

Himalayan Linguistics

A free peer-reviewed web journal and archive devoted to the study of the
languages of the Himalayas

Himalayan Linguistics

Perfect constructions with existential verbs in nDrapa

Satoko Shirai

Nagoya Institute of Technology

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to provide a full analysis of perfect constructions with existential verbs in nDrapa. Semantically, such construction conveys either a resulting state or a persistent situation, in accordance with the aspectual type of the situation. Syntactically, the existential verb in the perfect construction is not thoroughly grammaticalized as an aspect marker, but retains some element of its core meaning such as denoting that an entity exists. Moreover, they show distinct features from the serial verb constructions in terms of the affixation. Regarding a possible historical origin of the perfect constructions with existential verbs, I conclude that it is the functional borrowing from the neighboring languages.

KEYWORDS

existential verb, resultative, perfect, aspect, language contact

This is a contribution from *Himalayan Linguistics*, Vol. 9(1): 101–122.

ISSN 1544-7502

© 2010. All rights reserved.

This Portable Document Format (PDF) file may not be altered in any way.

Tables of contents, abstracts, and submission guidelines are available at
www.linguistics.ucsb.edu/HimalayanLinguistics

*Perfect constructions with existential verbs in nDrapa**

Satoko Shirai

Nagoya Institute of Technology

1 Introduction

In the Mätro dialect of nDrapa (Qiangic, Tibeto-Burman: Sichuan, China),¹ the combination of a verb and an existential verb is used as an aspectual device that can have implications such as resulting state and persistent situation. For example, in (1) below, the combination is used to describe a resulting state or persisting result of the previous event; that is, a man has come to the speaker's place and is there until the time of the utterance.

- (1) *ŋoro1 a-tɛ3 tɕt-ɛ2.*
3SG DIR:DOWN-come-[a] exist₆-B.IPF
'He has arrived here.' (He has come and is still here.)

The basic construction of such combinations has the suffix *-a* affixed to the head of the predicate (such as *a-tɛ3* 'come' in (1)), followed by an existential verb (such as *tɕt-ɛ2* in (1)). In this paper, this combination in nDrapa is called the “*-a* + EXIST” construction. The *-a* in an “*-a* + EXIST” construction is simply labeled as “-[a]” in the morpheme gloss.²

The formation of “*-a* + EXIST” constructions is distinct from both the auxiliary construction and the typical serial verb constructions in nDrapa, in which left-hand verbs cannot be affixed with

* This paper is the revised and extended version of the one presented at The 41st International Conference on Sino-Tibetan Languages and Linguistics, 2008, held at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London. I am very grateful to the participants of the symposium for their comments.

This study is supported by the Grant-in-Aid for Scientific Research from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (“Areal Study of the Multilingual Societies in Southwestern China”; No. 19720095; Satoko Shirai).

¹ The nDrapa (Zhaba) language is spoken by around 8,000 people in Daofu County and Yajiang County of Kanze Prefecture, Sichuan, China. The Mätro dialect is spoken in the Mazhong village of Zhongni District, Zhaba Area, Daofu County. The following are the phonemes of Mätro nDrapa: consonants /ph [p^h], th [t^h], tʰ [t^h], ch [ç^h], kh [k^h]; p, t, t̚, c, k, ʔ; b, d, d̚, ʒ, g; tsh [ts^h], tɕh, [tɕ^h]; ts, tɕ; dz, dʒ; m, n, ŋ, ɲ; hm [ɥm], hn [ɥn], hɥ [ɥɥ], hɲ [ɥɲ]; fh [f^h], sh [s^h], ɕh [ç^h]; f, s, ɕ, x; v, z, ʒ, ʕ; w, j; l, r [r̥]; ʎ [ʎ̥], ʎ [ʎ̥]; vowels /i, i̥, u, u̥, e [ɪ], ɐ, o, ɛ, ʌ, ə, a; ei/, and tones: 1 (High-level), 2 (High-falling), 3 (Low-rising) and 4 (Low-rising-falling).

² The identity of this suffix is one of the topics of this paper. It has the same form as one of the “Pattern B” suffixes that is used in the point-of-view system (See sections 3.1.2, 3.2.3 and 4.3). The Pattern B suffix *-a* implies the objective (non-egophoric) attitude of a statement in the perfective aspect. Please refer to Shirai (2006a, 2007) for the details of the point-of-view system.

-a. On the other hand, the “-a + EXIST” constructions appear to be parallel to constructions in the neighboring major languages such as Sichuan Chinese and Khams Tibetan,³ where the combination of a perfect verb and an existential verb convey a resulting state.

In this paper, I will provide a full analysis of the combination of a verb with -a and an existential verb in the Mätro dialect of nDrapa. Such phenomena have not been discussed in the previous descriptive studies on nDrapa dialects, such as Huang (1991) and Gong (2007).

The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 analyzes the semantics of the two aspects that are expressed with the “-a + EXIST” construction. Section 3 describes the morphosyntactic structure of such constructions. Section 4 discusses the origin of the “-a + EXIST” construction in nDrapa in light of similar constructions found in neighboring languages. The conclusions of the paper are summarized in Section 5.

2 Semantic implications of the “-a + Exist” construction

2.1 Tense/aspect values: perfect aspect

The “-a + EXIST” construction in nDrapa can have one of the following two tense/aspect values: the “perfect of result” (Comrie 1976: 56) or “perfect stative” (Smith 1997: 106), such as *John has arrived* in English; and the “perfect of persistent situation” (Comrie 1976: 60) or “present perfect” with an “open interpretation” (Smith 1997: 188), such as English *I’ve been waiting for hours*. An example of each pattern is shown in (1) (repeated below) and (2), respectively.

- (1) *ɲoro1 a-te-a3 tɕu-ε2.*
 3SG DIR:DOWN-come-[a] exist₆-B.IPF
 ‘He has arrived here.’ (He has come and is still here.)

- (2) *ɲa1 tɕuu2 co3 ko-hdo1 hce-a3 tɕu2.*
 1SG now friend DIR:UP-sit PST-[a] exist₆
 ‘I have been waiting for a friend (and continue to do so now).’

Moreover, in a few examples, the construction seems to have an iterative or habitual implication, as seen in (3). However, this implication can be viewed as a variation of the perfect of persistent situation, as in the roughly comparable English example *I’ve shopped there for years* (Comrie 1976: 60).

- (3) *rendzo3 ka-hteire = hce-a1 tɕa = rε3.*
 often DIR:IN-overcloud = PST-[a] exist₄=COP
 ‘It often becomes cloudy.’

³ In the areas where nDrapa is spoken, Tibetan is the traditional lingua franca, and more recently, Chinese has become the dominant language. Many loanwords from Tibetan and Chinese are found in nDrapa, and loanwords from Tibetan are found even in rather basic vocabularies such as *loma3* ‘leaf’ and *meto3* ‘flower.’ They are so familiar to nDrapa speakers that the consultants of my fieldwork recognize them as native nDrapa words (Shirai 2006a: 5-6, 2008: 3).

Other meanings that are often associated with the perfect in other languages, such as experience and the recent past, are not necessary entailments of the “-a + EXIST” construction in nDrapa.

