

The markers of the verbal plurality in Kalmyk¹

In the Kalmyk language (Mongolian, Altaic) there are three markers that are somehow connected with the meaning of the plurality of participants: *-cxa-*, *-ld-* and *-lc-*. The presentation is devoted to the occurrence of these affixes.

The suffix *-cxa-* is traditionally considered to be an agreement marker. However, several examples of the use of *-cxa-* show that this suffix should be described as a marker of the verbal plurality: the example (1) shows that this marker can be used only in the case of the plurality participants but not if the same grammatical form of the pronoun has the meaning of a single participant; the example (2) shows that the suffix *-cxa-* can be used even if the subject is grammatically single, because the situation (a meeting) imply the plurality of participants. What is more, the place of the marker in a verb is unusual for an agreement marker: it stands before the markers of time, person and number, it can be also used in infinite forms of verbs.

The suffixes *-lc-* and *-ld-* are used rather rarely. Besides the sociative meaning the verbs with these affixes can have the reciprocal or assistive meanings. It is rather natural as both situations — reciprocal and assistive — imply the plurality of participants. In traditional grammars of Kalmyk the suffix *-ld-* is described as the marker of the “reciprocal voice”. On the one hand, it is true for a fixed number of verbs (3). On the other hand, there is another reciprocal construction in Kalmyk — with a pronoun *neg negän* ‘each other’ (4). This way of expressing the reciprocal situation is much more productive than the reciprocal construction with the suffix *-ld-* that changes the argument structure of the verb. In sentences like in the example (4) this suffix can be also used however it does not change the argument structure and becomes optional.

The affix *-lc-* can be used in verbs that describe an assistive situation (5). Then, it changes the argument structure of a verb. However, this way of expressing the assistive situation is rather unproductive. The Kalmyk speakers prefer use another construction — with the phrase *nökäd bol-* ‘to become a helper’ (6).

Though all three suffixes express the meaning of the plurality of participants and should be referred to verbal plurality rather than to nominal plurality, the marker *-cxa-* has more grammatical properties than *-ld-* and *-lc-*: in ‘compound’ verbs it stands in the finite part that has the grammatical markers while *-ld-* and *-lc-* take place in the infinite part that has derivational affixes (7).

The suffixes *-cxa-*, *-ld-* and *-lc-* can also have some other meanings that are not discussed in this abstract. To sum it up, the table (8) shows the situations that can be described with the help of the markers in question.

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- (1a) Tadən shirä deer-äsə aaq-mud av-tən.
2PL table surface-ABL plate-PL take-2PL
'You (pl / polite sg) are taking the plates from the table'.
- (1b) Tadən shirä deer-äsə aaq-mud av-cxa-tən.
2PL table surface-ABL plate-PL take-PLR-2PL
'You (pl / *polite sg) are taking the plates from the table'.
- (2) Kün xurəg-tə ir-cxä-sən uga.
Person meeting-DAT come-PLR-PC.PRF NEG.COP
'Nobody came to the meeting'.
- (3) Ämtə-n neg neg-tä-qän cokə-ld-na.
people-EXT one one-ASSOC-P.REFL hit-RECP-PRS
'People fight with each other.'²
- (4) Ämtə-n neg neg-än cokə-(ld)-na.
people-EXT one one-P.REFL hit-RECP-PRS
'People fight with each other.'³
- (5a) Bi gerə shird-nä-v.
1SG house paint-PRS-1SG
'I paint the house'.
- (5b) Enə nandə gerə shirdə-lc-nä.
this 1SG.DAT house paint-SOC-PRS
'He helps me to paint the house'.
- (6) Enə nandə gerə shird-xə nököd bol-dha-na.
this 1SG.DAT house paint-PC.FUT helper become-PROG-PRS
'He helps me to paint the house.'
- (7) ...gi-ld-äd güü-ld-äd
talk-RECP-CV.ANT run-RECP-CV.ANT
bää-cxä-nä tedən
be-PLR-PRS they
'They are running talking.'

(8)

	-cxa-	-ld-	-lc-
Sociative situation	+	+	+
Assistive situation	-	-	+
Reciprocal situation	-	+	+

² ASSOC — a kind of the comitative case.

³ Neg negän is an accusative form of the pronoun.