Essentials of Circassian

A CONCISE GUIDE TO THE CIRCASSIAN LANGUAGE

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Presented by the Nassip Foundation

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A BEGINNER’S GUIDE TO CIRCASSIAN Grammar

# Introduction

Circassian is the language of the Circassian nation. Like many other languages, notably English and Arabic, Circassian has many regional variations, but is comprised of two literary dialects— Western Circassian, sometimes referred to as Adyghean, and Eastern Circassian, sometimes referred to as Kabardian. The two dialects are mutually intelligible, albeit with some effort on the part of the speaker. The dialects of Circassian are a bit closer to each other than Spanish and Portuguese, but not quite as close as the various dialects of Spanish. This text deals exclusively with the Eastern Circassian dialect.

## About the Alphabet

Circassian is notable for its large number of sounds — 54 in all. While this may sound like a lot, the English language is comprised of 44 unique sounds. By the same token, Circassian is comprised of 56 letters — roughly twice that of the 26 letters in the English language.

Moreover, Circassian is comprised of several multi-character letters. While this might seem daunting, the benefit to this structure is that Circassian is almost completely phonetic, meaning that most words are spelled exactly as they sound.

Accordingly, while the Circassian alphabet may take a bit longer to learn, once it is understood, reading and writing is relatively straightforward.

### The Circassian alphabet at a glance

The table below provides a summary of the Circassian alphabet in alphabetical order. Within each cell in the table, the upper left corner shows each Circassian letter in capital format. The lower right corner of each cell provides a pronunciation guide using English letters. You may note that several of these letters consist of multiple characters.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **А** | **Э** | **Б** | **В** | **Г** | **Гу** | **Гъ** |
| а | e | b | v | g | gw | gh |
| **Гъу** | **Д** | **Дж** | **Дз** | **Е** | **Ё** | **Ж** |
| ghw | d | j | dz | ye | yo | zh |
| **Жь** | **З** | **И** | **Й** | **К** | **Ку** | **Кl** |
| zh' | z | yi | yee | к | kw | k' |
| **Кlу** | **Къ** | **Къу** | **Кхъ** | **Кхъу** | **Л** | **Лъ** |
| k‘w | q | qw | q’ | q‘w | l | lh |
| **Лl** | **М** | **Н** | **О** | **П** | **Пl** | **Р** |
| l' | m | n | o | p | p' | r |
| **С** | **Т** | **Тl** | **У** | **Ф** | **Фl** | **Х** |
| s | t | t' | w | f | f' | х |
| **Ху** | **Хь** | **Хъ** | **Хъу** | **Ц** | **Цl** | **Ч** |
| xw | h | kh | khw | ts | ts' | ch |
| **Ш** | **Щ** | **Щl** | **Ы** | **Я** | **I** | **lу** |
| sh | sch | sch' | i | ya | ‘ | ‘w |

While the alphabet may seem a bit foreign and even daunting at first, there are several steps we can take to simplify our view of the alphabet, making it easier to learn. These simplificatins will not impair your ability to read or write; they will simply make it faster and easier to learn.

First: Remove letters we don’t need to learn

For the purposes of these lessons, we’re going to eliminate the letters Дж and Дз. These end in ж and з, which are separate, stand-alone letters. We’re also going to get rid of Ё, as it only appears in words loaned from Russian. Next, we are going to eliminate letters that use modifiers. Instead, we’re simply going to learn the rules these modifiers follow. This allows us to eliminate many multi-character letters without losing the ability to read.

This is a modified approach to learning the alphabet, designed specifically for English-speakers. If you learn these letters and the rules around letter modifiers, you should be able to start reading much more quickly.

Quick reference to modifiers

ъ: Hardens the preceding letter

ь: Softens preceding letter

l: Shortens consonants it follows

у: Letter that makes the “w” sound

A few additional things to bear in mind

кl: Makes a “k” or a “ch” sound

лъ: Combination of “th” and “l” sound

лl: As above, but more “explosive”

ш: Soft “sh” sound, like in she

щ: Harder “sch” sound, like in shingles

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **А** | **Э** | **Б** | **В** | **Г** | **Гу** | **Гъ** |
| а | e | b | v | g | gw | gh |
| **Гъу** | **Д** | **Дж** | **Дз** | **Е** | **Ё** | **Ж** |
| ghw | d | j | dz | ye | yo | zh |
| **Жь** | **З** | **И** | **Й** | **К** | **Ку** | **Кl** |
| zh' | z | yi | yee | к | kw | k' |
| **Кlу** | **Къ** | **Къу** | **Кхъ** | **Кхъу** | **Л** | **Лъ** |
| k‘w | q | qw | q’ | q‘w | l | lh |
| **Лl** | **М** | **Н** | **О** | **П** | **Пl** | **Р** |
| l' | m | n | o | p | p' | r |
| **С** | **Т** | **Тl** | **У** | **Ф** | **Фl** | **Х** |
| s | t | t' | w | f | f' | х |
| **Ху** | **Хь** | **Хъ** | **Хъу** | **Ц** | **Цl** | **Ч** |
| xw | h | kh | khw | ts | ts' | ch |
| **Ш** | **Щ** | **Щl** | **Ы** | **Я** | **I** | **lу** |
| sh | sch | sch' | i | ya | ‘ | ‘w |

### Simplified Circassian Alphabet

As you can see, the approach above leads to a much smaller volume of content to learn. Whereas the official Circassian alphabet is comprised of 56 letters, this simplified view is comprised of only 29 letters. That’s a reduction of nearly 50%.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **А** | **Э** | **Б** | **В** | **Г** | **Д** | **Е** |
| а | e | b | v | g | d | ye |
| **Ж** | **З** | **И** | **Й** | **К** | **Л** | **М** |
| zh | z | yi | yee | к | l | m |
| **Н** | **О** | **П** | **Р** | **С** | **Т** | **У** |
| n | o | p | r | s | t | w |
| **Ф** | **Х** | **Ц** | **Ч** | **Ш** | **Щ** | **Ы** |
| f | х | ts | ch | sh | sch | i |
| **Я** |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ya |  |  |  |  |  |  |

There are still a few things we can do to make the alphabet even easier to learn. Hidden within these 29 letters are several you already know, a few more that are pretty easy to memorize and a handful that might take a bit of practice. Accordingly, our next step is to group the Circassian letters in a way that makes them easier to learn.

### Circassian letters by group

Group Ӏ: Looks like English, sounds like English

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **А** | a | **К** | k | **М** | m | **О** | o | **С** | s | **Т** | t |

Group 2: Looks like English, sounds different

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **В** | v | **Е** | ye | **Н** | n | **Р** | r | **У** | w | **Х** | x |

Group 3: Sounds like English, looks different

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Э** | *e* | **Б** | *b* | **Г** | *g* | **Д** | *d* | **З** | *z* | **И** | *yi* |
| **Й** | *yee* | **Л** | *l* | **П** | *p* | **Ф** | *f* | **Ы** | *i* | **Я** | *ya* |

Group 4: Requires two English letters to make the sound

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Ж** | *zh* | **Ц** | *ts* | **Ч** | *ch* | **Ш** | *sh* | **Щ** | *sch* |

# Circassian Grammar

## Brief Overview

Grammar is the system of “rules” that govern what is “right” and “wrong” in any given language. I put the words “rules” and “right” and “wrong” in quotes because language is fluid and evolves over time. Rules are meant to be broken, and the boundaries of correct and incorrect usage change every day.

In any case, grammar is typically organized around morphology and syntax. These are just fancy words that describe how a language sounds and how sentences are put together. Let’s begin with morphology.

### Circassian morphology

Morphology deals with how the sounds of a language are structured and organized. The Circassian language is notable for its highly sophisticated system of consonants and comparatively few vowels. It is characterized by a richness of verb forms and a relative poverty of noun forms.

### The melody of the Circassian language

Spoken Circassian is characterized by a certain cadence that can only be described as melodic. This is due to the unique structure of the language, the sounds of which it is comprised, and unique characteristics of its grammar. In many languages, there is a clear difference in tone between statements and questions; in many languages, the former end on a down note while the latter end on an up note, or rising inflection. In Circassian, this is not always the case.

By way of example, in the Circassian language, the following expressions all follow the same stress and cadence.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Уэ укIуа́? | Did you go? |
| Уэ укIуа́щ. | You went. |

Note that the examples above deal with expressions in the past tense. Expressions in the future tense differ.

When dealing with the future tense, there actually is a difference in the tone and stress between a question and statement, similar to many other languages. The following expressions follow differing stress and cadence.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Уэ укIуэ́ну? | Will you go? |
| Уэ уóкIуэ. | You will go. |

Don’t worry if this sounds confusing or you can’t read the Circassian text above. At this point, we’re just trying to provide some sense of how the language is structured. We’ll get into more details later.

### Stress in the Circassian language

Stress deals with which syllables are emphasized when a word is spoken aloud. Think of the English word because. This word is most often pronounced as “bee-CAUSE.” The stress falls on the second syllable.

In Circassian, word stress follows a few basic patterns based on whether the syllables that make up a word are comprised of open or closed sounds. This makes stress easy to understand for words, but it also means that the stress of a word can change depending on the grammar surrounding the word.

Here is an example might be helpful. In English, think of the verb to read. You probably pronounce this word as reed in everyday speech. Now say it in the past tense. You’d pronounce it as red. See how the stress changed? Circassian is a bit like that. The major difference is that, unlike English, words in Circassian follow regular spelling patterns that match their stress.

The following pages provide several rules that word stress in Circassian tends to follow.

As with any language, there are always exceptions, but the rules below follow the “80/20 rule.”

These words will help you learn the melody of the Circassian language. Don’t worry if you feel a little confused. Most people who learn Circassian are able to quickly pick up these rules intuitively “by ear.”

If the word ends with the short vowel “uh” sound (expressed by the Circassian letter **э**), stress falls on the second-to-last syllable.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | да́дэ | grandfather | | да́хэ | beautiful | |  | |  |  | | --- | --- | | лъа́шэ | shame | | етхуа́нэ | fifth | |

If the word ends with any other vowel, stress falls on the last syllable.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | хьэмбылу́ | worm | | зэма́н | time | |  | |  |  | | --- | --- | | кIэфи́й | whistle | | дзэýз | tooth ache | |

In loan words (mostly of Turkish or Arab origin) ending with a vowel, stress usually falls on the last syllable.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | мыхьэнэ́ | meaning | | тэрэзэ́ | scale | |  | |  |  | | --- | --- | | арэзы́ | pleased | | къамышы́ | whip | |

Then there are closed-syllable words. These are words that have only one vowel and end in a consonant. Generally speaking, stress in words like these tends to be on the last syllable.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | къамы́л | cane | | джэдэ́щ | hen house | |  | |  |  | | --- | --- | | дыжьы́н | silver | | дэрбзэ́р | tailor | |

As noted in the first example in this section, verbs that are in the past tense universally stress their last syllables only.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Уэ укIуа́щ | you went | | щышха́щ | she ate there | |  | |  |  | | --- | --- | | дылэжьа́щ | we worked | | уеджа́щ | you studied | |

## Introduction

Circassian is the language of the Circassian nation. Like many other languages, notably English and Arabic, Circassian has many regional variations, but is comprised of two literary dialects: Western Circassian (sometimes referred to as Adyghean) and Eastern Circassian (sometimes referred to as Kabardian).

Speakers of one dialect are able to understand the other, albeit with some difficulty. The dialects of Circassian are a bit closer to each other than Spanish and Portuguese, but not quite as close as the various dialects of Spanish. This text deals exclusively with the **Eastern Circassian dialect**.

### Circassian parts of speech

Circassian includes Ӏ0 parts of speech: seven notional and three non-notional. Notional parts of speech are made up of words that have meaning on their own, while non-notional parts of speech require other words to make sense. For example, in English, the words walk and dog are notional, since they have meanings of their own. The words to and the are non-notional, since they require other words to make sense.

#### Notional and non-notaional parts of speech

Notional

1. Nouns
2. Pronouns
3. Adjectives
4. Adverbs
5. Verbs
6. Numerals
7. Unions

Non-notional

1. Conjunctions
2. Particles
3. Postpositions

We will explore each part of speech in the following sections.

#### Brief note on grammatical case

Each Circassian part of speech is governed by a set of rules that changes how words appear in sentences. These rules are referred to as grammatical case, and they are the glue that holds words together. With the right case, words fit together and make sense. With the wrong case, words don’t quite fit, and it’s hard to understand the meaning of an expression or a question. Circassian contains four cases.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Case | Answers the question(s) | Accompanied by |
| Nominative | Who? Whom? What? | Nouns in the nominative case end in the suffix –**р**. |
| Ergative | To whom? To what? | Nouns in the ergative case end in the suffix –**м**. |
| Instrumental | By what means? In what direction? | The suffix that places a word into the instrumental case is –**кIэ**. |
| Adverbial | Who amongst? What, within? | The adverbial case is demonstrated by two suffixes: –**у** and –**yэ**. |

### Nominative case in the Circassian language

The nominative case refers to words that make up the subject of a sentence or the predicate of a clause. That’s a fancy way of saying that the nominative case refers to the person or thing that is doing something — not the person or thing that something is being done to.

In the English sentence The boy reads, the word boy is in the nominative case. Who is reading? The boy. He is doing something — reading.

In the sentence The boy reads the book, the word boy is still in the nominative case, but the word book, though a noun, is not in the nominative case. This is because the word book is the thing that something is being done to — the book is being read. By whom? The boy, of course. The nominative case answers the questions: Who? Whom? What?

Nouns in the nominative case end in the suffix –**р.**

### Ergative case in the Circassian language

The ergative case is hard to understand because it refers to something not found in English. The ergative case occurs when the subject of a sentence is performing the action of a transitive verb and an object is receiving the action.

Let’s go back to our example from the nominative case: The boy reads the book.

Remember how we said that book is not in the nominative case? That’s because it is in the ergative case.

The ergative case answers the questions: To whom? To what?

The suffix given to the noun in order to put it into the ergative case is –**м**.

This might be a lot to take in, so let’s review the nominative and ergative cases in a simple example.

### Nominative and ergative case example

Let’s go back to the example we used for both the nominative and ergative cases:

The boy reads the book.

1. Subject of the sentence and the noun that is doing the action – read. Boy is in the nominative case.
2. Transitive verb of the sentence. It is transitive because its action is being received by the direct object – the book.
3. Direct object of the sentence, because it is the noun that receives the action of the verb. Book is in the ergative case.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ЩIалыр тхылъым йоджэ. | The boy reads the book. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| (the boy) (the book) (reads)  nominative ergative |  |

## Deep Dive into the Ergative Case

### What’s the ergative case?

Most languages spoken today (around 80%) are nominative–accusative, while a minority (around 20%) are ergative. Don’t worry if this sounds confusing. All you need to understand is that Circassian is an ergative language, and this is different from English, Turkish, Russian, and Arabic.

### How is this different?

Actually, let’s start with how they are similar. Like other languages, Ergative languages like Circassian deal with how the action of verbs affects nouns.

Nouns in both cases can be:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Subject | Does the action |
| Direct objects | Receives the action |
| Indirect objects | Receives the direct object |

When it comes to verbs, in both cases:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Transitive | Give action |
| Intransitive | Do not give action |

In an ergative language like Circassian, nouns that receive the action (direct objects) are usually placed in the ergative case. Remember this?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ЩIалыр тхылъым йоджэ. | The boy reads the book. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| (the boy) (the book) (reads)  nominative ergative |  |

* **Subject** of the sentence and the noun that is doing the action — read. Boy is in the nominative case.
* **Direct object** of the sentence because it is the noun that is receiving the action of the verb. Book is in the ergative case.
* **Transitive verb** of the sentence. It is transitive because its action is being received by the direct object — the book.

#### Ergative versus nominative case

In the example we’ve been using, there is no real confusion:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ЩIалыр тхылъым йоджэ. | The boy reads the book. |

But what about the example below?

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ЩIалэм и цIэр жеIэ. | The boy says his name. |

What’s going on here? The boy (**ЩIалэм**) is the subject of the sentence – he is the one doing the action, and the name (**цIэр**) is the noun receiving the action. So why is this different from the example above?

The exception here is that in Circassian, there are special cases of verbs that we’ll call ergative verbs. These are transitive verbs that change the state of their direct objects.

#### Ergative verbs and their exceptions

Remember what we said earlier: The nominative case answers the questions: Who? Whom? What? Nouns in the nominative case end in the suffix –**р**.

The ergative case answers the question: To whom or to what? The suffix given to the noun in order to put it into the ergative case is –**м**.

Most of the time, nouns in the nominative case are subjects, while nouns in the ergative case are direct objects. The exception is when we are dealing with ergative verbs.

Ergative verbs change the state of their direct objects; this change of state places the subject of the verb into the ergative.

Example Ӏ

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ЩIалыр тхылъым йоджэ. | The boy reads the book. |

The verb read (**йоджэ**) is transitive, but it is not ergative. Why? From a Circassian perspective, the book has not changed. It is the same as it was before it was read.

Example 2

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ЩIалэм и цIэр жеIэ. | The boy says his name. |

The verb say (**жеIэ**) is transitive and it is ergative. Why? Saying the name causes it (the name) to be brought into existence.

### Ergative verbs explained

Ergative verbs are those that create, change or end a state of being of the nouns to which they give their action.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Ergative verbs | Examples |
| Ӏ. | Create a state | born, make, say  They take something that did not exist and bring it into existence. |
| 2. | Alter a state (no movement) | cook, repair, combine  They cause something to change its appearance or composure. |
| 3. | Alter a state (with movement) | stop, start, push  They cause an object to move through time or space. |
| 4. | End a state | burn, die, destroy  They take something that existed and cause it to cease its existence. |

#### Additional technical detail

The ergative case is not common, so you may need to review the previous section a few times. For some people, this will be enough.

If you’re interested in more technical detail, here’s the linguistic theory explanation; it’s shorter, but not as descriptive. If it helps, great. If not, don’t worry. We’re going to cover more examples in the next section.

In Nominative–accusative languages, subjects of transitive and intransitive verbs are distinguished from objects of transitive verbs through word order, case marking, and/or verb agreement.

In Ergative languages, the subject of an intransitive verb behaves like the object of a transitive verb and differently from the subject of a transitive verb.

#### Practice section: Nominative and ergative case in Circassian

* The nominative case answers the questions: Who? Whom? What?
* Nouns in the nominative case are giving action.
* Nouns in the nominative case end in the suffix –**р**.
* The ergative case answers the questions: To whom? To what?
* Nouns in the ergative case are receiving action.
* The suffix given to the noun in order to put it into the ergative case is –м.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Example | Explanation |
| Ӏ. | ЩIалэр йоплъ.  The boy looks. | The boy is who is giving the action. He is looking. The boy is in the nominative case. In this example, nothing is receiving his action, so there is no ergative case. |
| 2. | ЩIалэр хъыджэбзым йоплъ.  The boy looks at the girl. | The boy is now looking at the girl. As before, the boy is in the nominative case, since he is giving the action. The girl is now receiving the action, so the girl is in the ergative case. |
| 3. | ЩIалэм хъыджэбыр елъагъу.  The boy sees the girl. | This is a little counterintuitive, but in Circassian, to “look” is not the same as to “see.” To see is an ergative verb, so (from a Circassian perspective) its action is delivered to the boy. Thus, the boy is in the ergative case, while the girl is in the nominative case. |
| 4. | Хъыджэбзым щIалэр елъагъу.  The girl sees the boy. | Here, the girl sees the boy. The act of seeing transforms her state; similar to the example above, since the girl sees, she is in the ergative case, and the boy is now in the nominative. |

**Note**: Every language has its own quirks. In Circassian, to “look” is not the same as to “see.” Think of it as the difference between to “hear” and to “understand” in English. Just because you hear something doesn’t mean you understand. Just because you look doesn’t mean you actually see. In Circassian, to “see” is an ergative verb because it transforms the state of the person who sees: it gives that person more information or knowledge. This change in state is why the subject in sentences 3 and 4 above are in the ergative case.