My semantic analysis of this construction is based on the two-component theory of Smith (1997). The two-component theory assumes that “sentences present information about aspectual situation type and viewpoint. The two types of information are independent.” (Smith 1997: 2). There are three main viewpoint types: perfective, imperfective, and neutral. Moreover, aspectual situations are classified into five types as listed below:

- *States*: static, durative
- *Activity*: dynamic, durative, atelic
- *Accomplishment*: dynamic, durative, telic, consisting of process and outcome
- *Semelfactives*: dynamic, atelic, instantaneous
- *Achievement*: dynamic, telic, instantaneous (Smith 1997: 3)

It is natural to consider the difference between the two values of the “-a + EXIST” construction mentioned above as being derived from the aspectual viewpoints: the perfect of result has the perfective viewpoint and the perfect of persistent situation has the progressive viewpoint. Moreover, such viewpoints appear to be restricted by the situation type of the event expressed in the sentence, a point I pursue in the subsequent sections.

2.1.1 The perfect of result

If the event expressed in an “-a + EXIST” sentence is telic (i.e., there is a natural final endpoint of the event), the construction has a strong tendency to have the reading of resulting state. In other words, if the situation type of the event expressed in the sentence is Accomplishment or Achievement, the “-a + EXIST” construction implies that the event is viewed as a whole from the perfective viewpoint and that a result of the event exists at the time of reference. For example, Accomplishment situations, such as “put on certain clothes” and “open a certain window,” as seen in (4) and (5) respectively, show this pattern. Moreover, Achievement situations, such as “crack a certain cup” and “break a certain cup,” as seen in (6) and (7), also have the reading of resulting state.

- (4) *ŋoro1 pətʃhe3 a-ʔci-a1 tʃt-ε2.*
 3SG Tibetan.clothes DIR:UP-put.on-[a] exist_t-B.IPF
 ‘He is wearing the Tibetan clothes.’ (He has put on the Tibetan clothes and is still wearing them.)

- (5) *ŋoro1 ngezi3 o-ʔchu1 hce-a3 tʃa=re3.*
 DEM window DIR:UP-open PST-[a] exist_t=COP
 ‘That window is open.’ (Someone has opened that window and it is still open)

- (6) *koro1 tonɔo1 ka-ʔte-a1 tɕa=rɛ3.*
 DEM cup DIR:IN-become.cracked-[a] exist_t=COP
 ‘This cup is cracked.’ (This cup has been cracked since someone dropped it.)

- (7) *koro1 tonɔo1 a-ʔhe-a3 tɕa=rɛ3.*
 DEM cup DIR:DOWN-break-[a] exist_t=COP
 ‘This cup is broken into bits.’ (Someone has broken this cup, and the fragments remain scattered on the floor.)

In the “-a + EXIST” construction with the resultative implication, the perfective viewpoint is located between the time when the action is finished and the time when the resulting state changes. The latter temporal point is referred to as “F + 1” by Smith (1997: 71–72) and as “the reset time” by Igarashi and Gunji (1998: 82–3). For example, in (4), the situation “he put on the clothes” is the Accomplishment type. The viewpoint is the perfective type, which includes the initial endpoint (I) and the final endpoint (F) of the action, and the result of the action is his wearing of the clothes. Moreover, the viewpoint is located in the period when he is wearing the clothes, that is, the period between the time when he finishes putting on the clothes (F) and the time when he takes them off (F + 1: a change of state from F).

In nDrapa, the perfect of result interpretation of the “-a + EXIST” construction is only acceptable if the result of a telic situation is visible. In addition to the examples above, situations such as *ŋa=rə3 tianxua4 xaoma3 ka-ra3* [1SG=GEN telephone number DIR:IN-write] ‘(I) write my telephone number,’ *hɣara-kə3 meto-rɛ3 ŋo-hbo3* [garden-inside flower-PL DIR:OUT-bloom] ‘the flowers in the garden open up,’ and *ta3 a-hca1* [water DIR:UP-boil] ‘the water comes to a boil’ are found to express the perfect of result when placed in the “-a + EXIST” construction. However, if the result is invisible, the “-a + EXIST” construction is judged to be odd or unacceptable by native speakers. I will return to this problem in section 2.2.

2.1.2 The perfect of persistent situation

Example (2), repeated below, expresses a persistent situation: the speaker began waiting for a friend in the past and continues to wait until the reference time. In this pattern, the reference time is identical with the time of utterance.

- (2) *ŋa1 tɕuu2 co3 ko-hdo1 hce-a3 tɕu2.*
 1SG now friend DIR:UP-sit PST-[a] exist_t
 ‘I have been waiting for a friend (and continue to do so now).’

If the situation expressed in the sentence is the Activity type, the “-a + EXIST” construction conveys a persistent situation. If the final endpoint of the situation is not well-defined, that is, out of the aspectual view, and if the situation has time duration, that is, the initial endpoint is not identical with the final endpoint, then the aspectual viewpoint is easily located in the interval between the two endpoints. Examples with the activity situations “live with someone” and “help someone do something” are provided in (8) and (9), respectively.

- (8) *tsheri1 loza = ntsha3 hdo = wu4 mθ = hce-a3 tçu-ε2.*
 PN PN=COM same.place=ACC live=PST-[a] exist₆-B.IPF
 ‘Tseri has been living with Loza (since marriage).’
- (9) *ηoro1 tçuu2 hgehge = wu1 kə-ji1 hce-a3 tçu-ε2.*
 3SG now teacher=ACC DIR:IN-help PST-[a] exist₆-B.IPF
 ‘He has been helping the teacher (and continues to do so now).’

In nDrapa, the progressive aspect is usually indicated by the imperfective auxiliary *tʌ*, which follows the main verb stem, as shown in (10a). The semantic interpretations of (10a) with the imperfective auxiliary and (10b) with the “-a + EXIST” construction are so similar that native speakers have difficulty describing any difference.

- (10) a. *ηa1 tçati-ta1 ntçhi = tʌ1.*
 1SG book-upside look=IPF
 ‘I am reading.’
- b. *ηa1 tçati-ta1 kə-ntçhi-a1 tçu2.*
 1SG book-upside DIR:IN-look-[a] exist₆
 ‘I have been reading.’

Example (3), which is repeated below, has an iterative implication: the sky becomes cloudy again and again. Moreover, the situation is regarded as continuing until the time of reference.

- (3) *rendzo3 ka-hteire = hce-a1 tça = rε3.*
 often DIR:IN-overcloud= PST-[a] exist₄=COP
 ‘It often becomes cloudy.’

A parallel pattern is found in (11) and (12). In (11), the subject wears Tibetan clothes one day, again the next day, and keeps putting them on in the morning and taking them off in the evening all the way up until the day of utterance. Similarly (12) implies that the subject repeats the cycle of reading books up to the day of utterance.

- (11) *ηoro1 ηareηʌ3 pətçhe3 ʌ-ʔci-a1 tçu-ε2.*
 3SG every.day Tibetan.clothes DIR:UP-put.on-[a] exist₆-B.IPF
 ‘He wears Tibetan clothes every day.’
- (12) *ηoro1 ηareηʌ3 tçati-ta1 kə-ntçhi-a1 tçu-ε2.*
 3SG every.day book-upside DIR:IN-look-[a] exist₆-B.IPF
 ‘He reads every day.’

