

1 Introduction

West Circassian (Adyghe): Northwest Caucasian, polysynthetic, ergative alignment

Data from Khatazhukaj rural settlement, Republic of Adyghea, Russia, unless otherwise indicated.¹

MAIN CLAIM:

- Multiple wh-agreement in West Circassian is the realization of a parasitic gap dependency.
- Anti-c-command condition on parasitic gaps singles out absolutive DP as highest argument, i.e. provides evidence for syntactic ergativity.

2 Multiple wh-agreement is a parasitic gap dependency

Wh-agreement $z(\text{ə})$ - replaces ϕ -agreement with the relativized participant on the predicate heading the relative clause:

Relativization of ergative DP (Lander 2009a:619):

- (1) a. $\check{\text{č}}'\text{ale-m}$ apč'ə-r Ø- ə- q^wəta -ɐ
 boy-OBL glass-ABS 3ABS- 3SG.ERG- break -PST
 Finite clause: 'The boy broke the glass.'
- b. [$t(\text{ERG})$ apč'ə-r Ø- zə- q^wəta -ɐ] č'ale-r
 glass-ABS 3ABS- WH.ERG- break -PST boy-ABS
 Relative clause: 'the boy that broke the glass'

Prefix $z(\text{ə})$ - marks agreement with a trace in [WH] feature (O'Herin 2002 on related Abaza; Caponigro & Polinsky 2011).

Multiple wh-agreement:

Additional wh-agreement is optionally triggered by pronoun coreferent with relativized participant (Lander 2009a, b, 2012; Caponigro & Polinsky 2011).

Multiple wh-agreement – ergative DP + possessor of absolutive DP:

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Glosses: ABSolutive; ADverbial; ALP-alienable possession; BENefactive; COMitative; DIREctive; DYNamic verb; ERGative; IO-indirect object; NEGation; OBLique; POSSessor; PST-past tense; Question; SG-singular.

- (2) marə č'etəw-ew [$t(\text{ERG})$ { z -, Ø- } jə-šxən zə-mə-šxə-re] -r
 here cat-ADV { WH-, 3SG.POSS- } ALP-food WH.ERG-NEG-eat-DYN -ABS
 'Here is the cat that doesn't eat its food.'

Multiple wh-agreement can appear both intra- and cross-clausally.

Cross-clausal multiple wh-agreement – IO in matrix clause + IO in embedded clause:

- (3) xet-a [Aslan mafe-m rjene [Ø- { z -, je } -mə-w-ew]
 who-Q Aslan day-OBL whole 3ABS- { WH-, 3SG.IO- } NEG-hit-ADV
 $t(\text{IO})$ Ø- zə- de-žeg^wə-re] -r
 3ABS-WH.IO-COM-play-DYN -ABS
 'Who is the one Aslan plays with __ all day without hitting { __, him/her }?'

Cross-clausal multiple wh-agreement displays classic parasitic gap properties (Engdahl 1983):

- Wh-agreement in the dependent clause is optional; cf. English translation in (3).
- The dependent clause may be a syntactic island: direct relativization out of it is ungrammatical.
- The trace in the matrix clause does not c-command the parasitic gap (anti-c-command condition).

Relativization out of adjunct is ungrammatical:

- (4) * xet-a [Aslan mafe-m rjene [$t(\text{IO})$ Ø- z -mə-w-ew]
 who-Q Aslan day-OBL whole 3ABS- WH.IO-NEG-hit-ADV
 Ø- (Ø- de-) žeg^wə-re] -r
 3ABS-3SG.IO-COM-play-DYN -ABS
 Intended: 'Who does Aslan play all day without hitting __?'

Multiple wh-agreement with clausemate DPs is also parasitic: the optionally wh-agreeing pronoun cannot be directly relativized:

- (2') * marə č'etəw-ew [pro_i [t_i z -jə-šxən] ə-mə-šxə-re] -r
 here cat-ADV WH.POSS-ALP-food 3SG.ERG-NEG-eat-DYN -ABS
 Intended: 'Here is the cat that doesn't eat its food.'

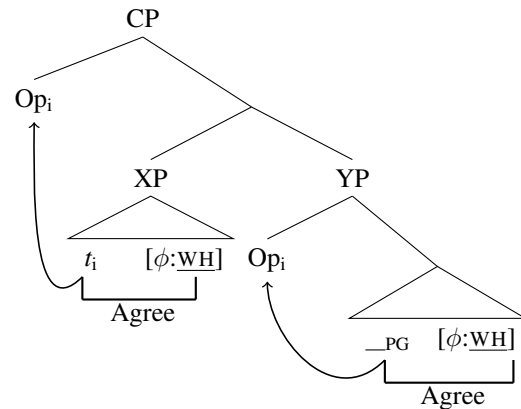
UNIFIED ANALYSIS FOR WH-AGREEMENT:

- Wh-agreement in West Circassian is **always** agreement with a wh-trace.
- Multiple wh-agreement is realization of agreement with a **parasitic** wh-trace.

3 Basic assumptions

- Relativization = movement of null Op to Spec,CP (Caponigro & Polinsky 2011).
- Argument DPs trigger ϕ -agreement on predicate via Agree (Chomsky 2000).
- Wh-agreement = ϕ -agreement with a wh-trace (Chung 1998; Baier 2016).
- Parasitic gap (PG) = wh-trace of null Op in Spec of YP containing PG (Chomsky 1986; Postal 1998; Nissenbaum 2000).

