

## Facilitive and difficilitive in Ossetic

### 1. Terminology and preface

(van der Auwera, Plungian 1998, 80): “Modality and its types can be defined and named in various ways. There is no one correct way. The only requirement is that one makes clear how one uses one’s terms”.

I will follow classification of possibility proposed by van der Auwera and Plungian (1998):

Dynamic and epistemic modality: possibility and necessity

Dynamic modality: **participant-internal**, **participant-external** modality

Participant-external: **deontic** modality (*You may come in*)

Following Johan van der Auwera and Vladimir A. Plungian (1998: 80), **participant-internal** modality is understood in the paper as modality “internal to a participant engaged in the state of affairs” or participant’s ability / capacity or needs (e.g. *Boris can get by with sleeping five hours a night*). **Participant-external** modality “refers to circumstances that are external to the participant, if any, engaged in the state of affairs” (ibid.) and that make this state of affairs possible or necessary (e.g. *To get to the station, you can take bus 66*). **Deontic** modality is a special case of participant-external modality which “identifies the enabling or compelling circumstances external to the participant as some person(s), often the speaker, and/or as some social or ethical norm(s) permitting... the participant to engage in the state of affairs” (ibid.: 81) (*You may come in*).

While the grammaticalization of the main modal meanings — possibility and necessity — is well-studied (Bybee, Perkins, Pagliuca 1994; van der Auwera & Plungian 1998; Palmer 2001; Traugott 2006), many other, more specialized, meanings of dynamic modality apparently have not been investigated in details yet.

My paper deals with typologically rare grammaticalization of the meaning ‘easy or hard to accomplish’, which is found in the modern Ossetic language (Eastern Iranian).

### 2. Facilitive and difficilitive construction in Ossetic

#### 2.1. Formation and peculiarities

Ossetic has a special construction which is not mentioned in reference grammars and special studies of Ossetic modality (e.g. Tekhov 1970) and is formed by the verbal form in *-æn*, an auxiliary (usually *wævyn* ‘to be’) and an adjective *æncan* ‘easy’ or *žæn* ‘hard’; the auxiliary agrees in person and number with the Principal, the Patientive is marked by the dative (the hyperroles of Principal and Patientive are understood as in Kibrik 1997: Principal is “the main participant, the “hero” of the Situation, who is primarily responsible for the fact that this Situation takes place”; Patientive is “the most Effect(Patient)-like participant of a multi-participant event”). Depending on the adjective chosen, the construction expresses the meaning ‘easy to accomplish’ or ‘hard to accomplish’, which are labeled here facilitive and difficilitive (from Lat. *facilis* ‘easy’ and *difficilis* ‘hard’) respectively. Cf. the following examples with transitive (1) and intransitive (2) verbs:

(1) *acə fəš-tæ nən žən ærc-axš-ænen štə<sup>1</sup>*  
 this sheep-PL.NOM 1PL.ENCL.DAT difficult PREF-catch.PRS-NMLZ be.PRS.3PL  
 ‘It is difficult for us to catch these sheep’ (lit. ‘these sheep are difficult for catching by us’).

(2) *æncæ dæw mæn žən cær-ænen u*  
 without you.SG 1SG.ENCL.DAT difficult live.PRS-NMLZ be.PRS.3SG  
 ‘It is difficult for me to live without you’ (Kokaev T. A. *Nebesnyj kluč*. Vladikavkaz, 2004, p. 91).

The facilitive / difficilitive meanings can also be conveyed by another construction, where the word *æncæn* ‘easy’ or *žæn* ‘hard’ forms a predicate with the verb *wævyn* ‘to be’ in 3SG (‘to be easy / hard’); the Experiencer in this construction is marked by the dative. Cf.:

(3) *žæn u adæjmag-ænen jæ xorž ax,wər-tæ nə-wwadz-æn*  
 difficult be.PRS.3SG man-DAT POSS.3SG good habit-PL.NOM PREF-leave.PRS-NMLZ  
 ‘It is difficult for a man to leave his good habits’ (Makh dug, 2001, № 6, p. 79).

