"Subjective applicatives" in Mapudungun, Even, and beyond

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A number of Western Austronesian constructions famously conflate functions that are usually kept separate in many other languages, viz. applicativization and promotion to subject. Some valency-changing operations in Mapudungun (unclassified, South America) and Even (Tungusic, Russia) show comparable features but have received much less attention in the literature. Based on the extant descriptive literature of selected languages, the present talk explores these phenomena and discusses their implications for our understanding of grammatical voice. Particular attention is given to our current knowledge of the variation displayed by applicative(-like) constructions, both within and across languages.

In what is arguably the default Mapudungun construction, the verbal suffix *-(ñ)ma* applicativizes transitive predicates –i.e., it turns a nonagentive extra-thematic participant into a core syntactic argument–, commonly (but not obligatorily) with an adversative connotation (1a-b) (data from field notes, based on Salas 2006: 119-120):

(1)   a. *Kintu-ñma-fi-n*   *mamüll.*
            search-APPL-3P-1SG.IND   wood
            'I looked for (fire)wood on him/her (e.g., in order to take it from him/her).'
      b. *Leli-ñma-fi-n*   *ñawe.*
            look-APPL-3P-1SG.IND   daughter.of.man
            'I looked at his daughter on him (e.g., in order to somehow harm him by harming her).'

Non-default *(ñ)ma*-derivation in the language comes in two main guises. First, albeit not discussed in the present talk, some *ñma*-predicates do not introduce another syntactic argument to the clause, with or without concurrent semantic effects. Second, most relevantly for this talk, with some intransitive predicates (unergative (2a) represents the normal case within this predicate class; unaccusative (2b) represents the special case) and with most atransitive predicates (2c), the marker not only introduces an applied argument (2a-b-c) but also grants it subject status (2b-c); it works as an applicative-cum-passive, so to speak. (The language does have a passive marker, which would be used with cases like (1a-b). It would be expected in (2b-c) but fails to appear.)

(2)   a. *Lef-ma-fi-n.*
            run-APPL-3P-1SG.IND
            'I ran away from him/her.' (own notes)
      b. *Iñche*   *aku-ñma-n*   *kiñe*   *küme*   *dungu.*
            1SG   arrive.here-ÑMA-1SG.IND   one   good   message
            'I received a nice message.' (Smeets 2008: 303)
      c. *Mawün̲-ma-n.*
            rain-ÑMA-1SG.IND
            'I got rained on.' (Salas 2006: 125)

There is a similar phenomenon in Even, where the verbal suffix *-w* can simply passivize a transitive predicate like *maa-* 'kill' with the expected syntactic outcome (3a). Interestingly enough, non-prototypical constructions like (3b-c), where the subject is portrayed as being negatively affected, are

also possible, even though the latter is not a semantic argument of the base predicate; it works as a passive-cum-applicative, so to speak (data from Malchukov 1993: 21-23):

(3) a. *Etiken*   *nugde-du*   *maa-w-ra-n.*
         old.man[NOM]   bear-DAT   kill-W-NFUT-3SG
         'The old man was killed by a bear.'
     b. *Etiken*   *nugde-du*   *gia-j*   *maa-w-ra-n.*
         old.man[NOM]   bear-DAT   friend-REFL.POSS   kill-W-NFUT-3SG
         'The bear killed the old man's friend.'
     c. *Etiken*   *(imanra-du)*   *imana-w-ra-n.*
         old.man[NOM]   snow-DAT   snow-W-NFUT-3SG
         'The old man is caught by the snowfall.'

References
Malchukov, Andrej. 1993. Adversative constructions in Even in relation to passive and permissive. In: B. Comrie & M. Polinsky (eds.), *Causatives and Transitivity*, 369–384. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
Salas, Adalberto. 2006. *El mapuche o araucano*. 2nd ed. Santiago: Centro de Estudios Públicos.
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