Reciprocal binding and syntactic ergativity in Adyghe and Kabardian*

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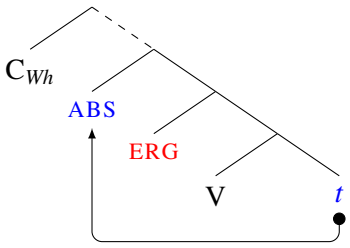
1. Overview

The primary concern in the research on syntactically ergative languages is the modeling of phenomena that draw a distinction between ERG(ative) vs. ABS(olutive) arguments. According to a HIGH ABS(olutive) analysis, the asymmetry between ERG vs. ABS arguments in e.g. *Wh*-movement is a consequence of the latter moving to a position that c-commands the former (1a). As a result, the ABS DP blocks a higher node (e.g. a *Wh*-probe) from reaching the now lower ERG DP (1b).

(1) a.



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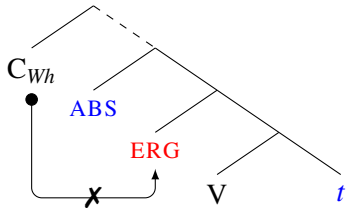
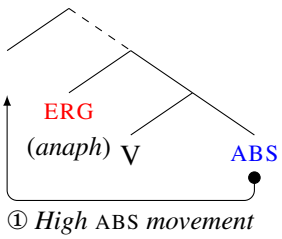


As a result of the ABS DP moving to a position that c-commands an ERG anaphor, the former is predicted to bind the latter (Anderson 1976, Brodkin and Royer To Appear):

(2) a.



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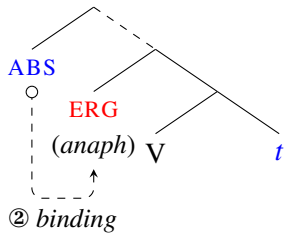

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However, this prediction does not seem to be borne out by facts. This generalization is stated by Brodkin and Royer (To Appear) as follows:

(3) *The ban on ergative anaphors* (Brodkin and Royer To Appear:(2))
In many ergative languages, anaphors cannot surface as ergative external arguments.

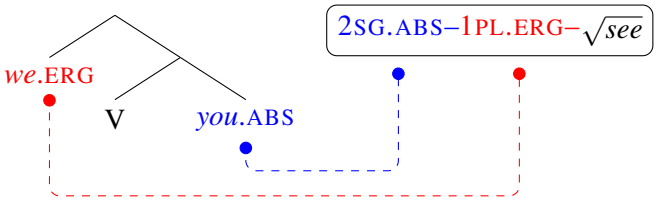
Nonetheless, reciprocal (henceforth: RECP) binding sentences in Adyghe (4) and Kabardian (5) appear to diverge from (3).

(4) a. ŝʷə-t-λeʁʷə-ʁ
2PL.ABS-1PL.ERG-see-PST
'We saw you.'
b. te-ze-re-λeʁʷə-ʁ
1PL.ABS-RECP-INSTR-see-PST
'We saw each other.' (Ershova 2019:(88a) and (88c))

(5) a. se dəʁʷase wə-s-λeʁʷ-a-š'
1SG yesterday 2SG.ABS-1SG.ERG-see-PST-IND
'I saw you yesterday.'
b. de dəʁʷase də-ze-rə-λeʁʷ-a-š'
1PL yesterday 1PL.ABS-RECP-INSTR-see-PST-IND
'We saw each other yesterday.'