However, in contrast to the facilitive / difficilitive construction, where only two adjectives can be used (*æncæn* ‘easy’ or *žæn* ‘hard’), in the construction shown in (3), *æncæn* ‘easy’ or *žæn* ‘hard’ can be replaced by other VALUE adjectives. Cf. the following example with *æxcon* ‘pleasant’:

(4) *Asimo-imæ naxaš kæn-æn adæjmag-ænen æxcon u*  
 Asimo-COM word do.PRS-NMLZ man-DAT pleasant be.PRS.3SG  
 ‘It is a pleasure for a human being to talk with Asimo (robot’s name)’ (Makh dug, 2003, № 5, p. 152).

There are also morphosyntactic differences between facilitive / difficilitive construction and the construction shown in (3) and (4): in the facilitive / difficilitive construction the auxiliary agrees with the Patientive, while in the construction shown in (3) and (4), it is always in 3SG.

The Ossetic facilitive / difficilitive construction is close to the tough construction, which is attested in many European and non-European languages (among many others see e.g. Comrie, Matthews 1990, from the recent studies see Hicks 2009), cf. the following examples from English:

*These books are easy to read* (cf. *It is easy to read these books*)

*This room is pleasant to sleep in* (cf. *It is pleasant to sleep in this room*)

However, unlike the tough construction, the Ossetic facilitive / difficilitive construction is restricted by the use of only the adjectives *æncæn* ‘easy’ and *žæn* ‘hard’.

According to our corpus (4,6 million tokens), *æncæn* ‘easy’ or *žæn* ‘hard’ in facilitive / difficilitive construction are always preposed to the verbal form in *-ænen*. They can not be separated from the verbal form in *-ænen* by other words or clitics and particles. The personal second position clitics are postposed to the unit ‘verbal form in *-ænen* + the *æncæn* ‘easy’ or *žæn* ‘hard’’. Cf.:

(5) *æncæn kuš-ænen dza u?*  
 easy work.PRS-NMLZ 3SG.ENCL.INESS be.PRS.3SG  
 ‘Is it easy (comfortable) to work in it [in the tails]’ [Makh dug, №5, 2003, 130].

<sup>1</sup> The Ossetic examples cited in the abstract are partly collected during my fieldwork in North Ossetic in 2007–2009 and partly borrowed from the modern Ossetic texts (mainly fiction). I also used Ossetic oral glossed texts available in <http://ossetic-studies.org/en>.

*æncon* ‘easy’ or *žən* ‘hard’ in the facilitive / difficilitive construction can be analyzed as attributes of the verbal form in *-æn*. In Ossetic, attributes are always preposed to the head. Cf.:

- (6) *mæ ræšuyd səlgojmadž-ə fed-t-on*  
 POSS.1SG beautiful woman-GEN see.PST-TR-PST.1SG  
 ‘I saw my beautiful woman’.

Functioning as attributes, *æncon* ‘easy’ or *žən* ‘hard’ in facilitive / difficilitive can be marked by the comparative suffix *-dær*. Cf.:

- (7) *žæxx-ə æmæ foš-ə k<sup>w</sup>əštæg-tæ xæxbæšt-ə wældaj*  
 land-GEN and cattle-GEN work-PL.NOM mountainous.terrain particularly  
*zən-dær kæn-æn wədəštə*  
 difficult-COMPAR do.PRS-NMLZ be.PST.3PL  
 ‘In was more difficult to farm the land and to ranch the cattle in particularly in the mountainous terrain’ [Makh dug, № 8, 2004, p. 91].

The facilitive / difficilitive construction can not be considered a complex predicate, as the verbal form in *-æn* can be separated from the auxiliary and the negation particles are always attached to the auxiliary. In the case of a complex verb the noun constituent is unseparated from the verbal constituent; negation particles are always attached to the noun constituent.

