I want ~~Ahmad~~ to eat porridge: the Causative in Melkhi as Switch-Reference

Introduction. Melkhi is a language of the Nakh-Daghestanian family, positioned at the center of the Chechen-Ingush dialect continuum. The data for this presentation was collected during a field expedition in the summer of 2024 in the village of Arshty, Republic of Ingushetia. This presentation explores two functions of the suffix *-iit*: (indirect) causative and **switch-reference** (see Nichols (1985) for similar Chechen data) and provides a **syntactic** analysis that generalizes these two functions that have not yet been proposed.

Data. The causative suffix *-iit* can attach to any verb and conveys a maximally **underspecified** causative meaning. The original subject of a transitive verb is in the allative case.

(1) as moʜmad-ag keʜat yaz d-aʔ-iit-na
1SG.V.ERG Mohammad.V-ALL letter.D write D-do-CAUS-PERF
'I made/asked/allowed Mohammad to write a letter.'

In addition to straightforward causative contexts, *-iit* is used in infinitival clauses as a marker of **switch-reference**, indicating cases where the subject of the embedded clause does not coincide with that of the matrix clause. These are **control** predicate constructions, such as ones with the verb *la* 'want', where the dependent clause is in the infinitive form.[1]

(2) su-n dʕa v-ij v-ax low
1SG.V-DAT COMP V-sleep V-go want.PRES
'I want to go to sleep.'

In cases of non-coreference[2], the causative marker *-iit* attaches to the verb. It is worth noting that the infinitive causative cannot have PRO **controlled** by the subject of the matrix clause, as seen in (3-b).

(3) su-n low Mansur txu-g ca v-aʔ-iit
1SG.V-DAT want.PRES Mansur.V 1EXCL-ALL NEG V-go-CAUS
a. 'I want Mansur not to come to us.'
b. *'I want to make Mansur not come to us.'

Infinitival clauses may also have an **imperative** function. When forms with *-iit* are used (4), a straightforward **imperative** meaning with causation (4-a) or a mere **jussive** meaning (4-b) is possible. The latter one disappears with the **explicit** expression of the subject (5-b).

(4) Aʜmad-ag xudar d-aʔ-iit
Ahmad.V-ALL porridge.D D-eat-CAUS
a. 'Make Ahmad eat the porridge.'
b. 'Let Ahmad eat the porridge.'

(5) aʜ Aʜmad-ag xudar d-aʔ-iit
2SG.V.ERG Ahmad.V-ALL porridge.D D-eat-CAUS
a. '(You) make Ahmad eat the porridge.'
b. *'Let Ahmad eat the porridge.'

Analysis. I propose that the morpheme *-iit* instantiates *Voice [Ø D]* (Nie, 2020), a voice head that **neither requires nor prohibits** an external argument. Here, *Voice [Ø D]* assigns the allative case to its argument.

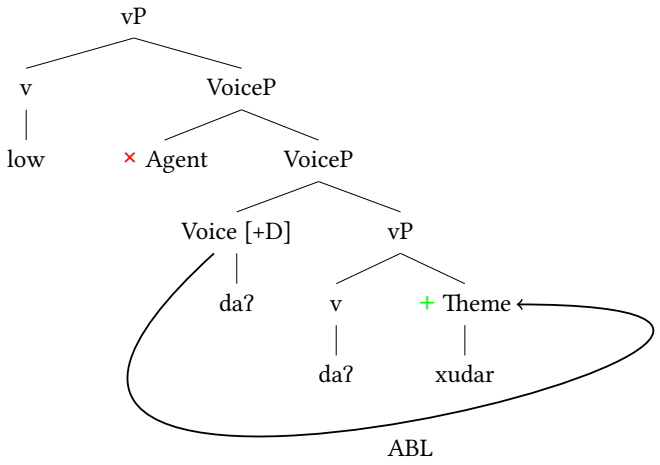
[1] The dependent clause can also be finite and marked by a subjunctive marker.

[2] In fact, *-iit* can be used even when the subjects of the matrix and embedded clauses coincide, as long as there is no **control**. For example, the sentence *su-n low su-g xudar d-aʔ-iit* is grammatical and means "I want **me** to eat porridge" instead of "I want to eat porridge."

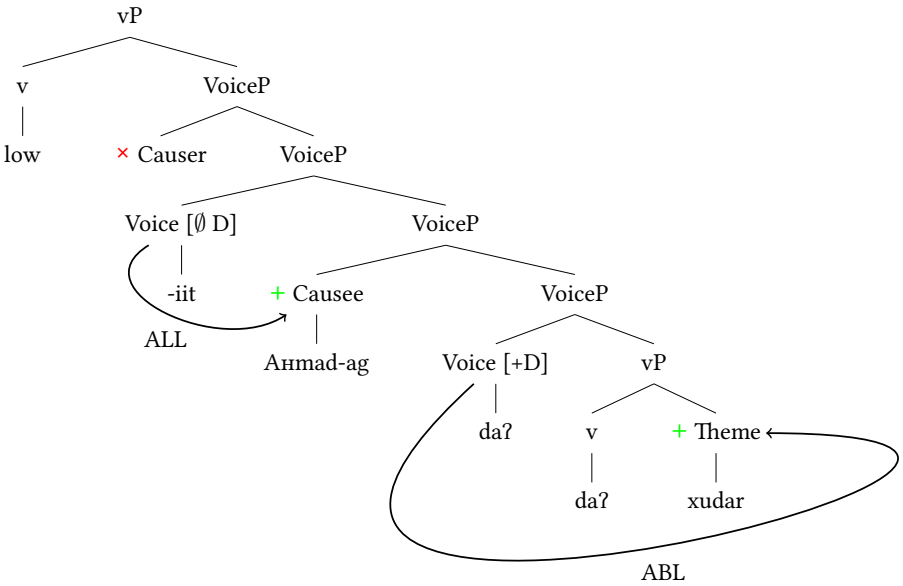
Following Nie (2020), I also assume that the **highest** *Voice*, that is located under some other heads in the verbal domain, can license **two** arguments, while other *Voice* heads **only one**.

The absence of requirements of *Voice [Ø D]* for a specifier firstly explains the **unspecified** semantics of the causer (1). Secondly, since in non-causative infinitival clauses the highest argument is not licensed (presumably due to the lack of projections above *VoiceP*), but is required by the *Voice [+D]* head (6), this leads to subject control in the embedded clause. This explains the use of *-iit* in infinitival clauses in the absence of **control** (and even the **prohibition** of **control** due to the lack of requirements for an external argument at the *Voice head [Ø D]*) (7).

(6) su-n low xudar d-a?
1SG.V-DAT want.PRES porridge D-eat
'I want to eat porridge'



(7) su-n low Ahmad-ag xudar d-a?-iit
1SG.V-DAT want.PRES Ahmad.V-ALL porridge.D D-eat-CAUS
'I want Ahmad to eat porridge'



Glossary of Abbreviations. ALL – allative; CAUS – causative; COMP – completive; D – class prefix; DAT – dative; ERG – ergative; EXCL – exclusive; NEG – negation; PERF – perfect; PL – plural; PRES – present; SG – singular; V – class prefix; 1 – first person; 2 – second person.

References.
- Nichols, J. (1985). Switch-reference causative. In *Chicago Linguistic Society 21, Part 2: Papers from the Parasession on Causatives and Agentivity*, pages 193–203, Chicago. The University of Chicago Press.
- Nie, Y. (2020). *Licensing arguments*. Phd thesis, New York University.