THE INTERPRETATION OF WEAK EXPLICIT ARGUMENTS: EVIDENCE FROM LAZ
Ömer Eren/ The University of Chicago

The verbal pre-root vowel (PRV) {*i-*} in Pazar Laz (PL; endangered South Caucasian) exhibits syncretism, i.e. it occurs in three different constructions: i) Passives (1a), ii) Reflexives (1b), and iii) Unergatives (1c) (examples from Öztürk&Taylan 2017). This study provides a uniform analysis for the PRV that accounts for its syncretism and interpretation. I argue that the PRV syntactically qualifies as a weak explicit argument, overtly marking the presence of otherwise implicit arguments (c.f. weak implicit argument; Landau 2010). As for its interpretation, rather than an adopting an allosemic approach, it is argued that the PRV has one and *only one* meaning, i.e. an identity function, and all of the different meanings *seemingly* associated with it come from other parts of the structure by virtue of its semantically vacuous nature (c.f. Wood 2015)

(1)a. Passives   b. Reflexives   c. Unergatives

Ham metali	**i**-ndrikh-**e(r)**-n.	Ali-k yali-s	**i**-dzir-u.	Ali-k **i**-nçir-am-s.
this metal.nom	PRV-bend-TS-pres3sg	Ali-erg mirror-dat	**PRV**-see-pst.3sg	Ali-erg **PRV**-swim-TS-3sg
'This metal is being bent.'		'Ali saw himself in the mirror.'		'Ali is swimming.'

1. The PRV is a *Weak Explicit Argument* (WEA):

The diagnostics provided by Legate et al (2017) provide evidence showing that the constructions in (1a) constitute an instance of passivization (c.f. impersonalization; Ö&T 2017). Firstly, as in passives, there is no obligatory human interpretation (2). Additionally, these constructions don't license subject-oriented depictives (3) (contrasting with active sentences, as in *Alik meveleri ikaphams* 'Ali is running (while he is) drunk').

(2) Ğermaşe-pe-s   **iki**-e(r)-n.   (3)***Meveleri** var   i-kaph-e(r)-n.
    mountain-PL-LOC howl-TS-3sg   hungry   NEG PRV-run-TS-3sg
    '✓It is howled in the mountains.'   '*It is not run hungry.'

The fact that the passive constructions involve an implicit initiator is evidenced by their compatibility with agent oriented adverbials and purpose clauses (4).

(4) Ham metali   [tzukali otzopxu şeni] kasite   i-ndrikh-e(r)-n.
    this metal.nom pot.nom fix   for   intentionally PRV-bend-TS-3sg
    'This metal is being bent intentionally to fix the (drilled) pot.'

Landau (2010) argues that implicit controllers are always syntactically projected but either as *strong* or *weak* in nature depending on whether they can or cannot license depictives respectively (c.f. Bhatt & Pantcheva 2017). Based on the observation in (3), I argue that the PRV in passives indeed *explicitly* realizes a weak (otherwise implicit) argument, hence syntactically qualifies as a weak explicit argument (WEA) (c.f. Icelandic *sig* Eythórsson et al. 2016).

2. The WEA analysis of the PRV provides a uniform account of its syncretism:

In addition to passives, the PRV also occurs in reflexives (1b), and more interestingly unergatives (1c). Lidz (1996) argues that the verbal reflexive marker in certain languages has a more general function of implying the presence of any implied argument. I argue that the PRV in PL, traditionally treated as the reflexive marker (Öztürk&Pöchtrager 2011), indeed overtly marks the presence of any sort of (otherwise implicit) argument, not only that of the agents in passives. Extending the WEA analysis of the PRV to reflexives, I argue that the PRV can occupy different syntactic positions, yielding different reflexive constructions when it is base-generated below Spec-*v*P. (c.f. Ö&T 2017). As for unergatives, following Nash (2016) and Ö&T (2017), I assume that unergatives are transitive externally caused accomplishments and argue that they receive the same analysis as direct object reflexives. This analysis makes a prediction that PL lacks unergative-based resultative constructions because the PRV, saturating the internal argument position, cannot license depictives/secondary predicates due to its weak nature. This prediction is

borne out in that PL lacks PP (as well as adjectival) resultatives based on unergatives (5a). The example in (5b), on the other hand, shows that PP-resultatives are indeed possible in PL with directed motion verbs.

