

Modal expressions in Bezhta

Khalilova Z. M.

The Institute of Linguistics RAS, Moscow, Russia; National Research University Higher School of Economics, Moscow, Russia; zaira.khalilova@gmail.com

Abstract: *This paper deals with modal expressions in Bezhta, which is a minority language and which belongs to the Nakh-Daghestanian language family, spoken in the small republic of Daghestan within the Russian Federation. The aim of this paper is to give an overview of Bezhta modal expressions, presenting the most essential semantic and syntactic properties. In Bezhta, modality is realized lexically, i.e. with the help of modal verbs, and morphologically, i.e. with the help of the suffix. The main subtypes of modality are deontic, which expresses obligation and permission, epistemic, which expresses probability, and dynamic, which expresses ability and volition. In Bezhta, modality often depends on the complementation strategy of a modal verb. For instance, deontic and epistemic modality of the modal verb -aq- 'to be able, can' is expressed with the infinitival clausal complement, and dynamic modality is expressed with the converbal clausal complement. This paper presents an analysis of the previously unstudied data of Bezhta verbal modal expressions.*

Key words: *Bezhta, modal verbs, complementation, complement-taking predicates, complement-taking strategy, epistemic, deontic, dynamic, modality, potential construction*

Funding: This research is supported by the Russian Science Foundation grant № 22-18-00528

Средства выражения модальности в бежтинском языке

З. М. Халилова

Институт языкознания РАН, Москва, Россия; НИУ ВШЭ, Москва, Россия; zaira.khalilova@gmail.com

Аннотация: В статье рассматриваются средства выражения модальности в бежтинском языке (нахско-дагестанская семья). В бежтинском языке модальность выражается лексическими средствами (это модальные глаголы) и морфологическими средствами (с

помощью различных аффиксов). Традиционно в типологии можно выделить такие типы модальности, как эпистемическая, деонтическая и динамическая. Некоторые модальные глаголы имеют лишь определенные модальные значения, например, модальный глагол *nis'o-* 'быть должным' выражает лишь деонтическую модальность. Другие же модальные глаголы могут совмещать несколько модальных значений, например, выражение определенной модальности зависит от стратегии оформления сентенциального актанта при модальном глаголе *-aq-* 'мочь, уметь'. Так при оформлении сентенциального актанта инфинитивом при глаголе *-aq-* 'мочь, уметь', конструкция получает деонтическую и эпистемическую интерпретации, а при оформлении сентенциального актанта конвербом, конструкция выражает динамическую модальность. В бежтинском языке представлены и морфологические средства выражения модальности. Имеются две потенциалисные конструкции, которые образуются с помощью таких суффиксов, как *-jɫ-* и *-jɕ'*, и выражают динамическую модальность. Конструкция с суффиксом *-jɕ'* обладает инволитивным и потенциальным значением, тогда как конструкция с суффиксом *-jɫ-* выражает только потенциальное значение. В потенциалисной конструкции происходит замена канонического агенса, который может быть выражен абсолютным падежом или эргативом, на косвенный падеж: в бежтинском языке агенс в потенциалисной конструкции принимает форму посс-эссива.

Ключевые слова: *бежтинский язык; модальные глаголы; конструкции с сентенциальными актантами; стратегии оформления сентенциального актанта; эпистемическая модальность; деонтическая модальность; динамическая модальность; потенциалис.*

Финансирование: Исследование выполнено при поддержке гранта РФФИ № 22-18-00528.

1. Introduction

Bezhta belongs to the Tsezic group of the Daghestanian subbranch of the Nakh-Daghestanian language family. Bezhta is a minority unwritten language spoken in the Republic of Daghestan in the Russian Federation. Bezhta has three dialects, Bezhta Proper, Tladal and Khasharkhota. The data for this article comes from the Bezhta Proper dialect. Syntactically, Bezhta is a head-final language with the basic word order Subject Object Verb. As is generally

the case in the Nakh-Daghestanian languages, the case-marking pattern is ergative. In Bezhta, nominal categories of gender and number are implied to cross-reference the verbal arguments. Bezhta has intransitive, unergative, transitive, and affective verbs. Intransitive verbs are typically one-place verbs. Intransitive verbs have the single argument (S) in the Absolutive case (e.g. -*ek'e-* 'to burn', *k'ok'o-* 'to be sick', -*en'λ'e* 'to go', *qoqo-* 'to dry', -*ija* 'to cry', etc.). If the verb starts with a vowel and it belong to the certain class of verbs that show gender/number agreement, then the verb agrees with the Absolutive single argument. The unergative verbs are a small group of onomatopoeic verbs, with S_A in Ergative, no agreement, e.g. *hahλo-* 'to yawn', *wajλo-* 'to moan', *hik'λo-* 'to hiccup', *hawλo-* 'to bark', *wič'λo-* 'to cheep', *hoⁿhoⁿλo-* 'to neigh', *koλo-* 'to cry, to scream', and many others. Diachronically these onomatopoeic verbs seem to have arisen through the incorporation of an onomatopoeic element like *hik'* 'hiccup' into the verb *iλe-*, which in Bezhta means 'to call' but has the more general meaning 'to say' in some other Tsezic languages. Transitive verbs have two core arguments, where one argument (A) is marked with the Ergative case and the other argument (P) stands in the Absolutive case. Transitive verbs involve two-place verbs (e.g. *qow-* 'to read', -*oo-* 'to do, to make', *niλ-* 'to give', -*eže-* 'to carry, to take', *gul-* 'to put', -*üⁿq-* 'to eat', etc.). If the verb has gender/number agreeing slot, it will agree with the Absolutive P argument. Affective verbs are two-place perception, emotion and cognition verbs (e.g. -*at'* 'to love, to want', *tuq-* 'to hear', -*ega-* 'to see', *č'al-* 'to feel', -*iq'e-* 'to know', *čoq-* 'to be informed, to hear', *bidži -aq-* 'to understand', and other verbs). Affective verbs have animate argument that experiences the action, and this argument, the Experiencer, stands in the Lative case, whereas the other argument, the Stimulus of the action, is marked with the Absolutive case. The verb in the affective clause always agrees with the Absolutive argument. As for the verbal morphology, they have a very rich morphological system of tense-aspect-mood, with distinct finite (a rich set of synthetic and analytical verbal forms) and non-finite forms (infinitive, participles, masdar, and various contextual and specialized converbs). Most Bezhta verbs show gender/number agreement and agree with the arguments in the absolutive case. As a rule, only vowel-initial verbs have a prefixal slot for gender-number agreement, plus a small number of verbs with internal vowel change.

