

## Verb Formation In Girirra

Askale Lemma

### 1. Introduction

#### 1.1. The Girirra People and Their Language

Girirra is a language assumed to be one of the Eastern Lowland Cushitic Languages of Ethiopia. As far as I know, it is a newly "discovered" language, and only two research attempts have been made to describe the language: one on its phonology, by Abdurahim (1993) and another on its morphology, by Askale (1994).

The language is found in the Sarar District of the Bale Administrative region. It is spoken by people who call themselves Garirro and their language 'af-Garirro' (which means the Girirra language). Outsiders usually refer to the language as Girirra (Abdurahim, 1993).

The exact number of speakers of the language is not known; however, according to some of my informants, their number is estimated to be over 100,000. Although they are surrounded by Somali- and Oromo-speaking people, they have still maintained their language. The people are all followers of Islam.

This study attempts to present the processes of verb formation in Girirra. The theoretical framework followed is the Weak Lexicalist Hypothesis, which stipulates that words with derivational morphology and compounding are not formed by syntactic transformation.

In Girra there are five types of verb stems derived from verbal roots and/or stems. These are causatives, passives, reflexives, statives, frequentatives and/or intensives. The first four are formed by affixation, whereas the last one is formed by reduplication. All the processes, except the statives, are non-category-changing.

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### Abbreviations used

Cs.	causative	P.	pre/post position
Df.	definiteness	Part.	particle
Df.m.	masculine definite	Pf.	perfective
F.	feminine	Pas.	passive
Foc.	focus marker	Pl.	plural marker
Imp.	imperfective marker	1pl.	1st person plural
Inten.	intensive	REC.	reciprocal
M.	masculine	REF.	reflexive
Ms.	masculine singular	Sg.	singular
Neg.	negative marker	Stat.	stative
Naf.	noun affix	V.	verb
Np.	noun phrase	Vr.	verb root

### Signs and Symbols

C.	consonant	[ ]	enclosed phonetic items
V.	vowel	*	ungrammatical structure
-	lacks that value	+	has that value
→	becomes	:	has the value of length
//	enclosed phonemic items	-	morpheme boundary

1.2. Girirra's phoneme inventory

According to Abdurahim (1993), Girirra has the following consonants and vowels in its phonemic inventory respectively.

Consonants

		Bilabial	Labio-dental	Alveolar	Alveo-palatal	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Stops	Vd	b		d			g	
	VI			t			k	ʔ
	Ejective						k'	
Implosive				ɗ(D)				
Fricatives			f	s	ʃ(š)			h
Nassals		m		n		ɲ(ñ)		
Liquids	Flap				r			
	Lat.				l			
Semi-Vowels		w				y		

Vowels

	Front	Center	Back
High	i		u
Mid	e		o
Low		a	

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Vowel and consonant lengthening is also phonemic, as can be observed from the following examples:

### Vowel length:

- 1) /un/ 'eat'  
/u:n/ 'smoke'
- 2) /dɛl/ 'pot'  
/dɛ:l/ 'play'
- 3) /wan/ 'milk'  
/wa:n/ 'frustration'
- 4) /hor/ 'ancient'  
/ho:r/ 'to rain'

### Consonant length or gemination:

- 1) /eri/ 'sun'  
/er:i/ 'soil'
- 2) /ilis/ 'skimmed milk'  
/il:is/ 'heavy'
- 3) /migi/ 'name'  
/mig:i/ 'fruit'

## 2. Verbalization

The process of verb-formation in a language is called verbalization. Verbal stems are derived from roots or stems by affixing various derivational morphemes to those verbal roots or stems (affixation) and also by reduplicating the roots (reduplication).

2.1. Affixation: Affixation is the process by which a new word is built from a base by adding an affix.

### 2.1.1. Causatives

In the process of causativization, one person causes another person to do something. "Any causative situation involves two component situations, the cause and its effect (result)" (Comrie, 1981:158). Alsina (1992:517), too, says that "morphologically derived causatives are composed of a causative morpheme and a base verb."