## Instrumental and Adverbial Cases

### Instrumental case in the Circassian language

As in the ergative case, the instrumental does not exist in English, but is easier to understand. This case is used to indicate that a word is the instrument or means by which the subject of a sentence achieves its action.

In English, this is most often accomplished through the use of prepositions. In the sentence, I went to the park in my car, in my car is a prepositional phrase, and the word in is a preposition. In this English example, in my car answers the question by what means.

Circassian does not typically use prepositions to express by what means actions are accomplished. Instead, Circassian relies on suffixes appended to nouns to put them into the instrumental case.

The ergative case answers the questions: By what means? In what direction? The suffix that places a word into the instrumental case is –**кIэ**.

### Adverbial case in the Circassian language

The adverbial case is not common to many languages and is not very common within Circassian. This case identifies singular parts from larger wholes.

The adverbial case answers the questions: Who amongst? What within? This case is demonstrated by two suffixes: –**у** and –**yэ**.

### Practice section: Instrumental and Adverbial Case in Circassian

The instrumental case answers the questions: By what means? In what direction?

The suffix that places a word into the instrumental case is –**кIэ**.

The adverbial case answers the question: Who amongst? What, within?

The adverbial case is demonstrated by two suffixes: –**у** and –**yэ**.

# Parts of Speech

## What are Parts of Speech?

In any language, words are the smallest elements that have distinctive meanings. Based on how they are used, words are categorized into several categories. These categories are referred to as parts of speech.

In this section, we will continue to build on our foundation by exploring each part of speech in the Circassian language.

Circassian includes Ӏ0 parts of speech. These include seven notional parts of speech and three non-notional parts of speech, as described previously. Generally speaking, notional parts of speech are made up of words that have meaning on their own, while non-notional parts of speech require other words to make sense.

I walk the dog to the park.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Notional parts of speech: | walk; dog |
| Non-notional parts of speech: | to; the |

In the example above, the words walk and dog have meaning on their own. The words to and the, however, require other words to make sense.

## Nouns

Nouns are words that represent a person, place, thing, or idea. In Circassian, nouns fall into two main groups: those that represent people, and those that represent everything else. The former answers the question who, while the latter answers the question what.

Circassian nouns come in two forms and with three variations:

* Forms:
  + Proper nouns
  + Common nouns
* Variations:
  + Infleciton
  + Quantity
  + Case

This is further illustrated in the following figure.

Circassian Nouns

**Inflection**

**Case**

**Quantity**

**Proper nouns**

**Common nouns**

Two forms

Three variations

### Circassian noun forms

Proper nouns are distinct from common nouns in that they:

* Describe a “one-of-a-kind” person, place, thing, or idea
* Begin with a capital letter

### Circassian noun variations

Regardless of whether Circassian nouns are proper or common, they come in three variations:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Inflection: | definite versus indefinite |
| Case: | grammatical context |
| Quantity: | one versus more than one |

#### Inflection: definite versus indefinite

Inflection is a fairly simple concept to understand. Definite nouns refer to a specific entity, while indefinite nouns do not.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Dogs bark | indefinite noun |
| A dog is barking | indefinite noun |
| The dog is barking | definite noun |

#### Case: grammatical context

Circassian grammatical case affects noun structure. As previously covered, there are four cases in Circassian, so nouns are affected in four ways.

#### Quantity: one versus more than one

In Circassian, nouns come in quantities of one or more than one. This concept is also referred to as single versus plural.

### Relationship between inflection and case in Circassian

Nouns share a special set of relationships with inflection and case in the Circassian language. Remember that:

Inflection describes whether a noun is definite or indefinite.

Case provides grammatical context.

In Circassian, there are four grammatical cases. We will describe them more in-depth later on, but for the time being, all you need to know is that there are four grammatical cases in Circassian.

In Circassians, nouns will take a suffix that is unique to each grammatical case.

#### The key thing to remember about Circassian case

Again, don’t worry about what the cases are. All you need to remember for now is that there are four grammatical cases in Circassian, and nouns take a suffix depending on which case is in use.

### Understanding Circassian noun suffixes

**Inflection**

**Definite**

**Indefinite**

**Case**

-р

-м

-мкIэ

-рауэ

-кIэ

-у/уэ

-

-

**гупыр**

**гупым**

**гупымкIэ**

**гупрауэ**

**гупкIэ**

**гупу**

the group

a group

with (a/the) group

about the group

with group

from among a group

**Definite**

**Indefinite**

**Nominative**

**Ergative**

**Adverbial**

### Further examples of inflection and case

Before moving on to quantities, let’s make sure we fully understand the relationships between inflection and case in Circassian. The examples below are designed to further illustrate these relationships and apply to the numbered examples in the table below.

1. We are discussing one defined ball.
2. We are discussing a specific ball, though not necessarily one near us.
3. The suffix **мкIэ** demonstrates that the activity is “with” the ball. The vowel **ы** is added to bridge the two consonants **п** and **м**.
4. The suffix **рауэ** is similar to the **мкIэ** suffix but used more with intransitive verbs.
5. We are referring to some ball somewhere in the world.
6. Similar to the third sentence above, but we are not referring to a specific ball but rather “some” ball.
7. The **у** suffix shows that the ball in question is “some ball” from among a group of three.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Definite | Ӏ. | топыр | Топыр пщIантэм дэлъщ. | The ball is in the yard. |
| 2. | топым | Топым и уасэр пудщ. | A ball’s price is inexpensive. |
| 3. | топымкIэ | ТопымкIэ сабийхэр мэджэгур. | The children are playing with a ball. |
| 4. | топрауэ | Сабийхэр щIызэныкъукъур топрауэ къыщIэкIащ. | The children have begun to argue over the ball. |
| Indefinite | 5. | топ | Топ къещэхуащ. | (A) ball was purchased. |
| 6. | топкIэ | Сабийхэр топкIэ щхьэгъубжэр якъуэтащ. | The children broke the window with (a) ball. |
| 7. | топу | Топу щы къэсщэхуащ. | I bought a ball from among three (balls). |

### Quantities for Circassian nouns

Like most languages, Circassian distinguishes between singular and plural nouns.

Plural nouns (quantities greater than one) are demonstrated by a plural suffix of **хэ** or **хэр**.

There are times when plural nouns signify relationships such as sisterhood, brotherhood, or friendship.

In these cases, a relation prefix of **зэ** is required to demonstrate this relationship. The illustration will help you better understand these concepts.

#### Circassian noun quantities

Relation prefix | word root | Plural suffix

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Ӏ. | шыпхъу | One sister |
| 2. | шыпхъухэр | sisters |
| 3. | Мадинэрэ Аманэрэ зэшыпхъухэщ. | Madina and Amana are sisters. |
| 4. | ныбжьэгъу | one friend |
| 5. | ныбжьэгъухэр | friends |
| 6. | Жантийрэ Русланрэ зэныбжьэгъухэщ. | Janty and Ruslan are friends. |
| 7. | къуэш | (one) brother |
| 8. | къуэшхэр | brothers |
| 9. | Тамбийрэ Рамзийрэ зэкъуэшхэщ. | Tamby and Ramzy are brothers. |

### Noun structure: word roots, prefixes, and suffixes

As with other languages, Circassian nouns are comprised of roots, prefixes, and suffixes. The entire Circassian language is estimated to contain 30,000+ words, but these words are comprised of an estimated Ӏ500 word roots.

Circassian nouns often follow a few basic structures that combine word roots, prefixes, and suffixes. This section will provide an overview of noun structure and should help provide a “short cut” to understanding and learning words more quickly and efficiently.

#### Adverbial case in the Circassian language

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Word Structure | Illustration |
| 5. | prefix — root |  |
| 6. | root — suffix |  |
| 7. | prefix — root — suffix |  |
| 8. | root — root |  |

### Adverbial case in the Circassian language

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Ӏ. | зэшыпхъ | sister(hood) |
| зэкъуэш | brother(hood) |
| зэунэгъу | family (relation) |
|  |  |
| 2. | шыпхъухэр | sisters |
| къуэшхэр | brothers |
| унагъуэхэр | Relatives |
|  |  |
| 3. | зэшыпхъухэр | (two people are) sisters |
| зэкъуэшхэр | (two people are) brothers |
| зэунагъуэхэр | (two people are) relatives |
|  |  |
| 4. | адэ-анэ | parents (father–mother) |

### More examples of noun construction in Circassian

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Creates nouns that mean: one who does | | | |
| **–кIуэ** | **Plus verb** |  |  |
| еджэн + кIуэ | еджакIуэ | student |
| тхэн + кIуэ | тхакIуэ | writer |
| лажьэн + кIуэ | лэжьакIуэ | worker |
| къафэн+ кIуэ | къэфакIуэ | dancer |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Creates nouns that are tangible | | | |
| **–гъэ** | **Plus verb** |  |  |
| тхын + гъэ | тхыгъэ | writing |
| лажьэн + гъэ | Лэжьыгъэ | Work |
|  | | |
| **Plus adjective** |  |  |
| фIыцIэ + гъэ | фIэцIагъэ | blackness |
| плъыжь + гъэ | плъыжьыгъэ | redness |
|  | | |
| **Plus another noun** |  |  |
| цIыху + гъэ | цIыхугъэ | humanity |
| гу + гъэ | гугъэ | thought |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Creates nouns that are locations | | | |
| **–пIэ** | **Plus verb** |  |  |
| еджэн + пIэ | еджапIэ | school |
| есын + пIэ | есыпIэ | pool |
| егъэзын + пIэ | егъэзыпIэ | camp |
| тIысын + пIэ | тIысыпIэ | seat |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **–щ** | **Plus another noun** |  |  |
| джэд+щ | джэдэщ | chicken coop |
| мэкъу+щ | мэкъуэщ | barn (for hay) |
| шы+щ | шэщ | horse stable |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Creates nouns mean: person who is a partner in | | | |
| **–гъу** | **Plus verb** |  |  |
| псалъэн + гъу | псалъэгъу | girl/boyfriend |
| къафэн + гъу | къафэгъу | dance partner |
| лажьэн + гъу | лажьэгъу | work partner |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Creates nouns that mean: remaining pieces of | | | |
| **–хуэ** | **Plus verb** |  |  |
| шхэ + хуэ | шхахуэ | leftovers (food) |
| къутэ + хуэ | къутахуэ | broken pieces |
| упс + хуэ | упсахуэ | shavings |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Creates nouns that mean: contains something | | | |
| **–лъэ** | **Plus another noun** |  |  |
| дагъэ + лъэ | дагъалъэ | butter dish |
| псы + лъэ | псылъэ | reservoir |
| шакъэ + лъэ | шакъалъэ | ink well |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Creates nouns that show a manner or style | | | |
| **–кIэ** | **Plus verb** |  |  |
| псалъэ + кIэ | псалъэкIэ | speaking style |
| тхэ + кIэ | тхэкIэ | writing style |
| еджэ + кIэ | еджэкIэ | reading style |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Creates nouns that mean: at the center | | | |
| **–гу** | **Plus another noun** |  |  |
| бзэ + гу | бзэгу | tongue |
| Iэ + гу | Iэгу | palm (hand) |
| лъэ + гу | лъэгу | sole (foot) |
| щIы + гу | щIыгу | ground |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Creates nouns that show times | | | |
| **–гъэ** | **Plus verb** |  |  |
| лажьэн + гъуэ | лажьэгъуэ | work time |
| зыгъэпсэхун + гъуэ | зыгъэпсэхугъуэ | vacation |
|  | | |
| **Plus adjective** |  |  |
| дахэ + гъуэ | дахэгъуэ | age of beauty |
| щIалэ + гъуэ | щIалэгъуэ | youth (time) |
|  | | |
| **Plus another noun** |  |  |
| гупсысэ + гъуэ | гупсысэгъуэ | thinking time |
| хьэщIэ + гъуэ | хьэщIэгъуэ | visiting time |

### Affixing and compounding nouns

#### Word formation of nouns

There are two main ways to form nouns in Eastern Circassian: compounding and affixation. Compounding is when two words are combined to create a new word. Affixation is when a word is combined with a prefix or a suffix to create a new word. Compounding is the more common of the two methods.

### Nouns formed through compounding.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Circassian Noun** | **English Translation** | **Word stem Ӏ** | **Word stem 2** |
| шызешэ | stableman | **шы** ‘horse’ | **зешэ**, the one who rides |
| шхапӀэ | canteen | шхэ | **пӀэ**, place |
| Мэлыл | mutton | **мэл** ‘sheep’ | **Лы**, meat |

### Nouns formed through affixation.

There are three main ways to form nouns by adding suffixes: from other nouns, from different verb forms, or from adjectives. Nouns are also formed using prefixals and suffixal-prefixals.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| A. From other nouns | | |
| **анэ** | гъуэгуанэ | way |
| **Гъуэ** | пкъыгъуэ | body |
|  | унагъуэ | family |
|  | лъэпкъыгъуэ | kind (of) |
| **Ей** | дей | walnut |
|  | жыгей | oak |
| **Жь** | унэжь | big house (negative connotation) |
|  | Ӏэжь | big hands (negative connotation) |
| **Мэ** | бдзумэ | a special wooden hammer |
| **Пхъэ** | вакъапхъэ | material for shoes |
| **Щ** | хьэщ | kennel |
|  | гуэщ | a room for bullock-cart |
|  | джэдэщ | henhouse |
|  | шэщ | stable |
| **Гу** | бзэгу | gossip |
|  | Ӏэгу | palm |
| **Ринэ** | гъыринэ | crybaby sniveler |
| **кӀуэ** | гъуэгурыкӀуэ | wayfarer |
| **Уей** | лъэуей | roost |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| B. From different verb forms | | |
| **гъуэ** | пычыгъуэ | part |
|  | лэжьэгъуэ | work time |
| **кӀуэ** | тхакӀуэ | writer |
|  | лъыхъуакӀуэ | finder |
|  | еджакӀуэ | pupil |
| **кӀэ** | псалъэкӀэ | manner of speaking |
|  | шхэкӀэ | manner of eating |
| **гъэ** | лэжьэныгъэ | working |
|  | тхэныгъэ | writing |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| C. From adjectives | | |
| **гъ, – гъэ** | дахагъэ | beauty |
|  | фӀыцӀагъэ | darkness |
|  | кӀыхьагъ | length |
| **гъу** | Ӏэпэгъу | like-minded person |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Prefixal Way** |  |  |
| -зэ | зэш | brothers |
|  | зэблагъэ | relatives |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Suffixal-prefixal Way** |  |  |
| **зэ-…-гъу** | зэшхэгъу | Classmates |
|  | зэкъуажэгъу | fellow-villagers |

#### Compound nouns

Compound nouns are formed by adding root words.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Ӏ. | Nouns | **джэд** ‘hen’ | **Къаз**, goose | poultry | джэдкъаз |
| 2. | Nouns and adjectives | **лӀы** ‘man’ | **Жьы**, old | old man | лӀыжь |
| 3. | Nouns and verbs | **мэз** ‘forest’ | **Хъумэ**, the one who guards | forester | мэзхъумэ |
| 4. | Copulative (connecting) vowel and particles | **Ӏэ** ‘hand’ | **Тхы**, write (imperative) | manuscript | Ӏэрытх |

## Pronouns

Pronouns are words that are substituted for nouns, and they come in several varieties, including the following:

* Personal pronouns
* Possessive pronouns
  + Dependent possessive pronouns
  + Independent possessive pronouns
* Interrogative pronouns
* Demonstrative pronouns
* Indefinite pronouns
* Negative pronouns

That may all seem like a lot to take in, but it’s not nearly as complicated as you might think. Each type of pronoun is described on the following pages.

### Personal pronouns

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Singular | Сэ | I (me) |
| Уэ | You |
| Ар | He/she/it (him/her/it) |
| Plural | Дэ | We (us) |
| Фэ | You |
| Ахэр | They (them) |

Personal pronouns are most often associated with a person or living being. These pronouns can take the form of first, second, or third person, and may be singular or plural.

In English, there are subjective and objective personal pronouns. (In English, objective personal pronouns include me; him/her/it; us; and them.)

Due to the ergative grammatical case of Circassian, there are no such distinctions. As such, the subjective pronouns above may also stand in for objective pronouns that appear in parentheses.

**Note**: For the balance of this text, only masculine subjective pronoun forms will be used for English examples.

### Independent versus dependent possessive pronouns

Possessive pronouns demonstrate ownership and come in two varieties: independent and dependent. Independent possessive pronouns do not require an object in the sentence in which they appear, while dependent possessive pronouns do.

#### Independent and dependent pronouns in English

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| The book is mine → | Independent possessive |
| That is my book → | Dependent possessive |

In the example above, mine is independent and my is dependent. This is because the word mine can be use independently of any object in the sentence in which it appears. For example, The book is mine. It is mine.

Both sentences make sense. Let’s try this with the word my: That is my book. The book is my.

The second example, The book is my, makes no sense. It is dependent on the object of the sentence — book.

Now that we are sure we understand these concepts, let’s see how they apply to Circassian.

#### Dependent possessive pronouns

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Singular | Сэ | My | Мыр ситхылъщ. | This is my book. |
| Уэ | Your | Мыр уиунэщ. | This is my house. |
| Ар | His | Мыр имашинэщ. | This is his car. |
| Plural | Дэ | Our | Мыр ди сабийщ. | This is our baby. |
| Фэ | Your | Мыр фи мыӀэрысэщ. | This is your apple. |
| Ахэр | Their | Мыр я шхынщ. | This is their food. |

#### Independent possessive pronouns

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Singular | Сысей | Mine | Тхылъыр сысейщ. | The book is mine. |
| Уыуей | Yours | Унэр уыуейщ. | The house is yours. |
| Ей | His | Машинэр ейщ. | The car is his. |
| Plural | Дыдей | Ours | Сабийр дыдейщ. | The baby is ours. |
| Фыфей | Yours | МыӀэрысэр фыфейщ. | The apple is yours. |
| Яй | Theirs | Шхыныр яйщ. | The food is theirs. |

Note that in the examples above, nouns end in the suffix –**р** and independent possessive pronouns end in the suffix –**щ**. The former is due to the ergative case; possession of the objects described is an active (transitive) act, which requires these nouns to take the ergative suffix. The possessive pronouns end in the –**щ** suffix to demonstrate statements made in the affirmative case.

#### Summary table of personal and possessive pronouns

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Personal | | Dependent | | Independent | |
| Singular | Сэ | I | Си | My | Сысей | Mine |
| Уэ | You | Уи | Your | Уыуей | Yours |
| Ар | He | И | His | Ей | His |
| Plural | Дэ | We | Ди | Our | Дыдей | Ours |
| Фэ | You | Фи | Your | Фыфей | Yours |
| Ахэр | They | Я | Their | Яй | Theirs |

### Interrogative pronouns

Interrogative pronouns are used to ask questions. In Circassian, there are seven such pronouns, which include who, whose, what, which, and how much/how many. In Circassian, interrogative pronouns fall into two main groups: those that represent people, and those that represent everything else.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Хэт? | Who? | Always refers to a living being. |
| Хэт ей? | Whose? | Also refers to a living being. |
| Сыт? | What? | Refers to an inanimate object, typically tangible. |
| ЛIо? | What? | Refers to an inanimate object, typically intangible. |
| Дэтхэнэ? | Which? | Refers to a specific object. |
| Дэтхэнэр? | Which one? | Refers to a specific object within a series. |
| Дапхуэдэ? | Which one? | Refers to an object with a specific description within a series. |
| Дапщэ? | How much/many? | Refers to a quantity of countable objects which may be living or inanimate, tangible or intangible. |

### Demonstrative pronouns

Whereas personal pronouns represent people and living beings, demonstrative pronouns relate to inanimate objects. In the Circassian language, there are four such pronouns; they may appear in singular or plural form, and they take different forms depending on the grammatical case in which they appear. A simple summary of demonstrative pronouns in Circassian is provided below.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | ← Most Common Demonstratives | | | |
| Singular | Мыр | Мыбы | МыбыкIэ | Мыру | This |
| Мор | Мобы | МобыкIэ | Мору | That |
| Plural | Мыхэр | Мыбыхэм | МыбыхэмкIэ | Мыхэру | These |
| Мохэр | Мобыхэм | МобыхэмкIэ | Мохэру | Those |

As you can see above, there are four versions of each of these demonstrative pronouns, one for each grammatical case of Circassian. As previously noted, we’ll be looking at grammar more in-depth later in this text. For the time being, let’s just focus on the highlighted column to see if we can recognize any familiar patterns.

