finished and the snow melted.

IV. Lacking a simple predicate:

(8)

xetop	atxe,	cxaj,	kistīlars	žej,	mi	mām	{xwetop}	atxe
PRS 3, SG	ADVT	PTC	N., dat., PL	DEF	PRON 1	NPTC	PRS 1, SG	ADVT

He will shoot the air rifle of course and I'm not going [to shoot] now

(9)

bačars	xepwštwanālda	čīs,	ču xepwžwenōl	licarži	cxeķisa	i	cxeķxenka	{xepwštwanālda}	ser
N., dat., PL	IMP 3	DEF, DAT	IMP 3, SG	ADVPL	ADVPL	CONJ	ADVPL	IMP 3	ADV

He threw stones to everyone and then he hid in the forest and [threw] stones again.

V. Lacking a simple predicate and the verbal part of a compound predicate:

(10)

dōmāj	ķidben	las	(ķidobans	ē	xaqlax	kartwild)
ADV	N., Nom., SG	AOR 3, SG	N., Dat., SG	CONJ	IMP 3, PL	ADV

i	eži	ži lugwšile	{las}	ser
CONJ	DEM	PTCP	AOR 3, SG	ADV

There was an ark (in Georgian *Kidobani*) and it [was] full.

(11)

eži	aš	xola	məde	mər	ləmār,	žeγ	māre,
DEM	ADV	ADG (SUP)	PTC	INDF	RES. 4, 3, SG	DEF	N., Nom., SG

išgen	xoča	{ləmarx)	ežjar,	wargäl	xoča
DEF	ADG (SUP)	RES. 4, 3, PL	DEM	N., Nom., PL	ADG (SUP)

He was a bad man, a real dog but the rest of the princes [were] good.

(12)

jerxid	k'ādwōdex	eče	i	tbiliss	enyidex	bināl	i	jerxid	mankanāl	enqidex,
INDF	elisio, AOR 3, SG	ADVPL	CONJ	ADVPL	AOR 3, SG	N., Nom., PL	CONJ	INDF	N., Nom., PL	AOR 3, SG

4

naj	desama	{gwiqīda}	kweqanaži,	ešxu	ḳapēḳiš	desama
POS	NPTC	PRF 1, PL	ADV	CAR NUM	N., Gen., SG	NPTC

Some people sold their houses and bought flats in Tbilisi and others bought cars but we [didn't buy] anything, even worth a dime.

Lacking the verbal part of a predicate and a simple predicate is caused due to the fact that the same predicate is used in the previous clause. However, there are also cases when the missed predicate in the first clause is restored by means of a verb-predicate in second or the final clauses.

(13)

daurxan	muḳbaniān	{xwi},	arēšṭži	met	xwi,
N., Nom., SG	N., Nom., SG	PRS 1, SG	NUM	N., Nom.	PRS 1, SG

mare	oša	zaj	γena	mēmixa
CONJ	Inter PRON (Q)	N., Nom., SG	PTC	elisio, PRS 1, SG

I [am] Daurkhan Mukbanian, more than eighty but I do not know the exact age.

(14)

ō,	jaγo,	masardiž	{muγwa}	mi	ežjar,	jaraγ,	mədeiž	meγweni	mi	eži
INTJ	PTC	ADG	PRS 1, SG	PRON 1	DEM	N., Nom., SG	PTC	FUT 1, SG	PRON 1	DEM

I have a lot of weapons.

VI. **Lacking several predicates (simple predicates and the verbal part of a compound predicate):**

(15)

ḳarawisa	zeki	laqwrōlar	gwīgda,	gačirwebul,	ečēži	lebīl	i	sabnīl	{guγwān}
ADVPL	N., GEN., SG	N., Nom., PL	IMP 1, PL	INVOLVED	ADVPL	N, Nom, SG, DMN	CONJ	N, Nom, SG, DMN	IMP 1, PL

i	lemes	{gwīšwda}	nēsḳājsa,	ečxen	laqwrōl	{las}	i	amxen	laqwrōl
CONJ	N., Nom., SG	IMP 1, PL	ADVPL	ADVPL	N., Nom., PL	AOR 3, SG	CONJ	ADVPL	N., Nom., PL

We had poor wooden beds in the tent with mattresses and blankets and a bonfire in the centre between the beds.

(16)

māj	{las}	ser	axalgazrdoba,	gačiwrebānqa	desma	miçwa	i	dalxineba	{desa	miçwa}
Inter PRON (Q)	AOR 3, SG	ADV	N abst	N, Dat + Postpos	NPTC	PRF 1, SG	CONJ	N, NOM	NPTC	PRF 1, SG

How [was] my youth? I have never seen anything but poverty and {have never seen} wealth.

● The collected diverse material allows us to discuss not only the said cases but also such complex structures as paratactic, hypotactic and intermixed sentences, the parts of which are imperfect clauses very often (sometimes in the hypotactic and the intermixed sentences the clauses lack connectors and correlatives along with predicates), however, at this stage the format does not allow us to show the said sentences thoroughly that will be taken into account for the future publications.

● Analyzing the research material made it clear that in the Cholur speech (the speech of the elderly) it is quite common to express thoughts by means of imperfect sentences and this fact is conformed in the speech of a number of speakers. Using the said kind of sentences does not create problems in communication even when in the complex sentences several predicates are missed because the missed verb-predicates can be easily restored by means of the context.

● There is an impression that when the verbal part of a compound predicate is missed the nominal part takes the full function of a verb-predicate making it possible to assume the verbal part and thus makes it easy to perceive the idea of a sentence.

● As our evidence suggests, the verb-drop in Svan is very likely to be conditioned not only by syntactic parameters and matters of reference such as anaphoric and cataphoric omission, but also by the information structure of the text, that is, e.g. verb topicalization triggered by the emphasis on the nominal constituents, which claim is additionally backed up by prosodic characteristics of Svan discourse.

References

A. **Kiziria**, Types of a Simple Sentence According to the Members and the Comunicatives, Tbilisi, 1987.