The causative stem in Girirra is formed by suffixing the affixes /-is/ and /-si:s/ to verbal bases. /-is/ is attached to intransitive verbal roots, whereas /-si:s/ is attached to transitive ones.

2.1.1.1. Causatives of transitive verbs

As it has been stated above /-si:s/ is an affix that causativizes transitive verbs as shown in Table 1 below:

Verbal roots	Gloss	Causative verbs	Gloss
ot	'close'	ot-si:s-	'cause to close'
fur	'divorce'	fur-si:s-	'cause to 'divorce'
tum	'hit'	tum-si:s-	'cause to hit'
het	'steal'	het-si:s-	'cause to steal'
we:r	'call'	we:r-si:s-	'cause to call'
gub	'burn'	gub-si:s-	'cause to burn'

Table 1: Causatives of transitive verbs

Syntactically, such verbs and their non-causative bases have different characteristics. Regarding this, Comrie (1981:168) says: "The morphological causative has a valency one higher than that of the corresponding non-causative, since in addition to the arguments of that non-causative predicate there is also the causer." This is shown in the following examples:

- (1)    anan-ki            awu-kes            un-we:r-ey  
       boy-df-m        father his        part-call-pf

'The boy called his father.'

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Here, /we:r/ 'call' is a monotransitive verb, having only one noun phrase complement. Its subcategorization frame is as follows:

/we:r/: v, [NP-] 'call'.

What is observed from this frame is that /we:r/ o- marks an object NP. On the other hand, the verb can get an additional argument when it is causativized. Consider the following sample:

- (2)      Dad-ki              annan-ki              awu-kes              un-we:r-si:s-ey  
         man-df-m              boy-df-m              father-his              part-call-cs-pf

'The man caused the boy to call his father'.

As stated earlier, in causativization, there is an increase of valency. This difference may be observed from the entries for /we:r/ 'call' and /we:r-si:s/' 'cause to call', as shown below:

/we:r/: v, [NP-] 'call'  
/we:r-si:s-/: v, [NP NP-] 'cause to call'.

Furthermore, if we take a bitransitive verb like /šeg/ 'tell', there is also one more complement after causativization.

- (3)      (a)      ussu      bara:n-ki      dad-ki      še:g-ey  
         he      news-df-m      man-df-m      tell-pf

'He told the news to the man'.

- (b)      awu-kes usso    bara:n-ki    dad-ki      še:g-si:s-ey  
          father-him    news-df-m    man-df-m    tell-Cs.pf his

‘His father caused him to tell the news to the man’.

The subcategorization of (3a) and (3b) may be presented respectively as follows:

- /še:g/:            v, [NP NP -] ‘tell’  
 /še:g-si:s/:      v, [NP NP/NP-] ‘cause to tell’

The effect of causativization is not only on changing subcategorization frames by increasing the number of arguments, but there is also a shift of thematic roles. In the causative sentence (3a), the subject becomes the object, while the old objects become second and third objects, and also a new causing agent, that is, a new subject is introduced as in (3b).

#### 2.1.1.2. Causativization of intransitive verbs

In this section, we shall consider the causativization of intransitive verbs. The process of adding the causative affix /-is/ to intransitive verbs may result in transitivity such verbs. The transitivity verbs, like other transitive verbs, may undergo the same process. This is shown in tables (2) and (3) below:

Intransitive Verb Root	Gloss	Transitivity verbs	Gloss
bo:t	‘jump’	‘bo:č-is-’	‘make jump’
kar	‘boil’	‘kar-is-’	‘make boil’
hundur	‘sleep’	‘hundur-is-’	‘make sleep’
ro:r	‘run’	‘ro:r-is-’	‘make run’
wara:b	‘drink’	‘wara:b-is-’	‘make drink’

Table 2: Transitivity verbs



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The processes of causativizing and transitivizing are non-category-changing. Their effects are on subcategorizations. As a result of transitivization, intransitives can get one more internal argument (NP-complement). Compare the following structures with the verb /kar/ 'boil' and its transitivized form.

