High absolute in West Circassian: Evidence from parasitic gaps[*]

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1.   Introduction

In West Circassian (or Adyghe; Northwest Caucasian family), a polysynthetic language with ergative alignment in verbal indexing and case marking, relativization of a participant involves the replacement of the corresponding cross-reference morphology on the predicate with a specialized wh-agreement marker.[1] If the relative clause contains a pronoun that is co-referent with the relativized participant, that pronoun may optionally trigger an additional instance of wh-agreement, resulting in a multiple wh-agreement construction (Lander 2009a, 2012, Caponigro & Polinsky 2011). I argue that multiple wh-agreement constructions in West Circassian are the manifestation of a parasitic gap dependency: the additional wh-agreement marks agreement with a parasitic wh-trace. This analysis is supported by the fact that multiple wh-agreement constructions display properties typical of constructions involving parasitic gaps: (a) the additional wh-agreement is parasitic on the primary wh-agreement, often appearing within a syntactic island; (b) the appearance of additional wh-agreement involves local wh-movement within the syntactic island, as predicted by the movement analysis of parasitic gap dependencies (Chomsky 1986, Postal 1998); (c) just as parasitic gaps are generally optional and may be replaced with a pronoun, additional wh-agreement freely alternates with regular ϕ-agreement.

Restrictions on multiple wh-agreement constructions, if understood in light of the parasitic gap analysis, provide evidence for West Circassian being syntactically ergative in the structural sense: the absolutive DP c-commands all other arguments, including the ergative

[1]Abbreviations: ABSolutive; ADVerbial; BENefactive; CAUSative; COMitative; DATive; DIRective; ERGative; IO–indirect object; LOCative; MODal future; NEGation; OBLique; PLural; POSSessive; PR–possessor; PRS–present tense (on dynamic verbs); PST–past tense; Question; REfactive; SG–singular.

agent of a transitive verb. The restriction in question is the following: a pronoun that is co-referent with a relativized absolutive participant may not trigger additional wh-agreement, which means that *an absolutive wh-trace fails to license a parasitic gap within its clause-mate DPs*. This restriction finds an explanation in the anti-c-command condition, which states that a parasitic gap may not be c-commanded by the licensing gap (Engdahl 1983).

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows. Section 2 provides evidence that the multiple wh-agreement construction is a parasitic gap dependency. Section 3 connects structural restrictions on multiple wh-agreement constructions with the high position of the absolutive DP. Section 4 argues against analyzing multiple wh-agreement constructions as a case of agreement under binding. Section 5 concludes.

2. Multiple wh-agreement is a parasitic gap dependency

This section presents evidence for the multiple wh-agreement constructions being the manifestation of a parasitic gap dependency. In particular, I show that multiple wh-agreement constructions display the following properties typical of parasitic gap configurations:

- One of the wh-agreement markers in a multiple wh-agreement construction is *parasitic* on the presence of the other wh-agreement marker.
- The additional wh-agreement in a multiple wh-agreement construction freely alternates with a pronoun. Parasitic gaps are also often optional.
- The multiple wh-agreement dependency may not cross more than one island boundary. This means that, like parasitic gaps, this construction involves local operator movement, as proposed by Chomsky (1986), Postal (1998), Nissenbaum (2000), a.o.

Relativization in West Circassian involves the use of a special relativizing morpheme *zə-*[2] (Ø- for absolutive) in place of the regular cross-reference morphology referring to the relativized participant (Lander 2009a, 2012, Caponigro & Polinsky 2011). This is illustrated in (1): in (1a) the ergative agent triggers third person ergative personal marking (*ə-*) on the predicate heading the clause; if that participant is relativized, as in (1b), the corresponding cross-reference morphology is replaced with the prefix *zə-*.