Modality deals with the speaker's attitude towards the propositional content of the utterance [Palmer 2001]. Modality has the following main subtypes – dynamic, deontic and epistemic. In this paper, I use the notion of dynamic, deontic and epistemic modality proposed by

Palmer [2001]. Deontic modality is concerned with obligation, necessity and permission; dynamic modality refers to ability or volition; and epistemic modality conveys the speaker's opinion on the factual status of the proposition. Palmer argues that it is quite common for a language to use similar set of markers to express several modality subtypes. This is found in English, which uses modal verbs *may*, *can* and *must* to express epistemic and deontic/dynamic modality.

Bezhta verbal morphology was analyzed by local and foreign scholars, such as Erkert [1985], Bokarev [1959], Madieva [1965], Khalilov [1980], Kibrik & Sandro [1988]. The modality system, however, has been addressed only partially in Comrie, Khalilov & Khalilova [2015]. Modal expressions in Bezhta involve modal predicates and potential constructions. The Bezhta modal predicates are *-aq-* 'to be able, can', *nuc'o-* 'must', *k'ezi -aq-* 'to dare, to meet' and *hăžăt -aq-* 'to need' [Comrie et al., 2015:322]. The potential construction, which is formed with the potential suffix *-jł/-ijł*, expresses the physical and mental ability of the main argument. Another potential construction, formed with *-jc'*, is less productive.

Section 2 deals with modal verbs. Sections 3 and 4 describe potential constructions. Section 4 sums up the paper.

2. Bezhta modal verbs

Like other Nakh-Daghestanian languages, the Bezhta modality system is operated by employing modal verbs. Bezhta has a distinct group of modal verbs, which mark all subtypes of modality. These are *nuc'o-* 'must', *-aq-* 'to be able, can', *k'ezi -aq-* 'to dare', *hăžăt -aq-* 'to need', and *bažarzi -aq-* 'to be able'.

The modal verb *nuc'o-* 'must' only has a deontic meaning and expresses obligation. This verb can only take an infinitive as its complement. The case marking of the most prominent argument depends on the valency of the embedded verb – if the embedded verb is intransitive, the main argument is in the Absolutive case; if the embedded verb is transitive, the main argument is in Ergative case; if the embedded verb is affective, and the main argument is in the Lative case.

(1) kid žensa biłoka j-ec-al nuc'o-s

girl(ii) today at.home ii-stay-inf must-prs
 ‘The girl must stay at home today.’

(2) öždi ijodoj kaʁaj čax-al nuc'o-s
 boy.erg mother.apud letter write-inf must-prs
 ‘The boy has to write a letter to his mother.’

(3) žensa šarʔijabli ädätliʔa req'un ile
 today Shariat.obl tradition.sup according.to we.erg
 q'urbanis boʻlo b-üč'-al nuc'o-s zuq'o-jo
 Kurban.gen1 neck(iii) iii-cut-inf must-impf.cvb be-pst
 ‘According to the Shariat tradition today we have to cut Kurban’s neck.’

(4) biʕo? b-eč-ejas aʕna wodo Ø-ohda-al
 house.in hpl-be-pst.ptcp.gen1 seven day i-work-inf
 nuc'o-s zuq'o-jo abo
 must-impf.cvb be-pst father(i).abs
 ‘My father had to work for seven days for staying at home.’

(5) kibbal bit'arab žo j-iq'-al nuc'o-s
 girl.lat true thing(iv) iv-know-inf must-prs
 ‘The girl has to know the truth.’

When the modal verb *nuc'o-* ‘must’ is combined with the verb *-aq-* ‘become, happen’, it expresses epistemic modality of probability and uncertainty. Sentence (6) has two interpretations – first, inference is based on general knowledge, for example, ‘the girl is usually at home’, and second, inference is based on direct evidence, for example, ‘the girl must be at home, because the lights are on’.