- (4) (a)      biy-i                                  kar-ey  
               water-df                                boil-pf

‘The water boiled’

- (b)      anan-ki              biy-i              kar-is-ey  
             boy-df-m            water-df            boil-Cs pf

‘The boy boiled the water.’

As can be seen from the structures, transitivization changes the subject in (4a) which is /biyi/ ‘the water’, to an object in (4b) and a new NP subject /ananki/ ‘the boy’ is introduced.

Furthermore, transitivized verbs may take the causative affix /-i:s/ as the following examples demonstrate:

Transitivized	Gloss	Causativized Verbs	Gloss
kar-is	‘boil(tv)’	kar-s-i:s-	‘cause to boil’
hundur-is	‘make sleep’	hundur-s-i:s-	‘cause to sleep’
ro:r-is-	‘make run’	ro:r-s-i:s-	‘cause to run’

Table 3: Causativized forms of transitivized verbs.

The effect of attaching the causative affix is not on changing the categorial membership but on the subcategorization frames. The subcategorization frames of transitivised and causative forms are different from their base forms. This can be illustrated by the entries of such verbs as /hundur/ 'sleep', /hundur-is/ 'make sleep', and /hundur-s-is/ 'cause to sleep', as shown below:

- /hundur/: V, [ \_\_\_\_ ] 'sleep'  
 /hundur-is/: V, [NP—] 'make sleep'  
 /hundur-s-is/: V, [NP NP—] 'cause to sleep'

As can be seen from the entries, the number of complements (arguments) increases as the verbs go from intransitive to transitive and then to causative (cf. Baye, 1986:129). Observe such forms as in the following structures:

- (5) (a) anan-ki                      hundur-ey  
          boy-df-m                      sleep-pf

'The boy slept.'

- (b) Ali      anan-ki              hundur-is-ey  
       Ali      boy-df-m              sleep-Cs.-pf.

'Ali made the boy sleep.'

- (c) Dad-ki Ali      anan-ki              hundur-s-i:s-ey  
       man-df-m Ali      boy-df-m.              sleep-Cs.-Cs.-pf.

'The man caused Ali to make the boy sleep.'

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In addition to the subcategorization frames, syntactic functions of arguments also change. In (5a) above, the subject of the verb /hundur/ 'sleep' (int.) is /ananki/ 'the boy', and when the verb /hundur/ is transitivity as /hundur-is/, it introduces a new subject, i.e., Ali in place of Ananki 'the boy', and the former subject, /ananki/ 'the boy', becomes the object of the new sentence as in (5b). Moreover, in (5c) we have again an additional causing agent /dadki/ 'the man'.

### 2.1.1.3. Causatives of intensive verbal stems

Like the causativization of transitive verbs, in causativizing intensive verbal stems, we attach the causative affix /-si:s/ to the base, as shown below:

Intensive verbal stems	Gloss	Causative from intensives	Gloss
tatta:b-	'touch repeatedly'	tatta:b-si:s-	'cause to touch repeatedly'
deddere:r-	'go now and then'	deddere:r-si:s-	'cause to go now and then'
bobbo:d-	'jump several times'	bobbo:d-si:s-	'cause to jump several times'

Table 4: Causatives from intensive verbal stems

Compare the occurrence of the base and the derivatives of such processes in the following structures:

- (6) (a) farad-ki            bobbo:d-ey.  
horse-df-m            jump (intensive)-pf.

The horse jumped several times.'

- (b) anan-ki            farad-ki            bobbo:č-isi:s-ey.  
boy-df-m            horse-df-m        jump (9nten)Cs-pf.

'The boy caused the horse to jump several times'.

#### 2.1.1.4. Causatives of reciprocals

Even though the reciprocal action is expressed with /is/ or /isku/ 'each other', it is possible to causativize such verbs by the same process used in causativizing the transitive or intransitive verbs as demonstrated in table 5 below.