### Most common demonstrative pronouns

Among the four Circassian grammatical cases, the demonstrative pronouns highlighted in red above are the most common.

Let’s take a look at the structure of these demonstrative pronouns to see if we recognize any familiar patterns.

#### Demonstrative pronoun word roots

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Мы | describes an object that is directionally near the speaker; hence, this |
| Мо | describes an object that is directionally distant from the speaker; hence that |

These two word roots make up the core of the simplest form of the four pronouns above, **мыр** and **мор**. Making them plural simply requires the addition of the –**хэ** suffix covered earlier.

Aside from these changes, the appearance of each pronoun follows the addition of other suffixes previously covered. We will revisit this topic further when we cover Circassian grammar more in-depth.

### Indefinite pronouns

An indefinite pronoun refers to one or more unspecified beings, objects, places, or times. They are not unique to Circassian, but indefinite pronouns in the Circassian language are difficult to translate into other languages, owing to their expansive nature as demonstrated below.

In Circassian, there are six indefinite pronouns, including the following:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Зыгуэр: | This word translates fairly well and means someone or something. |
| Заул: | This word translates reasonably well to some time or a while; it refers to an unspecified mount of time. |
| Къом: | May be translated as some or a few and sometimes any amount. |
| Зыкъом: | Translates roughly to just about everyone or nearly everybody. |
| Тэлай: | A period of time within a sequence of time; translates roughly to a bit of time. |
| Зытэлай: | Similar to above, but a larger period of time within a sequence. |

Although the pronouns above are grouped thematically, **заул**, **тэлай**, and **зытэлай** are relatively old words and not used often in everyday speech. In contrast, the following pronouns are commonly used in everyday speech: **зыгуэр**, **къом**, and **зыкъом**.

Although the pronouns above are grouped thematically, **заул**, **тэлай**, and **зытэлай** are relatively old words and not used often in everyday speech.

### Negative pronouns

Negative pronouns indicate the non-existence of people or things. The most common negative pronouns in the Circassian language by far are **зыри** and **зыми**—no one and nothing, respectively.

Other common negative pronouns include **зыкӀи**, meaning nobody, or sometimes not in the least; **зыуи**, in no way, and **зыгуэри**, nothing at all.

## Adjectives

Adjectives are words that describe or modify nouns. In Circassian, adjectives also answer the questions of:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Сыт хуэдэ? | What kind? |
| Дэпхуэдэ? | Which kind? |
| Зыхуэдэр? | Which? |
| Дэтхэнэрей? | Which one? |

In the Circassian language, adjectives follow the nouns that they modify. For example, whereas in English one might say small boy, in Circassian, one would say, boy small (**щӀалэ цӀыцӀу**).

Additionally, there are a handful of cases where Circassian appends an adjective suffix to a noun rather than allow the adjective to follow that same noun. As confusing as this might sound, there are only a handful of cases where this occurs. Some of the more common examples are provided below.

All adjectives in the Eastern Circassian language are divided into two groups: qualitative and relative. There are no possessive adjectives in Eastern Circassian language.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Small boy | щӀалэ цӀыцӀу | This is the example we used above, where no suffix is attached. We’ll use this for comparison. |
| Young boy | ЩӀалэщӀэ | In Circassian, the word for boy is the same as the word for young or new. Rather than writing or saying something like щӀалэ щӀалэ, in Circassian, we express that the boy is young by appending the adjective suffix щӀэ. |
| Old boy | ЩӀалэжь | The word for old is **жьы**, but when we use old as an adjective, we often do so by appending the adjective suffix жь to the noun it modifies. |
| Big boy | ЩӀалэшхуэ | In Circassian, the word for big is ин. Although it is acceptable to say something like The boy is big (**щӀалыр инщ**), we cannot use the word **ин** to refer to a big boy. Rather, we need to append an adjective suffix. In this case, the suffix is шхуэ. |

In Circassian, there are four ways of forming adjectives.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Word Structure | Illustration |
| 9. | Compounding |  |
| Ӏ0. | Suffixal |  |
| ӀӀ. | Prefixal |  |
| Ӏ2. | Suffixal-repfixal |  |

Of these four ways, the first two, compounding and suffixal, are the most common.

### Compounding adjectives in Circassian

Compounding is by far the most common way to form adjectives in Circassian. The number of compound adjectives is literally infinite, and new words are formed by this method on a regular basis.

Below are just a few examples of compound adjectives in the Circassian language. Please note that the words used in compounding need not be from the same parts of speech.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Adjective | Stem Ӏ | Stem 2 |
| Noun + Noun | **мэзылъэ** woody | **Мэз** forest | **Лъэ** place |
| Noun + Verb | **Лъэрызехьэ** enterprising | **Лъэ** leg | **Зехьэ** carry |
| Noun + Pronoun | **Дунейпсо** worldwide | **Дуней** world | **Псо** whole |
| Particle + Noun | **нэхъыфI** the best | **Нэхъ** more | **фIы** good |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Rule | Adjective | Stem Ӏ | Stem 2 | Translation |
| Adding two stems of the noun | мэзылъэ | **Мэз**, forest | **Лъэ**, place | woody |
| Adding stems of the noun and adjective | нэфIыцIэ | **Нэ**, eye | **фIыцIэ**, black | blackeyed |
| Adding stems of noun and verb forms | лъэрызехьэ | **Лъэ**, leg | **Зехьэ**, carry | enterprising |
| Adding stems of noun and pronoun | дунейпсо | **Дуней**, world | **Псо**, whole | worldwide |
| Adding the stems of participle and adjective | ятхагъащIэ | **Ятха**, written | **щIэ**, new, fresh | just written |
| Adding the stems of adjective | морэфIыцIафэ | **Морэ**, brown | **фIьщIафэ**, dark | dark-brown |
| Adding the stems of numeral and verb | ныкъуэтхъу | **ныкъуэ**, half | **тхъу**(н), become grey | half grey |
| Adding stems of participles | мыкIуэмытэ | **мыкIуэ**, the one who is not going | **мытэ**, not giving | clumsy |
| Adding a particle and stem of noun | нэхъыфI | **Нэхъ**, more | **фIы**, good | the best |

### Suffixal adjectives in Circassian

Suffixal adjectives are formed by adding a suffix to another word. Such suffixes are not unique to Circassian and are quite common in English. For example:

* Danger + **ous** = **Dangerous**
* Music + **al** = **Musical**
* Attract + **ive** = **Attractive**

As is the case with compounding adjectives, suffixal adjectives in Circassian may be formed from many parts of speech. Below are a few examples.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Adjective | Stem | Suffix |
| Noun + Suffix | **Цыбэ** hairy | **цы** hair | -бэ |
| Adjective + Suffix | **Пасэрей** ancient | **пасэ** early | -рей |
| Number + Suffix | **Закъуэ** lonely | **зы** one | -къуэ |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Rule | Suffix | Stem | Adjective |
| From nouns | -бэ | **цы**, hair, wool | **цыбэ**, hairy |
| -лэ | **уэлбанэ**, rain | **Уэлбаналэ**, rainy |
| -рилэ | **сымаджэ**, sick | **Сымаджэрилэ**, sickly |
| -ншэ | **пIалъэ**, term/deadline | **пIалъэншэ**, termless |
| -шэ | **нэ**, eye | **нашэ**, squint |
|  | **Ӏэ**, arm | **Iэшэ**, armless |
| -гуэ | **щхьэ**, head, surface | **щхьэгуэ**, roundheaded |
| From adjectives | -рей | **пасэ**, early means belonging (not productive) | **пасэрей**, ancient |
| бжэ | **гъуэ**, dun (not productive) | **гъуабжэ**, grey |
| From stems of numerals | -щIэ | **mIу**, two | **тIуащIэ**, double |
|  | **щы**, three (not productive) | **щащIэ**, third |
| -къуэ | numeral **зы**, one (not productive) | **закъуэ**, lonely |
| From stems of adverbs | -рей | **пщэдей**, tomorrow (productive) | **пщэдейрей**, tomorrows |

### Most common adjective suffixes

Circassian has many suffixes that may be used to form adjectives. Below are a few examples of the most common, along with a description of their meaning.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Suffix | Meaning | Example |
| -щIэ | new or young | **ЩIалэщIэ** young boy |
| -жь | old | **ЩIалэжь** old boy |
| -шхуэ | big | **ЩIалэшхуэ** big boy |
| -ншэ | lacking | **акъылыншэ** mindless (stupid) |
| -Iуэ | too much | **хуабэIуэ** too hot |
| -бзэ | totally | **фIыцIабзэ** (utterly) pitch black |

### Note on the adjective big in Circassian

In Circassian, the adjective big may be expressed through a suffix (-**шхуэ**) or as a stand-alone adjective: **ин**.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ЩIалэр инщ. | The boy is big. |
| Ар щIалэшхуэщ. | He is a big boy. |

At first glance, this might seem confusing, but here is a simple rule of thumb to determine which adjective form of big to use:

* When the noun appears by itself, use **ин**
* When the noun is joined by a pronoun, use -**шхуэ**

In the first example above, “**ЩIалэр инщ**,” the word boy (**щIалэ**) appears all by itself, so we use the adjective **ин**.

In the second example, “**Ар щIалэшхуэщ**,” the word boy (**щIалэ**) is joined by the pronoun he (**ар**), so we use the suffixal adjective form of big, which is -**шхуэ**.

### Prefixial adjectives in Circassian

Prefixial adjectives are not common in Circassian. The least uncommon form of prefixial adjectives makes use of the prefixes **мы**- and **пэ**-.

Of these, **мы**- is the simpler prefix. It conveys the negative form of an adjective. For example:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Adjective | Negative form |
| **ин** - big | **мыин** - not big |
| **цыбэ** - hairy | **мыцыбэ** - not hairy |
| **пасэрей** - ancient | **мыпасэрей** - not ancient |
| **закъуэ** - lonely | **мызакъуэ** - not lonely |

The prefix **пэ**- is less straight forward. It may convey the direction, distance, or reciprocity. The most common form of prefix is when it appears with the prefix **мы**- in the following adjective: **пэмыжыжьэ**. This translates roughly to: not far away from the current position.

The prefixal way of forming adjectives is not productive in Eastern Circassian language and is represented by a few prefixes only.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| къу- | **къуэху**, white-horned | Etymologically, horn and ху, white |
| тэ- | **тэху**, white | From adjective ху, white. |
| пэ- | **пэIэщIэ**, remote | From adjective IэщIэ, close. |

### Suffixal-prefixal adjectives

Suffixal-repfixal adjectives simply combine suffixes and prefixes:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| мыакъылыншэ | not stupid |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| мы-...ншэ мыакъылыншэ | Not muddle-headed, from the noun **акъыл**, mind, and others |

#### Estimating suffixes: NEED TO DEFINE THIS

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| -Iуэ | **хужьыIуэ**, whitish | From **хужь**, white |
| **фIыцIэIуэ**, blackish | From **фIыцIэ**, black |
| -бзэ | **Гъуэжьыбзэ**, totally yellow | From **гъуэжь**, yellow |
| -щэ | **Губзыгъащэ**, very wise, very smart | From **губзыгъэ**, smart |
| -шхуэ | **Инышхуэ**, very big | From **ин**, big |
| -жь | **Губзыгъэжь**, smart | From **губзыгъэ**, smart, and **жьы**, old (in the positive sense) |
| -жьы-шхуэ | **фIыцIэжьышхуэ**, big, black, clumsy | From **фIыцIэ**, black (in the pejorative sense) |

There are no dimunitive-affectionate suffixes in Eastern Circassian language. Meanings of such suffixes are transmitted by qualitative adjectives:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | цIыкIу | small | | угъурлы цIыкIу | kindly | |  | |  |  | | --- | --- | | дахэ цIыкIу | pretty/cute | | плъыжь цIыкIу | reddish | |

### Comparative and superlatives in Circassian adjectives

In many languages, adjectives come in comparative and superlative forms. This is just a fancy way of categorizing adjectives that compare one noun to another, as opposed to adjectives that declare one noun to be of the highest degree.

In the English language, the simplest example of comparatives and superlatives would be good / better / best.

Good is a regular adjective. It might describe a food – good food. Better is a comparative adjective, and it suggests that one type of food is superior to one other type of food – warm food is better than cold food.

Best is a superlative adjective, which declares one type of food to be superior to all other types of food. Circassian yogurt is the best food.

In Circassian, comparative adjectives require a bit of help from two related words – нэхъ and нэхърэ.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| А щӀалыр инщ. | That boy is big. |
| Ар щӀалэшхуэщ. | He is a big boy. |
| ЩӀалыр **нэхъ** инщ, хъыджэбзыр **нэхърэ**. | The boy is bigger than the girl. |
| А щӀалыр ин дыдэщ. | That boy is the biggest. |

The comparative degree is formed by the particles **нэхъ**, or by repetition of the same particle **нэхърэ** ... **нэхъ**. The particle **нэхъ** always stands before the adjective and **нэхърэ** stands before the noun, denoting the object that is compared with another object.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| нэхъ ин | Bigger |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| нэхъ хужь | Whiter |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| мо унэм нэхърэ мы унэр нэхъ инщ | This house is bigger than that house. |

The simple form of the superlative degree is formed by suffixes -**щэ**, -**бзэ**, and -**пс**.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| гъуэзэджащэ | The most wonderful. |
| дахащэ | The most beautiful. |
| фӀыцӀабзэ | The darkest. |
| плъыжьыпс | All red. |

The compound form of the superlative degree is formed by the particle **дыдэ**, the adverbial word икъукӀэ, and the combination of particles **нэхърэ нэхъ… дыдэ**.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| yдзыфэ дыдэ | Very green, totally green. |
| икъукӀэ лъэщ | Rather/very strong. |
| мы еджакӀуэр псом нэхърэ нэхъ лъэщ дыдэщ | This pupil is the best one/the strongest one. |

Comparatives and superlatives are special forms of adjectives. The simplest example of comparatives and superlatives in English is given below:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Good | The girl is good. |
| Better | The girl is better than the boy. |
| Best | The girl is the best athlete on the team. |

In the example above, good is a simple adjective that describes the girl. The adjective better is a comparative — it compares the girl to the boy in the sentence. The adjective best is a superlative — it demonstrates that the girl is the best athlete from among all others on the team.

In Circassian, comparative adjectives require a bit of help from two related words — **нэхъ.... нэхърэ**.

Notice that these two words share a common root: нэхъ. This word is a particle. We’ll be discussing particles more in-depth later. For the time being, all you need to know is that particles require other words to take meaning. For the purposes of this discussion, нэхъ is roughly the same as the suffix –er in English (e.g., big versus bigger).

### Comparative adjectives in Circassian

Comparative adjectives in Circassian compare one item to another. This may be done in two ways:

1. Item being compared is not in the sentence

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Ар нэхъ инщ. | He is bigger. |

This is a very simple example where he is being compared with someone or something else that does not appear in the sentence. In this case, we use the single word **нэхъ**.

1. Item being compared is in the sentence

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Ар нэхъ инщ, хьэм нэхърэ. | He is bigger than the dog. |

In this second example, the item to which he is compared (the dog) appears in the same sentence, so we use the related words **нэхъ.... нэхърэ**.

### More examples of adjective construction in Circassian

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Creates adjectives that mean: lacking in | | | |
| **–ншэ** | **Plus noun** |  |  |
| акъыл + **ншэ** | акъылы**ншэ** | mindless (stupid) |
| щхьэ + **ншэ** | щхьэ**ншэ** | Immoral |
| Iуэху + **ншэ** | Iуэху**ншэ** | Unemployed |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Creates adjectives that mean: in great quantity | | | |
| **–фIэ** | **Plus any word** |  |  |
| гуащIэ + **фIэ** | гуащIа**фIэ** | very sour |
| акъыл + **фIэ** | акъылы**фIэ** | Clever |
| щэн + **фIэ** | щэны**фIэ** | well brought up |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Creates adjectives that mean: without the presence of | | | |
| **–гуэ** | **Plus noun** |  |  |
| бзэ + **гуэ** | бза**гуэ** | Mute |
| къуэ + **гуэ** | къуа**гуэ** | Hornless |
| лъэ + **гуэ** | лъа**гуэ** | short-legged |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Creates adjectives that mean: difficulty with | | | |
| **–** **гъуей** | **Plus verb** |  |  |
| лъагъун + гъуей | лъагъугъуей | hard on the eyes |
| гъуэтын + гъуей | гъуэтыгъуей | rare |
| лажьэн + гъуей | лажьэгъуей | difficult |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Creates adjectives that mean: does it a lot | | | |
| **–рей** | **Plus verb** |  |  |
| псалъэ + **рей** | псалъэ**рей** | talker |
| гушыIэ + **рей** | гушыIэ**рей** | joker |
| къафэ + **рей** | къафэ**рей** | dancer (a lot) |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Creates adjectives that mean: often | | | |
| **–х** | **Plus verb** |  |  |
| укIытэ + **х** | укIытэ**х** | high strung |
| гупсысэ + **х** | гупсысэ**х** | nervous |
| щыгъупщэ + **х** | щыгъупщэ**х** | forgetful |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Creates adjectives that mean: possesses the quality of | | | |
| **–фэ** | **Plus a color** |  |  |
| яжьэ + **фэ** | яжьа**фэ** | ashen |
| гъуабжэ + **фэ** | гъуабжа**фэ** | yellowish |
| сырыху + **фэ** | сырыху**фэ** | blondish |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Creates adjectives that mean: so ugly it’s scary | | | |
| **–джэ** | **Plus noun** |  |  |
| сурэт + **джэ** | сурэты**джэ** | ghastly picture |
| фэ + **джэ** | фа**джэ** | decrepit skin |
| нэ + **джэ** | на**джэ** | ugly eyes |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Creates adjectives that mean: easily | | | |
| **–гъуафIэ** | **Plus noun** |  |  |
| лъагъу + **гъуафIэ** | лъагъу**гъуафIэ** | easy on the eyes |
| къащтэ + **гъуафIэ** | къащтэ**гъуафIэ** | easily obtainable |
| лажьэ + **гъуафIэ** | лажьэ**гъуафIэ** | easily worked |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Creates adjectives that mean: before/after | | | |
| **–и/–я** | **Plus noun** |  |  |
| **и** + пэ | **и**пэ | beginning to end |
| **я** + пэ | **я**пэ | first |
| **и** + ужь | **и**ужь | immediately (after |
| **я** + ужь | **я**ужь | afterwards |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Creates adjectives that mean: two alike | | | |
| **–зэпэ** | **Plus another adjective** |  |  |
| **зэпэ** + хъурей | **зэпэ**хъурей | both round |
| **зэпэ** + зэв | **зэпэ**зэв | both narrow |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Creates adjectives that mean: absence of | | | |
| **–** **мы** | **Plus verb** |  |  |
| **мы** + дахэ | **мы**дахэ | unattractive |
| **мы** + къабзэ | **мы**къабзэ | unclean |

### Relative adjectives

Relative adjectives in Eastern Circassian are few.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| нобэрей | today’s |
| пщэдейрей | tomorrow’s |
| нэгъабэрей | last year’s |

Such adjectives, as a rule, are of adverbial origin and are formed by suffix –**рей**. Another group of relative adjectives is formed by numerals.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| тӀаущӀэ | double |
| щащӀэ | triple |

There is also a small group of relative adjectives of pronoun origin.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| нэгъуэщӀ, модрей | other |
| адрей | another, that |

#### Examples of declension of qualitative adjectives.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Singular number | Plural number |
| Nominative | жыг лъагэ-р | жыг лъагэ-хэ-р |
| Ergative | жыг лъагэ-м | жыг лъагэ-хэ-м |
| Instrumental | жыг лъагэ-мкIэ жыг лъагэ-кIэ | жыг лъагэ-хэ-мкIэ жыг лъагэ-хэ-кIэ |
| Adverbial | жыг лъагэ-рауэ жыг лъагъэу | жыг лъагэ-хэ-рауэ жыг лъагэ-хэ-у |

#### Examples of declension of relative adjectives

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Singular number | Plural number |
| Nominative | Пщэдейрей пщэдейрей махуэ-р | пщэдейрей-хэ-р пщэдейрей махуэ-хэ-р |
| Ergative | пщэдейрей-м пщэдейрей махуэ-м | пщэдейрей-хэ-м пщэдейрей махуэ-хэ-м |
| Instrumental | пщэдейрей-мкIэ пщэдейрей махуэ-мкIэ пщэдейрей-кIэ  махуэ-кIэ |  |
| Adverbial | пщэдейрей-уэ пщэдейрей махуэ-рауэ пщэдейрей-у махуэ-ру |  |

## Adverbs

Adverbs are similar to adjectives in that they describe or modify other words. Whereas adjectives describe or modify nouns, adverbs describe or modify adjectives, verbs, or other adverbs.