(6) kanli j-ega-ʔol, dije pikro b-aq-ijo
 light(iv) iv-see-antr 1sg.gen1 thought(iii) iii-happen-pst

kid	biλoβa	j-aq-al	nuc'o-s
girl(ii)	at.home	ii-happen-inf	must-prs

'Seeing the lights in the window, I thought, the girl must be at home.'

The modal meaning of ability 'to be able, can' is expressed with the polysemous verb *-aq-*, which has several meanings, 'to become, happen, stay, be, be borne', and expresses the modal meaning 'to be able, can' as well. When *-aq-* is used as a modal verb, it has three meanings – deontic modality expressing permission, epistemic modality expressing probability and dynamic modality expressing ability. This predicate takes an infinitival complement and converbal clausal complement. The expression of a certain type of modality depends on the complement-taking strategy of *-aq-*. The infinitival strategy of this verb expresses both deontic and epistemic modality. As for the agreement structure, it is the embedded predicate that assigns the case to the prominent argument and not the main predicate *-aq-* 'to be able, can'. This means that when the embedded verb is intransitive, the main argument is marked with the Absolutive case (7a), when the embedded verb is transitive, the main argument is in the Ergative case (7b) and when the embedded verb is affective, and the main argument is in the Lative case (7c). Such a construction is also an example of clause union, where lexical and modal predicates yield a single complex predicate. Clause union constructions are also present in other Nakh-Daghestanian languages, for example, in Godoberi, an Andic language, [Haspelmath 1999, Kibrik 1996] and Hinuq, a Tsezic language, [Forker 2013].

(7) probability

a. kid	biλoβa	j-ec-al	j-aq-ca
girl(ii)	at.home	ii-stay-inf	ii-can-prs

'The girl might stay at home.'

b. kibba	bäbä	b-oχ-al	b-aq-ca
girl.erg	bread(iii)	iii-buy-inf	iii-can-prs

'The girl might buy bread.'

c. kibbal	χabar	tuq-al	b-aq-ca
girl.lat	gossip(iii)	hear-inf	iii-can-prs

'The girl might hear the gossip.'

(8) žensa gej müžmār wodo=na, müžmār gähija?
today be.prs Friday day=add Friday be.sim.cvb
Ø-oⁿq'o-da axo gej sadaq'a j-ok'ol-al
i-come-cond well be.prs offering(iv) iv-gather-inf
j-aq-ca
iv-can-prs

‘Today is Friday, if I come to the Friday prayer, I might gather offerings.’

(9) permission

dil q'ac'c'o χic j-üq-äl j-aq-ca-di ?
1sg.lat all pancake(iv) iv-eat-inf iv-can-prs-ques

‘Can I eat all pancakes?’

The modal *-aq-* ‘be able, can’ takes converbal clausal complement and combines only with intransitive, unergative and transitive verbs, and never with affective verbs. Such a construction expresses the dynamic meaning of physical and intellectual ability of the main participant. The most prominent argument in such a construction is marked with the Possessive case. The main predicate shows ‘default’ agreement in gender IV, agreeing with the converbal clause which is in the object position.

(10)

a. öžö teli Ø-ogi<ja>c-ca
boy(i).abs much i-jump<iter>-prs

‘The boy is jumping a lot.’

b. öždiqa teli Ø-ogi<ja>c-na Ø-aq-ijo
boy(i).poss much i-jump<iter>-cvb i-can-pst

‘The boy could jump a lot.’

(11)

b. kibba aχo č'änäkö-š

1sg.poss good run-prs

‘The girl runs fast.’

- b. kibbaqa aχo č’änäkö-nä j-aq-ca
1sg.poss good run-cvb iv-can-prs

‘The girl can run fast.’

(12)

- a. öždi t’ek qoh-ca
boy.erg book(iv) read-prs

‘My boy reads a book.’

- b. öždiqa t’ek qoh-na j-aq-ca
boy.poss book(iv) read-cvb iv-can-prs

‘The boy can read a book.’ / ‘The boy is able to read a book.’

The modal verb *k’ezi -aq-* ‘to dare’, which is intransitive, expresses deontic modality of permission. It is very often found in non-assertive contexts, with negative auxiliaries, but it is also used in an assertive context. The most prominent argument of the modal verb *k’ezi -aq-* ‘to dare’ is marked with the Absolutive case, irrespective of the valency of the embedded verb. This verb takes an infinitival clausal complements. It is worth noting that this verb is a compound verb formed with the auxiliary *-aq-* ‘to happen, become’, and the lexical part is formed with the loan verb *k’ezi*, originally from the Avar verb *k’k’eze* ‘to be able’ [Khalilov & Khalilova 2016a]. Note that Bezhta, like other Daghestanian languages, is a pro-drop language, where the main arguments are often omitted, as they can be easily retrieved from the context, see examples (14-17).

- (13) kid aboqa jäže nis-al k’ezi<j>aq-eʔeš
girl(ii) father.poss word say-inf dare<ii>-pst.neg

‘The girl did not dare to say a word to her father.’

- (14) öžö hinis isi j-aλ’el-al k’ezi<Ø>aq-ijo
boy(i) self.gen1 sister(ii) ii-hit-inf dare<i>-pst

‘The boy dared to hit his sister.’

- (15) t’ok’ab λ’odo guw-al k’eziaq-na gǎʔä
 anymore above come-INF dare<HPL>-CVB NEG.COP
 wahallo qun-na-ʔ
 such farm-OBL-IN.ESS

‘They did not dare to come to that farm anymore.’