The form of sentence (11) is almost the same as that of (4), repeated below, except that (11) has the adverbial *ηareηʌ3* ‘every day.’ Sentence (12) is also similar to (10b) with the exception of the adverbial.

- (4) *ɲoro1 pətʃhe3 a-ʔci-a1 tɕu-ε2.*
 3SG Tibetan.clothes DIR:UP-put.on-[a] exist₆-B.IPF
 ‘He is wearing the Tibetan clothes.’ (He has put on the Tibetan clothes and is still wearing them.)

- (10) b. *ɲa1 tɕəti-ta1 kə-ntɕhi-a1 tɕu2.*
 1SG book-upside DIR:IN-look-[a] exist₆
 ‘I have been reading.’

The important point here is that the situation types depend on the whole sentence, including the adverbial.⁴ Therefore, the situations “He wears Tibetan clothes” and “He wears Tibetan clothes *every day*” belong to different types: The former is the Accomplishment type, and the latter, the Semelfactive type. On the other hand, since both situations of (12) and (10b) belong to the Activity type, the inference of iterativity is due to the presence of the adverbials such as *rendzɔ3* ‘often’ and *ɲareɲɲɔ3* ‘every day.’

To conclude, if the situation is atelic, that is, the Active type or the Semelfactive type, the “-a + EXIST” construction tends to convey a persistent situation. Moreover, it can also have an iterative-like implication in accordance with the context expressed by adverbials.

2.2 Situations unacceptable in the “-a + EXIST” construction

Interestingly, some situations are incompatible with the “-a + EXIST” construction.

Situations of the State type are not found with the “-a + EXIST” construction in nDrapa. For example, in (13), even though the stem of the main verb (*ra3*) may seem stative (‘resemble’), the situation expressed with the affixed verb (*a-ra-a3*) is the Achievement type (‘come to resemble’). In nDrapa, the verbal stems that have stative meanings, such as *tɕi1* ‘big’ and *ʔthe1* ‘white,’ generally form change-of-state verbs such as *a-tɕi-a1* ‘grow up’ and *a-ʔthe-a1* ‘turn white’ once they are affixed with a directional prefix and *-a*.⁵

⁴ The situation type does not depend on the inherent features of the verb. Although both the examples below involve the verb *ɲi-nɲi1* “listen/hear,” the situation in (i) “I hear the message” is the Accomplishment type, but the situation in (ii) “the mother listens to the child’s talk” is the Active type.

- (i) *antha1 no1 a-ɕje-məra3 ɲa1 ɲi-nɲi1 ɦce-a3 tɕu2.*
 just 2SG DIR:DOWN-say-NMLZ 1SG DIR:OUT-listen PST-[a] exist₆
 ‘I have heard what you have just said (and I remember the message).’

- (ii) *tɕuu2 pɲɲɲɔ3 tɕhi-pe4 ɕje=t-ε1. me3 ɲi-nɲi-a1 tɕu2.*
 now child something-a.little say=IPF-B.IPF mother DIR:OUT-listen-[a] exist₆
 ‘The child is saying something (obscure). His mother has been listening to it.’

⁵ In this respect, the function of the suffix *-a* is identical to that of the Pattern B suffix of the perfective aspect. This suggests that suffix *-a* is the same, or at least has the same origin, as the Pattern B suffix of the perfective aspect. See sections 3.2.3 and 4.3.

- (13) *ŋa1 phe = wu3 a-ra-a3 tɕu = t-ɛ1.*
 1SG father=ACC DIR:DOWN-resemble-[a] exist₆=IPF-B.IPF
 ‘I resemble my father.’ (I have grown up and come to resemble my father.)

Another type of incompatibility is found with events denoting death. Even though the final endpoints of the events are significant, the “-a + EXIST” construction is not accepted if the event implies extinction, as in “a man died many years ago.” Again we see that the “-a + EXIST” pattern cannot be used if the subject of the resulting state is not visible. This phenomenon indicates that the existential verb in the “-a + EXIST” construction is not thoroughly grammaticalized as an aspect marker but retains some element of its core meaning of denoting that an entity exists.

For example, example (14a) is unacceptable using the “-a + EXIST” construction, even though the situation is one where the father had died in the past and hence is dead at the time of the utterance. This type of situation is expressed by a simple perfect sentence that does not contain an existential verb, as shown in (14b).

- (14) a. **koro3 pɔhɣa = ra3 phe3 ta-ɕ-a1 tɕu-ɛ2.*
 DEM child=GEN father DIR:NEUT-die-[a] exist₆-B.IPF
 Intended meaning: ‘The father of this child has died.’

- b. *koro3 pɔhɣa = ra3 phe3 ta-ɕ-a1.*
 DEM child=GEN father DIR:NEUT-die-B.PFV
 ‘The father of this child has died.’

It is worth noting that the acceptability of the “-a + EXIST” construction is slightly improved in (15), though the implication also becomes slightly different. (14a) uses an animate existential verb *tɕu2* in the “-a + EXIST” construction, but (15) uses an inanimate existential verb *tɕa3*.⁶ Consequently, (15) may imply that an inanimate subject, a dead body, exists in the sight of the speaker.

- (15) *? koro3 pɔhɣa = ra3 phe3 ta-ɕ-a1 tɕa = re3.*
 DEM child=GEN father DIR:NEUT-die-[a] exist₄=COP
 ‘The father of this child has died (and his dead body is laying there).’

The intended meaning of (16a) is that the ice in a lake has melted and the resultant water still remains in the lake. The situation cannot be expressed with the “-a + EXIST” construction, as shown in (16a), but can be expressed with a perfect form of a sentence without an existential verb, as shown in (16b). This is because the subject of the resulting state is intangible; it no longer exists. If the situation is opposite, that is, if the water has turned to ice, the “-a + EXIST” construction can be used, as seen in (17). This is appropriate as the ice has come into existence.

⁶ For details on the distinction of existential verbs, please refer to section 3.1.1.

(16) a. **ɕu-ta = rɿ1* *nphei1* *a-j-a3* *tɕa = rɛ3*.
 lake-upside=GEN ice DIR:DOWN-melt-[a] exist₄=COP
 Intended meaning: ‘The ice in the lake has melted.’

b. *ɕu-ta = rɿ1* *nphei1* *a-j-a3*.
 lake-upside=GEN ice DIR:DOWN-melt-B.PFV
 ‘The ice in the lake has melted.’

(17) *ɕu-ta1* *nphei1* *kɿ-tɕa-a3* *tɕa = rɛ3*.
 lake-upside ice DIR:IN-exist₄-[a] exist₄=COP
 ‘The lake has been frozen over.’ (The ice in the lake has come to exist.)

Other situations with invisible results are also incompatible with this construction. These include mental situations expressed by such verbs as *hto3* ‘be afraid of’ or *hmɿ1* ‘forget’. Situations expressing changes in temperature that have no visible verifiability, such as “become cold,” are not acceptable with this construction, but those denoting changes in temperature that can be visibly verified are acceptable, as shown in (18) and (19), respectively. In (18), the change in temperature is invisible; on the other hand, in (19), the bright sunshine is visible.