In English, as a rule of thumb, adverbs are formed by adding the -ly suffix to adjectives.

In Circassian, as a rule of thumb, adverbs are formed by adding the suffixes -у and -уэ.

### Examples of adverb formation in Circassian

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | Adjective | Adverb |
| Suffix of -**у** | **псынщIэ**, fast | **псынщIэу**, quickly |
| **xуэм**, slow | **хуэму**, slowly |
| Suffix of -**уэ** | **фIы**, good | **фIыуэ**, well |
| **Iей**, bad | **Iейуэ**, poorly |

Adverbs show some feature of an action, feature of another side/feature, and rarely feature of the subject.

Prototypical adverbs include:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| нобэ | today |
| дыгъуасэ | yesterday |
| пщэдей | tomorrow |

Examples of derivative adverbs:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| дахэу | beautifully |
| псынщIэу | quickly |

Adverbs serve various functions:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Adverbs expressing a course of action | псынщIэу | Quickly |
| Iейуэ | badly |
| Adverbs of time | дыгъуасэ | yesterday |
| итIанэ | then |
| пщэдджыжь | tomorrow morning |
| Adverbs of place | ищIыIукIэ | from above |
| ищIагъкIэ | from below |
| Adverbs of reason | нэхейкIэ | in spite/defiance (of) |
| Adverbs of degree | икъукIэ | very |
| хуабжьу | strongly |
|  | very much |
| Adverbs of measure | тIэу, тIоней | two times |
| тхуэ, тхуэней | five times |
| хуэдитхукIэ | fivefold |

### How adverbs are formed

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| From qualitative adjectives | suffix –**у** || -**уэ** | лъагэ | high |
| лъагэу | high |
| бгъунж | crooked |
| бгъунжу | crookedly |
| дахэ | beautiful |
| дахэу | beautifully |
| фIы | good |
| фIыуэ | Good |
| From nouns | suffix -**кIэ** | махуэ | day |
| махуэкIэ | at day time/in the afternoon |
| From dependent possessive pronoun и | suffix -**кIэ** | щхьэ | up |
| ищхьэкIэ | above/on high |
| щIыIу | top |
| ищIыIукIэ | above something) |
| щIагъ | down |
| ищIагъкIэ | below/underneath/down(stairs) |
| From numerals | suffix -**э** | хы | six |
| хэ | six times |
| щы | three |
| щэ | three times |
| also have a parallel form with | suffix –**ней** | тIоней | twice |
| плIэ/-плIэней | four times |
| From cardinal numerals | suffix -**у**, -**уэ** | хъарбызхэр тхурытхуу гуэшащ | Watermelons are divided into five. |
| Repeating the roots of personal pronouns of 1st and 2nd person | suffixes -**р** and -**ру** | фэр-фэру | you yourself, independently |
| дэр-дэру | we ourselves, independently |
| From attributive pronoun | **езы** | езыр | himself |
| езыр-езыру | himself, independently |

**Note:**

* Roots of repeated numerals **тху** five are connected by the copulative syllable -**ры**-.
* The adverb **пщэдей** is used to form the word tomorrow **пщэдеймыщкIэ** (мыщкIэ – particle, etymologically - нэмыщIкIэ except).
* Adverb **вэсэмахуэ**, the day before yesterday, consists of archaic **вэсэ**- and **махуэ** day.

### Degrees of comparison of adverbs

Qualitative adverbs, as well as qualitative adjectives, have degrees of comparison. Adverbs have the same ways of expressing degrees of comparison as adjectives.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| сэ абы нэхърэ нэхъыфIу соджэ | I study better than him. |
| ар уэ нэхърэ нэхъ псынщIэу мэлажьэ | He works faster than you. |

Examples of superlative degree:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| еджакӀуэр къабзабзэу матхэ | The schoolboy writes clearly. |
| Дисэ гъуэзэджащэу мэлажьэ | Disa works very well. |
| ди еджапӀэм гъэ еджэгъуэр фIы дэдэу иухащ | Our school finished the school year in a very good way. |

Adverbs of comparative and superlative degrees always belong to the verb-predicate (look at the examples below). The same adverbs are used as predicates. In this case, they are formed by affix -щ.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ар зэреджэр фIыуэщ | He studies well. |
| ар зэреджэр фӀы дыдэущ | He/she studies very well. |

Adverbs can be declined like nouns.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| пщэдейр къос | Tomorrow is coming. |

(literal meaning: Tomorrow’s day is approaching.)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| пщэдейм дыпоплъэ | Tomorrow we expect |

(literal meaning: We’re expecting tomorrow’s day.)

Like any noun-predicate, adverb-predicates are formed by the verbal suffixes -щи -т.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| дэ дызыпэплъар нобэщ | We were expecting today. |

(literal meaning: We were expecting today’s day.)

Thus, in the cases above, adverbs can be coordinated with the predicate and noun by a personal prefix, but it has no tense indicators.

### Comparative and superlatives in Circassian adverbs

As with adjectives, adverbs may describe other words in comparative and superlative ways. In the case of comparatives, Circassian adverbs make use of the нэхъ.... нэхърэ structure previously discussed. Adverbs combine the нэхъ.... нэхърэ structure with the adverb suffixes, as demonstrated in the examples below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Сэ абы нэхърэ нэхъыфIу соджэ. | I study better than him. |
| Ар уэ нэхърэ нэхъ псынщIэу мэлажьэ. | He works more quickly than you. |

#### Comparative adverb examples

In contrast with comparative, superlatives in Circassian do not make use of the нэхъ.... нэхърэ structure.

#### Superlative adverb examples

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ЕджакIуэр къабзабзэу матхэ | The student writes most neatly. |
| Дисэ гъуэзэджащэу мэлажьэ. | Disa works most exquisitely. |

### Apposition

Apposition is a grammatical construction in which two elements, normally noun phrases, are placed side by side, with one element serving to identify the other in a different way. In Circassian, apposition is limited, but it does exist. In most cases, it is expressed by nouns and is related to personal pronouns. Such appositions in the sentence can be separated by commas, depending on intonation, but in most cases they are not:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| дэ зэныбжьэгъухэр дызэдэIэпыкъухэу дызэдеджащ | We, friends, studied, helping each other. |

(Зэныбжьэгъухэр, apposition, is related to the personal pronoun дэ.)

### Adverbial Modifiers

In Eastern Circassian, there are adverbial modifiers of manner, place, time, cause, purpose, and measure.

#### Adverbial Modifier of Manner

Adverbial modifier of manner indicates the general way an action happens; it shows the quality of an action.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Mainly adverbs and gerunds act as adverbial modifiers of manner. | | |
| лIыжьыр псынщIэу къызэфIэувэри ихъуреягъкIэ зиплъыхьащ | The old man straightened quickly and looked around. | Adverbial modifier of manner- qualitative adverb псынщIэу is related to predicate **къызэфIэувэри**. |
| хадэ щIэгъуэм ар хьэмфIанэ иIыгъыу сыт щыгъуи лажьэрт | During the weeding, he was always working with hoe in his hands (keeping hoe in his hands). | Adverbial modifier of manner — verbal adverb **иIыгъыу** is related to predicate **лажьэрт**. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Adverbial modifier of manner can be expressed by a noun standing in an adverbial case. | | |
| шу цIыкIур шэуэ блэлъэтри ежьэжащ | The small horserider flew past like a bullet and disappeared. | Adverbial modifier **шэуэ** is related to predicate **блэлъэтри**. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Adverbial modifiers of manner can be expressed also by a combination of words, such as verbal adverb and adverb forms. | | |
| джэд гъэвар ныкъуэ-ныкъуэу зэпатхъыурэ яшхырт | They were eating the boiled chicken, breaking it into pieces. | Adverbial modifier of manner — combination of adverb **ныкъуэ**-**ныкъуэу** and verbal adverb **зэпатхъыурэ** is related to predicate яшхырт). |

Syntactic relations between adverbial modifiers of manner and other parts of the sentence

Adverbial modifiers of manner is an adjoining part, and, as a rule, doesn’t correspond to predicates and other parts of speech. However, there are cases when adverbial modifiers go with the subject.

Adverbial modifiers of manner impact the main parts of the sentence when expressed by a verbal adverb. As for the adverbial modifier of manner-adverb doesn’t go with other parts of the sentence but adjoins the predicate or additional predicate-verbal adverb, which is, in turn, a part of the adverbial modifier.

The characteristic trait of adverbial modifiers of manner is the presence of affixes у || уэ or урэ || уэрэ.

#### Adverbial Modifier of Place

Adverbial modifiers of place mean different spatial relations between subjects. They’re expressed by nouns, participles and some forms of demonstrative adverbs and have a number of meanings:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Adverbial modifier of place: | | |
| Къэнокъуэхэ я къуажэр Псыжь адрыщIкIэ къыщыст | Kanokovs village was located behind the river Psizh. | Adverbial modifier of place- noun **адрыщIкIэ** is related to predicate **къыщыст**. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Adverbial modifier of place, with the meaning of direction of the action: | | |
| шу закъуэм мэзымкIэ иунэтIащ | The lonely horserider went in the direction of the forest. | Adverbial modifier of place-noun **мэзым** is related to predicate **иунэтIащ**. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Adverbial modifier of place, with the meaning of initial point of action: | | |
| хъыбарыр щызэхихым, щIалэщIэр къалэм къикIыжащ | Having heard the story, the youth returned from the town. | Adverbial modifier of place- noun **къалэм** is related to predicate **къикIыжащ**. |
| ныджэмкIэ зэрыгъэкIий макъ къыщоIу | From the side of the bank a shout is heard. | Adverbial modifier of place ныджэмкIэ is related to predicate къыщоIу. |

The analysis of the examples shows that adverbial modifiers of place can be of two case forms in the sentences: ergative or instrumental. In most cases, predicates, which have adverbial modifiers, are formed by prefixes of place, like **дэ**-, **щIэ**-, **щIы**-, **щы**.

#### Adverbial Modifier of Time

Adverbial modifiers of time are used to specify the relation of an action to time, or to specify the time relations between subjects. They convey several meanings:

* Duration of an action
* Limiting moment
* Initial moment of an action
* Confinement to some period

Adverbial modifiers of place can be expressed by an adverb, verbal adverb, or a noun.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| си анэм жэщым игъэжьа гъуэмылэр пщэдджыжьым къэлътмакъ зэпедзэкIым ирилъхьэри къулъшыкъум деж, хэкIуэтауэ гъуэмылэр мэкъум схьынусежьащ | My mother, having prepared/baked gomilo (bread) at night, she put into the bag, and I, late, after the sunrise went to haymaking. |

In this sentence, an adverbial modifier of time expressed by the adverb **жэщым** is related to attribute-particple **игъэжьа**.

The second adverbial modifier, **пщэдджыжьым**, is expressed by the same part of speech and is related to predicate **ирилъхъэри**.

The third adverbial modifier is expressed by a noun, **къулъшыкъум**, in combination with the postposition **деж**, and is related to the predicate **сежьащ**.

The fourth adverbial modifier is expressed by a verbal gerund, **хэкIуэтауэ**, and is related to the same predicate, to which belongs the last but one adverbial modifier.

They all have suffix -**м**, which is a typical indicator of time.

Sometimes it may not be formed by this affix:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Adverbial modifier of time | | |
| бгырысхэр ныщхьэбэ къэсыжащ | The mountaineers arrived todays evening. | Adverbial modifier of place — adverb **ныщхьэбэ** is related to predicate **къэсыжащ**. |

Such form of adverbial modifier of time is more characteristic to adverbial words. Adverbial modifier of time can be expressed also by collocation:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| абы щыгъуэ сэ еханэ классым сыщеджэрт | That time I was studying in the sixth grade. | Adverbial modifier of time is expressed by combination of demonstrative adverb **абы** and postpositional word **щыгъуэ** and is related to predicate **сыщеджэрт**. |

#### Adverbial Modifiers of Cause

Adverbial modifiers of cause express the cause of an action. It can be expressed by a noun, participle, infinitive, by postpositions **папщIэ**, **щхьэкIэ**, **къыхэкIкIэ**, **ипкъ иткIэ**, and combination of words.

Adverbial modifiers of cause, expressed by nouns, participles, and infinitives, with the help of postpositions:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| лIыхъужьыгъэм къыхэкIыу ар и гъусэхэм псынщIэу къацIыхуащ | Due to his bravery he was quickly recognised by his fellow travelers. | Adverbial modifier of cause is expressed by noun **лIыхъужьыгъэм**, and by postposition **къыхэкIыуи**, which is related to predicate **къацIыхуащ**. |
| си ныбжьэгъур къызэрызэджам щхьэкIэ сыкIуэн хуей хъуащ | As my friend called me, I had to go. | Adverbial modifier of cause - participle **къызэрызэджам** with postposition **щхьэкIэ** is related to predicate **сыкIуэн хуей хъуащ.** |
| фIыуэ зэреджам щхьэкIэ ар Мэзкуу экскурс ягъэкIуащ | For his good study he was sent to an excursion to Moscow. | Adverbial modifier of cause - partciple **зареджам** with postposition **щхьэкIэ** is related to predicate **ягъэкIуащ**. |
| псалъэреиным къыхэкIыу ар и ныбжьэгъухэм фIы дыдэу къалъагъуртэкъым | Because of his garrulity, friends didn’t like him that much. | Adverbial modifier of cause is expressed by infinitive **псалъэреиным** with the help of postposition **къыхэкIыу** and is related to predicate **фIы дыдэу къалъагъуртэкъым**. |

These sentences show that nouns, playing the role of adverbial modifiers of case, take the form of Ergative case. Postpositions **папщIэкIэ**, **щхьэкIэ** are used also without affix-**кIэ**, postpositions **къыхэкIкIэ**, **ипкъ** **иткIэ** can be ended with -**у** instead of -**кIэ**.

Expressing the adverbial modifier of cause by combinations of nouns with possessive pronouns:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| гъуэгурыкIуэгъу щIалэм и фIыгъэкIэ абы къищIащ къыпэщылъ шынагъуэр | Due to the young fellow traveller he got to know about the danger, awaiting for him. | Adverbial modifier of cause is expressed by combination of noun **фIыгъэкIэ** and dependent possessive pronoun and is related to predicate **къищIащ**. |
| ди жэрдэмкIэ абыхэм я къалэныр нэхъ псынщIэу ягъэзэщIащ | Due to our help (initiative) they managed to do their job in a good way. | Adverbial modifier of cause is expressed by combination of noun **жэрдэмкIэ** and possessive pronoun **ди** and is related to predicate **ягъэзэщIащ**. |

#### Adverbial Modifier of Purpose

An adverbial modifier of purpose is a secondary part of sentence, meaning purpose, for which the action happens, being expressed by a predicate. It can be expressed by nouns, participles, infinitives (in combination with postposition and without them), and also by combination of dependent possessive pronouns and nouns.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Adverbial modifier of purpose expressed by a noun with the help of postpositions | | |
| щхьэкIэ and папщIэ: абы и чысэм щхъэкIэ игъэзэжащ | He came back home because of his pouch. | Adverbial modifier of purpose-combination of noun **чысэ** and postposition **щхъэкIэ** belongs to predicate **игъэзэжащ**. |
| а Iуэхум папщIэ сыкIуагъат сэ абы и деж | I went to him because of this issue. | Adverbial modifier of purpose-combination of noun **Iуэхум** and postposition **папщIэ** is related to predicate **сыкIуагъат**. |

As can be seen, adverbial modifiers of purpose are formed the same way, as adverbial modifiers of cause.

Adverbial modifiers of purpose are expressed by combination of dependent possessive pronoun and a noun:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Adverbial modifier of purpose expressed by a combination of dependent possessive pronoun and a noun: | | |
| ар си мураду сыкъеблэгъат, Сэтэней | Having this purpose, I came to you, Satanay. | The adverbial modifier of purpose is **expressed** by a combination of noun мураду and a dependent possessive pronoun **си** and is related to predicate **сыкъеблэгъат**. Noun, which is a part of adverbial combination of such type, always has affix -**у**. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Adverbial modifier of purpose expressed by infinitive form with the help of postpositions: | | |
| папщIэ and щхьэкIэ: услъагъун папщIэ мыбы нэс сыкъэкIуащ | I came here to see you. | Adverbial modifier of purpose - infinitive **услъагъун** with postposition **папщIэ** is related to predicate **сыкъэкIуащ**. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Adverbial modifier of purpose expressed by non-postpositional form of the infinitive with affix -у: | | |
| я Iыхьлыхэм я деж махуэ зытIущкIэ щыхьэщIэхэри ахэр къэкIуэжыну къежъэжащ | After guesting at their relatives for a few days, they’ve left. | Adverbial modifier of purpose - infinitive **къэкIуэжыну** is related to **къежъэжащ**. |

#### Adverbial modifier of Measure and Degree

Adverbial modifier of Measure and Degree shows duration, repeatedness of an action, and the degree of displaying of the action. Its expressed by adverbs:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| ар сэ икъукIэ куэдрэ къыспэплъащ | He was waiting for me for quite a long time. | Adverbial modifier of measure and degree **икъукIэ куэдрэ** is related to predicate **къыспэплъащ**. |

## Verbs

A verb is a word that describes an action, occurrence, or state of being.

In Circassian, verbs change slightly based on who or what is doing the action; who or what is receiving the action, and when the action takes place. Conjugation is a fancy way of describing these changes, and, like many languages, Circassian is rich in verb conjugation.

Verbs are at the heart of the Circassian language, and many verbs have a rather peculiar characteristic—they convey much of the information that is normally delivered in a typical sentence. Here, an example is helpful.

English is well known for its irregular verbs and vague grammar; comedian Carl Marx once illustrated this fact with the following statement:

“I once shot an elephant in my pajamas. What he was doing wearing my pajamas, I will never know!”

In the first part of this statement, the reader assumes that Carl was wearing his pajamas while shooting the elephant. This is the most logical interpretation, and unless Carl was very large or the elephant very tiny, this is the only possible scenario in which the sentence makes sense.

Thanks to the vague nature of English grammar, however, the second part of the statement demonstrates that from a grammatical perspective, it is unclear who was wearing the pajamas—Carl or the elephant.

Circassian may be a complex language, but there are no such vague statements possible given its grammatical structure. This is largely due to the ergative case (covered previously) and the nature of verbs.

In Circassian, when verbs are properly conjugated, they are assigned prefixes that explain exactly who is doing the action, who is receiving the action, and when the action takes place. Verbs also dictate how and when the ergative case is applied, and require a suffix applied to each noun further clarifying who or what is doing, and who or what is receiving, the action.