(1) a. **mə č̣'ale-m$_i$(ERG)**   ə-š   velosjəped
         this boy-OBL   3SG.PR-brother bicycle
         Ø-   r-   jə-   tə   -ʁ
         3ABS- 3SG.IO+DAT- **3SG.ERG**- give -PST
         'This boy gave a bicycle to his brother.'

     b. marə č̣'al-ew [$_{RC}$ Op$_i$ *t$_i$*(ERG)   ə-š   velosjəped
         here boy-ADV   3SG.PR-brother bicycle
         Ø-   Ø-   je- **zə**-   tə   -ʁe] -r
         3ABS- 3SG.IO- DAT- **WH.ERG**- give -PST -ABS
         'Here is the boy that gave a bicycle to his brother.'

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[2]The vowel /ə/ is omitted in prevocalic environments and surfaces as /e/ when immediately followed by the dative applicative marker *r-/je-*.

Following O'Herin's (2002) analysis of a similar construction in Abaza (Northwest Caucasian) and Caponigro & Polinsky (2011), I assume that the morpheme *zə-* is the reflex of wh-agreement with the relativized participant. Since wh-agreement replaces regular ϕ-agreement, I follow O'Herin (2002) in assuming that agreement in the wh-feature is established in the same manner as ϕ-agreement in West Circassian. I analyze ϕ-agreement as parasitic on case assignment: it is established between an argument and the head that assigns case to it. The external argument of a transitive verb receives inherent ergative case from v^0 (Legate 2008), $Appl^0$ assigns inherent oblique case to applied objects Pylkkänen (2008), and the absolutive DP is assigned case by T^0. Wh-agreement is then established between the wh-trace of the corresponding argument and its case-assigning head.

If the relativized participant is co-referent with another argument in the clause, the relative clause may contain more than one instance of wh-agreement, resulting in patterns of multiple wh-agreement.[3] For example, the relative clause in (2) contains a null pronoun (*pro*) in the position of the possessor of the ergative agent, triggering corresponding third person singular agreement on the possessed noun. This possessor ϕ-agreement may be replaced with the wh-agreement marker *zə-*; in this case, the possessor is obligatorily interpreted as co-referent with the relativized indirect object.

(2) marə č'al-ew [RC Op$_i$ t_i(IO) [DP *pro*$_i$(PR) **ə/zə-š**](ERG)
    here boy-ADV   **3SG.PR/WH.PR**-brother
    velosiped Ø- qə- **ze-** r- jə- tə -ʁe] -r
    bicycle   3ABS- DIR- **WH.IO**- DAT- 3SG.ERG- give -PST -ABS
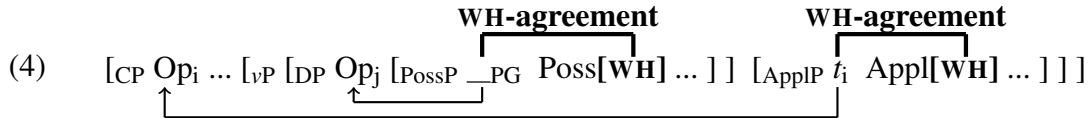   'Here is the boy$_i$ to whom his$_i$ brother gave a bicycle.'

Such patterns of multiple wh-agreement may appear across clausal boundaries, wherein the additional wh-agreement marker surfaces within an embedded clause. Such a case is shown below. The baseline sentence is in (3a): the indirect objects of the matrix and embedded clauses may in this case be interpreted as co-referent with each other. If the indirect object of the matrix clause is relativized, the co-referent participant in the embedded clause may either trigger third person singular ϕ-agreement or wh-agreement (3b).