(18) **ɿ-ve-a1* *tɕa = rɛ3*.
 DIR:UP-cold-[a] exist₄=COP
 Intended meaning: ‘It has become cold.’

(19) *ɿami1* *ko-zo-a1* *tɕa = rɛ3*. *ɿami1*
 sun DIR:IN-hot-[a] exist₄=COP sun
 ‘The sun shines brightly and it has become warm.’

Moreover, Activity situations that produce sound, such as “a child is saying something” with the verb *a-ɕjɛ3* ‘speak’ and “A monk beats a drum” with the verb *ɿo-hyo1* ‘beat (a drum)’, cannot be expressed with the “-a + EXIST” construction.

Other situations that are incompatible with the “-a + EXIST” construction seem arbitrary. For example, most of the situations consisting of a compound verb with the verb stem *mø1* ‘make,’ such as *hteimu3* *a-mø3* ‘marry’ and *khɿndi1* *ɿɿndi1* *a-mø3* ‘walk around,’ cannot be expressed with the “-a + EXIST” construction, as shown in (20). However, *htsoma1* *joma3* *a-mø3* ‘arrange (things in order)’ is acceptable, as shown in (21).

(20) **ɿone1* *hteimu3* *a-mø-a3* *tɕu-ɛ2*.
 3DL wedding DIR:DOWN-make-[a] exist₆-B.IPF
 Intended meaning: ‘They have been married.’

(21) *je-kɿ1* *htsoma1* *joma3* *a-mø-a3* *tɕa = rɛ3*.
 house-inside clean/ordered DIR:DOWN-make-[a] exist₄=COP
 ‘The house has been arranged.’ [FT]

2.3 Serial verb construction with the verb ‘put’

In nDrapa, there is another type of construction that conveys either the meaning of a resulting state or a persistent situation: the serialization of a general verb and the verb *le3* ‘put.’ For example, the meanings of (22a, b) are almost the same as those of (1), which is repeated below; both denote the resulting state of a man’s arrival.

(22) a. *ηoro1 a-tε3 le = hce-a3.*
 3SG DIR:DOWN-come put-PST-B.PFV
 ‘He has arrived here.’ (He has come and is still here.)

b. *ηoro1 a-tε3 le = t-ε3.*
 3SG DIR:DOWN-come put-IPF-B.IPF
 ‘He has arrived here.’ (He has come and is still here.)

(1) *ηoro1 a-tε-a3 tεu-ε2.*
 3SG DIR:DOWN-come-[a] exist₆-B.IPF
 ‘He has arrived here.’ (He has come and is still here.)

Similarly, the meanings of (23a, b) are also very similar to that of sentence (2): the persistent situation of waiting for a friend.

(23) a. *ηa1 tεuu2 co3 ko-hdo1 le = hεe3.*
 1SG now friend DIR:UP-sit put-PST:1
 ‘I have been waiting for a friend (and continue to do so now).’

b. *ηa1 tεuu2 co3 ko-hdo1 le = tλ3.*
 1SG now friend DIR:UP-sit put-PST:1
 ‘I have been waiting for a friend (and continue to do so now).’

(2) *ηa1 tεuu2 co3 ko-hdo1 hce-a3 tεu2 ηa1*
 1SG now friend DIR:UP-sit PST-[a] exist₆ 1SG
 ‘I have been waiting for a friend (and continue to do so now).’

In nDrapa serial verb and auxiliary constructions, no suffix can be added to the left-hand verb stem, as shown in (24) and (25), as well as in the verb plus *le3* serial construction just exemplified.

(24) *thu3 tλ-thε=ji1 εu-ε3.*
 LOG DIR:NEUT-egest=go need-B.IPF
 ‘(The boy said,) “I must go potty.” [FT]’

- (25) *ŋa1 tʌ3 le3 a-ji3 wu-a2.*
 1SG water draw DIR:DOWN-go/come PFT-B.PFV
 ‘I have already gone to draw water.’

By contrast, the “-a + EXIST” construction, as shown in (1) and (2), is morphologically distinct from typical serial verb/auxiliary constructions in that the left-hand verb is obligatory suffixed with -a.

It should be noticed that nDrapa has both the “-a + EXIST” construction and the serial verb construction with *le3* ‘put’ to express a resulting state or a persistent situation; moreover, the former has an atypical form in the nDrapa system of verb serializations. Further discussion on the structural differences between “-a + EXIST” and serial verb constructions is given in section 3.2.

3 The formation of the “-a + EXIST” construction

3.1 Existential verbs

In nDrapa, existential verbs constitute a subcategory of verbs. Thus, similar to all nDrapa verb stems, existential verb stems can become heads of predicates and take affixes such as directional prefixes and Pattern B suffixes, as shown in (26).

- (26) *tʌpʌ3 hdzusepe3 to-tɕu-a1 rɛ3.*
 riverside fish.killer DIR:NEUT-exist_t-B.PFV COP
 ‘There was a fisherman at the riverside.’ [FT]

3.1.1 The choice of an existential verb

There are as many as six existential verb stems in nDrapa, as shown in Table 1.⁷ In existential sentences, existential verb stems are chosen in accordance with the animacy of the subject and its manner of existence (Shirai 2006b, 2008).

	STEM	ANIMACY	TEMPORALITY	MANNER
1.	<i>pʌ3</i>	animate/inanimate	constant	settled
2.	<i>nʌ1</i>	animate	constant/temporary	(any)
		inanimate	temporary	gained
3.	<i>ɕi2</i>	inanimate	constant/temporary	immobile
4.	<i>tɕa3</i>	inanimate	temporary	not wrapped
5.	<i>tɕʌ3</i>	inanimate	temporary	within something
6.	<i>tɕu2</i>	animate	temporary	(any)

Table 1. Existential verb stems

⁷ In the glosses of the examples in this paper, the existential verbs have subscripts that indicate their corresponding stem in Table 1.

Only the last three existential verb stems are found in “-a + EXIST” constructions:⁸ *tɕu2* (exist₆) is used if the subject of the resulting state/persistent situation is animate, as shown in (27) and (28). On the other hand, if the subject of the resulting state/persistent situation is inanimate, *tɕa3* (exist₄) is usually chosen, as shown in (29) and (30); however, *tɕa3* (exist₅) is also found if such a subject is contained within an object, such as a bag or clothes, as shown in (31) and (32).

(27) *ŋa1 ko3 ʌ-hdʒi-a1 tɕu2.*

1SG here DIR:UP-sit-[a] exist₆

‘I have been sitting here.’ (I sat down here, and I am still sitting here.)

(28) *woko1 thapi3 rapha = tɕu3 ʌ-tɕhw-a3 tɕw-ε2.*

smoked.pork upside mouse=NCL DIR:UP-go-[a] exist₆-B.IPF

‘A mouse is on the big smoked pork.’ [Proverb]⁹ (A mouse has climbed to the top of the smoked pork and is still there)

(29) *ŋa1 nkho3 ʈotsi-ta3 kʌ-hti-a1 tɕa3.*

1SG key table-upside DIR:IN-put-[a] exist₄

‘I have kept the key on the table (and the key is still there).’