In Circassian, verbs may be categorized into the following groups:

* Verb types
* Verb tenses
* Verb moods

### Summary of Circassian verbs

In Circassian, verbs may be categorized into the following groups.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Description | | |
| Types | Ӏ. Dynamic verbs | Conveys action |
| 2. Stative verbs | Describe state of being |
| 3. Transitive verbs | Have a direct object |
| 4. Intransitive verbs | No direct object |
| 5. Reflexive verbs | Speaker is direct object |
| Tenses | Ӏ. Simple Past | Happened in the past |
| 2. Past Continuous | Interrupted in the past |
| 3. Past Perfect | Happened before something else in the past |
| 4. Simple Present | Happening now |
| 5. Simple Future | Will happen in the future |
| 6. Future Continuous | Will happen in the immediate future |
| 7. Future Conditional | May happen in the future |
| Moods | Ӏ. Indicative | Assertion or denial |
| 2. Imperative | Command or prohibition |
| 3. Interrogative | Expresses a question |
| 4. Subjunctive | Hypothetical |
| 5. Concessive | Concession |
| 6. Potential | Likely to occur |
| 7. Desirable | Wish or desire |
| 8. Surprise | Amazement |

### Circassian verb types

Circassian verbs fall into five types. None of these are unique to Circassian, and they include the following:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Verb types | Description |
| Ӏ. Dynamic verbs | Convey action |
| 2. Stative verbs | Describe state of being |
| 3. Transitive verbs | Have a direct object |
| 4. Intransitive verbs | No direct object |
| 5. Reflexive verbs | Speaker is direct object |

* Dynamic verbs

Also referred to as “action verbs,” dynamic verbs relate to activities or processes. Examples of dynamic verbs include walk, run, work, play. In each case, the example verbs represent an action a person can take.

* Stative verbs

Stative verbs relate to situations or states of being. Examples of stative verbs include happy, sad, to like, to know.

* Transitive verbs

Transitive verbs take direct objects in the sentences in which they appear, whereas intransitive verbs do not. This is just a fancy way of saying that transitive verbs transfer their action to a recipient, while intransitive verbs do not. For example:

* + I write a book. - Transitive verb
  + I sleep. - Intransitive verb

In the first example above, the verb write is being done to a book. The action of writing is being transferred to the book, so the verb is transitive.

In the second example, the verb sleep does not transfer any action. It is impossible for the verb sleep to transfer its action to something or someone else.

It should be noted that verbs may switch between transitive and intransitive uses. For example, in the sentence I write, there is no direct object receiving the action of the verb. In this case, write is intransitive.

Verbs may also fall into the categories of dynamic and static. Dynamic verbs are sometimes referred to as “action verbs,” and describe actions we can take or things that can happen. They are dynamic because once their action is done, something has changed. Static verbs usually refer to a state or condition that is not changing or likely to change. This is less complicated than it might sound, and the examples below will demonstrate how simple this concept really is.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Dynamic verbs | Type of action | Examples |
| Play | Activity | He plays the accordion every night. |
| She is playing the accordion right now. |
| Melt | Process | Snow melts when the temperature rises. |
| The snow is melting right now. |
| Hit | Momentary action | She hit me and now I am injured. |
| The marksman hit the bullseye. |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Static verbs | Type of action | Examples |
| Hate | Perception | He hates chocolate ice cream. |
| I hate it when it gets cold. |
| Have | Relation | I have a big brother. |
| I have nice memories of my childhood. |
| Think | Cognition | I think summer is wonderful. |
| I think sports are fun. |

In each of the examples above, the patterns are clear. The action of dynamic verbs brings a state of change into the world. Music is heard; snow disappears; an injury is received, or a bullseye is struck. Static verbs, however, do not bring any change into the world. In each case above, of course, it is possible for a change to occur, but this would require another verb to bring about that change; the static verb on its own does not bring about any change.

Dynamic verbs are unique in that the present tense—in all three tenses—has prefix о-:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| сопIыщIэр | I’m cold. (-**р**, a facultative suffix) |
| допIащIэр | We’re in a hurry. |
| фолажьэр | You’re working. |

Past and future tense verbs are not distinguished into static and dynamic. Static verbs do not have the facultative affix –**р**, but have affirmative suffix -**щ**:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| сэ сыщылъщ | I’m lying. |

#### Transitive and intransitive verbs

Transitive verbs are those words that deliver their action to a second party. Intransitive verbs are words that do not and cannot deliver their action to a second party.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Example of a transitive verb in a sentence: | I wrote my name. |
| Example of an intransitive verb in a sentence: | The little boy stood. |

In the first example, the verb is to write, which is conjugated as wrote. The verb delivers its action to my name. This is a transitive verb.

In the second example, the verb is to stand, which is conjugated as stood. The verb of standing cannot deliver its action to a second party, and there is no way to construct a sentence that does this.

Transitive verbs show that the action of the subject (in ergative case) transfers to the object (in nominative case). For example:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| студентым тхылъыр иджащ | The student studied the book. |

In this sentence, the subject stands in ergative case, while the direct object is in nominative case.

All transitive verbs are polipersonal (multipersonal). They always form ergative construction of the sentence. With intransitive verbs, the subject stands in nominative case, while the object has a form of indirect case:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| студентыр тхылъым йоджэ | The student is reading the book. |
| сэ кином сеплъащ | I’ve watched the movie. |

Unlike transitive verbs, intransitive verbs can be monopersonal:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| щIалэр матхэ | The boy is writing. |

and polipersonal:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| сэ тхылъым сеплъащ | I’ve looked at the book. |

Any intransitive verb can become transitive by adding the causative prefix **гъэ**- or **гъа**-:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| мэкъумэшыр губгъуэм макIуэ | The peasant goes to the field. |
| мэкъумэшым гур губгъуэм егъакӀуэ | The peasant sends the bullock-cart to the field. |

As in the above examples, the subject of the first sentence, **мэкъумэш**, becomes an object in the second sentence.

Transitive verbs can unintentionally become intransitive through the prefix IэщIэ-:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| хьэм бажэр итхьэлащ (итхьэлащ - transitive) | The dog smothered the fox. |
| хьэм бажэр IэщIэтхьэлыхьащ (IэщIэтхьэлыхьащ- intransitive) | The dog smothered the fox by accident. |

#### Circassian verb tenses

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Verb tense | Description | Example |
| Ӏ. Simple Past | Happened in the past  Simple Past is used for actions that started and finished at a specified time in the past. | I went to work.  **Сэ лэжьапӀэм сыкӀуащ.** |
| 2. Past Continuous | Interrupted in the past  Past Continuous is used for longer actions in the past that were interrupted by shorter actions. The shorter actions are usually Simple Past. | I was going to work when you called me.  **Сэ лэжьапӀэм сыкӀуэт, си телефоным укъыщеуам.** |
| 3. Past Perfect | Happened before something else in the past  Past Perfect expresses the idea that one action occurred before another action in the past. | I had gone to work when you arrived at my house.  **Сэ лэжьапlэм сыкӀуат уэ си унэм укъыщыlухьам**. |
| 4. Simple Present | Happening now  Simple Present applies to actions taking place now (or with no specified time). | I go to work/I am going to work.  **Сэ лэжьапӀэм сокӀуэ.** |
| 5. Simple Future | Will happen in the future  Simple Future is used for actions that will take place at an unspecified time in the future. This tense expresses factual certainty. | I will go to work.  **Сэ лэжьапӀэм сыкӀуэнущ.** |
| 6. Future Continuous | Will happen in the immediate future  Future Continuous specifies that an action will take place in the immediate future and will continue to occur. | I am going to go to work.  **Сэ лэжьапӀэм сыкӀуэнщ.** |
| 7. Future Conditional | May happen in the future  Future Conditional applies to actions that may occur or stand contrary to factual certainty. | Had I gone to work, I would not be home.  **Сэ лэжьапӀэм сыкӀуэнут.** |

#### Circassian verb moods

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Moods | Description |
| Ӏ. Indicative | Assertion or denial |
| 2. Imperative | Command or requests |
| 3. Interrogative | Express a question |
| 4. Subjunctive | Hypothetical |
| 5. Concessive | Concession |
| 6. Potential | Likely to occur |
| 7. Desirable | Wish or desire |

* Indicative Mood

This mood asserts that an action is definitely taking place or conveys that it will not or has not taken place. Verbs in this mood may appear with no suffix, a suffix of –**щ**, or a suffix of –**къым**.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Example | Conveys | Suffix |
| **Унэм сощӀэс.** I am at home. | Conveys a fact | - |
| **НтӀэ, унэм сощӀэсщ** Yes, I am at home. | Affirms a question | –**щ** |
| **Унэм сыщӀэкъым.** I am not at home. | Negative verb form | –**къым** |

In some cases, the Indicative Mood also uses the affix –**мы** to convey negation, as in the example below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Example | Conveys | Suffix |
| **СощӀэ.** I know. | Conveys a fact | - |
| **СщӀэркъым.** I do not know. | Negative verb form | –**къым** |
| **Уей сымыщӀэ** I really do not know. | Negative verb form | –**мы** |

* Imperative Mood

This mood expresses commands, requests, or advice. It may also be used to convey invigoration, surprise, or possibility.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Example | Conveys |
| **Къеджэт а тхылъым.** Read the book. | Command |
| **КхъыӀэ, паркым дыгъакIуэт.** Please, let’s go to the park. | Request/advice |
| **ИӀэт, иӀэт, хэкъузэт!** Come on, come on, push it! | Invigoration |
| **Мыдэ къакIуэт... еплъыт** Hey, come here… look! | Surprise |
| **ЛӀыгъэ уиӀэм, адыгэ хабзэр гъэзащӀэт!** If you have the courage, live by Circassian ethics! | Possibility |

Verbs in this mood are not governed by any well-defined set of rules, but they are typically easy to pick out. Most people understand when they are being given a command or some sense of urgency.

Despite the lack of well-defined rules for the Imperative Mood, many verbs in this mood take the following affixes: **pe**, –**ире**, or –**гъэ**, as in the examples below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Example | Affix |
| **ДырекIуэ**. Let us be the ones who will go. | –**pe** |
| **Ирелажьэ**. Let it be him who does the work. (Put him to work.) | –**ире** |
| **КхъыӀэ, паркым дыгъакIуэт.** Please, let’s go to the park. | –**гъэ** |

Negation in the Imperative Mood borrows the same affix –**мы** that the Indicative Mood uses, as demonstrated below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Example | Affix |
| **КIуэ** Go! | –**pe** |
| **УмыкIуэ** Don’t go! | –**мы** |

* Interrogative Mood

This mood expresses questions. In Circassian, questions may be conveyed in three ways:

* + Through intonation
  + Through suffixes
  + Through particles
* Interrogative Mood through intonation

As in English, it is possible to switch statements to questions by changing a sentence’s intonation. Intonation is just a fancy way to describe the rise and fall of stress or accent when words are pronounced. For example:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| This is a boy. | Мыр щӀалэ. |
| This is a boy? | Мыр щӀалэ? |

* Interrogative Mood through suffixes or particles

In the present tense, verbs in the Interrogative Mood take the following suffixes: –**рэ**, –**къэ**, –**уи** as in the following table.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Example | Suffix |
| **Ар иджыри еджэрэ?** Is he still studying? | –**рэ** |
| **Уэ лэжьэн щIэбдзэркъэ?** Have you started working? | –**къэ** |
| **Уэ укIуэуи?** Are you really going? | –**уи** |

In the past tense, verbs in the Interrogative Mood take the following suffixes: –**а**, –**уи** as in the table below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Example | Suffix |
| **Уэ музейм ущыIа?** Were you at the museum? | –**а** |
| **Ар абы жиIауи?** Did he really say that? | –**уи** |

In the future tense, verbs in the Interrogative Mood take the suffixes: –**у**, –**уи**, or make use of the particle **пӀэрэ**, as in the table below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Example | Suffix |
| **Пщэдей лэжьэн щӀэвдзэну?** Are you starting work tomorrow? | –**у** |
| **Уэ ар пхуэзэфIэмыкӀынуи?** Are you really able to do that? | –**уи** |
| **КъэкIуэжыну пӀэрэ?** Do you think she’ll come back? | **пӀэрэ** |

* Subjunctive Mood

This mood expresses a wish or hypothetical and is contrary to reality. In Circassian, the Subjunctive Mood is used to express situations where:

* + Something is desired that is not in reality.

**Example**: I wish it were Tuesday.

* + Something is desired that is the opposite to reality.

**Example**: I wish I were taller.

* + Something may happen in the future.

**Example**: If I study Circassian, I will be able to speak it.

* + It may be possible for the speaker to be able to do something.

**Example**: I am able to speak Circassian.

In Circassian, the Subjunctive Mood is achieved through the use of several suffixes, as described in the following table.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Suffix | Conveys |
| –**ф** | The ability to do something |
| –**мэ** | Whether something will take place |
| –**тэмэ** | A condition if something had taken place in the future |

The use of these suffixes are illustrated in the examples below.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Example | Usage | Suffix |
| СокӀуэ… | I go… | - |
| СокӀуэф… | I am able to go… | –**ф** |
| СыкӀумэ… | If I go… | –**мэ** |
| СыкӀуатэмэ… | If I had gone… | –**тэмэ** |

It should be noted that it is possible to combine Subjunctive Mood suffixes with one another, as well as to combine them with verb tenses previously covered.

* Concessive Mood

This mood conveys the notion of although or in spite of; verbs in this mood make a concession to another verb.

Verbs express the Concessive Mood by two means:

* + Through the suffixes –**ми**, –**тэми**
  + Through the particle **пэтми**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Example | Suffix |
| **Дунейр хуабэми, щIыр иджыри щӀыӀэщ.** Though it is warm, the soil is still cold. | –**ми** |
| **Ар къэмысыжатэми, дэ зэфIэдгъэкӀыфынт.** Even though he didn’t arrive, we still managed to do it. | –**тэми** |
| **Уэшх къемышха пэтми, щӀыр псыӀэщ.** Although it didn’t rain, it’s still humid. | **пэтми** |

* Potential Mood

This mood indicates that something is likely or may occur. Most often, the notion that something is likely to occur is conveyed through the suffix –**гъэн**, while the notion that something may occur is conveyed through the particle **пIэрэ**, typically in question form.

Forms of this mood are also created with the help of auxiliary verbs **хъун** and **къыщӀэкӀын**.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Example |  |
| **Ар къэкIуэжагъэнщ.** He’ll probably come back. | –**гъэн** |
| **ЩӀалэр къэсыжыну пӀэрэ?** Do you think the boy will return? | **пӀэрэ** |
| **Мэжид нобэ лэжьакIуэ щыIэ хъунщ.** Perhaps Mazhid is at work today. | **хъунщ** |
| **ЩӀалэр пщэдей къэсыжыну къыщӀэкӀынщ.** Perhaps the boy will return tomorrow. | **къыщӀэкӀын** |

Verbs with these auxiliary verbs are used in all tenses. Negative moods of probability is expressed with the negative suffix –**къым**:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Ар абы жиIа хъункъым. | Perhaps he didn’t say that. |

* Desirable Mood

This mood expresses a wish or desire for an action to take place and is achieved through the use of the following suffixes: –**арэт**, –**щэрэт**, –**кӀэт**, and; –**акlэрэт**.

* Surprise Mood

This mood expresses surprise or amazement and is achieved through the use of the –**и** suffix.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Сэ нобэ зы мыщэ слъэгъуащи! | (Oh my!) Today I saw a bear! |

#### Infinitive form

In Circassian, infinitive is a special verb form that has both noun and verb features. Infinitive verbs are formed from the imperative mood with the help of special affix -н.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | тхы | write | | жыIэ | say | | тэдж | stand up | |  | |  |  | | --- | --- | | тхын | to write | | жыIэн | to say | | тэджын | to stand up | |

Infinitive verbs can mean an action or condition.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| лэжьэн | To work |
| щысын | To sit |

Infinitive verbs can have both transitive and intransitive meanings.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| шхын | To eat (that) |
| шхэн | To eat (generally) |

The plural number of 3rd person is expressed in infinitive by suffix -**хэ**. Literal translations:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| еджэнхэ | They to study. |
| жэнхэ | They to run. |

Infinitives can also be conjugated. Here is an example of conjugation of the verb **тхэн**, to write.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Nominative | тхэн |
| Ergative | тхэным |
| Instrumental | тхэнкIэ || тхэнымкIэ |
| Adverbial | тхэну |

#### Finite and non-finite verbs

The main, independent action of the verb is expressed in finite form.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| щIалэр къэсыжакIэщ | The boy has already arrived. |

Finite verbs have both positive and negative forms; the positive form is characterized by the presence of affixes.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| -**щ:** | сэ сыщысщ | I’m sitting. |
| мэкъур щылъщ | The hay is lying. |  |
| -т: | a mlyp зэпсалъэрт | Those two were talking to each other. |

Verbs in finite form can affix –**р** in the end and particle:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| къэ: ар мажэр | He’s running. |
| сэ ар сщIэртэкъэ? | Didn’t I know that? |

Non-finite verbs, unlike the finite ones, mean incompleteness of the statement. They include:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Forms | Suffix | Example | English Version |
| Forms of conditional mood | -**мэ**, -**кIэ** | ар лажьэ-**мэ** | If he works. |
| абы щыжиIэ-**кIэ** | If he says so. |
| Forms of concessive mood | -**ми** | еджэ-**ми** | Although he studies |
| сыхуэ-за-**ми** | Although I met (him/her) |
| Verb forms with | -**ху**, -**хукIэ** | сыщIыхьэ**хукIэ** | Before I go into that place/enter there. |
| сынэсы**ху** | Before I reach that place/there. |

The negative form of finite verbs is formed by къым:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ар еджэркъым | He isn’t studying. |

The negative form of non-finite verbs is expressed with the prefix -мэ:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| уэ умыкIуэмэ, сэри сыкIуэркъым | If you won’t go, I’m not going either. |
| абы зыри къыжьэдэмыкIыу щытт | He was standing, saying nothing. |

### Verb Tense

There are three main tenses in Eastern Circassian language: present, past, and future.

#### Present Tense

Verbs in present tense show an action which coincides with the moment of speech.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Даринэ йоджэ | Darina is studying. |

It can also have a meaning of an action constantly happening:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Бахъсэн Тэрк хохуэ | Bakhsan flows into Terek. |

Present tense verbs in the 1st and 2nd person is characterized by the prefix -**o**- (positive form).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Transitive verbs | |
| Сэ грамматикэр содж | I’m studying grammar. |
| Уэ грамматикэр уодж | You’re studying grammar. |
| Абы грамматикэр едж | He/she/it is studying grammar. |
| Дэ грамматикэр додж | We’re studying grammar. |
| Фэ грамматикэр фодж | You’re studying grammar. (plural) |
| Абыхэм грамматикэр ядж, | They’re studying grammar. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Verb Form | Prefix |
| 3rd person singular | prefix -**е**- |
| 3rd person plural | prefix -**я** |
| 3rd person singular negative | prefix **и**- |
| 3rd person singular positive | prefix **я**- |

The negative form of transitive verbs in all three persons of the present time has no special indicator of time.

These verbs in all three persons are formed by negative suffix къым-, and the suffix р- should be used before this suffix.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Сэ грамматикэр зджы**ркъым** | I’m not studying grammar. |
| Уэ грамматикэр бджы**ркъым** | You’re not studying grammar. |
| Абы грамматикэр иджы**ркъым** | He/she/it is not studying grammar. |
| Дэ грамматикэр дджы**ркъым** | We’re not studying grammar. |
| Фэ грамматикэр фджы**ркъым** | You’re not studying grammar. (plural) |
| Абыхэм грамматикэр яджы**ркъым** | They’re not studying grammar. |

##### Multipersonal intransitive verbs

Unlike monopersonal impersonal verbs, multipersonal intransitive verbs in 3rd person of both singular and plural use the prefix -**о**-.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| сэ тхылъым соджэ | I’m reading the book. |
| уэ тхылъым уоджэ | You’re reading the book. |
| ар тхылъым йоджэ | He’s reading the book. |
| дэ тхылъым доджэ | We’re reading the book. |
| фэ тхылъым фоджэ | You’re reading the book. (plural) |
| ахэр тхылъым йоджэ (йоджэхэр) | They’re reading the book. |

The negative form of multipersonal intransitive verbs is characterized by the presence of prefix -**е**- in all three persons, both plural and singular. These verbs are also formed by suffixes -**р**- and -**къым**.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| сэ тхылъым седжэ**ркъым** | I’m not reading the book. |
| уэ тхылъым уеджэ**ркъым** | You’re not reading the book. |
| ар тхылъым еджэ**ркъым** | He/she’s not reading the book. |
| дэ тхылъым деджэ**ркъым** | We’re not reading the book. |
| фэ тхылъым феджэ**ркъым** | You’re not reading the book. (plural) |
| ахэр тхылъым еджэ**ркъым** (еджэхэркъым) | They’re not reading the book. |

##### Monopersonal intransitive verbs

Monopersonal intransitive verbs are used only in 3rd person singular, but in reality, they’re impersonal verbs:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| сэ сотхэ | I’m writing. |
| дэ дотхэ | We’re writing. |
| уэ уотхэ | You’re writing. |
| фэ фотхэ | You’re writing. (plural) |
| ар матхэ | He/she’s writing. |
| ахэр матхэ | They’re writing. |

As we see, monopersonal intransitive verbs of present tense in 3rd person singular and plural have prefix **мэ**- or **ма**-.