- (16) t’ok’ab badoco hicaadaak-al=na k’ezi<Ø>aqeč’e
 anymore other come.close-inf=add dare<i>neg.pst
 χiiχajüⁿxošlaʔ, q’ee j-ega-s j-ek-ijo piq
 walk.sim.cvb down iv-see-prs iv-fall-pst.ptcp fruit

‘He did not dare to come closer and while walking around, he saw a fruit which fell down.’

- (17) nuko-na q’o b-oło-na gej,
 be.hungry-cvb strength(iii) iii-finish-cvb be.prs
 hardizi<Ø>aq-na Ø-ok’da-al niʔana k’ezi<Ø>aq-aʔas
 ask<i>-cvb i-beg-inf how dare<i>-neg.pst

‘As I got hungry, I became tired, and then I did not dare to beg.’

- (18) jiʔa roʔ’ila Ø-ek’el-lo do, holłola
 much love.sup i-burn-pst 1sg.abs 3sg.gen2
 biʔoɔdaa goc’oq-al-zu=na k’ezi<Ø>aq-aʔas
 house.direct look-inf-foc=add dare<i>-neg.pst

‘As I was burning from big love, I could not even look in the direction of her house.’

- (19) χǎʔe-jo hem-coj gej hiχło-na,
 hit-pst.ptcp column-cmpr be.prs stay-cvb
 dena-beta χǎbä b-aʔ-al k’ezi<Ø>aq-eč’e
 then-then leg(iii) iii-take-inf dare<i>-neg.pst

‘I stayed like a stuck column, not daring to move a leg.’

The modal verb *hāžāt -aq-* ‘to need’ expresses deontic modality of necessity. Note that this verb is a compound verb, which is formed with the auxiliary verb *-aq-* ‘to happen, become’, and the lexical part being expressed with the nominal *hāžāt* ‘need’, originally from Arabic. This verb takes an infinitival clausal complement as well as a nominal argument, and the experiencer subject is expressed with the Lative. The modal verb *hāžāt -aq-* agrees with the Absolutive argument. The case marking of the whole construction depends on the valency of the main verb *hāžāt -aq-* ‘to need’, which is an affective verb. See examples below with the embedded verb being intransitive, transitive, and affective.

(20)

- a. dijela ist’il nuco hāžāt<j>aq-na
 1sg.gen2 uncle.lat honey(iv) need<iv>-pst
 ‘My uncle needs honey’
- b. öždil biļoḡa Ø-eⁿλ’-al hāžāt<Ø>aq-na
 boy.lat at.home i-go-inf need<i>-pst
 ‘The boy needs to go home.’
- c. kibbal it’ino gedo b-oḡ-al hāžātaq-na
 girl.lat small cat(iii) iii-buy-inf need <iii>-pst
 ‘The girl needs to buy a small cat.’
- d. öždil hinis ijo j-ega-al hāžāt<j>aq-na
 boy.lat self.gen1 mother(ii) ii-see-inf need<ii>-pst
 ‘The boy needs to see his mother.’

The modal meaning of necessity is also expressed with the copular clause. In such copular clause the predicate is based on the adjective *hāžatab* ‘necessary’ and the copula *gej*.

- (21) ḡasgu müžmār wodi? čara gäč’el hāžatāb gej
 especially Friday day.in exit be.neg.cvb necessary be.prs
 wa?zali qohdaa älim suk’o

sermon study.pst.ptcp.obl scientist man

‘Especially on Fridays one needs an educated person to preach a sermon in the mosque.’

The dynamic modality of ability is also expressed with the compound verb *bažarzi -aq-* ‘to be able’. The modal verb consists of two parts, where the lexical part *bažarzi* ‘ability’ is a loan from Avar and the auxiliary part is expressed with *-aq-* ‘to become, to happen’ [Comrie & Khalilov 2009]. The potential agent in such construction stands in the Possessive case. The use of this verb is limited to converbal clausal complement. *bažarzi -aq-* ‘to be able’ can be combined with intransitive, transitive and unergative verbs, and never affective verbs.

- (22) hoqcoqa wahdi j-uq’o bižo j-oh-na
 3sg.poss this iv-big house(iv) iv-do-cvb
 bažarzi<j>aq-ijo
 be.able<iv>-pst
 ‘He could build this big house.’

- (23) holo häl hökmö маӀос sik’aqa
 that condition(iii) decision(iii) body.gen1 mouth.poss
 niso-na bažarziaq-aʔas niʔana
 say-cvb be.able<iii>-neg.pst how
 ‘I was not able to say what I was feeling.’

- (24) hinqa=na bažarzi<j>aq-aʔaʔ , eʔddaa λ’ibeʔ
 self.poss=add be.able<ii>-neg.antr inside hayloft.in
 j-eʔλ’e-na j-äʔiʔ-na , b-oh-na kajta=na
 ii-go-cvb ii-stand-cvb iii-do-cvb meal(iii)=add
 gul-lo-žo siiʔ-doj äʔjdää
 put-pst-narr bear-apud in.front

‘As she could not do it herself, she went inside and made a meal and put it in front of the bear.’