(30) *ŋa1 mɛto-ta3 ta3 ko-tu-a1 tɕa3.*

1SG flower-upside water DIR:IN-pour-[a] exist₄

‘I have watered the flowers (and they are still wet; so you don’t need to water them).’

⁸ It is difficult to determine why the other three stems *po3*, *na1* and *ɕi2* are not used in the “-a + EXIST” construction, but the implications of these stems appears to be less suitable to the construction: neither the resulting state nor the persistent situation are recognized as constant or immobile.

Moreover, the existential verb *na1* appears to be related to the experiential auxiliary *na2*. Examples are shown in (i) auxiliary and (ii) existential verb. However, the word *na2* in (i) is completely grammaticalized as an auxiliary, even if it is assumed to originate from an existential verb. Since the verb to the left of *na1* cannot be affixed by -a, the structure is different from the “-a + EXIST” construction. Therefore, I will not discuss the issue further in this paper.

(i) *ŋa1 pətɕhe3 ʌ-ʔci1 na2.*

1SG Tibetan.cloths DIR:UP-wear EXP

‘I have worn Tibetan cloths.’

(ii) *ndankherə3 vi3 pɛpɛ3 na1 ʈhe3.*

fomerly dhole a.lot exist₂ PST:HBT

‘There used to be many dholes.’

⁹ This proverb refers to a position above oneself. A *woko1* (wholly-smoked and fermented pork)—which is known as Chou-Zhu-Rou (臭猪肉; smelly pork) in Chinese—hung above a fireplace, is a traditional food in nDrapa. It has a very important place in the nDrapa way of life, while a mouse is much smaller and less important.

- (31) *no = ro3 nkho3 ηa = rλ3 ma-kλ3 a-xu-a3 tɕλ3.*
 2SG=GEN key 1SG=GEN bosom-inside DIR:DOWN-stow-[a] exist₃
 ‘I have stowed your key away in my bosom¹⁰ (and the key is still in my bosom).’

- (32) *koro-kλ1 rera3 a-hku-a3 tɕλ3.*
 teapot-inside tea DIR:DOWN-pour-[a] exist₃
 ‘I have poured tea into the teapot (and the teapot is still full with the tea).’

If more than one argument is possible as the subject of the resulting state/persistent situation, the choice of an existential verb stem is dependent on what the speaker focuses on. For example, different existential verbs are found in (33a) and (33b), even though the meanings of the two sentences are similar—the resulting state of a third person shutting his mouth. Since the human subject (*ηoro1* ‘he’) is considered to be the subject of the resulting state in (33a), the existential verb stem used here is *tɕu2* (exist₆), which indicates that the subject of existence is animate. On the other hand, since the inanimate object (*neme3* ‘mouth’) is considered to be the subject of the resulting state in (33b), the inanimate existential verb stem *tɕa3* (exist₄) is used here.

- (33) a. *ηoro1 neme3 ta-ʔkeʔke1 tɕu-ε2.*
 3SG mouth DIR:NEUT-be.silent exist₆-B.IPF
 ‘He keeps his mouth shut.’

- b. *ηoro1 neme3 ta-ʔkeʔke1 tɕa = rε3.*
 3SG/DEM mouth DIR:NEUT-be.silent exist₄=COP
 ‘His mouth is kept shut.’

3.1.2 The point-of-view system

The existential verb in the “-a + EXIST” construction alters its form according to the point-of-view system (Shirai 2007), which is comparable to the so-called conjunct/disjunct system described for Newari (Hale 1980, Hargreaves 2005), Tibetan (DeLancey 1990, 2001), and other neighboring languages.¹¹ In the point-of-view system, sentences can be divided into two patterns: Pattern A and Pattern B.¹² Pattern A implies that the locutor is familiar with the content of the sentence. In other words, the sentence is produced from the locutor’s point of view. On the other hand, Pattern B implies that the sentence is uttered objectively, that is, without considering the locutor’s point of

¹⁰ *ma* is the space between a jumper and a blouse.

¹¹ I avoid using the term “conjunct/disjunct” in this paper, although I have used it in my previous papers. There have been criticisms against the use of this term (Tournadre 2008).

¹² Pattern A corresponds to “egophoric” forms (Tournadre 2008: 295) or a conjunct pattern, and Pattern B to “factual and sensory” forms (Tournadre 2008: 302) or a disjunct pattern.

view. nDrapa has two verbal suffixes to mark Pattern B: *-a* (B perfective) and *-ε* (B imperfective). Pattern A lacks an overt suffix.

Let us compare (34) with (27), which is repeated below. (34) is a Pattern B sentence in which the existential verb *tɕu2* is affixed with *-ε*. On the other hand, (27) is a Pattern A sentence in which the existential verb *tɕu2* lacks the suffix.

- (34) *tɕhuɕi3* *tε = i-kɕ2* *hɕε = zja1* *ɕ-hdɕi-a3* *tɕu-ε2*.
 car one=NCL-inside eight=NCL DIR:UP-sit-[a] exist₆-B.IPF
 ‘Eight people are in one car.’ (Eight people have sat down in the seats of a car, and they are still there.)

- (27) *ŋa1* *ko3* *ɕ-hdɕi-a1* *tɕu2*.
 1SG here DIR:UP-sit-[a] exist₆
 ‘I have been sitting here.’ (I sat down here and I am still sitting here.)

The Pattern B forms of the stems *tɕu2* and *tɕɕ3* are formed with *-ε*, and the forms are *tɕu-ε2* and *tɕj-ε3* respectively. On the other hand, the Pattern B form of the stem *tɕa3* is formed with the copula *rε3* to make *tɕa=rε3* (Shirai 2006b: 158–169).

3.2 Contrast with serial verb constructions

The structure of the “*-a* + EXIST” construction contrasts with that of serial verb and auxiliary constructions. I will briefly outline the distinct patterns of affixation found with these constructions below. For more detailed discussion, see Shirai (2009).

3.2.1 Serial verb constructions

In serial verb constructions,¹³ we find two major patterns of affixation: First, the major verb is not affixed by suffixes (i.e., is just a stem), while the rightmost minor verb, that is, the rightmost verb of serialization, carries a directional prefix and may take a Pattern B suffix. The minor verb of this pattern is necessarily a motion verb, as seen in (35). In this pattern, only a directional prefix is found between the serialized verb stems.

- (35) *atɕi3* *tshɕpi3* *hdɕ3* *to-tɕho-a1* *rε3*.
 sister after search DIR:NEUT-go-B.PFV COP
 ‘He went to look for his sister.’ [FT]

¹³ The serial verb constructions in nDrapa are “asymmetrical” (Aikhenvald 2006: 21), and the major verb(s) precedes the minor verb(s). That is, only the leftmost verb is from an unrestricted class, and the following verb(s) is/are from a rather restricted class. Verbs *ɕu3* ‘need,’ *ndu3* ‘can do,’ *le3* ‘put,’ *wu3* ‘finish,’ and motional verbs (come/go) are commonly found as the minor verbs.