Verbal roots	Gloss	Causatives of reciprocals	Gloss
k'anin	'bite'	is-k	'cause to bite each other'
tum	'hit'	is-tum-si:s-	'cause to hit each other'
eh	'scold'	isku-?eh-si:s-	'cause to scold each other'
k'il	'send'	is-k'il-si:s-	'cause to send each other'
we:r	'call'	isku-we:r-si:s-	'cause to call each other'

Table 5. Causatives of Reciprocals

Compare the use of reciprocals and their derived causative forms in the structures below:

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- 7) (a)  $\text{\textit{\text{šuru-di}}}$                        $\text{\textit{\text{isk'anin-e-n}}}$   
       cat-df-f                      REC bite-pf-pl  
       ‘The cats bite each other’
- (b)  $\text{\textit{\text{issi-we}}}$      $\text{\textit{\text{šuru-di-s}}}$                        $\text{\textit{\text{isk'anin-si:s-tey.}}}$   
       she-foc.    cut-df-f-foc    REC bite-cause-f-pf  
       ‘She made the cats bite each other.’

The word formation rule for such causatives is like the following:

- 8)    V        +     $\text{\textit{\text{vaf}}}$  [+Cs.]    →    V [+Cs.]

The processes of causativization are not category-changing since the bases and the derivatives are both verbs.

### 2.1.1.5. Causatives of adjectival bases

In Girirra, causativization may also be based on adjectives and nominals; then the causative affix /-is/ or /-š/ as in the examples below:

Adjectives	Gloss	Causative from Adjectives	Gloss
$\text{\textit{\text{adag}}}$	‘strong’	$\text{\textit{\text{adag-is-}}}$	‘make strong’
$\text{\textit{\text{tik'an}}}$	‘fat’	$\text{\textit{\text{tik'an-is-}}}$	‘make fat’
$\text{\textit{\text{gudud}}}$	‘red’	$\text{\textit{\text{gudud-is-}}}$	‘make red’
$\text{\textit{\text{mudowu}}}$	‘black’	$\text{\textit{\text{mudowu-š-}}}$	‘make black’
$\text{\textit{\text{balla:r}}}$	‘wide’	$\text{\textit{\text{balla:r-is-}}}$	‘make wide’

Table 6. Causatives of adjectival bases

Normal	Gloss	Causatives from Nominal	Gloss
mele	'pus'	mele-š-	'discharge pus'
bego	'wound'	bego-š-	'make wound'
barar	'swelling'	barar-is	'cause to swell'

Table 7. Causatives of nominal bases

Since adjectivals and nominals can be categorized under the same syntactic feature of [+ N], it may be possible to formulate the following word formation rule:

$$(9) \quad X [+N] \quad + \quad \text{Vaf} [+Cs] \quad \rightarrow \quad *V [+Cs]$$

Here, causativization has the effect of changing the category, that is, adjectivals and nominals are changed to verbals. Consider the occurrence of the adjective /adag/ 'strong' and the noun /mele/ 'pus' and their derivatives in the following structures respectively:

- (10) (a)      anan-ki                      adag-ya  
                  boy-df-m                      strong-be

'The boy is strong'

- (b)            issi-we                      anan-ki                      adag-is-t-ey  
                  she-foc                      boy-df-m                      strong-Cs.-f-pf.

'She made the boy strong'

- (c)            anan-ki                      mele-s                      mele-š-ey  
                  boy-df-m                      pus-foc                      discharge-Cs-pf

'The boy caused the pus to be discharged.'

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### 2.1.2. Passivization

In the passive, the object of an active verb becomes the subject of the passive verb only transitive verbs are used in the passive.

#### 2.1.2.1. Passives from transitive verb roots

In Girirra, the affix /la-/ or /-am/ is attached to transitive stems to form passive forms. The following are examples of such forms.