- (8) *žən æmbar-æn, dam, štə, Nafi-jə fəšt-ət-aw wæžžau...*  
 difficult understand.PRS-NMLZ PRTCL be.PRS.3PL Nafi-GEN letter-PL-EQU hard ‘They say, it’s difficult to understand them as the Nafi’s letters it’s hard...’ [Makh dug, № 9, 2003, c. 21].

- (9) *...wəj æncon ra-xat-æn næ wəzæn*  
 3SG easy PREF-understand.PRS-NMLZ NEG be.FUT.3SG  
 ‘It will be not easy to understand it’ [Bicoev G. Kh. Vechern’aja zvezda. Vladikavkaz, 2003, p. 156].

Though the auxiliary in the facilitive / difficilitive construction agrees with the patient-like participant and the agent-like participant is marked by the dative, the construction can not be considered a passive construction, since it can be formed from intransitive predicates. Ossetic passive constructions can be formed only from transitive predicates.

## 2.2. Other properties of the facilitive / difficilitive construction

The construction under discussion can be used in all tenses and moods. Cf. the following example with the auxiliary in imperative:

- (10) *næ foš žəmædž-ə æncon dar-æn,*  
 POSS.1PL cattle winter-GEN easy keep.PRS-NMLZ  
*æncon xæšš-æn fæ-wænt!*  
 easy keep.PRS-NMLZ PREF-be.IMP.3PL  
 ‘Let our cattle be easy to ranch during the winter time!’ [Ajlarov I., Gadžinova R., Kcoeva R. Poslovice (Proverbs). 2005, p. 606].

The construction can be used both with transitive and intransitive predicates, cf. (1)–(2). The construction can be formed from causative verbs (causatives in Ossetic are formed by an auxiliary *kænyn* ‘to do’). E.g.:

- (11) *zonəy jæ mid-bənat-ə a-šald æmæ, ævæccægæn, wəcə*  
 sledge POSS.3SG inside-place-GEN PREF-freeze.PST.3SG and probably that  
*æncə-bon cong-æn žən fe-nk<sup>w</sup>əš-ən-gæn-æn wəd*  
 without-strength hand-DAT difficult PREF-move.PRS-INF-do.PRS-NMLZ be.PRS.3SG  
 ‘The sledge got frozen to the earth and apparently for his/her weak hands it was difficult to move it’ [Beštaev G.G. Proizvedeniya. 3 vols. Vladikavkaz, 2004, p. 449].

The construction can be used both in assertive and interrogative sentences. Cf. the following examples where it is used in the interrogatives. Unlike other parts of the sentence, the verbal form in *-æn* can not function as question focus.

- (12) *wədon žən nəv kæn-æn štə?*  
 they difficult paint do.PRS-NMLZ be.PRS.3PL  
 ‘Is it difficult to paint them?’ (is it difficult to paint THEM or smb else? Is it DIFFICULT or easy to paint them? \*Is it difficult to PAINT them or to find them?).
- (13) *wəmcæn wədon žən š-nəv kæn-æn štə?*  
 he.DAT they difficult PREF-paint do.PRS-NMLZ be.PRS.3PL  
 ‘Is it difficult for him to paint them?’

The construction can be used in contrastive sentences:

- (14) *acə læppu žən nəv kæn-æn u wəcə læppu ta nəc-u*  
 this boy difficult paint do.PRS-NMLZ be.PRS.3SG that boy CONTR NEG-be.PRS.3SG  
 ‘This boy is easy to paint and that one is not’.
- (15) *æncə dəu mən žən car-æn u,*  
 without you.GEN 1SG.ENCL.DAT difficult live.PRS-NMLZ be.PRS.3SG  
*demæ ta æncon*  
 you.COM CONTR easy  
 ‘For me it is difficult to live without you and with you it is easy’.