(3) a. asλan$_i$ mafe-m rjene **ahmed$_j$(IO)** Ø- **Ø-** d- e- ʒeg^w
       Aslan day-OBL whole **Ahmed**   3ABS- **3SG.IO**- COM- PRS- play
       [CP *pro*$_i$(ABS) *pro*$_j$(IO) Ø- **Ø-** je- mə- w -ew]
                                        3ABS- **3SG.IO**- DAT- NEG- hit -ADV
       'Aslan plays all day with Ahmed without hitting him.'

    b. xet-a [RC **Op$_j$** asλan$_i$ mafe-m rjene [CP *pro*$_i$(ABS) *pro*$_j$(IO)
       who-Q   Aslan day-OBL whole
       Ø- **Ø-** je- mə- w -ew / Ø- **z-** e- mə- w -ew]
       3ABS- **3SG.IO**- DAT- NEG- hit -ADV / 3ABS- **WH.IO**- DAT- NEG- hit -ADV
       t$_j$(IO) Ø- **zə-** de- ʒeg^{w}ə -re] -r
                   3ABS- **WH.IO**- COM- play -PRS -ABS
       'Who does Aslan play with __ all day without hitting him/__?'

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[3]First documented by Lander (2009a, 2012), who coined the term 'multiple relativization' for it.

Multiple wh-agreement constructions exhibit several properties characteristic of parasitic gaps: (i) the additional wh-agreement may not appear without the primary wh-agreement marker; (ii) the additional wh-agreement freely alternates with regular ϕ-agreement, and (iii) the multiple wh-agreement dependency may not cross more than one island boundary.

Based on these similarities (to be presented in detail below) I propose that the additional wh-agreement in these constructions is triggered by a parasitic wh-trace. The structure for (2) is in (4): the applied object undergoes relativization and correspondingly triggers wh-agreement on $Appl^0$. The possessor within the ergative DP, then, also undergoes local A'-movement to Spec,DP and triggers wh-movement on the possessive head $Poss^0$.

WH-agreement **WH-agreement**

(4) $[_{CP}$ Op_i ... $[_{vP}$ $[_{DP}$ Op_j $[_{PossP}$ __PG Poss[**WH**] ...]] $[_{ApplP}$ t_i Appl[**WH**] ...]]]

First, the arguments in a multiple wh-agreement construction are not equally accessible for extraction: one of the wh-agreement markers is parasitic in the sense that the argument it refers to may not be directly relativized over the co-referent argument (Lander 2012, 322-327). Thus, while it is possible to mark only the ergative participant in (2) with wh-agreement, the inverse is not possible: the co-referent possessor of the indirect object may not be marked with wh-agreement if the ergative DP triggers regular ϕ-agreement (5).

(5) * marə č'al-ew $[_{RC}$ Op_i $[_{DP}$ t_i **zə**-š](ERG) pro_i(IO) velosiped
here boy-ADV **WH.PR**-brother bicycle

Ø- **Ø**- r- jə- tə -ʁe] -r
3ABS- **3SG.IO**- DAT- 3SG.ERG- give -PST -ABS

Intended: 'Here is the boy to whom his brother gave a bicycle.'

In fact, (5) is ungrammatical even without the co-referent interpretation because non-absolutive DPs are islands for extraction.[4] Thus, the possessor of the ergative agent of the verb ṣ̂ə 'make' may not be relativized directly (6a). Instead, the ergative DP must first be promoted to an absolutive position via the use of a pseudo-cleft construction as in (6b).

(6) a. * mwarə ŝʷəz-ew $[_{RC}$ Op_i $[_{DP}$ t_i(PR) **z**-jə-λ](ERG)
here woman-ADV **WH.PR**-POSS-man

wəne-xe-r Ø- ə- ṣ̂ə -re] -r
house-PL-ABS 3ABS- 3SG.ERG- do -PRS -ABS

Expected: 'Here is the woman whose husband builds houses.'

b. mwarə ŝʷəz-ew$_i$ $[_{RC}$ Op_i $[_{DP}$ t_i(PR) **z**-jə-λ]$_j$(ABS)
here woman-ADV **WH.PR**-POSS-man

$[_{RC}$ Op_j t_j(ERG) wəne-xe-r Ø- **zə**- ṣ̂ə -re]] -r
house-PL-ABS 3ABS- **WH.ERG**- do -PRS -ABS

lit. 'Here is the woman whose husband is the one that builds houses.'