The second pattern of affixation in serial verb constructions has the major verb affixed by a directional prefix; it may not take a Pattern B suffix. The rightmost minor verb is affixed by a Pattern B suffix, as shown in (24), repeated below. In this pattern, the verb stems are serialized without any interruption by suffixes.

- (24) *thɯ3 tɔ-thɛ=ji1 ɕɯ-ɛ3.*
 LOG DIR:NEUT-egest=go need-B.IPF
 ‘(The boy said,) “I must go potty.” [FT]’

Thus, the typical serial verb construction of nDrapa is summarized as follows:

- A directional prefix and a Pattern B suffix occur just once in a sequence.
- The major verb cannot be affixed by any suffix.

3.2.2 Auxiliary constructions

The nDrapa auxiliaries follow the major verb to mark the tense/aspect of the sentence, as shown in (36): *ji1* ‘go’ is the major verb and *tɔ3* is the auxiliary. The auxiliary *tɔ3* cannot become the main verb of a sentence.

- (36) *ŋa1 hka-ta1 ji=tɔ1.*
 1SG mountain-upside go=IPF
 ‘I am going up the mountain.’

In the auxiliary construction, the major verb may be affixed with a directional prefix but may not carry a Pattern B suffix. On the other hand, the auxiliary stem may not be affixed with a directional prefix, but may be affixed with a Pattern B suffix and a negative prefix, if necessary. This pattern is the same as that found in the second type of verb serialization. In example (37) below, a directional prefix *kɔ-* is attached to the verb stem *?tsi*, and both the negative prefix *mɔ-* and Pattern B suffix *-a* are attached to the auxiliary stem *wu2* (*w-*).

- (37) *ŋoro1 ɕitsi3 kɔ-?tsi1 mɔ-w-a2.*
 3SG supper DIR:IN-eat NEG.PFV-PFT-B.PFV
 ‘He has not had supper yet.’

3.2.3 Number of predicates

In my previous fieldwork, I found one example of an “-a + EXIST” construction, wherein the existential verb was affixed with both a directional prefix and a Pattern B suffix. In this case, the main verb preceding the existential verb had both a directional prefix and *-a*, as shown in (38). The form of the Pattern B perfective suffix and that of *-a* in the “-a + EXIST” construction was exactly the same.

- (38) *o-sho3 wu-a = ne2 ka-ntçhi = ta = ne3, zipλhγλ = ne3*
 DIR-dawn finish-B.PFV=then DIR-look=WHEN=TOP son/boy=TOP

ñλ2 njeʔthi-ta3 o-tçho-a1 to-tçu-a1 rε3.
 gold bed-upside DIR:UP-go-[a] DIR:NEUT-exist₅-B.PFV COP

‘When morning broke, the boy found himself on a golden bed.’ (The boy had gotten onto a golden bed, and he was on it when he opened his eyes in the morning.) [FT]

Such affixation of the main verb by *-a* or by the Pattern B suffix is impossible in the typical serial verb and auxiliary constructions mentioned above. In such constructions, a Pattern B suffix occurs just once in a sequence, and it can be attached only to the rightmost verb, as shown in (35). This fact supports the idea that a verb serialization forms one predicate.

- (35) *atçi3 tshapi3 hdu3 to-tçho-a1 rε3.*
 sister after search DIR:NEUT-go-B.PFV COP

‘He went to look for his sister.’ [FT]

Therefore, if we find a sequence of verbs where both the verbs involve Pattern B suffixes, as shown in (39) and (40), we should not regard it as verb serialization, but as a sequence of two predicates.

- (39) *nevo1 chepi = rλ1 ηo-hdo-ʔthu1, to-mo-hku-a1, o-tçho-a1 rε3.*
 sister elder=NMLZ DIR-wait-CAUS DIR:NEUT-NEG-obey-B.PFV DIR:UP-go- B.PFV COP
 ‘(Although he) tried to keep his elder sister waiting, she ignored him and went upstairs.’
 [FT]

- (40) *ηa = rλ3 ja-ta1 menna3 ko-zw-a1, ko-hlu-a1.*
 1SG=GEN hand-upside oil DIR:IN-splash-B.PFV DIR:IN-get.burned-B.PFV
 ‘(When I was cooking,) oil splashed onto my hand, (and I) got burned.’

In fact, the semantic relationship between the two verbs in (39) is different from the one in (35), although the rightmost verb stem is the same (*tçho1*). In (35), the actions of searching and going take place simultaneously. On the other hand, in (39), the sister first ignores him, *and then* she goes upstairs. That is, two separate events occur in sequence. Similarly, in (40), first the hot oil splashes, *and then* the subject gets burned.

However, the “*-a* + EXIST” construction does not show this contrast. Example (38) does not imply that the boy began to exist after he climbed into the gold bed. Rather, the existential verb indicates the continuance of his situation after he climbed into the bed. Thus, we can conclude that the “*-a* + EXIST” construction indicates a single event, although its form seems to have two Pattern B suffixes and involve two predicates.

Moreover, only a few sentence-final particles can occur on the right-hand side of the Pattern B suffix, for example, the hearsay evidential particle *tε3* shown in (41); however, no content

words, barring existential verbs, can occur. Thus, in this regard, the “-a + EXIST” construction is once again exceptional.

- (41) *ahya3* *ɕje = rɛ1*, *nguʔtɕhi-rɛ2* *hkatɕha1* *a-ɕjɛ3* *wu-a2* *tɛ3*.
 father say=COP leader-PL speech DIR:DOWN-say PFT-B.PFV HS
 ‘Father says the leaders have finished giving their speeches.’

4 Discussion on the origin of “-a + EXIST” constructions

As noted above, the “-a + EXIST” construction in nDrapa cannot be analyzed as a serial verb construction. Moreover, nDrapa has other constructions that convey similar meanings, as mentioned in section 2.2. This poses the following question: What is the state of the “-a + EXIST” construction in nDrapa? To answer this, we will consider its possible origins.

4.1 Similar structures in major languages

The two dominant languages in the nDrapa-speaking region—Khams Tibetan and Sichuan Chinese—both possess constructions that consist of a verb in the perfect form followed by an existential verb (henceforth referred to as a “perfect-existential” construction). As with the nDrapa “-a + EXIST” construction, the constructions in Khams and Sichuan express a resulting state or a persistent situation.

In Khams Tibetan (the sDe-dGe dialect), when the existential verb follows a main verb in perfect form, the construction indicates that the result of the action still remains (Gesang-Jumian and Gesang-Yangjing 2002: 141), as shown in (42) and (43).