3. Marked potential construction

The Potential construction expresses the dynamic modality of ability and possibility. The potential verb is marked with the potential suffix *-jł* (*-ijł* after a consonant). The argument of the potential construction to which ability is assigned (i.e. the X of ‘X can Verb’) stands in the Possessive case, irrespective of the valency of the basic or potential verb [Comrie et al., 2015: 554], [Khalilov & Khalilova 2016b], [Khalilova et al., 2022]. The potential construction can be derived from patientive intransitive, transitive and one affective verb, a few unergative verbs and they can never be derived from agentive intransitive verbs and most affective verbs. The potential construction derived from agentive intransitives adds a new argument, a potential agent, marked with the Possessive case. Additionally, the construction with *-jł/-ijł* expresses an accidental situation (‘X did accidentally Verb’). Similar potential constructions are also found in other closely related languages, for example, in Hinuq [Forker 2013], Tsez [Comrie 2000].

(25)

- a. *łi* *ɤajło-s*
 water boil-prs
 ‘The water boils.’
- b. *kibbaqa* *łi* *ɤajło-jł-ijo*
 girl.poss water boil-pot-pst
 ‘The girl could boil the water.’

- (26) *amma* *wo-bo* *j-owaɣ-da* *komaklıl* *Ø-eⁿλ’e-č’e*
 but dog-pl nhpl-catch-cond help.lat i-go-neg.cvb
 Ø-eče-jł-aʔas *huli*
 i-be-pot-neg.prs that.abs
 ‘But if the dogs are caught, he always wants to help them.’

The potential construction derived from the transitive verb does not change the number of verbal arguments; the potential agent stands in the Possessive case and the patient remains in the Absolutive case. The predicate agrees in gender and number with the Absolutive patient.

(27)

- a. *kibba* *q’arpuz* *m-üq-ijo*

girl.erg watermelon(iii) iii-eat-pst
 ‘The girl ate the watermelon.’

- b. kibbaqa q’ac’c’o q’arpuz m-üq-ijl-ijo
 girl.obl.poss all watermelon(iii) iii-eat-pot-pst
 ‘The girl could eat the whole watermelon.’

(28)

a. öždi aⁿc j-iⁿqo-jo
 boy.erg door iv-close-pst
 ‘The boy closed the door.’

- b. öždiqa aⁿc j-iⁿqo-jc’-ijo
 boy.poss door(iv) iv-close-pot-pst
 ‘The boy could close the door. / The boy accidentally closed the door.’

The potential construction can be derived from some unergative verbs: *hahł-al* ‘to yawn’, *wajł-* ‘to moan, to groan’, *öhłö-* ‘to cough’, *hik’ło-* ‘to hiccup’, *morło-* ‘to scold’, *hawło-* ‘to bark’, *wič’ło-* ‘to cheep’, *xixło-* ‘to blow one’s nose’, *qäłe-* ‘to shout’, *woło-* ‘to cry, to shout’ and many others. The unergative verbs are actually onomatopoeic verbs, with S_A in the Ergative case and no agreement. In the potential construction, the number of arguments does not change, but the potential S_A appears in the Possessive case.

(29)

a. öždi jił’a öhłö-jo
 boy.ERG much cough-PST
 ‘The boy coughed a lot.’

- b. öždi-qa öhłö-jl-ijo
 boy.OBL-POSS cough-POT-PST
 ‘The boy could cough.’

(30)

a. kibba χιχλο-s
 girl.erg blow.one’s.nose-prs

‘The girl blows her nose.’

- b. kibbaqa χιχλο-jl-ijo
girl.obl.poss blow.one’s.nose-pst
‘The girl could blow her nose.’

The potential construction derived from the affective verb adds a new argument, a potential agent in the Possessive case. The predicate shows agreement in gender and number with the Absolutive argument. There is only one affective verb such as *-ega-* ‘to see’ that undergoes potential derivation. When potential is used with *-ega-* ‘to see’, the verb becomes causative with the meaning ‘to show’. Note that only with one affective verb *-ega-* ‘to see’, the potential construction with *-jl /-ijl* increases a verbal valency by one.

(31)

- a. isil c’odolo gedo b-ega-jo
sister.lat black cat(iii) iii-see-pst
‘The sister saw a black cat.’
- b. ist’iqa isil c’odolo gedo b-ega-jl-ijo
brother.poss sister.lat black cat(iii) iii-see-pot-pst
‘The brother could show a black cat to the sister.’

Bezhta has another potential construction formed with the suffix *-jc’* (*-ijc’* after a consonant). This suffix is used only with transitive verbs conveying meaning of dynamic modality of ability. In the potential construction with *-jc’ /-ijc’* the most agent-like argument gets the marking with the Possessive case, the P argument is in the Absolutive case. The number of arguments of a transitive verb does not change in the potential construction, the potential agent stands in the Possessive case and the P argument remains in the Absolutive case. This construction also expresses an accidental situation (‘X did accidentally Verb’).

(32)

- a. oždi a^{nc} jiža j-i^aqo-jo
boy.erg door strong iv-close-pst
‘The boy closed the door.’

- b. öždiqa jiła a^{nc} j-iⁿqo-jc'-ijo
 boy.poss strong door(iv) iv-close-pot-pst
 'The boy could close the door.'