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[4]There is dialectal variation regarding the islandhood of non-absolutive DP; Lander (2012, 280-281) provides grammatical examples of direct relativization out of ergative and applied object DPs. My consultants uniformly treated all non-absolutive DPs as islands for extraction.

Clausal adjuncts like the adverbial clause in (3b) are likewise islands for extraction. Thus, wh-marking within the embedded adverbial clause may not appear without a relativized co-referent participant in the matrix clause (7).

(7) * xet-a [$_{RC}$ Op$_j$ asλan$_i$ mafe-m rjene   [$_{CP}$ *pro$_i$*(ABS)   *t$_j$*(IO)
     who-Q   Aslan day-OBL whole
     Ø-   **z-**   e-   mə- w -ew]   Ø-   (Ø-   de)-   žeg^{w}ə -re] -r
     3ABS- **WH.IO-** DAT- NEG- hit -ADV 3ABS- **3SG.IO-** COM- play -PRS -ABS
     Intended: 'Who does Aslan play (with him/her) all day without hitting __?'

Thus, we have seen that multiple wh-agreement constructions often involve additional wh-agreement replacing agreement with a participant that is otherwise inaccessible for extraction, i.e. that the additional wh-agreement is *parasitic* on the primary wh-agreement.

Second, multiple wh-agreement constructions alternate freely with constructions that do not involve additional wh-agreement, but have regular ϕ-agreement instead. This optionality can be seen in (2)-(3). Parasitic gaps are also notoriously optional, and in most cases freely alternate with a pronoun; see for example the English translation of (3b).[5]

Finally, there is evidence that the multiple wh-agreement construction involves local movement within the constituent containing the additional wh-agreement, as predicted by the movement analysis of parasitic gaps (Chomsky 1986, Postal 1998). In (8) the absolutive subject of the matrix verb is relativized (wh-agreement with ABS is Ø-), and the co-referent indirect object in the embedded clause may optionally trigger additional wh-agreement. However, this additional wh-agreement cannot be further contained within an island for extraction, such as an ergative DP: if the trace in the matrix clause is co-referent with the possessor of the ergative DP, that possessor may not trigger additional wh-agreement (9).

(8) marə   pŝaŝ-ew   [$_{RC}$ Op$_i$ *t$_i$*(ABS) [$_{CP}$ sədjaʁ^{w}jə   *pro$_i$*(IO)
     here   girl-ADV   always
     Ø-   **Ø/zə-**   š'ə- tχ^{w}ə -n   -x -ew]   **Ø-**   faje] -r
     3ABS- **3SG.IO/WH.IO-** LOC- praise -MOD -PL -ADV   **WH.ABS-** want -ABS
     'Here is the girl who$_i$ wants [them to always praise her$_i$].'

(9) marə pŝaŝ-ew$_i$ [$_{RC}$ Op$_i$ *t$_i$*(ABS)   [$_{CP}$ [$_{DP}$ *pro*(PR) **ə/*zə-š**](ERG)
     here girl-ADV   3SG.PR/WH.PR-brother
     ha   Ø-   q- ə-   š'efə -n   -ew]   **Ø-**   faje] -r
     dog   3ABS- DIR- **3SG.ERG-** buy -MOD -ADV   **WH.ABS-** want -ABS
     'Here is the girl$_i$ who wants her$_i$ brother to buy a dog.'

The ungrammaticality of additional wh-agreement in (9) provides evidence for local operator movement within the embedded CP, just as expected of parasitic gap constructions. The structural difference between (8) and (9) is illustrated in (10): the indirect object, not being embedded within an island, may undergo local operator movement within

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[5]Nissenbaum (2000) argues that the optionality of parasitic gaps is only apparent and correlates with a difference in structure. I have not yet found configurations analogous to the obligatory parasitic gap cases documented by Nissenbaum. If multiple wh-agreement is in fact optional in these cases, this would be evidence against the parasitic gap analysis.

the embedded CP and thus may trigger additional wh-agreement, while the possessor that is embedded within the ergative DP may not undergo local operator movement because it is within a syntactic island, and thus may not trigger additional wh-agreement.