The negative form of intransitive monopersonal verbs doesn’t have the tense indicator –prefix -о-, and in 3rd person isn’t formed by the prefixes мэ-, ма-. Like other forms of present tense, this form contains suffixes -р- and -къым-.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| сэ сытхэркъым | I’m not writing. |
| уэ утхэркъым | You’re not writing. |
| ар тхэркъым | He/she isn’t writing. |
| дэ дытхэркъым | We’re not writing. |
| фэ фытхэркъым | You’re not writing. (plural) |
| ахэр тхэркъым | They’re not writing. |

#### Past tense

Circassian verbs have different forms of past tense.

Past tense with -**a**- is formed from the stem of an unformed participle. In the affirmative form, we have -**щ**; in the negative, –**къым**; and absence of suffix -**щ**.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Cэ тхылъым седжа**щ** | I read the book. |
| Сэ тхылъым седжа**къым** | I didn’t read the book. |
| Уэ тхылъым уеджа**щ** | You read the book. |
| Ар тхылъым еджа**щ** | He/she/it read the book. |
| Дэ тхылъым деджа**щ** | We read the book. |
| Фэ тхылъым феджа**щ** | You read the book. (plural) |
| Ахэр тхылъым еджа**щ** | They read the book. |

Intransitive verbs with **a**- show an action that happened in the past, but do not indicate the removal of this action from present tense. Transitive verbs, on the contrary, show that the action is more or less finished.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Cэ тхылъыр зджащ | I’ve read the book. |
| Уэ тхылъыр бджащ | You’ve read the book. |
| Абы тхылъыр иджащ | He/she has read the book. |
| Дэ тхылъыр дджащ | We’ve read the book. |
| Фэ тхылъыр вджащ | You’ve read the book. (plural) |
| Абыхэм тхылъыр яджащ | They’ve read the book. |

Verbs that happened in the remote past are formed in the same way as verbs with –**a**, but in this case, we put the suffix –**гъа** before it.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| сэ сытха**гъа**щ | I wrote (once). |
| уэ утха**гъа**щ | You wrote (once). |
| ар тха**гъа**щ | He/she/it wrote (once). |
| дэ дытха**гъа**щ | We wrote (once). |
| фэ фытха**гъа**щ | You wrote (once). |
| ахэр тха**гъа**щ | They wrote (once). |

The negative form has the affix -**къым**, for example: **сэ сытхэгъакъым**, I didn’t write.

Past tense with is formed from the stem of an unformed participle with -**рт** || **-т**. Verbs in this form mean repeatedness, or an action happening at the same moment with another one.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| сэ жысIэрт | I was saying (at that time). |
| дэ дылажьэрт | We were working (at that time). |
| ар еджэрт | He was studying (at that time). |

The negative form is formed by adding the affix -**къым**:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| абы жиIэртэ**къым** | He/she wasn’t saying. |

Past tense with –**т** is formed from the past tense with -**а**-. The verb in this form means an action happened earlier than some other action in the past (in English, past perfect).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| дэ дылэжь**ат** | We had already worked (before that time). |
| фэ фылэжь**ат** | You had already worked (before that time). |
| ар лэжъ**ат**, лэжьахэт | He/she had already worked (before that time). |

For the negative form, we add suffix -**къым**, before where the affix -**э**- usually occurs.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| уэ улэжъатэ**къым** | You hadn’t worked (before that time). |

Past tense with –**гъат** is is expressed in the past form with -**гъа**- and usually coincides with its meaning. The only difference is that the verb in the form of -**гъат** refers to an action that happened at one time.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| сыщылэжъэ**гъат** | I worked there (once upon a time). |

This group of verbs is formed from participle form and morphologically is characterized by the absence of the suffix a- and the presence of the suffix **щ**-. These verbs show that the action is finished and occur instantly. These verbs do not have negative form.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Хъыджэбз цӀыкӀум бостейр **зэпипиплъыхьщ**-къызэпиплъыхьри игъэтӀылъыжащ | The girl examined the dress and put it back. |

Verbs with the affix –**кӀэ** mean the absolute end/finishing of an action (present perfect).

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| сэ сытха**кӀэ**щ | I’ve already written (something). |
| ар тха**кӀэ**щ | He/she has already written (something). |

#### Future Tense

Verbs in future tense have two shades of meaning.

Greater expression of confidence that the action will happen:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| дыкӀуэнущ | We will go. (from the infinitive кӀуэн, to go) |

Expressing less confidence that the action will happen:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| дыкӀуэнщ | We will go. (obviously) |

The suffix -**т**- can be added to the forms of these two meanings of verbs in the future tense and gives an extra meaning of desire.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| седжэн**т** | I’d study. |
| седжэну**т** | I’d study. (obviously) |

The morphological indicator of the verb in future tense with the meaning of more confidence is the suffix -**ну**-.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Сэ сылэжьэ**ну**щ | I’ll work. |
| Уэ улэжьэ**ну**щ | You’ll work. |
| Ар лэжьэ**ну**щ | He/she/it will work. |
| Дэ дылэжьэ**ну**щ | We’ll work. |
| Фэ фылэжьэ**ну**щ | You will work. (plural) |
| Ахэр лэжьэ**ну**щ, лэжьэ**ну**хэщ | They’ll work. |

The morphological indicator of the verb in future tense with a meaning of less confidence is the suffix **н**-.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Сэ сылэжьэ**н**щ | Probably/obviously/seems I will work. |
| Уэ улэжьэ**н**щ | Probably/obviously/seems you’ll work. |
| Ар лэжьэ**н**щ | Probably/obviously/seems he/she/it will work. |
| Дэ дылэжьэ**н**щ | Probably/obviously/seems we will work. |
| Фэ фылэжьэ**н**щ | Probably/obviously/seems you will work. (plural) |
| Ахэр лэжьэ**н**щ | Probably/obviously/seems they will work. |

In the third person, verbs in future tense are formed by the same prefixes as verbs in the present tense. The only exception is the prefix **мэ**- and **ма**-, which are characteristic to intransitive verbs in the present tense.

The negative form of verbs in the future tense is formed by adding suffix къым-.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Сэ сыкӀуэн**къым** | I won’t go. |
| Уэ укӀуэн**къым** | You won’t go. |
| Ар кӀуэн**къым** | He/she/it won’t go. |
| Дэ дыкӀуэн**къым** | We won’t go. |
| Фэ фыкӀуэн**къым** | You won’t go. (plural) |
| Ахэр кӀуэн**къым** | They won’t go. |

##### The Category of Person

As a rule, person in the Eastern Circassian language is expressed by pronoun prefixes. Moreover, the Eastern Circaassian verb can express the person of subject and object (or objects) simultaneously.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| сэ уэ сыпхуэзащ | I met you. |

In this verb-predicate prefix, **с**- **is an indicator of subject**, while -**п**- is an indicator of indirect object.

The first and second persons of both singular and plural verbs are expressed by personal prefixes. In singular first person, prefixes are **с**- and **з-**; in plural, – **т**- and **д**-.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| сэ ар слъэгъуащ | I saw him. |
| сэ ар згъэзэщIащ | I did this. |
| дэ ар тлъэгъуащ | We saw him. (plural) |
| дэ ар дгъэзэщIащ | We did it. |

Indicators of second person singular are personal prefixes: **у**-, **б**-, and **п**-; in plural, – **в**- and **ф**-.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| уэ ар уолъагъу | You see him. |
| уэ ар блэжьащ | You did it. |
| уэ ар плъэгъуащ | You saw him. |
| фэ ар влэжъащ | You did it. (plural) |
| фэ ар фолъагъу | You see it. (plural) |

Verbs in third person singular as personal prefixes have prefixes е- and и-; in plural, - я- and а-. These prefixes present subject and object in verb form.

##### Verb pluraity

Verbs do not have any specific indicators of number. In first and second persons, the number of the verb is expressed by difference in personal prefixes. The plural number of third person, however, is expressed by the suffix – хэ and prefixes а-, я-. The suffix -хэ is used when there is no subject in the sentence. Conversely, the suffix –хэ is added to the subject.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| сэ солажьэ | I’m working. |
| фэ фолажьэ | You’re working. (plural) |
| ар мэлажьэ 'он работает' | He is working. |
| ахэр мэлажьэ, мэлажьэхэр | They are working. |
| ар йоджэ | He is studying. |
| ахэр еджащI, еджахэщ | They studied. |
| датх | They’re recording us. |
| яшх | They’re eating. (that, etc.) |

#### Structure and conjugation

It’s possible to fill an entire book on the structure and conjugation of Circassian verbs, and more than a few researchers have tried to do just that. While this information is invaluable to researchers, it can be a bit daunting for a student just trying to learn how to speak Circassian.

In order to simplify the learning process—and to provide a way of easily and quickly learning verbs and how they are conjugated—we have developed a table that dissects each verb to explain how it changes based on who or what is doing the action, when the action is taking place, and the circumstances in which the action is being done. For the purposes of this text, we will refer to these as “conjugation tables.”

Like any language, there are endless ways to describe things we see and do, but the conjugation table below provides a solid foundation that covers more than enough for a competent speaker to describe his or her activities.

Verb in the simple present tense

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| I | Verb prefix | Verb root | **Example sentence in Circassian**. English translation. |
| You | **Example sentence in Circassian**. English translation. |
| he / she / it | **Example sentence in Circassian**. English translation. |
| We | **Example sentence in Circassian**. English translation. |
| You (plural) | **Example sentence in Circassian**. English translation. |
| They | **Example sentence in Circassian**. English translation. |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Verb mood |  |  | Ӏ. | 2. | 3. | 4. | 5. | 6. |
| I | Verb prefix | Verb root | Is it happen-ing? | It is not happen-ing! | If it happens… | It is able to happen. | If it is able to happen… | Even if it happens… |
| You |
| he / she / it |
| We |
| You (plural) |
| They |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Verb tense |  |  | 7. | 8. | 9. | Ӏ0. | ӀӀ. |
| I | Verb prefix | Verb root | Had it happened… | It happened. | It’s going to happen. | It will happen. | It was going to happen. |
| You |
| he / she / it |
| We |
| You (plural) |
| They |

We have numbered each of the conditions and tenses in order to make it easier to reference example sentences that will be provided following each section of the table.

As you can already see from the conjugation table, verbs in Circassian take on different prefixes based on whether the person or thing doing the action is in the first, second, or third person, and whether the person or thing is singular or plural.

#### Noun and Verb Conjugation

Two types of conjugation – verbal and noun – are differentitated only in the form of present tense.

The morphological indicator of noun conjugation is the suffix -щ. Examples:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| сэ сыщыс**щ** | I’m sitting. |
| уэ ущыс**щ** | You’re sitting. |
| ар щыс**щ** | He/she’s sitting. |
| дэ дыщыс**щ** | We’re sitting |
| фэ фыщыс**щ** | You’re sitting. (plural) |
| ахэр щыс**щ** (щысхэ**щ**) | They’re sitting. |

Verbs designating condition or space position may have indicators of verbal conjugation as well (presence of suffix -**о**-). In this case, verbs get feature/shade of duration of an action.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Дыщот | We stand (many times, usually, often). |

Beside the noted category of verbs, when a noun is conjugated, predicates (expressed by nouns, pronouns, and adverbs) are conjugated as well. Such predicates in Eastern Circassian language are formed by affirmative verbal suffix -**щ**.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ар щIалэ**щ** | He is young. |
| ар сэра**щ** | It’s me. |
| мы Ӏэнэр къабзэ**щ** | This table is clean. |

Predicates, expressed by nouns, pronouns, and adverbs are formed by indicators of person and other suffixes as common verbs, and are conjugated as intransitive verbs.

##### Present tense

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| сэ сытэрмэшщ | I’m an interpretor. |
| уэ утэрмэшщ | You’re an interpretor. |
| ар тэрмэшщ | He’s an interpretor. |
| дэ дытэрмэшщ | We’re interpretors. |
| фэ фытэрмэшщ | You’re interpretors. (plural) |
| ахэр тэрмэшхэщ | They’re interpretors. |

The negative form is formed by the suffix -**къым**.

From predicates, expressed by nouns, should be differentiated verbs, formed from nouns, they are conjugated on verbal conjugation and have all its indicators.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| сэ сотэрмэш | I’m interpreting. |
| уэ уотэрмэш | You’re interpreting. |
| ар мэтэрмэш | He’s interpreting. |
| дэ дытэрмэшщ | We’re interpreting. |
| фэ фотэрмэш | You’re interpreting. |
| ахэр мэтэрмэш | They’re interpreting. |

To the conjugated verbs of this type, affix –**p** can be added by vocalism -**ы-**, making it more distinct:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| сэ сотэрмэшыр | I’m interpreting. |

Verbs formed from nouns are not used often in Eastern Circassian language.

##### Future tense

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| сэ сытэрмэшынущ | I’ll be interpreting. |
| уэ утэрмэшынущ | You’ll be interpreting. |
| ар тэрмэшынущ | He/she’ll be interpreting. |
| дэ дытэрмэшынущ | We’ll be interpreting. |
| ахэр тэрмэшынущ, тэрмэшынухэщ | They’ll be interpreting. |

In future tense, the conjugated ‘noun’ verb can have a negative form, formed by the suffix.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| къым: сытэрмэшынукъым | I won’t be an interpretor. |

##### Past tense

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| сэ сытэрмэшащ | I was interpreting. |
| уэ утэрмэшащ | You were interpreting. |
| ар тэрмэшащ | He was interpreting. |
| дэ дытэрмэшащ | We were interpreting. |
| фэ фытэрмэшащ | You were interpreting. (plural) |
| ахэр тэрмэшащащ, тэрмэшахэщ | They were interpreting. |

##### Verbal conjugation

The majority of verbs in Eastern Circassian language are conjugated on verbal conjugation. The only exception is verbs having meaning of condition.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| щытын | To stand |
| фIэлъын | To hang |
| щысын | To sit |

The characteristic morphological indicators of verbal conjugation are:

Presence of prefix -**о**- in the 1st and 2nd persons of present tense (at transitive and intransitive verbs).

Presence of prefix **мэ**-, **ма**- in the 3rd person (at intransitive verbs in the singular and plural numbers), prefix **и**- (at transitive verbs of singular number), and prefix **я**- (at transitive verbs of plural number).

The morphological indicator of verbal conjugation at intransitive multipersonal verbs in all three persons of both singular and plural number is prefix -**о**-.

### Introduction to the Verb Conjugation Table

Circassian verbs follow a series of patterns that are quite easy to understand. The more quickly you understand these patterns, the easier it will be to learn the language.

We begin this section by taking a single Circassian verb, dissecting it into its component parts, and then reassembling it through our verb conjugation table.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Infinitive form | Normal usage |
| кӀуэн | кӀуэ |
| to go | go |

Verbs may be written in either form — infinitive or normal. In this text, we’ll use both forms.

#### Verb conjugation

Conjugation is just a fancy word to describe how verbs change when they are used in different contexts. As in most languages, Circassian verbs are conjugated based on whether the speaker is in the first, second, or third person, and whether the person is singular or plural.

This might sound complicated, but this is how personal pronouns are structured. We covered personal pronouns earlier in this text, and a summary of what we covered is provided below. This serves as the beginning of our verb conjugation table.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Singular | Сэ | I | 1st person |
| Уэ | You | 2nd person |
| Ар | He/she | 3rd person |
| Plural | Дэ | We | 1st person |
| Фэ | You | 2nd person |
| Ахэр | They | 3rd person |

As covered earlier, verbs are also conjugated based on whether their action is taking place in the past, present, or future. Let’s update the verb conjugation table to account for verb tense.

We’ll also conjugate the verb go to see how the verb conjugation table works in English.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  | Past | Present | Future |
| Singular | Сэ | I | went | go | will go |
| Уэ | You | went | go | will go |
| Ар | He/she | went | goes | will go |
| Plural | Дэ | We | went | go | will go |
| Фэ | You | went | go | will go |
| Ахэр | They | went | go | will go |

As you can see, the verb conjugation table shows a number of patterns and a few irregularities. In the past tense, for example, go is irregular and becomes went, but it is consistently irregular.

At the same time, we can see that all future tenses of go are conjugated as will go. Finally, we can see that there is a lone irregularity in the present tense when go becomes goes in the third person singular. Let’s see how the Circassian form of go looks when conjugated.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  |  | Past | Present | Future |
| Singular | Сэ | I | сыкӀуащ | сокӀуэ | сыкӀуэнущ |
| Уэ | You | уыкӀуащ | уокӀуэ | уыкӀуэнущ |
| Ар | He | кӀуащ | макӀуэ | кӀуэнущ |
| Plural | Дэ | We | дыкӀуащ | докӀуэ | дыкӀуэнущ |
| Фэ | You | фыкӀуащ | фокӀуэ | фыкӀуэнущ |
| Ахэр | They | мыкӀуащ | макӀуэ | мыкӀуэнущ |

Again, we see a number of patterns. The verb go, or **кӀуэ**, has a common root in all conjugated forms: **кӀу**. In all past tense forms, **кӀуэ** takes the suffix **ащ**; in all future tense forms, it takes the suffix **энущ**. There also seems to be an irregularity in that each form of the verb seems to take a personal pronoun prefix.

As we saw previously, Circassian verbs make use of personal pronoun prefixes. Given this unique characteristic, we’re going to make one final change to the verb conjugation table.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  |  | Present |  | Past | Future |
| Сэ | со | кӀуэ | сы | ащ | энущ |
| Уэ | уо | уы |
| Ар | ма | - |
| Дэ | до | ды |
| Фэ | фо | фы |
| Ахэр | ма | - |

The table above immediately makes clear what patterns exist for the verb **кӀуэ** (go). We will review similar tables for all future verbs, but first, let’s review the verbs in normal usage and in the first person singular.

