Two Probes, One Goal: Towards an Analysis of Long-Distance Agreement in Muira Dargwa[1]

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Introduction. Long-distance agreement (LDA) is a phenomenon whereby an argument in a subordinate clause determines φ-features on the predicate in the superordinate clause, see (Bhatt & Keine 2019) for an overview. LDA is attested in a variety of typologically unrelated languages and is widespread in the Nakh-Daghestanian languages, where it has received a lot of attention, beginning with the influential analyses of Godoberi by Haspelmath (1999) and Tsez by Polinsky and Potsdam (2001). As data from other languages accumulated, it became clear that LDA is not a uniform phenomenon – superficially similar LDA-like structures display varying properties, and, thus, there seems to exist many ways for the matrix verb to agree with the embedded argument. However, despite the differences, two main similarities have also been observed: (i) the matrix predicate lacks its own absolutive DP argument, and (ii) LDA varies with the default agreement, showing slight semantic/pragmatic differences. Moreover, what unites all existing approaches is the aim to reduce the apparent inter-clausal syntactic dependency to well-established local agreement.

In this talk, I investigate the properties of LDA in the understudied Nakh-Daghestanian language Muira Dargwa. In this language, there are four types of clausal complements: infinitives, converbs, nominalizations (masdars), and finite clauses. Unlike some other varieties of Dargwa, in Muira Dargwa LDA is not limited to a few phasal and modal predicates taking converbial or infinitival complements; rather, it is generally allowed with a vast number of predicates and all four types of complement clauses. In what follows, I will (i) show that LDA constructions are biclausal and, consequently, that restructuring analyses are untenable; (ii) provide evidence that neither the agreement goal leaves the embedded clause nor is there a base-generated proxy in the matrix clause; (iii) suggest an analysis that captures all the indicated properties of LDA in Muira Dargwa and discuss some of its consequences.

Biclausality. One way to deal with apparent violations of the locality of agreement is to postulate a monoclausal structure that arises from some type of restructuring. This line of analysis has been initially pursued by Haspelmath (1999) in his seminal paper on Godoberi, where LDA constructions are thought to result from clause union, i.e. complex predicate formation. Alternatively, restructuring may also involve embedding of a deficient clause which, importantly, lacks certain functional projections that render a clause impenetrable from the outside (Wurmbrand 2001). Both types of restructuring analyses imply that we are dealing with a monoclausal structure where agreement operates as it usually does. This, however, cannot be right for Muira Dargwa, as the constructions unambiguously demonstrate biclausal properties – for instance, it is possible to have negation in both matrix and embedded clauses (1) or two adverbials of the same type (2); additionally, embedded QPs cannot scope over matrix operators (3).

(1) Ɂaˤli-s   [pat'imat-li   šʷal čutːu   ħa-d-arq'-ib-li]
     PN-DAT   PN-ERG   five chudu.ABS   NEG-NPL-make.PFV-AOR-CVB

     ħa-d-ikː-u-li   sa<d>i
     NEG-NPL-want.IPFV-PROG-CVB   <NPL>COP
     'Ali doesn't want Patimat not to cook five chudu.'

(2) sa   pat'imat-li   d-urh-ib-ir=ri   murad-li-cːi [išħali
     yesterday   PN-ERG   NPL-tell.PFV-AOR-ATR=PST   PN-OBL-INTER today

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unc:a	hark	d-arq'-iq-ara]
door.ABS	open	NPL-make.PFV-CAUS-INF

'Yesterday Patimat told Murad to open the doors today.'

Goal in the matrix clause. Alternative approaches claim that, despite the biclausal status of the construction, agreement is nevertheless local by virtue of either (possibly, covert) movement of the goal to the matrix clause or presence of a covert pronoun coindexed with the goal and hence sharing its φ-features. An analysis that assumes raising has been suggested by Serdobolskaya (2010) for two Dargwa lects: Khuduts and Qunqi. Once again, this cannot be right for Muira Dargwa. Evidence that the agreement goal does not evacuate embedded clause comes, for example, from the absence of wide scope readings of QPs (3) and the inability of matrix subject to bind complex reflexive (4).