(10) $[_{RC}$ Op$_i$ t_i $[_{CP}$ Op$_j$ ...$[_{vP}$ $[_{DP}$ ✗$_{PG}$](ERG) ✓$_{PG}$(IO)]]]

In summary, multiple wh-agreement constructions display several properties typical of parasitic gap dependencies: the additional wh-agreement is optional and parasitic on the primary wh-agreement, and these constructions involve local operator movement within the constituent hosting the additional wh-agreement. Based on this evidence, I conclude that multiple wh-agreement constructions are manifestations of a parasitic gap dependency.

3.   Constraints on multiple wh-agreement and syntactic ergativity

In the previous section I have argued for a parasitic gap analysis of multiple wh-agreement constructions in West Circassian, outlining the similarities between these constructions and properties of parasitic gaps. This section argues that a restriction on multiple wh-agreement constructions in West Circassian provides evidence for the absolutive DP c-commanding other verbal arguments, including the ergative DP. In particular, a possessor that is co-referent to a relativized clausemate absolutive participant may not trigger additional wh-agreement. This restriction can be understood in light of the anti-c-command condition, which states that a licensing gap cannot c-command the parasitic gap (Engdahl 1983). This leads to the conclusion that the absolutive DP c-commands other clausemate DPs.

The structure I will argue for is the following: the absolutive DP is merged within vP, as the complement of V^0 if it is the internal argument or as the specifier of v^0 if it is the external argument of an unergative verb. The ergative agent is merged as the specifier of v^0, and applied indirect objects are high applicatives that are introduced as specifiers of Appl^0. The ergative agent and the applied object are assigned inherent case in situ, but the absolutive argument is assigned nominative case by T^0 and moves to Spec,TP to satisfy the uEPP feature. The structure of a TP containing a three-place predicate with an absolutive, ergative and applied argument is represented in (11).

(11) $[_{TP}$ DP(ABS) $[_{vP}$ DP(ERG) $[_{ApplP}$ DP(IO) $[_{VP}$ t]]]]

3.1   The Absolutive Constraint

Multiple wh-agreement constructions in West Circassian are not always possible, in particular, they are subject to the following constraint:

(12) ABSOLUTIVE 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.

This constraint is applicable in all cases of relativization of an absolutive case-marked nominal, whether it is an external argument, or an internal argument, and in combination with all types of clausemate DPs. Thus, we can see in (13) that a relativized absolutive external argument may not license a parasitic gap within an oblique applied object. The verb *jeceqe* 'bite' takes an absolutive external argument (the one who bites) and an oblique applied object (the victim of the biting). If the absolutive agent of this predicate is relativized, the applied indirect object may have as a possessor a pronoun that is co-referent with the relativized participant, but this possessor pronoun may not be replaced with a parasitic gap that would trigger wh-agreement on the possessed noun (13).

(13) se səš'eš'əne   ha-w   [RC Op$_i$ t_i(ABS)   [DP *pro$_i$*/*__PG(PR)
      I   1SG.ABS.fear   dog-ADV

      Ø/*z-jə-x^{w}ezjajən](IO)   **Ø**-   **Ø**-   je-   ceqe -ž'ə -ʁe] -m
      3SG.PR/*WH.PR-POSS-owner **WH.ABS**- 3SG.IO- DAT- bite -RE -PST -OBL

      'I fear the dog that bit its owner.'

A relativized absolutive internal argument likewise cannot license a parasitic gap within an ergative DP. This is illustrated in (14): the absolutive argument of the causative verb *ʁešxe* 'feed' is relativized; the null pronoun in the position of the possessor of the ergative agent may in this case be interpreted as co-referent with the relativized participant. As in the previous case, however, a parasitic gap may not replace this pronoun.