Verb roots	Gloss	Passive verb stems	Gloss
ha:bad	'find'	la-ha:bad-/ha:bad-am-	'be found'
ka:d	'hate'	la-kad-/ka:d-am-	'be hated'
wara:b	'drink'	la-wara:b-/wara:b-am	'be drunk'
gub	'burn'	la-gub-/gub-am-	'be burnt'
tum	'hit'	la-tum-/tum-am-	'be hit'
rug	'church'	la-rug-/rug-am-	'be churched'
ka:d	'take'	la-k'a:d-/k'a:d-am	'be taken'
dis	'build'	la-dis-/dis-am-	'be built'
hir	'tie'	la-hir-/hir-am-	'be tied'
k'ibis	'break'	la-k'ibis-/k'ibis-am	'be broken'
gaš	'cut'	la-guš-/guš-am-	'be cut'

Table 8. Pasivized verbs from transitive verb roots

From the above table, it is possible to formulate the following word formation rule:

$$(11) \quad \begin{array}{c} X \\ \left[ \begin{array}{c} +trans \\ -pass \end{array} \right] \end{array} + \text{vaf} \quad \text{V}_{[+pass]} \quad [+pass]$$

The process is non-category-changing. It only changes the property of the base to +pass (cf. Williams 1981 a:247).







On the other hand, the subject NP of the active structure can occur optionally as an object of preposition in passive structures, as in the following:

- |      |                   |                   |                                |
|------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|
| (14) | get-ki<br>wood-df | anan-ki<br>boy-df | ku-gaš-am-ey<br>by-cut-pass-pf |
|------|-------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------|

‘The wood was cut by the boy.’

Regarding this, Girmaye (1992:60) states that “the syntactic relationship which has come about as a result of the passive rule can be represented in the following manner. Passive Rule:

OBJECT	→	SUBJECT
SUBJECT	→	OBLIQUE.

Generally, passive is a ‘promotional’ process whereby a direct object nominal at one level is a subject nominal at a later level. As a result, a passive sentence is characterized as being intransitive (see Perlmutter and Postal, 1983; Keenan, 1976; Hayward, 1975 for details).

### 2.1.3. Reflexives

Such verbal stems refer to actions performed to one’s own(benefit)Bender 1976:18). The reflexive stem in the language is often indicated by the morpheme /-at/ suffixed to the verbal roots. It may also be possible to derive reflexives from two other bases: one from causative verbal bases and another from intensive verbal stems. Examples are given in the table below.



- (16) (a) biy-o                      kar-ey  
          water-part              boil-pf

‘water-boiled.’

- (b) anan-ki                      biyi-i kar-ad-ey  
          boy df.                      water-df-boil-REF-pf.

‘The boy boiled the water for himself.’

- (c) anan-ki                      biyi-i                      kar-is-ey

‘The boy made the water boil.’

- (d) anan-ki                      biyi-i                      kar-is-ad-ey

‘The boy made the water boil for himself.’

### 2.1.3.3. Middles /Reflexives from intensive verbal stems

In Girirra, it is also possible to attach the reflexive suffix /-at/ to intensive verbal stems as in the following table:

Intensive verbal stems	Gloss	Middles/ Reflexives	Gloss
gaggaš-	‘cut into pieces’	gaggaš-at-	‘cut into pieces for one self’.
wewwe:r-	‘call repeatedly’	wewwe:r-at-	‘call repeatedly for oneself’.
gaggad-	‘buy/sale repeatedly’	gaggad-at-	buy/sale repeatedly for oneself’.
k’ik’k’ibis-	‘break into pieces’	k’ik’k’ibis-at-	‘break. into pieces for oneself’.

Table 12. Middles/Reflexives from intensive verbal stems



Adjectives	Gloss	Statives	Gloss
k'anyar	'thin'	k'anyar-at-	'become thin'
gudud	'red'	gudud-at-	'become red'
mudowu	'black'	mudow-at-	'become black'
adag	'strong'	adag-at-	'become strong'
de:r	'long'	de:r-at-	'become long'
balla:r	'wide'	balla:r-at-	'become wide'
ad	'white'	ad-at-	'become white'

Table 13. Statives from adjective bases

A middle reflexive affix /-at/ is homophonous with the stative /-at/. Like the middle /reflexive affix /-at/, the stative suffix /-at/ also undergoes some phonological changes. Intervocally, the /t/ of the suffix /-at/ becomes voiced, and assimilates itself to the following alveolar nasal. This is shown below:

- (18) (a)      anan-ti              k'anyar-at-t-ey  
                  girl-df-f              thin-state. 3pf-pf

'the girl becomes thin.'

