

# Pavia Indo-European Summer School (September 2013)

## Introduction to Albanian

Brian D. Joseph (The Ohio State University)

### Day 2: *Nonactive Voice – Function and Representation*

We have seen that Albanian has for most verbs a set of parallel active and nonactive forms, e.g. *la-* ‘wash-ACT’ / *la-he-* ‘wash-NON.ACT’. The purpose of this exercise is to explore the functions of the nonactive and aim at some generalization as to how it is used and what it signifies when it is used.

By considering some typical examples of its use, we will attempt to find some unifying common thread in the various functions it serves. Work through these cases in the order they are given (that is, (1) through (8)); in each case you are given some data with a bit of commentary, and you are asked along the way to draw some conclusions about nonactive forms and their use and meaning, conclusions which may be in need of revision once you move on to additional data further down the exercise; where appropriate, corresponding active forms (or other useful information) are given after various examples:

1. First, consider cases with passive functions, e.g.:

- a. *lahen* (prej shokëve) ‘they are washed (by friends)’ (cf. *la-* ‘wash (someone)’)
- b. *forcoheni* (prej profesorit) ‘you are forced (by the professor)’ (cf. *forco-* ‘force (someone)’)

**QUESTION:** What is the relationship between the *logical* object (the entity acted on, the so-called “patient” in the structure of who-does-what-to-whom that the verb expresses) and what serves (or is understood) as the *grammatical* subject?

2. Next, consider the class of “psychological action” verbs that express states of mind or attitudes that the subject holds (a-c) or changes of state (d-e), e.g.:

- a. *mërzitem* ‘I get bored’ (cf. *mërzit-* ‘bore (someone)’)
- b. *dëshpërohem* ‘we become disappointed’ (cf. *dëshpëro-* ‘cause despair’)
- c. *gëzohet* ‘s/he rejoices, is happy’ (cf. *gëzo-* ‘gladden, make happy’)
- d. *fishkem* ‘I wither’ (cf. *fishk-* ‘cause to wither’)
- f. *qetësohem* ‘I grow calm, relax’ (cf. *qetëso-* ‘soothe; quiet (someone) down’)

**QUESTION:** Is there an element of meaning that links the uses in (1) with the uses in (2)?

3. Next, consider reflexive and reciprocal uses, e.g.:

- a. *lahen* ‘they wash themselves’
- b. *krihem* ‘I comb myself’ (cf. *kreh-* ‘comb (someone)’)
- c. *takohemi* ‘we meet one another’ (cf. *tako-* ‘meet (someone)’)

**QUESTION:** Can the use in (3) be integrated into our conception of the nonactive voice based on (1) and (2)?

4. Nonactive forms are also found with various verbs that denote movements, e.g.:

- a. hidhem ‘I jump’ (cf. *hedh* ‘I cast/throw’)
- b. kthehem ‘I return’ (cf. *kthe-n* ‘s/he turns, alters, bends (something)’)
- c. ngrihem ‘I get up’ (cf. *ngre-* ‘lift up, raise (something)’)
- d. rrotullohem ‘I rotate’ (cf. *rrotullo-* ‘rotate (something)’)
- e. nistem ‘I set out, depart’ (cf. *nis-* ‘start (something) off’)

**QUESTION:** Are the uses seen in (4) compatible with our emerging view of the nonactive voice based on (1) through (3)?

5. Next, consider a range of additional facts in (A), (B), (C), and (D):

A. There are verbs whose active and nonactive forms are virtually identical in meaning, e.g.:

- a. afrohet ‘it gets closer’ = afron ‘it gets closer’ (NB: *afron* can also mean ‘it brings (something) closer’)
- b. mendohet (për) ‘s/he thinks/ponders (over (something))’ = *mendon (për)* ‘s/he thinks (about (something))’
- c. kthehet ‘s/he returns’ = kthen ‘s/he returns (INTRANSITIVE, i.e. from somewhere)’ (cf. (4b))

B. There are verbs with only a nonactive form, e.g.:

- a. kollem ‘I cough’ (NB: there is no active-form *verb* \**koll* ‘cough’, though there is a noun *kollë* ‘a cough’)
- b. pendohet ‘s/he regrets’ (NB: there is no active-form *verb* \**pendo-*, though there is a noun *pendim* ‘regret’; also cf. (2) above)

C. There are (as Newmark et al. 1982:29 put it) “non-active forms ... accompanied by some indication of negation [that] represent the action in a general way without specifying a particular subject [with] modal nuances of possibility or even necessity”, e.g. (*s*’ is the negation marker):

- a. s’shkohet ‘there’s no going’ (cf. *shko-* ‘go’)
- b. s’kalohet ‘there’s no passing by’ (i.e. “no one should pass this way”; cf. *kalo-* ‘pass’)

D. There are some active motion verbs with meanings similar to other (unrelated) nonactive forms, e.g., *ikën* ‘s/he departs’ (cf. (4e)).

**QUESTION:** How do all of these generalizations fare with additional data like that in (A), (B), (C), and (D)?

6. Finally, can you propose a representation (a formalism) that captures all or at least a good part of the different functions seen in the data above?