Khams Tibetan (sDe-dGe)

- (42) *ŋɛʌ* *jiʌ keʌ* *tɕiʔʌ* *tsiʌ* *jøʔʌ*.
 1SG.ERG letter one write.PFT exist:CONJ
 ‘I have written the letter.’ (Gesang-Jumian and Gesang-Yangjing 2002: 141 [49])

- (43) *khøʌ* *tshaʌ paʌ* *tɛʌ* *ŋgeʌ*.
 3SG.ERG newspaper look.PFT exist:DISJ
 ‘He has read the newspaper.’ (Gesang-Jumian and Gesang-Yangjing 2002: 141 [51])

In the Sichuan dialect of Chinese,¹⁴ *tsaiʔ* (在) is an existential verb, and the main verb with *taoʔ* (到)/*tɕʰiʔ* (起) plus *teʔ* (得)/*tsaiʔ* (在) conveys the persistent result of a previous event (Zhang et

¹⁴ In this paper, on the basis of Zhang et al. (2001), the tones of the Sichuan dialect are indicated phonemically: if the syllable is pronounced independently, number 1 indicates the high-level tone [55]; number 2, a low-falling tone [21]; number 3, a high-falling tone [53]; and number 4, a low-falling-rising tone [213]. Note that the dialect is characterized by complicated tone sandhi.

al. 2001: 68), as shown in (44) and (45). This construction is not found in Standard Chinese (*Putonghua*; 普通话).

Sichuan Chinese (Zhang et al. 2001)

(44) 他 在 屋-头 坐-到 在。
t^ha¹ tsai⁴ u²-t^həu² tso⁴-tao⁴ tsai⁴.
 3SG LOC house-inside sit-RESULT exist
 ‘He is sitting inside the house.’

(45) 花-园 里 前-几-天 还 开-起 花 在, ...
xua¹-yan² li tɕ^hien²-tɕi³-t^hian¹ xai² k^hai¹-tɕ^hi³ xua¹ tsai⁴, ...
 flower-garden inside former-a.few-day still open-RESULT flower exist
 ‘In the garden, until recently, flowers were still blooming...’ (Zhang et al. 2001: 70)

As shown in (46) and (47), *-tɕ^hi³* (起) itself implies the resultative:

(46) 缸-头 装-起 水。
kaŋ¹-t^həu² tsuaŋ¹-tɕ^hi³ sui³.
 jar-inside put.in-RESULT water
 ‘There is water in the jar (because someone has put water in the jar).’ (Zhang et al. 2001: 70)

(47) 戴-起 眼镜儿 找 眼镜儿。
tai⁴-tɕ^hi³ ien³tɕiə⁴ tsau³ ien³tɕiə⁴.
 put.on-RESULT eyeglasses look.for eyeglasses
 ‘(He) has put glasses on, and (while wearing it,) is looking for the glasses.’ (Zhang et al. 2001: 71)

We can conclude that in this region, the perfect-existential construction is commonly used to express the persisting result of a previous event.

4.2 Strategies in the Qiangic languages

The “-a + EXIST” construction in nDrapa is similar to this commonly found structure, because the suffix *-a* that is affixed to the main verb has the same form as the Pattern B suffix of the perfective aspect. This suffix is found in many perfect sentences with the perfective viewpoint, as shown in (48).

(48) *ŋoro1 a-nphw-a3.*

3SG DIR:DOWN-be.defeated-B.PFV

‘He was defeated.’

However, it should be noted that *-a* in nDrapa is not a proper marker of the perfective aspect or the perfect tense, but is rather a marker of modality (Shirai 2007: 134–147). For example, *-a* is not added to perfect sentences in Pattern A, as shown in (49).

(49) *ŋje1 a-npho3.*

1PL DIR:DOWN-be.defeated

‘We were defeated.’

Therefore, we cannot claim that the “*-a* + EXIST” pattern in nDrapa is parallel to the perfect-existential constructions in the neighboring languages in a straightforward way.¹⁵

There is another problem that we encounter when we conduct an overview of the languages that are genetically closer to nDrapa, the Qiangic group of languages, which are spoken in the neighboring area. To the best of my knowledge, neither the perfect-existential construction nor the “*-a* + EXIST” construction is mentioned in the descriptions of the Qiangic languages.¹⁶

For example, Qiang—one of the most thoroughly described languages in the group—utilizes a copula, not an existential verb, to express a resulting state: “An ongoing state resulting from a change of state or action can be expressed using the prefixed (achievement or accomplishment) form of the verb, the change of state marker, plus the copula.” (LaPolla 2003: 171). An example is shown in (50).

¹⁵ In Newar, the left-hand verb of a serial verb construction may be affixed with a conjunct marker. “The first verb in the concatenation subcategorizes the core arguments in the clause and occurs in the invariant /-ā/ form, which is identical to the past conjunct form.” (Hargreaves 2005: 20) In the example cited below, the main verb *wan-* ‘go’ is marked with the concatenation marker *-ā*, which is identical in form to the past conjunct suffix.

Newar:

ji yala-e wan-ā cwan-ā.
 1.ABS PN-LOC go-CM stay-PST.CONJ

‘I was/am going to Yala (Patan).’ (Hargreaves 2005: 20 [80])

Such a construction in Newar is similar to the “*-a* + Exist” construction in nDrapa, in the sense that a marker of the so-called conjunct/disjunct pattern is found in the middle of the verb serialization. This suggests that it is a possible construction in the Tibeto-Burman languages, although we can hardly imagine a direct relation between the two languages either by way of close genetic relationship or the language contact situation.

¹⁶ I found one comparable example in rGyalrong from Jacques (2008: 267), which involves an existential verb and conveys a similar implication to the “perfect of result.” However, the existential verb in this example takes a nominal argument (‘tale’); therefore this is not structurally identical to the perfect-existential construction.

tɕeri zlawiɕɿɿɿɿɿɿɿɿɿ ku tɕhos pu-asu-zgruɿ u-fɕuut tu
 however PN ERG Buddhism PST-PROG-practice DEM-tale exist

‘However, it has been said that Zla-ba-shes-rabs was practicing asceticism of Buddhism.’

Qiang (LaPolla 2003)

- (50) *dzy-le: de-zgə-ji ŋua.*
 door-DEF:CL DIR-open-CSM COP
 ‘The door is open.’ (‘The door remains open.’) (LaPolla 2003: 171[4.120])

According to Lin (2003: 276), in rGyalrong, a persistent situation is expressed by the past imperfective, which is formed by the affixation of *na-*, as shown in (51).

rGyalrong (Lin 2003)

- (51) *wəjō tə-saksəŋk^hû na-nəza-s. wədzə̄s mə-tə-nəzâ-n to-tsê-n.*
 3SG one(whole)-afternoon IPF:PST-dine₂-S no.more NEG:IMPR-2-dine₁-2SG IMPR-say₁-2SG
 ‘He has been eating the whole afternoon. Tell him not to eat any more.’ (Lin 2003: 276 [56])

Given similar characteristics in other Qiangic languages, it is doubtful that the “-a + EXIST” construction can be reconstructed to the level of Proto-Qiangic; it does not appear to be an inherited feature in nDrapa.

4.3 Conclusion on the origin of the “-a + EXIST” construction in nDrapa

I tentatively conclude that the “-a + EXIST” construction in nDrapa originates from the functional borrowing of the perfect-existential construction from the neighboring languages, and that the Pattern B suffix of the perfective aspect, *-a*, is used as an alternative to the perfect marker.

The most important argument in support of this conclusion is that the major languages in the nDrapa-speaking region have a structurally and functionally parallel construction—the perfect-existential construction—while the related Qiangic languages do not appear to. Moreover, since the structure of the “-a + EXIST” construction is distinct from those found with verb serialization—a structure commonly found throughout Qiangic—the “-a + EXIST” construction is typologically unusual for the family, hence unlikely to be native to nDrapa. Finally, the fact that nDrapa has another construction which expresses a similar meaning (the serial verb construction with the verb *le*³ ‘put’) also argues that the “-a + EXIST” construction is a late development in nDrapa triggered by a contact with the region’s dominant languages.