- (b)      anan-ki              k'anyar-ad-ey.  
                  boy-df-m-              thin-stat.-pf.

'The boy becomes thin.'

- (c)      unnu-we              k'anyar-an-n-ey.  
                  we-foc.              thin-stat. lpl. -pf

'We become thin.'

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For statives the following type of word formation rule can be formulated.

$$(19) \quad V \quad + \quad \text{Vaf} [+stat] \quad \rightarrow \quad V [+stat]$$

In general, verbs are derived by suffixing, except in passivization which uses both prefixes and suffixes. On the other hand, except in the derivation of statives and causatives, in all other forms verbal affixes are non-category changing.

Furthermore, derived verbs are bound: they become complete with inflectional affixes. In relation to this, Scalise (1984:52) says, "In some language, the outputs of some WFR's [word formation rules] require overt inflectional markers before they can appear in surface structure."

### 2.2. Reduplication

Reduplication is a type of word formation by which a word or a root or part of it is repeated. Daly et al (1981:155) define reduplication; "Sometimes a morpheme has exactly the same form as all or part of the stem to which it is affixed, we call this reduplication." There are two types of reduplication: partial and total.

In Girirra, partial reduplication is the most productive one. The process reduplicates the first syllable and geminates the first consonant of a root. This is common in adjectives and verbs.

In adjectives, the process shows plurality, whereas in verbs, it shows frequency or intensity. Furthermore, it is also possible to derive certain time adverbials by means of total reduplication.

### 2.2.1. Intensives and Frequentatives

Intensive and frequentative forms are derived by repeating the first syllable and geminating the first consonant of the base. Compare the following in table 14 below.

Verb root	Gloss	Intensives or Frequentatives	Gloss
dere:r	'go'	deddere:r	'go repeatedly'
k'bis	'break'	k'ik'k'ibis	'break into 'pieces'
k'a:d	'take'	k'ak'k'a:d	'take repeatedly'
si:s	'give'	si:sis	'give repeatedly'
gaš	'cut'	gaggaš	'cut into pieces'

Table 14. Intensives and Frequentatives

The rule looks like this:

$$\begin{array}{ccc}
 [C_1 V_1 \dots] & \rightarrow & [C_1 V_1 C_1 C_1 V_1 \dots] \\
 V^r & & V^{\text{stem}} \\
 & & \left[ \begin{array}{c} +\text{intensive} \\ +\text{frequentative} \end{array} \right]
 \end{array}$$



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Intensives and frequentatives do not affect the sub-categorization property of verbs. Their effect is only on their semantics, as they show repeated or intensified actions. Consider the following structures:

1.        bikeri            k'ibis-t-ey.  
          glass            break-f-pf

'(She) broke the glass.'

2.        bikeri            k'ik'k'ibis -t-ey  
          glass            break (intensive)-f-pf.

'(She) broke the glass into pieces.'

3.        hagi    hage    ro:r-ey  
          here    there    run-pf

'(he) run here and there.'

4.        hagi            hago            rorro:r-ey  
          here            there            run (frequentive) - pf

'(He) run here and there repeatedly.'

### Summary

In this study it has been attempted to show how verbal stems such as causatives, passives, statives and reflexives are derived from verbal and adjectival roots/stems by the process of affixation and reduplication.

The suffix /-is-/ changes intransitives into transitives and /-si:s-/ changes transitives into causatives.

Passives are derived from active verb roots with the suffix /-am-/ or the prefix /la-/. These are in free variation, except in oblique clauses where only the suffix /-am/ is used. Statives and reflexives are derived from adjectival and verbal roots respectively with the homophonous suffix /-at/.

The verbal stems formed by the process of reduplication are frequentative and intensive actions in the language. Both partial and total types of reduplication are found. The former is the most productive of the two.

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