In the facilitive / difficilitive construction, all constituents can be omitted, i.e. the participants (Principal (12) and Patientive (8)), the auxiliary (15) and the verbal form in *-æn* (14)–(15). The construction can be used both in the main and in the subordinate clause. Cf. the following example of the the facilitive / difficilitive construction used in the purpose subordinate:

- (16) *Cæmæj wəj æncon-dær ra-mbul-æn wa wəj tæxxæj*  
 for 3SG easy-COMPAR PREF-win.PRS-NMLZ be.CONJ.3SG 3SG POST  
*qæw-ə təng biræ arxaj-ən*  
 need.PRS-PRS.3SG very a.lot.of work.PRS-INF  
 ‘One should train a lot to win him easily’.

### 2.3. Semantics

Semantically the construction under discussion is used to convey the meaning ‘easy or difficult to accomplish’. Sometimes one can detect the dynamic possibility meaning. Cf:

- (17) *fælae ajnædž-ə šær-t-ə mary-æn u æncon a-tæx-æn, adæm,*  
 but rock-GEN head-PL-GEN bird-DAT be.PRS.3SG easy PREF-fly.PRS-NMLZ people  
*gal-tæ æmæ wærdæ-ttæ cə kæn-øj*  
 ox-PL.NOM and cart-PL.NOM what do.PRS-CONJ.3PL  
*tæx-ən næ žon-ənc!..*  
 fly.PRS-NMLZ NEG know.PRS-PRS.3PL  
 ‘But for a bird it is easy to fly (lit. ‘a bird easily flies = a bird easily can fly’) across a rock  
 and what should man, ox and carts do, they can not fly!’ [Djusojty N. G. Sl’ozy Syrdona.  
 Vladikavkaz, 2004, p. 472].

When formed from a transitive predicate, the construction conveys the properties of the patient-like participant which cause difficulties for the accomplishment of the situation (difficultive meaning) or, vice versa, make the accomplishment of the situation easy or possible (facilitive meaning). When formed from an intransitive predicate, the construction expresses the situation which is easy or difficult to accomplish for the sole participant of the situation.

An interesting point is that the Principal of the facilitive / difficultive construction (if expressed in the sentence) can be both animate or inanimate

- (18) *æmæ ištə nicæjag æfxær-æn naxaš-æn dær*  
 and smth. worthless insult.PRS-NMLZ word-DAT FOC  
*æncon fe-žnæt-gæn-æn k<sup>w</sup>ə wa*  
 easy PREF-fury-do.PRS-NMLZ if be.CONJ.3SG  
 ‘[He was afraid that] some worthless, insulting words easily will throw him into a rage’  
 [Gusalov B. M. I vozdasts’a každomu. Vladikavkaz, 2003, p. 102] (lit. “he will be easily  
 thrown into a rage by worthless, insulting words).

The facilitive / difficultive construction can express both controlled and non-controllable situations. Cf. the following examples with the non-controllable verbs *rox kænən* ‘forget’ and *ulæfən* ‘breath’.

- (19) *šəydæg žærdæ-jə ænk’ar-æn-tæ aftæ æncon rox-gæn-æn*  
 pure heart-GEN feel.PRS-NMLZ-PL.NOM so easy forgotten-do.PRS-NMLZ  
*ne štə*  
 NEG be.PRS.3PL  
 ‘The feelings arisen from a pure heart are not so easy to forget’ [Makh dug, № 9, 2003,  
 p. 79].

- (20) *ra-jqal dæn, žən ulæf-æn mən kəj wəd*  
 PREF-awake be.PRS.1SG difficult breath.PRS-NMLZ 1SG.ENCL.DAT that be.PST.3SG  
*wəmæ gæšgæ*  
 he.ALL POST  
 ‘I waked up because it was difficult to breath’ [Makh dug, № 4, 2001, p. 131].