(5) a. Ali-k   marketi-şa am-i-{-gzal/xoron}-u.   b.Ali   marketi-şa am-xt-u.
     Ali-erg   market-all   into-PRV-walk/dance-Pst.3sg Ali.nom   market-all into-go-P st.3sg
    'Ali walked/danced into the market'($\nvDash$ in market)   'Ali went into the market' ($\vDash$ in market)

Additionally, following Baker (2015), I argue that the presence of the PRV in the undergoer position triggers ergative case on the external argument, explaining the parallelisms between transitives (6a), unergatives (6b) as well as reflexives (1b) in terms of the subject case marking. This provides evidence against a functional head analysis of the PRV as there is no argument reduction in reflexives as evidenced by the ERG-marked subjects in PL. (c.f. Ö&T 2017)

(6) a. Ali-**k**   çai   mo-ğ-am-**s**.   b. Ali-**k**   i-gzal-am-**s.**
    Ali-erg   tea.nom   hither-bring-TS-3sg   Ali-erg   PRV-walk-TS-3sg
    'Ali is bringing tea.'   'Ali is walking.'

3. The PRV is semantically vacuous, and being so it gives rise to the attested meanings: Landau (2010) states that the interpretation of weak arguments is less restricted than that of strong ones in that it is completely context dependent. In line with this, and following Wood (2015), I argue that the PRV is an identity function and the meanings (seemingly) associated with it indeed come from other parts of the structure by virtue of its semantically vacuous nature. In passives, the PRV is base generated in the external argument position, and being semantically null, it cannot satisfy the AGENT theta role (Figure 1). To salvage the derivation, I argue that the AGENT role needs to be satisfied by the existential closer introduced by the Passive Voice head, which I assume to be a syntactic head separate from the one introducing the external argument (Collins 2005). In reflexives, the PRV renders the THEME theta role unsatisfied, which is then satisfied by the external argument (Figure 2). Note that the reflexive interpretation here arises as a result of the semantically null nature of the PRV and the way the derivation proceeds, but crucially not by syntactic binding. This is in line also with Landau's analysis of *weak* arguments being non-referential due to lacking a D feature (Landau p.c.).
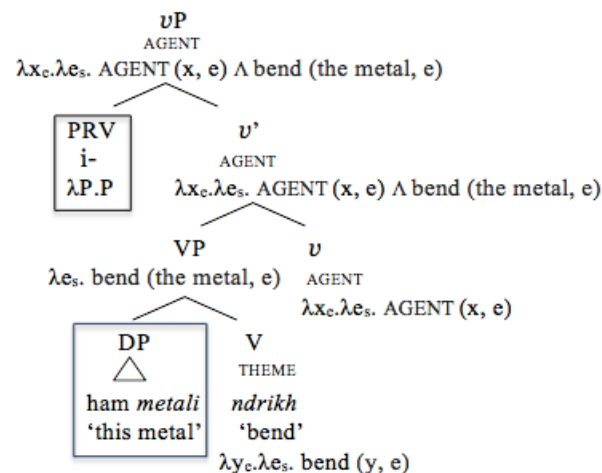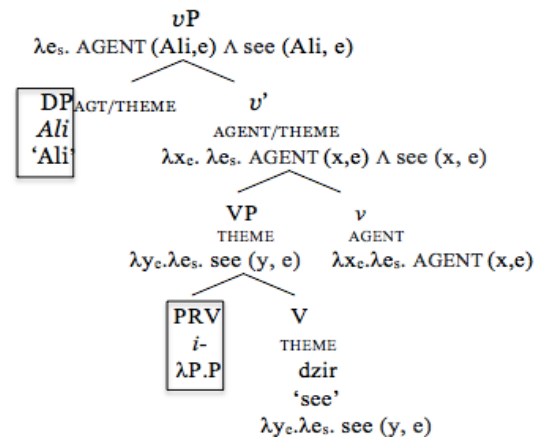
Figure 1: Passives (1a)   Figure2: Reflexives (1b) & Unergatives (1c)

This analysis also correctly predicts the presence of benefactive reflexives in PL as opposed to the case in Icelandic (Wood 2015). In this respect, the PRV seems to have a wider distribution, nicely completing the gaps exhibited by the Icelandic –*st* clitic.