(14) [RC Op$_i$ t_i(ABS)   [DP *pro$_i$*/*__PG(PR)   **Ø/*z**-jane](ERG)
                                              3SG.PR/*WH.PR-mother

      Ø-   mə- ʁa-   šxe -re] haẑ^{w}əš'ər-xe-m sə-g^w afewəzə
      WH.ABS- NEG- CAUS- eat -PRS puppy-PL-OBL   1SG.PR-heart 3PL.IO.BEN.ache

      'My heart aches for the puppies whom their mother doesn't feed.'

To summarize this subsection, we have seen that an absolutive trace, regardless of the theta-role it is assigned, cannot license a parasitic gap in any of its clausemate DPs: ergative external arguments or applied indirect objects.

3.2   The Anti-C-Command Condition

This subsection aims to connect the Absolutive Constraint in (12) with general structural constraints on parasitic gaps. A well-known condition on the licensing of parasitic gaps is the anti-c-command condition (15).

(15) ANTI-C-COMMAND CONDITION:
      "A parasitic gap may not be c-commanded by the real gap." (Engdahl 1983, 22)

Based on the anti-c-command condition, the Absolutive Constraint can be explained as follows: the absolutive trace cannot license a parasitic gap in a clausemate DP because it c-commands that DP and correspondingly the potential site of the parasitic gap. Conversely, if a parasitic gap *can* appear within a construction, that means that the licensing trace does not c-command it.

For some of the argument structure configurations listed in the previous section, the assumption that the absolutive trace c-commands the potential parasitic gap site is uncontrovertial. For example, the absolutive external argument in (13) would c-command the possessor of the applied indirect object under any theoretical account – this structure is illustrated in (16): assuming that the absolutive argument merges as the specifier of vP and the applied object is introduced lower, as a specifier of ApplP, a trace in the absolutive position would c-command, and thus fail to license, a parasitic gap within the applied object.

(16) $[_{RC}$ Op$_i$ ... $[_{vP}$ t_i(ABS) $[_{ApplP}$ $[_{DP}$ $\textbf{X}_{PG}$(PR)](IO) ...]]]

Recall, however, that the Absolutive Constraint applies to all types of absolutive arguments and in combination with all types of clausemate DPs: an absolutive trace cannot license a parasitic gap in an ergative or applied object DP, disregarding whether it is itself an external or internal argument (14). This forces us to conclude that the absolutive DP c-commands all of these arguments.

Reflexive binding patterns (Letuchiy 2010, 341, Ershova 2018) and patterns of argument encoding in nominalizations (Ershova 2015) suggest that the base generated position of the absolutive DP varies according to its theta-role: an absolutive theme is introduced as the complement of V^0 and an absolutive agent is introduced in Spec,vP. This means that the c-commanding position of the absolutive DP is derived. I propose that this position is Spec,TP: the absolutive DP is assigned nominative case by T^0 and moves to Spec,TP to satisfy the uEPP feature. Ergative and applicative case, on the other hand, are assigned in situ within vP, so neither the ergative, nor the indirect object DP moves to a position higher than Spec,TP. This leads to a configuration wherein the absolutive DP c-commands all other verbal arguments. Thus, if the absolutive argument is relativized, its trace appears in a position that c-commands both the ergative and applied object DPs, ruling out the possibility of a parasitic gap in either position (17).

(17) $[_{RC}$ Op$_i$ $[_{TP}$ t_i(ABS) $[_{vP}$ $[_{DP}$ $\textbf{X}_{PG}$](ERG) $[_{ApplP}$ $[_{DP}$ $\textbf{X}_{PG}$](IO) ...]]]]

The ergative agent and applied object, on the other hand, do not c-command the absolutive DP – this predicts that a relativized participant in any of these positions should be able to license a parasitic gap within the absolutive DP; this is illustrated in (18).

(18) $[_{RC}$ Op$_i$ $[_{TP}$ $[_{DP}$ $\checkmark_{PG}$](ABS) $[_{vP}$ ... t_i(ERG/IO) ...]]]