#### 2.4. Origin

There is no diachronic evidence of the origin of the construction as Ossetic was unwritten language till the mid of 19<sup>th</sup> century and very few data about Alanian (the ancestor of the modern Ossetic) language are available. However, apparently, the origin of the facilitive / difficultive construction is connected to the construction of external possibility. Both constructions consist of the verbal derivate in *-æn* and an auxiliary. The Principal is marked by Dative in both constructions. Note that the verbal derivate in *-æn* is used only in the two constructions; it can also be used independently, as a substantive noun (*xiž-æn* shepherd.PRS-NMLZ ‘pasture’) or an attribute (*fəšš-æn dzauma-tæ* write.PRS-NMLZ thing-PL.NOM ‘writing-materials’).

Intransitive verb

- (21) *Baratašvili-jə qoməšdžən kurdiat-æn passivon romantizm-ə k<sup>w</sup>əndæg*  
Baratašvili-GEN powerful talent-DAT passive romanticism-GEN narrow  
*fælgæt-t-ə ba-cæw-æn næ wəd*  
frame-PL-GEN PREF-go.PRS-NMLZ NEG be.PST.3SG  
‘Powerful talent of Baratašvili could not fit in the narrow frames of romanticism’  
[Beštaev G. G. Proizvedenija. 3 vols. Vladikavkaz, 2004, p. 226].

Transitive verb

- (22) *adæm-æn adæm mar-æn næ-j*  
man-DAT man kill.PRS-NMLZ NEG-EXT  
‘A human being is not allowed to kill a human being’.

Semantically, the two constructions are also close to each other: the facilitive / difficilitive construction can convey external-possibility, cf. (17).

### 3. Facilitive / difficilitive in other Caucasian and Iranian languages.

To the best of my knowledge, besides Ossetic, no other Iranian languages are reported to have a dedicated marker or a dedicated construction to convey facilitive or difficilitive semantics. Among the Caucasian languages geographically close to Ossetic, only Adyghe (North West Caucasian) grammaticalizes the meaning ‘easy / hard to accomplish’, where the suffix *-ɤ<sub>w</sub>eš<sub>w</sub>ə* conveys facilitive and the suffix *-ɤ<sub>w</sub>aje* expresses difficilitive [Rogava, Keraševa 1966, 297–298].

- (23) *ar bwew še-ɤ<sup>w</sup>ešə aš’ xe-plɛ-ž’ə-ɤ<sup>w</sup>aj-ep*  
3SG.ABS very do-FSL 3SG.ERG LOC-look.at-REFACTIVE-DFS-NEG  
‘This is easy to do, this is not difficult to look at again’ [Rogava, Keraševa 1966, 298].

### 4. Conclusion

The Ossetic facilitive / difficilitive construction is a rare case of grammaticalization of the meaning ‘easy / hard to accomplish’ from the participant-external possibility, which has not been observed in Iranian languages before. The origin of the discovered Ossetic construction apparently is connected to participant-external possibility. Consequently, Ossetic facilitive / difficilitive construction adds a new path of grammaticalization of participant-external possibility to the semantic map of modality [van der Auweva and Plungian 1998].

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**Key Difference - Facilities vs Amenities** Facilities and amenities are two words that are often used in the hospitality industry. Although these two terms are similar, they can also have different meanings in different contexts. For example, facilities can refer to a restroom in a public place such as a theatre. What is the difference between Facilities and Amenities? Definition: Facilities refer to a building, room, array of equipment, or a number of such things, designed to serve a particular function. Amenities are things that conduce to comfort, convenience, or enjoyment. **Pleasure and Comfort:** Facilities may not aim to provide pleasure and comfort. Amenities aim to provide pleasure and comfort. **Image Courtesy** Some public facilities include medical facilities, telecommunication facilities, educational facilities, research facilities, and commercial or institutional buildings, such as a hotel, resort, school, office complex, sports arena, or convention center etc. Some examples of hotel facilities are health clubs, spas, conference facilities, banquet halls, movie theatres, parking areas, etc. Since the hotel industry mainly aims at providing the best services to the guests, the amenities they provide often get categorized under hotel facilities. **Difference Between Amenities and Facilities. Definition**