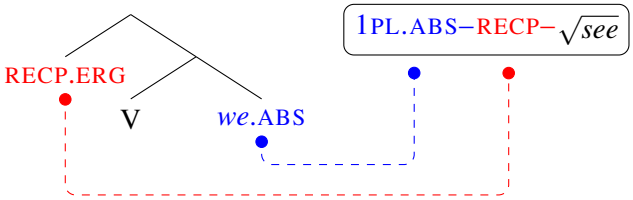
In Adyghe (4a) and Kabardian (5a), φ-prefixes in the verb crossreference ERG and ABS DPs. The innermost φ-prefix crossreferences the ERG DP, while the outermost one cross-references the ABS DP. A baseline example such as (5a) can be schematized as follows:

(6)



Given the templatic nature of the φ-prefixes of the Adyghe and Kabardian verb, one could make inferences about the structure of RECP sentences in these languages from the verbal morphology. In (4b) and (5b), the innermost φ-position is occupied by *ze–*, a RECP prefix, while the outermost φ-prefix crossreferences the antecedent of that RECP:

(7)



(7) is precisely the structure assumed by Ershova (2019, 2023), who argues that RECP sentences in Adyghe provide empirical support for a HIGH ABS theory. The fact that the RECP c-commands its ABS antecedent, the author argues, is not at odds with well-known structural requirements imposed by binding. Rather, RECP binding obtains as a consequence of HIGH ABS movement (2) of the ABS antecedent.

I argue, instead, that the morphosyntax of RECP sentences such as (4b) and (5b) should not be taken at face value: it is the byproduct of the interaction between: *(i)* the case properties of the RECP pronoun, *(ii)* independent principles such as Last Resort, and *(iii)* the independent workings of case assignment. The net result is that, despite appearances, RECP sentences in Adyghe and Kabardian do abide by (3) and RECP binding and HIGH ABS movement are, thus, independent of each other in Adyghe and Kabardian.

2. Case and φ-morphology

In this section, we investigate the case properties of Adyghe and Kabardian, especially as it relates to the φ-morphology exhibited by the verb in these languages. Case plays a crucial role in the analysis to be proposed. As such, a particular theory of case is proposed here, so that it can be taken up in §4.

Adyghe (8) and Kabardian (Northwest Caucasian) are morphologically ERG languages:[1]

(8) a. č̣'ale-m pisme-r Ø-j-e-txə
boy-ERG letter-ABS 3SG.ABS-3SG.ERG-DYN-write
'The boy is writing a letter.'

b. č̣'ale-r Ø-ma-tx-e
boy-ABS 3SG.ABS-DYN-write-AP
'The boy is writing.' (Arkadiev and Letuchy 2011:(26))

Furthermore, φ-prefixes in the verb crossreference core and oblique arguments (which include applied arguments, indirect objects, and causees), in a particular descriptive template:

(9) ABS.φ– **OBL.φ**– ERG.φ– CAUS– $\sqrt{\ldots}$ (–3PL.ABS) (based on Letuchiy 2016)

The templatic order of the φ-prefixes is particularly useful in face of the fact that Adyghe and Kabardian are rampant *pro*-drop languages. '(3PL.ABS)' in (9) denotes an optional suffix that crossreference a DP with matching features, the equivalent prefix being, in contrast, null (see e.g. (13) below).

I assume Dependent Case (Marantz 1991), whereby case is assigned according to the Disjunctive Case Hierarchy. For Adyghe and Kabardian, I propose the following algorithm:

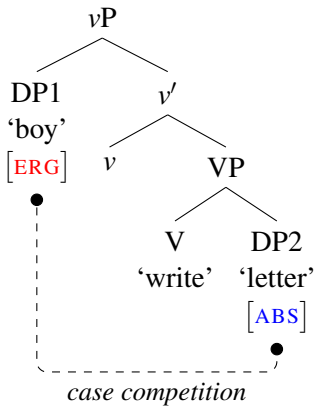
[1]Most data analyzed in this paper can be found in both Adyghe and Kabardian. Due to space constraints, the data of only one of the languages is featured in this paper. See Fong (In prep.) for a more exhaustive data set. Uncited data is due to my own elicitation. Data from existing sources have been adapted for uniformity.