#### Common verbs in Circassian

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | еплъын | look (at) | | лъагъун | see | |  | |  |  | | --- | --- | | псалъэн | speak | | жыӀэн | say | |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | еджэн | study | | къеджэн | call | | егъэджэн | teach | |  | |  |  | | --- | --- | | гупсысэн | think | | щӀэн | know | | тхын | write | |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | иӀэн | have | | хуейин | need | |  | |  |  | | --- | --- | | етын | give to | | къэщтэн | take | |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | дыхьэшхын | laugh | | гъын | cry | |  | |  |  | | --- | --- | | щӀэдзэн | begin | | ухын | finish | |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | тхьэщӀын | wash | | жьын | comb | |  | |  |  | | --- | --- | | шхын | eat | | ефэн | drink | |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Зэхэхын | hear | | дэӀуэн | listen | |  | |  |  | | --- | --- | | лэжьэн | work | | джэгун | play | |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| жеин | sleep |

#### Common verbs in Circassian: conjugations

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| еплъын — look (at) | | | | | | | |
|  |  | Present |  |  |  | Past | Future |
| Сэ |  | плъ |  | Уе | плъ | ащ | ынущ |
| Уэ | со |  | Е |
| Ар | уо |  | Де |
| Дэ | е |  | Фе |
| Фэ | до |  | Е |
| Ахэр | фо |  | Уе |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| лъагъун — see | | | | | | | |
|  |  | Present |  |  |  | Past | Future |
| Сэ | со | лъагъу |  | с | лъагъу | ащ | нущ |
| Уэ | уо |  | п |
| Ар | е |  | и |
| Дэ | до |  | т |
| Фэ | фо |  | ф |
| Ахэр | я |  | я |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| псалъэн — speak | | | | | | | |
|  |  | Present |  |  |  | Past | Future |
| Сэ | со | псалъэ |  | сы | псалъ | ащ | энущ |
| Уэ | уо |  | у |
| Ар | мэ |  | - |
| Дэ | до |  | ды |
| Фэ | фо |  | фы |
| Ахэр | мэ |  | - |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| жыӀэн — say | | | | | | | |
|  |  | Present |  |  |  | Past | Future |
| Сэ | жызо | Ӏэ |  | жыс | Ӏ | ащ | энущ |
| Уэ | жыбо |  | жып |
| Ар | же |  | жи |
| Дэ | жыдо |  | жыт |
| Фэ | жыво |  | жыф |
| Ахэр | жа |  | жа |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| еджэн — study | | | | | | | |
|  |  | Present |  |  |  | Past | Future |
| Сэ | со | джэ |  | се | дж | ащ | энущ |
| Уэ | уо |  | уе |
| Ар | йо |  | е |
| Дэ | до |  | де |
| Фэ | фо |  | фе |
| Ахэр | йо |  | е |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| къеджэн — call or read | | | | | | | |
|  |  | Present |  |  |  | Past | Future |
| Сэ | сыкъе | джэ |  | сыкъе | Дж | ащ | энущ |
| Уэ | укъе |  | укъе |
| Ар | къе |  | къе |
| Дэ | дыкъе |  | дыкъе |
| Фэ | фыкъе |  | фыкъе |
| Ахэр | къе |  | къе |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| егъэджэн — teach | | | | | | | |
|  |  | Present |  |  |  | Past | Future |
| Сэ | зо | гъаджэ |  | ез | гъадж | ащ | энущ |
| Уэ | бо |  | еб |
| Ар | ре |  | ре |
| Дэ | до |  | ед |
| Фэ | во |  | ев |
| Ахэр | ра |  | ра |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| гупсысэн — think | | | | | | | |
|  |  | Present |  |  |  | Past | Future |
| Сэ | со | гупсысэ |  | сы | гупсыс | ащ | энущ |
| Уэ | уо |  | уы |
| Ар | мэ |  | - |
| Дэ | до |  | ды |
| Фэ | фо |  | фы |
| Ахэр | мэ |  | - |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| щӀэн — know | | | | | | | |
|  |  | Present |  |  |  | Past | Future |
| Сэ | со | щӀэ |  | с | щӀ | ащ | энущ |
| Уэ | уо |  | п |
| Ар | е |  | и |
| Дэ | до |  | т |
| Фэ | фо |  | ф |
| Ахэр | я |  | я |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| тхын — write | | | | | | | |
|  |  | Present |  |  |  | Past | Future |
| Сэ | со | тхэ |  | сы | тх | ащ | ынущ |
| Уэ | уо |  | уы |
| Ар | ма |  | - |
| Дэ | до |  | ды |
| Фэ | фо |  | фы |
| Ахэр | ма |  | - |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| иӀэн — have | | | | | | | |
|  |  | Present |  |  |  | Past | Future |
| Сэ | с | иӀэ |  | с | иӀ | ащ | энущ |
| Уэ | у |  | у |
| Ар | - |  | - |
| Дэ | д |  | д |
| Фэ | ф |  | ф |
| Ахэр | я |  | я |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| хуейин — need or want | | | | | | | |
|  |  | Present |  |  |  | Past | Future |
| Сэ | сы | Хуей |  | сы | хуей | ащ | энущ |
| Уэ | у |  | у |
| Ар | - |  | - |
| Дэ | ды |  | ды |
| Фэ | фы |  | Фы |
| Ахэр | - |  | - |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| етын — give | | | | | | | |
|  |  | Present |  |  |  | Past | Future |
| Сэ | со | т |  | с | т | ащ | энущ |
| Уэ | бо |  | п |
| Ар | е |  | и |
| Дэ | до |  | т |
| Фэ | фо |  | ф |
| Ахэр | я |  | я |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| къэщтэн — take | | | | | | | |
|  |  | Present |  |  |  | Past | Future |
| Сэ | къызо | щтэ |  | къас | щт | ащ | энущ |
| Уэ | къыбо |  | къаб |
| Ар | къе |  | къи |
| Дэ | къыдо |  | къад |
| Фэ | къыво |  | къав |
| Ахэр | къа |  | къа |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| щытын — stand | | | | | | | |
|  |  | Present |  |  |  | Past | Future |
| Сэ | сы | щот |  | сы | щыт | ащ | ынущ |
| Уэ | у |  | у |
| Ар | - |  | - |
| Дэ | ды |  | ды |
| Фэ | фы |  | фы |
| Ахэр | - |  | - |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| щысын — sit | | | | | | | |
|  |  | Present |  |  |  | Past | Future |
| Сэ | сы | щос |  | сы | щыс | ащ | энущ |
| Уэ | у |  | у |
| Ар | - |  | - |
| Дэ | ды |  | ды |
| Фэ | фы |  | фы |
| Ахэр | - |  | - |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| дыхьэшхын — laugh | | | | | | | |
|  |  | Present |  |  |  | Past | Future |
| Сэ | со | дыхьэшх |  | сы | дыхьэшх | ащ | ынущ |
| Уэ | уо |  | уы |
| Ар | мэ |  | - |
| Дэ | до |  | ды |
| Фэ | фо |  | фы |
| Ахэр | мэ |  | - |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| гъын — cry | | | | | | | |
|  |  | Present |  |  |  | Past | Future |
| Сэ | со | гъ |  | сы | гъ | ащ | ынущ |
| Уэ | уо |  | у |
| Ар | ма |  | - |
| Дэ | до |  | ды |
| Фэ | фо |  | фы |
| Ахэр | ма |  | - |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| щӀэдзэн — begin | | | | | | | |
|  |  | Present |  |  |  | Past | Future |
| Сэ | щӀызо | дзэ |  | щӀэз | дз | ащ | энущ |
| Уэ | щӀыбо |  | щӀэб |
| Ар | щӀе |  | щӀи |
| Дэ | щӀыдо |  | щӀэд |
| Фэ | щӀыво |  | щӀэв |
| Ахэр | щӀа |  | щӀа |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ухын — finish | | | | | | | |
|  |  | Present |  |  |  | Past | Future |
| Сэ | со | ух |  | с | ух | ащ | энущ |
| Уэ | бо |  | б |
| Ар | е |  | и |
| Дэ | до |  | д |
| Фэ | фо |  | ф |
| Ахэр | я |  | я |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| тхьэщӀын — wash | | | | | | | |
|  |  | Present |  |  |  | Past | Future |
| Сэ | со | тхьэщl |  | с | тхьэщl | ащ | энущ |
| Уэ | уо |  | п |
| Ар | е |  | и |
| Дэ | до |  | т |
| Фэ | фо |  | ф |
| Ахэр | я |  | я |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| жьын — comb | | | | | | | |
|  |  | Present |  |  |  | Past | Future |
| Сэ | со | жь |  | с | жь | ащ | энущ |
| Уэ | уо |  | б |
| Ар | е |  | и |
| Дэ | до |  | д |
| Фэ | фо |  | ф |
| Ахэр | я |  | я |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| лэжьэн — work | | | | | | | |
|  |  | Present |  |  |  | Past | Future |
| Сэ | со | лажьэ |  | сы | лажьэ | ащ | энущ |
| Уэ | уо |  | у |
| Ар | мэ |  | - |
| Дэ | до |  | ды |
| Фэ | фо |  | фы |
| Ахэр | мэ |  | - |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| джэгун — play | | | | | | | |
|  |  | Present |  |  |  | Past | Future |
| Сэ | со | джэгу |  | сы | джэгу | ащ | нущ |
| Уэ | уо |  | у |
| Ар | мэ |  | - |
| Дэ | до |  | ды |
| Фэ | фо |  | фы |
| Ахэр | мэ |  | - |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| жеин — sleep | | | | | | | |
|  |  | Present |  |  |  | Past | Future |
| Сэ | со | жей |  | сы | жей | ащ | инущ |
| Уэ | уо |  | у |
| Ар | къе |  | - |
| Дэ | до |  | ды |
| Фэ | фо |  | фы |
| Ахэр | мэ |  | - |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| шхын — eat | | | | | | | |
|  |  | Present |  |  |  | Past | Future |
| Сэ | со | шхэ |  | сы | шх | ащ | энущ |
| Уэ | уо |  | у |
| Ар | ма |  | - |
| Дэ | до |  | ды |
| Фэ | фо |  | фы |
| Ахэр | ма |  | - |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| ефэн — drink | | | | | | | |
|  |  | Present |  |  |  | Past | Future |
| Сэ | со | фэ |  | се | ф | ащ | энущ |
| Уэ | уо |  | уе |
| Ар | е |  | е |
| Дэ | до |  | де |
| Фэ | фо |  | фе |
| Ахэр | е |  | е |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| зэхэхын — hear | | | | | | | |
|  |  | Present |  |  |  | Past | Future |
| Сэ | зэхызо | x |  | зэхэс | x | ащ | ынущ |
| Уэ | зэхыбо |  | зэхэп |
| Ар | зэхе |  | зэхи |
| Дэ | зэхыдо |  | зэхэт |
| Фэ | зэхыво |  | зэхэф |
| Ахэр | зэха |  | зэха |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| дэӀуэн — listen or obey | | | | | | | |
|  |  | Present |  |  |  | Past | Future |
| Сэ | со | даӀуэ |  | се | даӀуэ | ащ | энущ |
| Уэ | уо |  | уе |
| Ар | йо |  | е |
| Дэ | до |  | де |
| Фэ | фо |  | фе |
| Ахэр | йо |  | е |

### Verbal Affixes

Verbs are the heart of the Circassian language, and they are rich in their ability to express much of the information contained in the rest of the sentence. This stems from their use of verbal affixes; in Circassian, verbs make use of three affix types.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Ӏ.Prefix | VERB |
| 2. Affix | VERB-ROOT VERB-ROOT |
| 3. Suffix | VERB |

As their names imply, prefixes come before the verb, while suffixes come after the verb. Affixes are inserted between portions of the verb root, with one exception. Examples of the most common and useful verb affixes are provided.

There are several dozen verbal affixes in the Circassian language; not all are common, and not all are useful to someone just beginning to learn the language. This text focuses on the most common and useful verbal affixes, including 27 prefixes and four suffixes. A small section is included on negation affixes, which may appear as suffixes or affixes. A summary of verbal affixes is provided below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Prefixes that demonstrate: | |
| relative position | position (in sequence) |
| relationship | on behalf of another |
| reciprocity | transitive verbs |
| reciprocity + relationship | transitive verbs (that compel) |
| reflexive verbs | location |
| direction of movement | time |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Suffixes that demonstrate: | |
| repetition | plurality |
| direction of movement | area of action |

We will also provide examples of suffixes and affixes used in verb negation.

#### Verbal prefixes

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Prefix | Shows | Example |
| бгъэ | relative position | **Бгъэдэсын** Sit next to |
| гу | relationship | **гурыгъэIуэн** Understand (or agree) |
| гуэ | **Гуэшын** Divide (and share) |
| дэ | **Дэшхэн** Eat together |
| дэ | location | **Дэтын** Stand between |
| зэ | reciprocity | **Зэзэуэн** Fight (one another) |
| зэдэ | reciprocity + relationship | **зэдэгушыIэн** Joke (with one another) |
| зы | reflexive verbs | **Зыхуэпэн** Dress one’s self |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Prefix | Shows | Example |
| блэ | direction of movement | **блэкіын** Pass by (something) |
| и | **илъхьэн** Place inside |
| ире | **ирекIуэн** Send along |
| ири | **ирикІуэн** Go (along a path) |
| къэ | **къэкIуэн** Come (towards) |
| нэ | **нэсын** Arrive |
| пэ | **пэдзыжын**  Throw (back) |
| щхьэ | **щхьэпрыпщын** Climb (something) |
| Іу | **IукIуэтын** Move away (from something) |

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Prefix | Shows | Example |
| те | relative position | **телъхьэн** Lay on top |
| фІэ | **фiэщiэн** Hang (up) |
| хэ | **хэлъхьэн** Put (into) |
| кІэ | position (in sequence) | **кІэлъыкІуэн** Look after (something) |
| ху | on behalf of another | **хуещӀэн** Do (for someone) |
| е | transitive verbs | **еджэн** Read (something) |
| гъэ | transitive verbs (that compel) | **Гъэпсэлъэн** Make (someone) speak |
| щІэ | location | **щIэтын** Be inside (or under) |
| щы | **Щыiэн** Be somewhere |
| щы | time | **щыжеин** When sleeping |

#### Verbal suffixes

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Prefix | Shows | Example |
| ж | repitition | **къэшэжын** Bring back |
| еи | direction of movement | **дэлъеин** Jump up |
| хэ | plurality | **къэкIуахэщ** They came |
| хь | area of action | **къэкIухьын** Walk around |

#### Verbal negation

Affix Shows Example

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Prefix | Shows | Example |
| мы | negation - command not to | **Умыгузавэ**. Don’t worry. |
| мы | negation - preference not to | **Сигу иримыхьыр**… What I don’t like… |
| къым | negation - absence of action | **Сэ сыкӀуэнукъым**! I’m not going! |

## Numbers

As in many languages, Circassian relates to numbers in a variety of ways; these include the following:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Number type | Answers the question | Examples |
| Cardinal | How many? | Ӏ, 2, 3, etc. |
| Ordinal | Which one? | First, second, third, etc. |
| Distributive | In what sequence? | Two by two; four by four, etc. |
| Fractional | What portion? | ½, ⅓, ¼, ¾, etc. |

### Cardinals

#### Numbers 1 through Ӏ0

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | 1 | зы | one | | 2 | тIу | two | | 3 | щы | three | | 4 | плIы | four | | 5 | тху | five | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | 6 | хы | six | | 7 | блы | seven | | 8 | и | eight | | 9 | бгъу | nine | | Ӏ0 | пщIы | ten | |

#### Numbers Ӏ1 through 20

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | 11 | пщыкIуз | eleven | | 12 | пщыкIутI | twelve | | 13 | пщыкIущ | thirteen | | 14 | пщыкIуплI | fourteen | | 15 | пщыкIутху | fifteen | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | 16 | пщыкIух | sixteen | | 17 | пщыкIубл | seventeen | | 18 | пщыкIуий | eighteen | | 19 | пщыкIубгъу | nineteen | | 20 | тIощI | twenty | |

#### Numbers 30 and beyond

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | 30 | щэщI | thirty | | 40 | плIыщI | forty | | 50 | тхущI | fifty | | 60 | хыщI | sixty | | 70 | блыщI | seventy | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | 80 | ищI | eighty | | 90 | бгъущI | ninety | | Ӏ00 | щэ | hundred | | 1,000 | мин | thousand | | 1,000,000 | мелуан | million | |

#### More on Circassian Cardinals

Ten — prefix — number root

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 11 | пщIы | кIу | з | пщIыкIуз |
| 12 | пщIы | кIу | тI | пщIыкIутӀ |
| 13 | пщIы | кIу | щ | пщIыкIущ |
| 14 | пщIы | кIу | плI | пщIыкIуплӀ |
| 15 | пщIы | кIу | тху | пщIыкIутху |
| 16 | пщIы | кIу | х | пщIыкIух |
| 17 | пщIы | кIу | бл | пщIыкIубл |
| 18 | пщIы | кIу | и | пщIыкIуи |
| 19 | пщIы | кIу | бгъу | пщIыкIубгъу |

##### Cardinals 20 — 90

Numbers past Ӏ9 also follow a similar set of patterns, as demonstrated below.

Number root — partial prefix of ten

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | 20 | тIо | щI | тIощI | | 30 | щэ | щI | щэщI | | 40 | плIы | щI | плIыщI | | 50 | тху | щI | тхущI | |  | |  |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | --- | | 60 | хы | щI | хыщI | | 70 | блы | щI | блыщI | | 80 | и | щI | ищI | | 90 | бгъу | щI | бгъущI | |

##### Cardinals beyond Ӏ0 counts

Cardinal numbers beyond the Ӏ0 counts provided above follow a very simple pattern.

Ten count — and — number — and

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | 21 | тIощI-рэ-зырэ-рэ | | 22 | тIощI-рэ-тIу-рэ | | 23 | тIощI-рэ-щы-рэ | | 24 | тIощI-рэ-плIы-рэ | | 25 | тIощI-рэ-тху-рэ | |  | |  |  | | --- | --- | | 26 | тIощI-рэ-хы-рэ | | 27 | тIощI-рэ-блы-рэ | | 28 | тIощI-рэ-и-рэ | | 29 | тIощI-рэ-бгъу-рэ | |

##### Cardinals Ӏ00 and Beyond

In Circassian, the word for Ӏ00 is щэ. Similar to English, 200 is simply two hundred, 300 is three hundred, and so on. As is the case in Circassian, the number of hundreds is counted by a suffix.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | 100 | щэ | | 200 | щитI | | 300 | щищ | | 400 | щиплI | | 500 | щитху | |  | |  |  | | --- | --- | | 600 | щих | | 700 | щибл | | 800 | щий | | 900 | щибгъу | |

The number for Ӏ000 is **мин**, and multiples of Ӏ000 follow the same pattern as above.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Ӏ000 | мин | | 2000 | минитI | | 3000 | минищ | | 4000 | миниплI | | 5000 | минитху | |  | |  |  | | --- | --- | | 6000 | миних | | 7000 | минибл | | 8000 | миний | | 9000 | минибгъу | |

##### Circassian numbers past the thousands

Past the thousands, Circassian numbers follow Latin conventions of millions, billions, etc.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| One million: | мелуан |
| One billion: | мелард |

## Ordinals

Ordinal numbers answer the question, Which one? and describe the numerical position of an object. Circassian has a specialized set of ordinal numbers that refer exclusively to the number of times an action or experience has been undertaken. These words correspond in meaning to their English counterparts (first, second, third, etc.) but relate exclusively to time. A summary is provided below.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | 1x | зэ | once | | 2x | тIо | twice | | 3x | щэрэ | thrice | | 4x | плIэрэ | four times | | 5x | тхурэ | five times | |  | |  |  |  | | --- | --- | --- | | 6x | хырэ | six times | | 7x | блырэ | seven times | | 8x | ирэ | eight times | | 9x | бгъурэ | nine times | | 10x | пщIырэ | ten times | |

### Cardinal and Ordinal Review

Ordinal numbers answer the question Which one? In the previous section, we described time-based ordinals. In this section, we’ll learn about ordinals that refer to a position in space. A summary of ordinals and how they compare to cardinals is provided below.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Cardinals (review) | | | 1 | зы | | 2 | тIу | | 3 | щы | | 4 | плIы | | 5 | тху | | 6 | хы | | 7 | блы | | 8 | и | | 9 | бгъу | | 10 | пщIы | |  | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Ordinals 1 — Ӏ0 | | | 1st | зы | | 2nd | тIу | | 3rd | щы | | 4th | плIы | | 5th | тху | | 6th | хы | | 7th | блы | | 8th | и | | 9th | бгъу | | Ӏ0th | пщIы | |

## Distributives and Fractionals

A distributive number is a word that answers how many times each? Or how many at a time? Such as singly or doubly. A fraction represents a part of a whole or, more generally, any number of equal parts. When spoken in everyday English, a fraction describes how many parts of a certain size there are.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Distributives | | | 1x1 | зырыз | | 2x2 | тIурытI | | 3x3 | щырыщ | | 4x4 | плIрыплъ | | 5x5 | тхурытху | | 6x6 | хырых | | 7x7 | блырыбл | | 8x8 | янэ | | 9x9 | бгъурыбгъу | | 10x10 | пщIыпщI | |  | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Fractionals | | | 1/3 | щанэ | | 1/4 | плIанэ | | 1/5 | тхуанэ | | 1/6 | ханэ | | 1/7 | бланэ | | 1/8 | иуанэ | | 1/9 | бгъуанэ | | 1/Ӏ0 | пщIанэ | |

### More on fractionals

Also note that cardinal suffixes may be appended to fractional numbers to represent fractional counting. This is illustrated in the examples below.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | 1/2 | ныкъуэ | | 1/3 | щанэ | | 1/4 | плIанэ | | 1/9 | бгъуанэ | |  | |  |  | | --- | --- | | 2/2 | ныкъуитI | | 2/3 | щанитI | | 3/4 | плIанищ | | 5/9 | бгъуанитху | |

### Fractionals as decimals

Numbers in Circassian may also be used to represent decimal counting.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | 2/2 | Зырэ пщIанэрэ | | 2/3 | ТIурэ щанитIрэ | |  | |  |  | | --- | --- | | 3/4 | Щырэ пщIаниплIрэ | | 5/9 | Тхурэ пщIанибгъурэ | |

### Distributives and Fractionals

The most common use of numbers relates to cardinal numbers, which describe how many of a person, place, or thing exist or are present. In many languages, use of cardinal numbers follows a similar pattern:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| number - object | I have five apples. |

In Circassian, after the number one, cardinal numbers exhibit the following use-case:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| object - number suffix | I have apples five-ish. |

Of course, this use-case does not exist in English, nor does the suffix “five-ish,” but we used this made-up term to denote that the suffix is related to the number “five” but does not contain the whole word — only the root.