This prediction is in fact borne out. In (19) we can see that an ergative trace can license a parasitic gap within an absolutive theme: the ergative agent of the verb *šxə* 'eat' is relativized and the co-referent possessor pronoun within the absolutive DP may be optionally replaced with a parasitic gap, triggering wh-agreement on the possessed nominal.

(19) mərə četəw-ew $[_{RC}$ Op$_i$ $[_{DP}$ *pro$_i$*/__PG(PR) **Ø/z**-jə-šxən](ABS)
here cat-ADV **3SG.PR/WH.PR**-POSS-food

t_i(ERG) Ø- **zə**- mə- šxə -re] -r
3ABS- **WH.ERG**- NEG- eat -PRS -ABS

'Here is the cat that doesn't eat its food.'

A relativized indirect object may likewise license a parasitic gap within the absolutive external argument. Thus, if the benefactive applied object in (20) is relativized, the co-referent possessor pronoun within the absolutive DP may be replaced with a parasitic gap.

(20) marə č'ele-çək̇ʷ-ew [RC Op_i [DP pro_i/__PG(PR) **Ø/z**-jane](ABS)
     here boy-small-ADV   **3SG.PR/WH.PR**-mother

     t_i(IO) Ø- **zə**- fe- gʷəbž -zepətə -re] -r
              3ABS- **WH.IO**- BEN- be.angry -always -PRS -ABS

     'Here is the boy at whom his mother is always angry.'

To conclude this section, the anti-c-command condition on parasitic gaps provides a structural account for restrictions on the multiple wh-agreement construction: an absolutive trace fails to license parasitic gaps – and, correspondingly, additional wh-agreement – within clausemate DPs because it c-commands those DPs.

4.   Multiple wh-agreement is not pronominal binding

An alternative account of the absolutive constraint in (12) is proposed by Caponigro & Polinsky (2011), who use this constraint as evidence for the ergative DP c-commanding the absolutive theme, i.e. for syntactic accusativity. The authors argue that the additional wh-agreement in a construction like (19) is the manifestation of agreement between the ergative wh-trace and a bound pronoun within the absolutive DP. The impossibility of wh-agreement within an ergative DP in the presence of a relativized absolutive theme as in (14) is then due to a Weak Crossover violation: the relative operator cannot undergo wh-movement over the bound pronoun in the structurally higher DP (21).

binding+WH-agreement

(21)   [RC Op_i [TP [DP *pro*_i](ERG) ... [VP *t*_i(ABS)]]]

This account, however, faces several challenges. Firstly, as Lander (2012, 332) points out, if we are to assume a structure as in (21) for the relativization of the absolutive theme, this type of relativization would be a Weak Crossover violation even in the absence of the additional wh-agreement and should thus be ungrammatical, contra to fact (14). Secondly, this analysis fails to account for the systematic optionality of the additional wh-agreement. And finally, it cannot be extended to cases where an absolutive trace fails to license additional wh-agreement in a structurally lower DP, such as the indirect object in (13).

5.   Conclusion

To conclude, multiple wh-agreement constructions in West Circassian are best analyzed as parasitic gap dependencies. Like parasitic gaps, the additional wh-agreement in these

constructions (i) can appear in syntactic islands, (ii) freely alternates with pronouns, and (iii) involves movement within the constituent containing the parasitic gap.

Once multiple wh-agreement constructions are understood as parasitic gap dependencies, restrictions on the use of this construction can be analyzed in terms of general restrictions on parasitic gaps, and in particular – on the anti-c-command condition. The anti-c-command condition on parasitic gaps in turn provides evidence for the absolutive DP c-commanding all other arguments within the relative clause, i.e. for syntactic ergativity.

Several questions remain for future work. In particular, the Absolutive Constraint does not apply in cross-clausal parasitic gap dependencies (8): this may be an indication that dependent clauses are merged higher than TP. Additionally, an ergative trace may license a parasitic gap within an applied object, which should be ruled out by the anti-c-command condition on parasitic gaps. This may be a consequence of *v*P-internal A-scrambling.

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