(10) a. Assign any idiosyncratic lexical (e.g. **OBL**) case.
b. Given two nominals DP1 and DP2, such that *(i)* DP1 c-commands DP2, *(ii)* neither DP1 nor DP2 has been assigned case yet, and *(iii)* DP1 and DP2 are contained in the same smallest phase *Ph*, assign dependent ERG to DP1 if DP1 is at the edge of *Ph*. Otherwise assign dependent **OBL** to DP1.
c. Assign unmarked ABS to any DP that has not been assigned case yet.

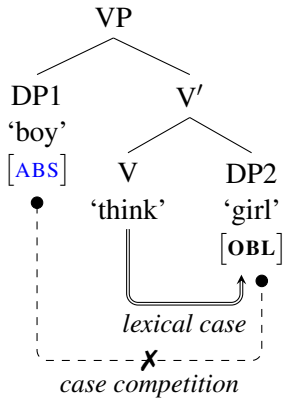
The DPs referenced in (10b) are called 'case competitors.' As soon as a DP is assigned any case, it is no longer computed by the Disjunctive Case Hierarchy (DCH). I assume, moreover, that the DCH applies as soon as the smallest phase (e.g. *v*P) is assembled, and that only the highest projection of the verbal projects qualifies as a phase.

In a transitive sentence with an ERG/ABS frame (8a), the object is a case competitor for the subject. According to (10), the latter is, thus, assigned dependent ERG and, subsequently, the former is assigned unmarked ABS (11). The sole DP present in an intransitive sentence (8b), does not have a competitor, so it is assigned unmarked ABS.

(11)



(12)



Adyghe (13) and Kabardian also have sentences with an ABS/**OBL**(ique) frame:

(13) [&P ʒ'wen-re merjə-re] ***pro***
John-COORD Mary-COORD 1PL.OBL
Ø-qə-**t**-fe-g^{w}əmeč'ə-x
3PL.ABS-DIR-1PL.OBL-BEN-worry-3PL.ABS
'John and Mary worry about us.'

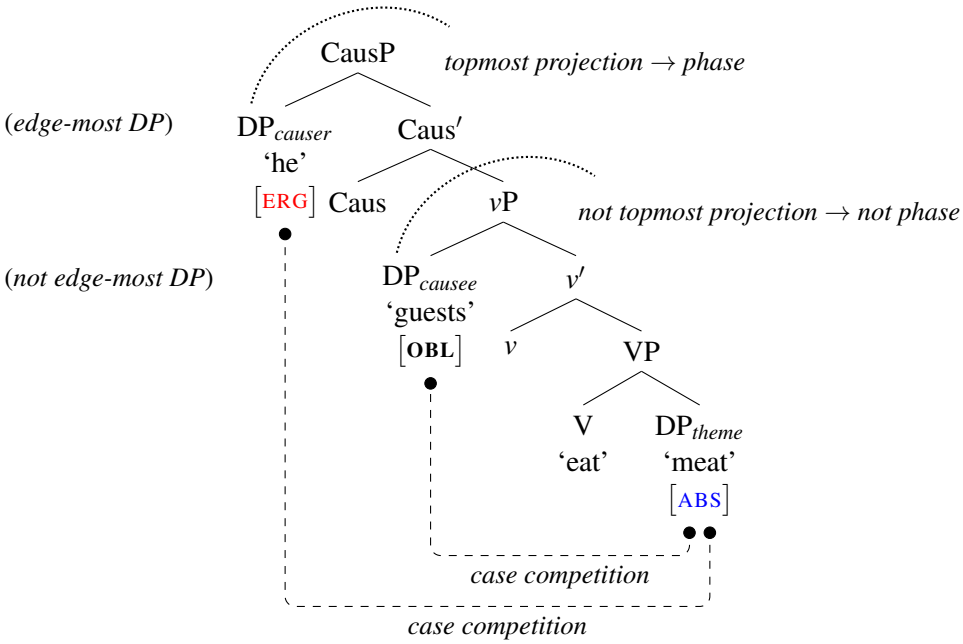
'Worry' is idiosyncratically able to assign lexical case to its object. As a result, while there are two DPs present in the phase where the DCH applies, the object cannot act as a case competitor for the subject, given (10b). The subject is, then, left with unmarked ABS (12).