The most common use of numbers relates to cardinal numbers, which describe how many of a person, place or thing exist or are present. In many languages, use of cardinal numbers follows a similar pattern:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Common use-case A) | number \_ object | I have five apples. |
| Common use-case B) | object \_ number | I have apples five. |

Clearly, the second use-case is not found in English but is common in many other languages. In Circassian, after the number one, cardinal numbers exhibit the following use-case:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Circassian use-case: | object \_ number suffix | I have apples\_“fivish” |

Of course, this use case does not exist in English, nor does the suffix “fivish”, but we used this made-up term to denote that the suffix is related to the number “five”, but does not contain the whole word—only the root, as is the case in the table above.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Ӏ. | I have one apple. | Сэ (**зы**) мыэӀэрысэ сиӀэщ. |
| 2. | You have two pears. | Уэ кхъужь**ит1** уиӀэщ. |
| 3. | She has three bananas. | Ар банан**ищ** иӀэщ. |
| 4. | They have four pineapples. | Ахэр Ӏэнэнас**ипл1** яӀэщ. |
| 5. | We have five cucumbers. | Дэ нащ**итху** диӀэщ. |
| 6. | You (plural) have six apricots | Фэ хуардж**их** фиӀэщ. |
| 7. | He has seven peppers | Ар щыбжий**бл** иӀэщ. |
| 8. | I have eight tomatoes. | Сэ бэдрэжан**и** сиӀэщ. |
| 9. | You have nine potatoes. | Уэ кӀэртӀоф**ибгъу** уиӀэщ. |
| Ӏ0. | We have ten cherries | Дэ балийгъ**ипщ1** диӀэщ. |

As the table above demonstrates, each numbers’ root is joined to the noun it counts with the insertion of the letter **и**. In words that already end in the letter **и** or the letter sequence **ий**, no additional и is required; this can be seen in sentence seven above. Additionally, the number eight, the whole word of which is represented by the letter **и** does not require an additional **и**.

In Circassian, the only exception to the suffixes described above is the number one, which may appear as a whole number directly before the object it counts. In the example above, the number one appears in parentheses because when a single item is being counted, use of the word “one” may be optionally used.

## Unions

Circassian unions govern the rules by which the other six notional parts of speech are joined to one another. In English, and may be used to connect most parts of speech with most other parts of speech. In Circassian, there is no such single word, and there are different rules for connecting the different parts of speech to one another. Fortunately, these rules are fairly simple and regular.

The table below summarizes the rules that govern how unions join these parts of speech.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Nouns and pronouns | Add suffix -**рэ** to all nouns and pronouns in the sequence when they are connected by a verb. Add suffix -**ри** to all nouns and pronouns in the sequence when they are connected by an adjective. |
| Adjectives and adverbs | Use **икIи** between words to connect adjectives or adverbs. |
| Verbs | Add suffix **и** to all verbs except the last. |
| Numerals | Add suffix **рэ** to all numbers in the sequence. |

### Circassian unions for nouns and pronouns

Unions for nouns and pronouns are governed by the same set of rules. Add suffix -рэ to all nouns and pronouns in the sequence when they are connected by a verb. Add suffix -ри to all nouns and pronouns in the sequence when they are connected by an adjective.

Example of nouns connected by a verb

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| ЩIалэм къопсалъэ. | A boy is speaking to me. |
| ЩIалэм**рэ** хъыджэбзым**рэ** зопсалъэ. | A boy and girl are speaking to each other. |

In the example above, the words boy (**щIалэ**) and girl (**хъыджэбз**) are connected by a verb — they are speaking. In this case, we use the -**рэ** suffix on both the boy and the girl. This would be a bit like saying the boy **and** the girl **and** in English.

Example of nouns connected by an adjective

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Хъыджэбз дахэщ. | The girl is pretty. |
| Хъыджэбз**ри** щIалэм**ри** дахэщ. | The girl and the boy are pretty. |

In the example above, the words girl (**хъыджэбз**) and boy (**щIалэ**) are connected by an adjective — they are both pretty. In this case, we use the -**ри** suffix on both the girl and the boy. Again, this would be a bit like saying the girl **and** the boy **and** in English.

Unions for adjectives and adverbs are governed by the same rule: use **икIи** between words to connect adjectives or adverbs. This rule is illustrated in the examples below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Унэр дахэщ **икIи** инщ. | The house is big and beautiful. |
| Уэ фIыуэ **икIи** тэмэму упсалъэ. | You speak properly and beautifully. |

### Circassian unions for verbs

Unions for verbs are governed by the following rule: add suffix **и** to all verbs except the last.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Сыгупсысащ. | I thought. |
| Сыгупсысэр**и** сыкlуащ. | I thought and I went. |
| Сыгупсысэр**и**, сыкlуэри слъэгъуащ. | I thought, I went and I saw. |

### Circassian unions for numerals

Unions for nouns and pronouns are governed by the following rule: add suffix **рэ** to all numbers in the sequence.

We’ve actually seen this rule before, when we covered numerals, as illustrated in the examples below.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| тIощI**рэ**тху**рэ** | Twenty-five. |
| щэ**рэ**щэщI**рэ** | One hundred thirty-five. |

## Conjunctions

In the last section, we discussed unions, the Circassian part of speech that connects individual words to one another.

In this section, we’ll be discussion conjunctions, the Circassian part of speech that connects sentences, phrases, and clauses.

In Circassian, conjunctions fall into two categories: coordinating conjunctions and subordination conjunctions.

* Coordinating conjunctions link sentences, phrases, or clauses that are similar. An example of a coordinating conjunction in English is and.
* Subordinating conjunctions link sentences, phrases or clauses that are dissimilar. An example of a subordinating conjunction in English is though.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Coordinating conjunctions | Link things that are similar | Examples: but, and |
| Subordinating conjunctions | Link things that are dissimilar | Examples: though, because |

### Coordinating and Subordinate Conjunctions

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| |  |  | | --- | --- | | Coordinating | | | и, икIи and suffix -рэ | and | | ауэ | but | | арщхьэкӀэ | because (of) | | aтӀэ | in spite of | | е...е | either…or | | хьэмэ | or | | зэ...зэ | first…then | |  | |  |  | | --- | --- | | Subordinating | | | сыту | as | | щхьэкӀэ | though | | сыт щхьэкӀэ | because (of)/why | | папщӀэ | for | | папщӀэкӀэ | as | | щыгъуэ | when | | къудейуэ | as soon as | | ару | just | | пэтми | although | | щытмэ | if | | ипкъ иткӀэ | therefore | | къыхэкӀкӀэ | because/that’s why | |

## Particles

Particles are not unique to Circassian. They are words that need another word to take any meaning.

Below are some of the more commonly-used particles in Circassian.

**Note**: **акъудей** and **къудей** are not to be confused with **акъудейуэ**, covered in the section on conjunctions.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Particle | Meaning |
| дыдэ | quite, very |
| уеблэмэ | even |
| пIэрэ | whether, really |
| мис | here |
| мес | there (near by) |
| адэ | there (further away) |
| модэ | there (furthest away) |
| кхъыӀэ | please |
| нэхъ | more |
| нэхърэ | more than |
| хьэуэ | no |
| нтIэ | yes |
| акъудей (аркъудей) | quite not |
| къудей | just now |

## Postpositions

Postpositions are similar to prepositions. Prepositions demonstrate place, time, or attribution, and appear before the word they describe.

In Circassian, postpositions also describe a place, time, or attribution, and appear after the word they describe.

Below are some of the more commonly-used Circassian postpositions.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Particle | Meaning |
| дыдэ | quite, very |
| уеблэмэ | even |
| пIэрэ | whether, really |
| мис | here |
| мес | there (near by) |
| адэ | there (further away) |
| модэ | there (furthest away) |
| кхъыӀэ | please |
| нэхъ | more |
| нэхърэ | more than |
| хьэуэ | no |
| нтIэ | yes |
| акъудей (аркъудей) | quite not |
| къудей | just now |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Postpositions demonstrating time | |
| **ипIэкIэ** before | **ЩIалэм ипIэкIэ пщащэр ягъэкIуащ.** The girl was sent before the boy. |
| **пщӀондэ** before | **Шэджагъуэ пщIондэ.** Before the afternoon. |
| **щыгъуэ** during | **ХьэгъуэлIыгъуэм щыгъуэ ар си деж щыIащ.** He was at my place during the wedding. |
| **икIуэцIкI** during | **А зэманым икIуэцIкIэ абы зигъэхъеякъым.** He didn't move during that time. |
| **нэужь** after | **Пщэдджыжь нэужьым.** After the morning. |
| **Лъандэ** since | **Нышэдибэ лъандэрэ.** Since the morning. |
| **къэскIэ** until | **Нобэм къэскIэ лэжьыгъэр абы зэфIигъэкIакъым.** He didn’t finish the work until today. |
| **Нэс** until | **Ар сыхьэтихым нэс щысащ.** He sat until six o’clock. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Postpositions demonstrating space | |
| **Деж** to | **Мухьэмэд и къуэшым деж щыIащ**. Mohammad was at his brother’s. |
| **дежкIэ** at | **Дэринэ унэм дежкIэ зигъэзащ.** Derina returned to the house. |
| **Иужь** after | **Сабий и анэм иужь иту мажэ.** The baby is running after its mother. |
| **пащхьэ** in front of | **Ар егъэджакӀуэм и пащхьэ къиуващ**. He stood in front of the teacher. |
| **щӀыбагъ** behind | **Абы унэм и щӀыбагъым щӀыэщ**. He is behind the house. |
| **щIагъ** under | **Ар гъуэлъыпIэ и щIагъым гъэпщкІуащ**. He hid under the bed. |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Postpositions demonstrating attribution | |
| **нэмыщI** except | **Уэр нэмыщI зыми жиIакъым.** Except for you, no one said anything. |
| **фIэкIа** except | **Абы фIэкIа нэгъуэщI къэкIуакъым.** Except for him, nobody came. |
| **Къэс** every | **Дэтхэнэ лъэпкъ езым и бзэ иӀэщ.** Every nation has its own language. |
| **Хуэдиз** come to | **И уасэ тӀощ1 хуэдиз мэхъу?** Did the price come to twenty? |

APPENDIX

1. About the Ergative-Absolute Case

To understand the ergative-absolute case, you first need to understand a few keywords:

* **Nominative-Accusative**: Traditional sentence structure in most languages
* **Transitive Verb**: Verb that takes an object (Steve sees the baby girl)
* **Intransitive Ve**rb: Verb that doesn’t take an object (Bob sees)
* **Subject**: The label provided to the participant of a sentence using an intransitive verb (not the same as the subject in SVO)
* **Agent**: The label provided to the actor in a sentence that uses a transitive verb
* **Patient**: The label provided to the person/thing being acted on in a sentence with a transitive verb
* **Morphosyntactic** **Alignment**: A way to illustrate how sentences with transitive and intransitive verb arguments differ

To understand the ergative-absolute case, we need to understand subjects and their verbs. It is important to differentiate between the subject in terms of case and the subject in terms of “Subject Verb Object” (SVO) sentence structure. SVO illustrates how sentences are connected. In English, the subject comes first, followed by the verb, followed by the object. However, this piece looks at subject in terms of case. Understanding SVO is important but that will be discussed later.

Moving past sentence structure, and focusing on case and how case is marked is the best way to understand how ergative-absolute case differs from nominative case. Morphosyntactic alignment helps with that process. Morphosyntactic alignment is a way of placing similar sentences side by side to illustrate the differences of arguments between transitive and intransitive verbs.

Most languages you are probably familiar with use nominative-accusative case. These sentences are set up as an agent acting on a patient. These agents are left unmarked.

Take a look at this sentence: Steve sees.

In this sentence, Steve is the subject. There is no patient to be acted upon. And it is clear who is acting.

Now look at this sentence: Steve sees the baby girl.

With this sentence, “sees” becomes a transitive verb because we have added a patient, “the baby girl,” to the sentence. Steve is acting on the baby girl. Steve becomes the agent.

The use of a transitive verb is essential because in both nominative-accusative and ergative-absolutive, the subject is unchanged when there is an intransitive verb: Steve sees. There’s no need to differentiate between anything because it is clear what occurs. Only when using intransitive verbs do things change.

In a sentence like the one above, we can substitute nouns for pronouns: “Steve sees her.” This helps readers and listeners understand what occurs in the sentence. Pronouns follow specific rules with the nominative-accusative sentence structure.

We would never say, “Him sees the baby girl” or “Him sees she.” That’s because, with nominative-accusative, it is always the patient that gets marked, never the agent. We treat the agent the same, no matter where it is in the sentence. Using the subject, you can compare and see that they remain unchanged.

This is not the case with ergative-absolutive.

The critical point to remember is that ergative-absolute is merely the opposite of nominative-accusative. Now, this seems strange when expressed in English because it doesn’t use this structure. However, it does feel natural to those who speak languages such as Georgian, Basque, and Circassian.

Looking at the previous sentence again: “Steve sees the baby girl,” with ergative-absolutive, instead of marking “the baby girl,” you would mark Steve. Again, using pronouns, “Him sees the baby girl.” Why? Because in ergative-absolutive the agent is marked, the patient remains unmarked.

Languages that use this type of alignment will mark the agents linguistically. This would look like, “Steve-a sees the baby girl.” The “-a” refers to a hypothetical marking. People communicating in the ergative-absolute would see or hear the mark and know that Steve was the one seeing.

The sentence structures in these languages look different. As mentioned before, languages that use the ergative-accusative case typically don’t follow SVO. Sentences can move or “morph” in these languages. In most cases, ergative-absolute sentences usually end or begin within the verb. As a result, marking the agent in ergative-absolutive is vital otherwise you wouldn’t clearly understand the sentence.

Retake a look at our sentence, but organized this way, “Steve the baby girl sees.” There could be confusion, especially when you can move the sentence structure around even more, “The baby girl Steve sees” or even “sees the baby girl Steve.” Who does the seeing? It’s hard to tell.

However, once you mark the agent (the ergative), there is no confusion: “Steve- a / the baby girl sees” and “The baby girl Steve-a sees.”

This is the nature of ergative-absolute. It is a system to help organize sentence structure that differs from the majority of systems in place. At first glance, it can appear confusing, but keep in mind that it’s a natural occurrence when creating a language. Some form one way, others differ.

One final note of importance: While languages that are nominative-accusative stay nominative accusative without exception, ergative-absolutive exists on a spectrum. This means that in some instances, it uses characteristics of nominative-accusative depending on how animated the agent is. In some languages, only the first person pronouns follow the nominative-accusative structure while in other languages, various nouns have differing levels of ergative use.

1. Circassian as a Polysynthetic Language

As a language, Circassian is partly agglutinative and partly polysynthetic. These terms deal with how words are formed. While the distinction between agglutinative and polysynthetic is largely academic, it is worth noting that Circassian vocabulary is somewhat easy to pickup for a simple reason: Circassian words are largely formed by combining a relatively small number of word roots.

This makes it somewhat easy to quickly expand ones vocabulary, and is the driving force behind the content and format presented in the body of this text. In order to better understand this unique advantage of the Circassian language, a brief overview of linguist morphology is presented below. Before we dive in, however, let’s start with the root of all language efforts—the word.

How do you define a word?

It turns out the answer to that question is a lot more complicated than you would initially think. As you know, words vary from language to language. And one way to compare and contrast them is through their use of morphemes. A morpheme is the smallest dividable unit in a language. And depending on the language, they vary in their abilities and how they’re used to help words express ideas.

Linguistical Typology analyzes the morphemes of a language to categorize it. Imagine a spectrum similar to the color spectrum, on one end, rests “Analytic Languages” then there’s “Isolating Languages” and on the other end sits “Synthetic Languages.” No one language belongs to a specific category. Language exists on a spectrum, borrowing characteristics from those next to them. What’s more, Synthetic Languages divide into four subcategories: Fusional, Agglutinative, Polysynthetic, and Oligosynthetic.

Morphology

Morphology analyzes how morphemes enhance the words of a particular language. From languages that rarely combine morphemes to ones that seem to stack them endlessly, morphology studies the formation of words by looking at stems, roots, and affixes and seeing how they interact to illustrate meaning. It also highlights how the parts of speech, stress, and intonation change the meaning of a word.

Linguistical Typological Language Categories

* **Analytic**: Analytic Languages convey meaning between words through prepositions, articles and other similar types of “helper words.” Word order instead of inflection is also essential for conveying meaning. This language type has a low morpheme per word ratio, meaning that there is typically one morpheme per word while other languages use multiple morphemes or morphemes with multiple meanings to convey ideas. Chinese and Vietnamese are examples.
* **Isolating**: Similar to Analytic, Isolating Languages have a low morpheme per word ratio. Take the following English example, “He holds a fish.” For the most part, the sentence has one morpheme per word, except for “holds” which has “hold” and “-s.” This use of inflection for possession also exists to illustrate number. Sentence order supports meaning as well.
* **Synthetic**: With a high morpheme to word ratio, Synthetic Languages differ from other categories in that they rely heavily on the use of morphemes to convey meaning. How this happens depends on the type of Synthetic Language with each having increasing more complex morpheme use. These are the four subcategories:
* **Fusional**: These languages use a single inflectional morpheme to express grammatical characteristics. Spanish is an excellent example of this, where one morpheme in the form of suffix can illustrate person, tense, and number.
* **Agglutinative**: These languages form sentences by adding a suffixes to root words. In a language like Turkish, for example, you can add multiple suffixes onto a word to make your meaning more precise. The result is a long word formed from a short word. More intricately, words in Turkish can indicate direction and presence as well.
* **Polysynthetic**: These languages are very synthetic, meaning that multiple morphemes combine to express complicated, detailed ideas. The morpheme to word count is exceptionally high in Polysynthetic Languages resulting in the notorious “sentence-words.” With Polysynthetic languages, words from out of the combination of multiple (ten or more) morphemes to express specific ideas. The morphemes are not independent. They work together with a root word to communicate an idea. Polysynthetic Languages also take on characteristics of both Agglutinative and Fusional languages in the creation of their monolithic words. A language like Circassian tends to fit more into this category than an Agglutinative language, though other linguists may debate the issue.
* **Oligosynthetic**: This is a hypothetical/unnatural type of language with limited morphemes that combine to form sentences. It would be on the far end of the spectrum, a kind of hyper-morpheme language.

Why the Spectrum Matters

The critical point to remember is that all languages rest on a spectrum. As a language leans more towards one category, it borrows similar components from the types around it. Using morphological typography helps linguists and those studying languages for their interest better understand the components that make up those languages. And knowing how structure conveys meaning assists in fully mastering the implementation of any language.