(33)

- a. kibba k'ima-li-s sik j-aⁿk-ijo
 mother.erg cheese-obl-gen1 sack(iv) iv-untie-pst
 'The girl untied the sack with cheese.'
- b. kibbaqa k'ima-li-s sik j-aⁿk-ijc'-ijo
 mother.erg cheese-obl-gen1 sack(iv) iv-untie-pot-pst
 'The girl could untie the sack with cheese.'

4. Unmarked potential construction

Another potential construction, which I call unmarked potential construction, expresses dynamic modality of ability. The verb in such potential construction does not contain any potential morpheme. The potential meaning is expressed through the case change of the main arguments. The potential construction can be derived from semantically patientive intransitive and transitive verbs. In such potential construction the most agent-like argument appears in the Possessive case, the P argument is in the Absolutive case; gender-number agreement is with the P [Comrie et al., 2015]. Additionally, this construction expresses an accidental situation ('X did accidentally Verb').

The potential constructions with patientive intransitives require a new argument in the Possessive case, while the Absolutive S argument remains unchanged. This alternation increases the valency of the intransitive verb by one. The instances of patientive intransitive verbs are *-äč't-* 'to be cold', *-ek'e-* 'to burn', *-ek-* 'to fall', *-uko-* 'to die', *-oq'* 'to come, to appear', *-iše-* 'to break', *pacpaλo-* 'to blink', *hele-* 'to cook', *qoqo-* 'to dry', and others.

(34)

- a. ilos balilas χöχö b-ek-ijo

1sg.gen1 cherry.gen1 tree(iii) iii-fall-pst
 ‘Our cherry tree fell down.’

- b. aboqa ilos balilas χῶχῶ b-ek-ijo
 father.poss 1sg.gen1 cherry.gen1 tree(iii) iii-fall-pst
 ‘The father could make the tree fall.’

(35)

- a. ijos vaza b-iše-jo
 mother.gen1 vase(iii) iii-break-pst
 ‘The mother’s vase broke up.’

- b. diiqa ijos vaza b-iše-jo
 1sg.poss mother.gen1 vase(iii) iii-break-pst
 ‘I could break the vase. / I accidentally broke the vase.’

(36)

- a. χῖλα-s kisa b-äxe-jo
 trousers.obl-gen1 pocket(iii) iii-tear-pst
 ‘The trousers pocket tore.’

- b. it’ina öždiqa χῖλα-s kisa b-äxe-jo
 small.obl boy.poss trousers.obl-gen1 pocket(iii) iii-tear-pst
 ‘The little boy could tear the trousers pocket. / The little boy accidentally tore the trousers pocket.’

The potential construction can be also based on a transitive verb, for example, *-üč’*- ‘to cut’, *ha?o-* ‘to grind’. The most agent-like argument is marked with the Possessive case, the P argument is in the Absolutive case; agreement is with the P. The number of arguments of a transitive verb does not change in the potential construction, the potential agent stands in the Possessive case and the P argument remains in the Absolutive case. Example (37) shows the transitive construction with the Ergative agent *kibba* and the potential construction with the possessive agent-like argument *kibbaqa*.

(37)

- a. it'ina kibba hinil bābā b-üč'-ijo
little.obl girl.erg self.lat bread(iii) iii-cut-pst
'The little girl chopped bread for herself.'
- b. it'ina kibbaqa bābā b-üč'-ijo
small.obl girl.poss bread(iii) iii-cut-pst
'The little girl could chop bread.'

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have presented a descriptive analysis of Bezhta modal expressions focusing on their semantic and syntactic properties. Bezhta verbal modal expressions distinguish dynamic, epistemic and deontic modality. Bezhta modal verbs are polyfunctional because they can express more than one modal meaning. The deontic modality of obligation and permission is expressed with the modal verbs *-aq-* 'to be able, can', *nuc'o-* 'must', *k'ezi -aq-* 'to dare' and *hāžät -aq-* 'to need'. The dynamic modality of ability and volition is expressed with the modal verbs *y-aqal* 'to be able, can', *bažarzi -aq-* 'can, to be able' and three potential constructions. The epistemic modality of probability is covered by the modal *-aq-* 'to be able, can'. All modal verbs take infinitives as their clausal complements. In addition to the infinitival complement, *-aq-* 'to be able, can' allows alternative marking of the complement with the converb. In the potential construction the verb requires a nominal argument but not a complement. All modal verbs, except for the deontic modal *nuc'o-* 'must' and the epistemic modal *-aq-* 'to be able, can', control the valency frame of the whole construction. The case frame of the deontic *nuc'o-* 'must' and the epistemic *-aq-* 'to be able, can' depends on the valency of the embedded verbs.

Bezhta modal expressions are quite typical for the Nakh-Daghestanian languages, which generally have two or three modal verbs covering various modality meanings. The table 2 summaries the use of all modal verbs and constructions in Bezhta.