When an ERG/ABS transitive verb is causativized, the causee is marked with **OBL** case, which replaces the ERG that transitive subjects are otherwise assigned (8a). Now, it is the causer that is assigned ERG. Only the underlying theme retains its original case, viz. ABS.

(14) a-š' **haǯ'e-xe-m** lə Ø-**a**-r-j-e-ʁa-šxə
3SG-ERG guest-PL-OBL meat 3SG.ABS-3PL.OBL-OPV-3SG.ERG-DYN-CAUS-eat
'He is making the guests eat meat.' (Letuchiy 2014:(25b))

Assuming a bottom-up derivation, the causee and the underlying theme are competitors. By (10b), the causee is assigned dependent **OBL**, since it is not the edge-most DP in the smallest phase where the DCH applies. Because the theme remains caseless, it can be a competitor for the causer too. Because the latter is the edge-most DP in the aforementioned phase, it is assigned dependent ERG. Lastly, the theme is assigned unmarked ABS.

(15)



That the **OBL** assigned to the causee in (14) is an instance of dependent case and not of lexical **OBL** case, is indicated by the fact that, in the absence of a viable competitor, the causee is assigned unmarked ABS. In (16), 'worry' assigns lexical **OBL** to its object (cf. (13)). In (16), the semantic subject of this predicate is the causee. It is marked with ABS case instead of **OBL** (cf. (14)). The causer is marked with ERG, just as in (14).

(16) *pro* [&P ʒ'wen-re merjə-re] ***pro***
2SG.ERG John-COORD Mary-COORD 1PL.OBL
Ø-qə-**t**-fe-b-ʁe-g^{w}əmeǯə-ʁe-x
3PL.ABS-DIR-1PL.OBL-BEN-2SG.ERG-CAUS-worry-PST-3PL.ABS
'You made John and Mary worry about us.'

The difference in the case assigned to the causee in (14) vs. (16) can be explained straightforwardly by (10). In (16), the underlying theme cannot be a case competitor, since it is assigned lexical case by 'worry.' Due to the lack of case competition, the causee cannot

be assigned dependent **OBL**. However, it remains active in the derivation, allowing it to be a competitor for the causer. This is why the latter is assigned ERG in both (14) and (16), though its competitor is a different DP in each configuration. Finally, the causee is itself assigned unmarked ABS. The correlation between the unavailability of a case competitor and the impossibility of assigning **OBL** is precisely what the current analysis predicts, under the assumption that the latter is a particular instance of dependent case.

Coupled with a particular proposal about the case properties of the RECP pronoun in Adyghe and Kabardian, this analysis of case assignment will be shown to make correct predictions about the morphosyntax of RECP sentences in these languages, while also maintaining standard assumptions about binding.

3. HIGH ABS analysis

As mentioned above, according to a HIGH ABS analysis of RECP binding in Adyghe and Kabardian, (4b) and (5b) are analyzed as the result of the movement of the ABS antecedent to a position that is higher than the ERG antecedent (2). This analysis faces a few challenges. First, under a HIGH ABS analysis, movement is modeled as a necessary condition for binding, in divergence from similar patterns found in analogous constructions elsewhere. Second, not all instances of RECP binding require HIGH ABS movement in Adyghe. A HIGH ABS analysis implies, thus, a teleological grammar. Finally, the configuration that results from HIGH ABS movement as a precursor for RECP binding results in a configuration that is ruled out by well-formedness conditions imposed on chains.[2]

For transitive verbs with an ERG/ABS frame (e.g. 'see,' (4a)), the antecedent of a RECP must be marked with ABS (5b) and cannot be marked with the expected ERG (17).