5 Conclusion

The “-a + EXIST” construction in nDrapa has interesting semantic, syntactic, and historical features.

Semantically, a sentence with the “-a + EXIST” construction conveys either a resulting state or a persistent situation. If the situation is of the Accomplishment or Achievement type, and if the result of the event is visible, the “-a + EXIST” construction tends to convey a resulting state. In this pattern, the aspectual viewpoint can be located between the final endpoint of the action and the point when the resulting state changes. If the situation is of the Activity or Semelfactive type, the “-a + EXIST” construction tends to convey a persistent situation. In this pattern, the aspectual viewpoint is located between the initial and final endpoints of the situation.

Syntactically, the existential verb in the “-a + EXIST” construction is not thoroughly grammaticalized, but it retains its state as a verb: the existential verb stem is chosen in accordance with the animacy and the manner of existence of the subject of the resulting state or persistent situation. In consideration of this point, the structure of the “-a + EXIST” construction is found to be exceptional: although it appears to be one of the serial verb constructions in nDrapa, it is atypical in that the left-hand verb is affixed by a suffix. Moreover, it is also exceptional among the predicate structures in nDrapa because a content word follows a verb with -a.

This problem can be resolved if we assume that the “-a + EXIST” construction originates from a functional borrowing, and that the suffix -a that is attached to the left-hand verb is an alternative to a perfect marker of the source language. There is a high probability that this was a contact-induced change, given that major languages of the nDrapa-speaking region—Khams Tibetan and Sichuan Chinese—have parallel constructions.

ABBREVIATIONS

1	first person	2	second person	3	third person
ABS*	absolutive	ACC	accusative-dative	B	Pattern B suffix
CAUS	causative	CM*	concatenation marker	COM	comitative
CONJ*	conjunct	COP	copula	CSM*	change of state marker
DEF*	definite marker	DEM	demonstrative	DIR	directional prefix
DL	dual	ERG*	ergative	EXP	experiential
FT	folk tale	GEN	genitive	HBT	habitual
HS	hearsay	IMPR	imperative	IPF	imperfective
LOC*	locative	LOG	logophoric pronoun	NCL	noun classifier
NEG	negative	NMLZ	nominalizer	PCL*	particle
PFT	perfect	PFV	perfective	PL	plural
PN	proper name	PROG*	progressive	PST	past
SG	singular	TOP	topic marker		
=	formation of a phonological word				

*The abbreviations marked with an asterisk are used only in the cited examples.

REFERENCES

- Aikhenvald, Alexandra Y. 2006. “Serial verb constructions in typological perspective”. In: Aikhenvald, Alexandra Y.; and Dixon, R. M. W. (eds.) *Serial Verb Constructions: A Cross-linguistic Typology*. pp. 1–68. Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press.
- Comrie, Bernard 1976. *Aspect*. Reprinted with corrections 1978, 1981. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- DeLancey, Scott 1990. “Ergativity and the cognitive model of event structure in Lhasa Tibetan”. *Cognitive Linguistics* 1.3: 289–321.
- DeLancey, Scott 2001. “The mirative and evidentiality”. *Journal of Pragmatics* 33: 369–382.
- Gesang-Jumian and Gesang-Yangjing 2002. *Zangyu Fangyan Gailun (An Introduction to Tibetan Dialects)*. Beijing: Minzu Chubanshe.

- Gong, Qunhu 2007. *Zhabayu Yanjiu* (Study of the Zhaba language). Beijing: Minzu Chubanshe.
- Hale, Austin 1980. "Person markers: Finite conjunct and disjunct verb forms in Newari". In: Ronald L. Trail et al. (eds.) *Papers in South-East Asian Linguistics No. 7* (Pacific Linguistics, Series A - No. 53). pp. 95–106. Canberra: The Australian National University.
- Hargreaves, David 2005. "Agency and intentional action in Kathmandu Newar". *Himalayan Linguistics* 5: 1–48.
- Huang, Bufan 1991. "Zhabayu" (The Zhaba language). In: Dai, Qingxia; Huang, Bufan; Fu, Ailan; Renzeng-Wangmu; and Liu, Juhuang (authors) *Zangmianyu Shiwu-zhong* (Fifteen Tibeto-Burman languages). pp. 64–97. Beijing: Beijing Yanshan Chubanshe.
- Igarashi, Yoshiyuki; and Gunji, Takao 1998. "The temporal system in Japanese". In: Gunji, Takao; and Hashida, Koichi (eds.) *Topics in Constraint-Based Grammar of Japanese*. pp. 81–97. Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Jacques, Guillaume 2008. *Jiarongyu Yanjiu* (Study of the rGyalrong language). Beijing: Minzu Chubanshe.
- LaPolla, Randy J. 2003. *A Grammar of Qiang*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Lin, You-Jing 2003. "Tense and aspect morphology in the Zhuokeji rGyalrong verb". *Cahiers de Linguistique—Asie Orientale* 32.2: 245–286.
- Shirai, Satoko 2006a. Dapago ni okeru siten hyoozi sistemū no kenkyū (Study on the point-of-view system in nDrapa). Ph.D. dissertation. Kyoto University.
- Shirai, Satoko 2006b. "Analysis of multiple existential sentences in nDrapa". In: "Studies on Eurasian Languages" Publication Committee (ed.) *A Festschrift in Honour of Professor Masahiro Shōgaito: Studies on Eurasian Languages*. pp. 145–173. Kyoto: "Studies on Eurasian Languages" Publication Committee.
- Shirai, Satoko 2007. "Evidentials and evidential-like categories in nDrapa". *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area* 30.2: 125–150.
- Shirai, Satoko 2008. "Effects of animacy on existential sentences in nDrapa". *Gengo Kenkyū* 134: 1–22.
- Shirai, Satoko 2009. "Auxiliary constructions and serial verb constructions in nDrapa". In: Endo, Mitsuaki et al. (eds.) *Proceedings of the Chulalongkorn-Japan Linguistics Symposium*. pp. 241–250. Fuchu: Global COE Program, "Corpus-based Linguistics and Language Education", Tokyo University of Foreign Studies.
- Smith, Carlota S. 1997. *The Parameter of Aspect*. 2nd ed. Dordrecht/Boston/London: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Tournadre, Nicholas 2008. "Arguments against the concept of 'conjunct/disjunct' in Tibetan". In: Brigitte Huber, Marianne Volkart and Paul Widmer (eds.) *Chomolangma, Demawend und Kasbeck, Festschrift für Roland Bielmeier*. pp. 281–308. Halle: VGH Wissenschaftsverlag GmbH.
- Zhang, Yizhou; Zhang, Qingyuan; and Deng, Yingshu 2001. *Chengdu Fangyan Yufa Yanjiu* (A Study of the Grammar of the Chengdu Dialect). Chengdu: Bashu Shushe.

Satoko Shirai
xirai@nitech.co.jp