(5) Basic structure of parasitic gap construction:



4 Constraints on multiple wh-agreement and syntactic ergativity

- (6) **ABSOLUTE CONSTRAINT ON MULTIPLE WH-AGREEMENT:**
Intra-clausal multiple wh-agreement is ungrammatical if the relativized participant is the absolutive DP (Lander 2009a, b, 2012).

In terms of parasitic gaps:

An absolutive trace cannot license a parasitic gap in a clausemate DP.

Abslutive Constraint in a transitive clause (ERG-ABS):

- (7) marə [{✓ə-,*zə-}q^we t(ABS) Ø-q-ə-š'a-be]
here {3SG-,WH.POSS-}son WH.ABS-DIR-3SG.ERG-bring-PST
bzəlfəbe-r
woman-ABS
'Here is the woman whom_i her_i son brought __.'

Abslutive Constraint in an intransitive clause (ABS-IO):

- (8) marə pšaš-ew [t(ABS) {✓Ø-,*z-}jane Ø-qə-Ø-fe-š^wa-be] -r
here girl-ADV {3SG-,WH.POSS-}mother 3ABS-DIR-3SG.IO-BEN-dance-PST -ABS
'Here is the girl who_i __ danced for her_i mother.'

The Abslutive Constraint can be explained via the anti-c-command condition on parasitic gaps (Engdahl 1983; Culicover & Postal 2001, i.a.).

(9) **Anti-c-command condition on parasitic gaps:**

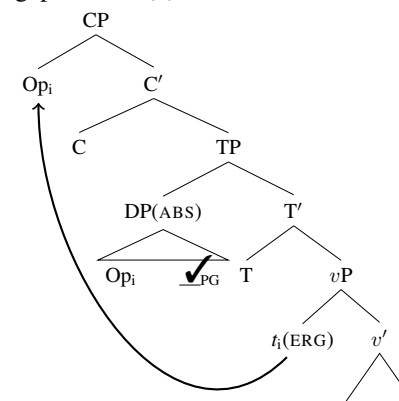
"A parasitic gap may not be c-commanded by the real gap." (Engdahl 1983:22)

⇒ **The absolutive DP c-commands other argument DPs**, including the ergative subject.

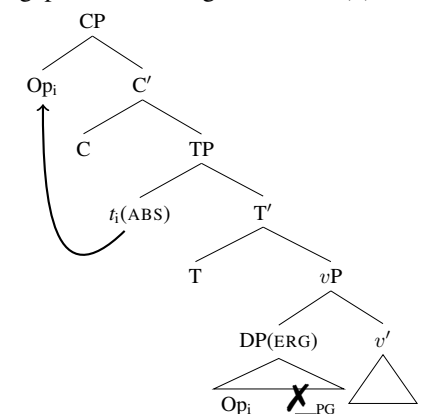
WEST CIRCASSIAN IS SYNTACTICALLY ERGATIVE:

- Ergative DP and IO are assigned inherent case by v^0 and Appl⁰ and remain in-situ within vP (Legate 2008; Pytkäinen 2008).
- Abslutive DP is assigned structural case by T and raises to Spec,TP to satisfy [EPP].
- Previous proposals of high ABS: Bittner & Hale (1996); Aldridge (2008); Coon et al. (2014), i.a.

(10) Relativization of ERG + parasitic gap in ABS (2):



(11) Relativization of ABS + parasitic gap in ERG is ungrammatical (7):



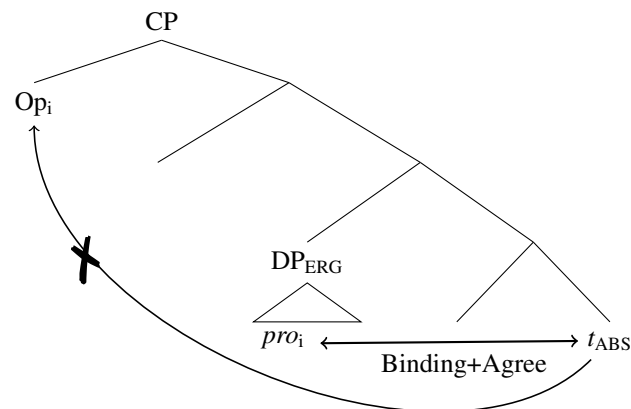
5 Multiple wh-agreement is not pronominal binding

Caponigro & Polinsky (2011): multiple wh-agreement = Op and bound possessor pronoun agree in [WH].

Absolutive Constraint is evidence for accusativity: absolutive DP does not c-command possessor of ergative DP

⇒ relativization of ABS + binding/Agree with possessor of ERG renders Weak Crossover violation.

(12) Multiple wh-agreement w/ABS as WCO violation:



COUNTERARGUMENTS:

- Weak Crossover is not ungrammatical with regular pronominal agreement (7).
- Doesn't account for optionality of multiple wh-agreement (2).
- Cannot be extended to Absolutive Constraint with absolutive subject (8).

6 Implications & Questions

1. Reflexive binding and control/raising (Potsdam & Polinsky 2012) follow an accusative pattern (ERG > ABS):
 - Reflexives are local subject oriented (Ahn 2015).
 - Control/raising clauses are smaller than TP or lack [EPP] on T.
2. Expectation: DP(ERG) cannot license PG in DP(IO).

$$(13) \quad [Op_i \quad [_{vP} \quad t_i(ERG) \quad [_{AppIP} \quad [X_{PG} \quad](IO) \quad] \quad]]$$

— Not confirmed. A-scrambling?

3. Absolutive Constraint absent in cross-clausal contexts (Lander 2009a, 2012).

Embedded clauses attach higher than TP?

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