(17) **pro* ze-re-t-λeʁʷə-ʁ.
1PL.ERG RECP-INSTR-1PL.ERG-see-PST
Int.: 'We saw each other.' (Ershova 2023:(36b))

The case of the RECP's antecedent is particularly clear when it is an overt DP:

(18) zeč'e ç̣əf-xe-r Ø-ze-r-e-λeʁʷ-ž'ə-x
all man-PL-ABS 3PL.ABS-RECP-INSTR-DYN-see-RE-3PL.ABS
'All the people see each other.' (Arkadiev and Letuchy 2011:(22b))

Furthermore, as we saw above, the RECP prefix is closer to the stem (7), a position that is otherwise occupied by an ERG φ-prefix (6).[3]

To capture these properties, a HIGH ABS analysis assumes that the RECP is base-generated above its antecedent (7), with binding obtaining as a consequence of HIGH ABS movement (2) (see also (21) below). Moreover, the antecedent would be necessarily ABS because it is a theme. The RECP prefix, in turn, occupies an ERG φ-slot because the RECP is base-generated as an external argument.

[2] An additional empirical issue is discussed in Fong (In prep.).

[3] This description is revised in the current analysis. See more details in §4 below and in Fong (In prep.).

Given this assumed underlying structure, HIGH ABS movement would be a necessary condition for RECP binding in Adyghe and Kabardian. A-movement is well-known to create new antecedents for binding. This is the case, for instance, in Hindi (19), where an anaphor contained in the subject can be bound by the local of scrambling of the object.

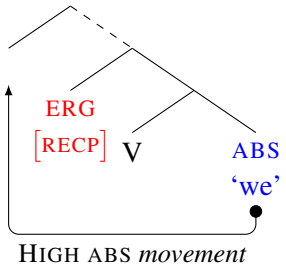
(19) [$_{DP}$ raam aur prataap]-ko ek-duusre-kii bahinõ-ne __ maaraa.
Ram and Pratap -ACC each.other's sisters-ERG hit
Ram and Pratap$_1$, each other$_1$'s sisters hit __.' (Keine 2018:(11b))

But even in languages where A-movement *can* create new antecedents for binding, movement is not a *necessary* condition, provided that the appropriate configuration for binding obtains. This is shown by the Hindi sentence (20), where there is no scrambling and the anaphor now contained in the object position is trivially bound by the subject.

(20) unhõ-ne [$_{DP}$ ek-duusre-ke bhaaiyõ]-ko maaraa.
they-ERG each.other's brothers -ACC hit
'They hit each other's brothers' (M. Chaturvedi, p.c.)

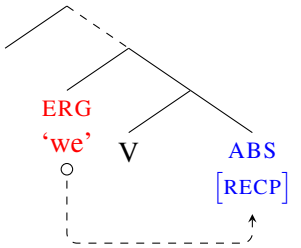
Why, then, must the derivation of a RECP sentence have (21) as its underlying structure?

(21)



HIGH ABS *movement*

(22)



binding without movement

In other words, why would (22) necessarily result in ungrammaticality (17)?

However, RECP binding in Adyghe (23) and Kabardian is in fact possible without HIGH ABS movement. In e.g. the causative sentence (23), the ERG causer binds the RECP causee, and the DP that undergoes HIGH ABS movement is a third DP, viz. the theme 'goods.'

(23) te š'eʁen-xe-r
1PL.ERG good-PL-ABS
Ø-**ze**-re-d-ʁe-š'efə-ž'ə-ʁe-x
3PL.ABS-RECP-INSTR-1PL.ERG-CAUS-buy-RE-PST-3PL.ABS
'We made each other buy goods.' (Letuchiy 2013:(22))

Given that an ERG DP can bind a RECP (23), a question arises as to how Adyghe and Kabardian can determine when HIGH ABS movement is required for binding and when it is not. A challenge that can be leveled against a HIGH ABS analysis is that it implies a teleological grammar which must "know" when the ABS DP is an antecedent that must move above an ERG RECP to bind it (21), and when this possibility is ruled out (17).