TABLE 2: modal expressions in Bezhta

Modal verb / construction	Modal meaning	Case marking
<i>nuc'o-</i> 'must'	deontic modality of	S _{ABS} Intr. Infinitive + Must

	obligation	A _{ERG} Tran. Infinitive + Must EXPLAT Affec. Infinitive + Must
	epistemic modality of probability and uncertainty	S _{ABS} ‘happen’ + Must
-aq- ‘to be able, can’	dynamic modality of ability	A _{POSS} Converb + Can
	epistemic modality of probability	S _{ABS} Intr. Infinitive + Can A _{ERG} Tran. Infinitive + Can EXPLAT Affec. Infinitive + Can
k’ezi -aq- ‘to dare’	deontic modality of permission	S _{ABS} Infinitive + Dare
häžät -aq- ‘to need’	deontic modality of necessity	EXPLAT Infinitive + Need
bažarzi -aq- ‘can, to be able’	dynamic modality of ability	A _{POSS} Converb + Can
potential construction with -jł /-ijł	dynamic modality of ability	A _{POSS} P _{ABS} Verb (marked with -jł /-ijł)
potential construction with -jc’	dynamic modality of ability	A _{POSS} P _{ABS} transitive Verb (marked with -jc’)
unmarked potential construction	dynamic modality of ability	A _{POSS} P _{ABS} Verb (with no marking)

Abbreviation

Agreement prefixes in Bezhta

	I (male human)	II (female human)	III (animate)	IV (animate and inanimate)
SG	Ø-	j-	b-	j-

PL	b-	b-	j-	j-
----	----	----	----	----

Roman numerals I–IV indicate genders, ABL = ablative, ABS = absolutive, ADD = additive particle, CMPR = comparative, COND = conditional converb, COP = copula, CVB = converb, GEN1 = genitive 1 (used when the head noun is in the absolutive case), GEN2 = genitive 2 (used when the head noun is in the oblique case), ITER = iterative, LAT = lative, ERG = ergative case, HPL = human plural, LOC = locative, NARR = narrative particle, NEG = negative, NHPL = nonhuman plural, IMPF = imperfective, IN = in-essive, INF = infinitive, OBL = oblique, PF = perfective, PL = plural, POSS = possessive, POT = potential, PROG = progressive, PRS = present tense, PST = past tense, PTCP = participle, QUES = question particle, REFL = reflexive pronoun, SG = singular

References

1. Alekseev, M. E. *Sravnitel'no-istoričeskaja morfologija naxsko-dagestanskix jazykov. Kategorija imeni* [Comparative morphology of the Nakh-Daghestanian languages. Noun]. Moskva: Nauka, 2004.
2. Authier, G., & Maisak, T. *Tense, aspect, modality and finiteness in East Caucasian languages*. Bochum: Brockmeyer, 2011.
3. Bokarev, E. A. *Cezskie (didojskie) jazyki Dagestana* [The Tsezic languages of Daghestan]. Moskva: Izd-vo AN SSSR, 1959.
4. Comrie, B. Valency-changing derivations in Tsez. In R.M.W. Dixon & Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald (eds.), *Changing valency: Case studies in transitivity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, P. 360–374.
5. Comrie, B. & Khalilov, M. Loanwords in Bezhta, a Nakh-Daghestanian of the North Caucasus. In: Martin Haspelmath and Uri Tadmor (eds.), *Loanwords in the World's Languages: A Comparative Handbook*, Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2009, P. 414–429.
6. Comrie, B., Khalilov, M., & Khalilova, Z. Valency and valency classes in Bezhta. In Andrej Malchukov, Martin Haspelmath & Bernard Comrie (eds.). *Valency classes*. Berlin: de Gruyter Mouton, 2015, P. 541-570.

7. Comrie, B., Khalilov, M., & Khalilova, Z. *A Grammar of Bezhta: Phonology, Morphology, and Word formation*. Leipzig/Makhachkala: ALEF, 2015.
8. Forker, D. *A grammar of Hinuq*. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2013.
9. Erkert, Roderich von. *Die Sprachen des kaukasischen Stammes*. Wien: Hoelder, 1985.
10. Haspelmath, M. Long-distance agreement in Godoberi (Daghestanian) complement clauses. *Folia Linguistica* 33, 1999, P. 131-151.
11. Kibrik A.E. et al. (eds.) *Godoberi*. München/Newcastle: Lincom Europa, 1996.
12. Kibrik, A. E. & Kodzasov, S. V. *Sopostavitel'noe izučenie dagestanskix jazykov. Glagol*. Moskva: Izd-vo Moskovskogo Universiteta, 1988.
13. Khalilov, M. & Khalilova, Z. Word formation in Avar. In Müller, Peter O., Ingeborg Ohnheiser, Susan Olsen & Franz Rainer (eds.), 2015. *Word-Formation: An International Handbook of the Languages of Europe*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter, HSK 40, 2016a, P. 3633-3647.
14. Khalilov, M. & Khalilova, Z. Word formation in Bezhta. In Müller, Peter O., Ingeborg Ohnheiser, Susan Olsen & Franz Rainer (eds.), 2015. *Word-Formation: An International Handbook of the Languages of Europe*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter, HSK 40. 2016b, P. 597-3616.
15. Khalilova, Z. Evidentiality in the Tsezic languages. In *Linguistic Discovery* 9, 2011, P. 30-48.
16. Khalilova, Z. *A Grammar of Khwarshi*. PhD dissertation, Leiden University. Utrecht, 2009.
17. Khalilova Z. M., Khalilov M. Sh. & Testelet's YA. G. Involitivnaja konstrukcija v bežtinskom i xvaršinskom jazykax: klassy glagolov i problema podležaašego [Involitive construction in Bezhta and Khwarshi: verbal classes and problem of subject] // *Sbornik 'Malye jazyki v bolšoj lingvistike 2022'*, 22-23 April 2022, MGU imeni M. V. Lomonosova, 2022.
18. Madieva, G. I. *Grammatičeskij očerk bežtinskogo jazyka* [The Bezhta grammar sketch]. Makhačkala: Tipografija Dagestanskogo naučnogo centra Rossijskoj akademii nauk, 1965.
19. Palmer, F. *Mood and Modality*. 2nd edition. Cambridge: University Press, 2001.
20. van den Berg, Helma. The East Caucasian language family. In *Lingua* 115 (1-2), 2005, P. 147–190.