(3)

har	učitel^j-li-s	[rasul-li	č^{w}al	žuz-i	d-elč'-uj]
each	teacher-OBL-DAT	PN-ERG	two	book.ABS-PL	NPL-read.PFV-AOR.CVB

d-ik:-u-li	saj
NPL-want.IPFV-PROG-CVB	COP.M

'Every teacher wants Rasul to read two books.' $(\forall \gg 2; *2 \gg \forall)$

(4)

rasul-li$_i$	tuχtur-li-c:i$_j$	[[sun-ni	saj]$_{j/*i}$	ʔaˤħ
PN-ERG	doctor-OBL-INTER	SELF.OBL-ERG	SELF.ABS	good

w-arq'-iq-ara]	tiledi	w-arq'-ib
M-make.PFV-CAUS-INF	request	M-make.PFV-AOR

'Rasul asked the doctor to cure himself / *him.'

Analysis. I suggest that a modified version of the cyclic agreement analysis (Legate 2005) is best suited for Muira Dargwa LDA. One reason to depart from the analysis of Polinsky and Potsdam (2001) that relies on edge movement is that the goal need not be interpreted as topic – it can also be non-referential (3) or focal (5). It should be noted, however, that LDA does correlate with information-structure status of the goal. Besides that, there seems to be no evidence for movement to that position. Finally, example (5), where the goal is an ergative *wh*-phrase, is also crucial in that it demonstrates that LDA configurations are not limited to absolutive goals, casting additional doubt on the idea that agreement is directly between the *v* head and a DP.

(5)

rasul-li	či<r>a-b	[či-li	musa	gap	w-arq'-ib=al]
PN-ERG	<F>see.PFV-AOR	who.OBL-ERG	PN.ABS	praise	M-make.PFV-AOR=IQ

'Rasul saw who (a woman) praised Musa.'

(6)
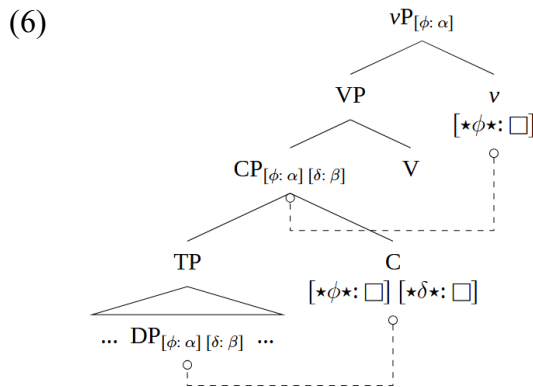
Concretely, I propose that φ-features can be bundled with the generalized information-structural feature δ on the left peripheral head, C in (6). This head searches for a goal in its c-command domain that satisfies both features at once, cf. Multitasking (van Urk 2015) that additionally prohibits independent probing. When C has valued its features and *v* is merged, the latter agrees with the former, as it is the closest potential goal bearing φ-features. With this, both instances of agreement proceed without violating any locality constraints, e.g. Phase Impenetrability Condition (Chomsky 2001). Such an analysis predicts that agreement can proceed even further, i.e. some other probe may agree with *v*P that bears φ-features of the

embedded argument – this prediction is borne out, cf. (1) with LDA on copula. Moreover, LDA in Muira Dargwa is possible across several clauses, but, crucially, highest verb cannot show LDA when intermediate verb displays default agreement – a fact that is expected under the current analysis, if some further probe agrees with vP and then itself serves as a goal. Some other consequences and possible applicability of the analysis to some other Nakh-Daghestanian languages will be discussed in the talk.

Abbreviations: ABS – absolutive; AOR – aorist; ATR – attributive; CAUS – causative; CONV – converb; COP – copula; DAT – dative; ERG – ergative; F – feminine; INF – infinitive; INTER – inter-lative; IPFV – imperfective; IQ – indirect question; M – masculine; N – neuter; NEG – negation; OBL – oblique; PFV – perfective; PL – plural; PN – proper name; PROG – progressive; PST – past; SELF – reflexive.

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