21. Xalilov, M. Š. *Bežtinsko-russkij slovar'* [Bezhta-Russian dictionary]. Махаčkала: Tipogafija Dagestanskogo naučnogo centra Rossijskoj akademii nauk, 1995.

СПИСОК ЛИТЕРАТУРЫ

1. *Алексеев М. Е.* Сравнительно-историческая морфология аваро-андийских языков. М.: Наука, 1988.
2. *Authier, G., & Maisak, T.* Tense, aspect, modality and finiteness in East Caucasian languages. Bochum: Brockmeyer, 2011.
3. *Бокарев Е. А.* Цезские (дидойские) языки Дагестана. М.: Изд-во АН СССР, 1959.
4. *Comrie, B.* Valency-changing derivations in Tsez. In R.M.W. Dixon & Alexandra Y. Aikhenvald (eds.), *Changing valency: Case studies in transitivity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, P. 360–374.
5. *Comrie, B. & Khalilov, M.* Loanwords in Bezhta, a Nakh-Daghestanian of the North Caucasus. In: Martin Haspelmath and Uri Tadmor (eds.), *Loanwords in the World's Languages: A Comparative Handbook*, Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 2009, P. 414–429.
6. *Comrie, B., Khalilov, M., & Khalilova, Z.* Valency and valency classes in Bezhta. In Andrej Malchukov, Martin Haspelmath & Bernard Comrie (eds.). *Valency classes*. Berlin: de Gruyter Mouton, 2015, P. 541-570.
7. *Комри Б., Халилов М., Халилова З.* Грамматика бежтинского языка. Лейпциг–Махаčkала: Институт эволюционной антропологии им. Макса Планка–ИЯЛИ ДНЦ РАН, 2015.
8. *Forker, D.* A grammar of Hinuq. Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton, 2013.
9. *Erkert, Roderich von.* Die Sprachen des kaukasischen Stammes. Wien: Hoelder, 1985.
10. *Haspelmath, M.* Long-distance agreement in Godoberi (Daghestanian) complement clauses. *Folia Linguistica* 33, 1999, P. 131-151.
11. *Kibrik A.E. et al.* (eds.) Godoberi. München/Newcastle: Lincom Europa, 1996.
12. *Кибрик А. Е., Кодзасов С. В.* Сопоставительное изучение дагестанских языков. Глагол. М.: Изд-во МГУ, 1988.

13. *Khalilov, M. & Khalilova, Z.* Word formation in Avar. In Müller, Peter O., Ingeborg Ohnheiser, Susan Olsen & Franz Rainer (eds.), 2015. *Word-Formation: An International Handbook of the Languages of Europe*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter, HSK 40, 2016a, P. 3633-3647.
14. *Khalilov, M. & Khalilova, Z.* Word formation in Bezhta. In Müller, Peter O., Ingeborg Ohnheiser, Susan Olsen & Franz Rainer (eds.), 2015. *Word-Formation: An International Handbook of the Languages of Europe*. Berlin/New York: Mouton de Gruyter, HSK 40, 2016b, P. 597-3616.
15. *Khalilova, Z.* Evidentiality in the Tsezic languages. In *Linguistic Discovery* 9, 2011, P. 30-48.
16. *Khalilova, Z.* A Grammar of Khwarshi. PhD dissertation, Leiden University. Utrecht, 2009.
17. *Халилова З. М., Халилов М. Ш., Тестелец Я. Г.* Инволитивная конструкция в бежтинском и хваршинском языках: классы глаголов и проблема подлежащего // Сборник Малые языки в большой лингвистике 2022, 22-23 апреля 2022 года, МГУ имени М. В. Ломоносова. Тезисы. — 2022.
18. *Мадиева Г. И.* Грамматический очерк бежтинского языка. Махачкала: Типография Дагестанского научного центра Российской академии наук, 1995.
19. *Palmer, F.* *Mood and Modality*. 2nd edition. Cambridge: University Press, 2001.
20. *van den Berg, Helma.* The East Caucasian language family. In *Lingua* 115 (1-2), 2005, P. 147–190.
21. *Халилов М. Ш.* Бежтинско-русский словарь. Махачкала: ИЯЛИ ДНЦ РАН, 1995.

About the author

Zaira Khalilova - Ph.D., Senior Researcher, Laboratory for Study and Preservation of Minority Languages, Institute of Linguistics, Russian Academy of Sciences; Researcher, Linguistic Convergence Laboratory HSE University; zaira.khalilova@gmail.com

Об авторе

Заира Маджидовна Халилова - кандидат филологических наук, старший научный сотрудник Лаборатории исследования и сохранения малых языков Института языкознания

РАН; научный сотрудник Международной лаборатории языковой конвергенции НИУ
ВШЭ; zaira.khalilova@gmail.com