More generally, a HIGH ABS analysis results in a configuration that is ruled out by well-formedness conditions imposed on chains (Rizzi 1986, McGinnis 2004).[4] According to e.g. Rizzi, a chain of coindexed nodes must contain at most one θ- and at most one case position. Support for this requirement is provided by contrasts such as the following:

(24) Gianni { gli / *si } è stato affidato *t*.
Gianni to.him to.himself was been entrusted
'Gianni$_1$ was entrusted to him$_2$/*himself$_1$.' (Rizzi 1986:(9a) and (10a))

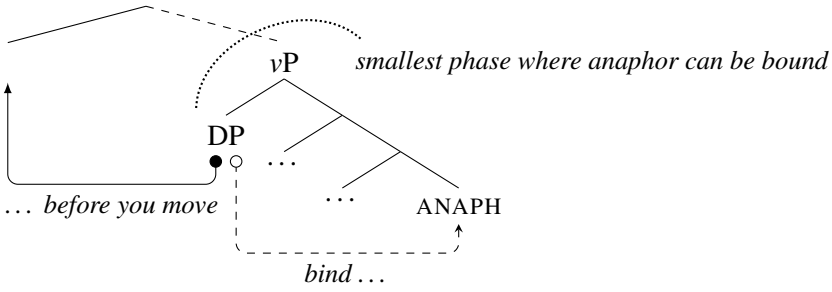
In the Italian example (24), a chain is formed that contains *Gianni* and its trace *t*, as well as the reflexive *si*, which *Gianni* binds. This chain is ill-formed because it contains more than θ- and case positions. As we can see in (2b), a HIGH ABS analysis implies a derivation that has the same configuration that underlies the ungrammatical version of (24).

In brief, a HIGH ABS analysis of RECP sentences in Adyghe and Kabardian faces theoretical and empirical challenges. In the next section, I propose an analysis where binding is uniform and the dumbfounding morphosyntax of RECP binding sentences in Adyghe and Kabardian is the byproduct of independent factors.

4. Proposal

Following recent work on binding (Brodkin and Royer To Appear, and references therein), I assume that a Binding Domain is the smallest phase that contains an anaphor and a c-commanding antecedent. Moreover, binding takes place as soon as possible, provided that all conditions for binding are met:

(25)



To recall, the morphosyntactic properties of RECP sentences in Adyghe (4) and Kabardian (5) make their underlying structure look as though it is the RECP which c-commands its antecedent (7). In the present analysis, this morphosyntax will not be taken at face value. Instead, it is analyzed as the byproduct of (*i)* the case properties of RECP, (*ii)* independent principles such as Last Resort, and (*iii)* the independent logic of the DCH (10).

[4]I thank a CLA 2025 reviewer for bringing Rizzi's Chain Condition and McGinnis's Lethal Ambiguity to my attention.

The morphosyntax of RECP sentences such as (4) and (5) is reminiscent of pseudo noun incorporation (PNI) in e.g. Niuean, in that, in both constructions, a transitive subject is marked with ABS (26b), instead of the expected ERG (26a).

(26) a. Takafaga tūmau nī [e ia] [**e tau ika**]
hunt always EMPH ERG he ABS PL fish
b. Takafaga [**ika**] tūmau nī [a ia].
hunt fish always EMPH ABS he
'He is always fish.' (Massam 2001:(5))

In Massam's (2001) analysis, an object undergoes PNI when it is not able to check off an ABS case feature. In Dependent Case terms, this can be translated as the PNI-ed object not being visible to the DCH. Furthermore, I follow Levin (2015) in assuming that PNI occurs as a Last Resort strategy to license a nominal that cannot otherwise be assigned case.

Given the morphosyntactic similarities between PNI and RECP binding sentences in Adyghe and Kabardian, I propose the following:

(27) a. The RECP pronoun in Adyghe and Kabardian is unable to participate in the DCH (10).
b. The RECP pronoun is assigned INSTR(umental) case as a Last Resort licensing strategy, unless it can be assigned lexical case independently.

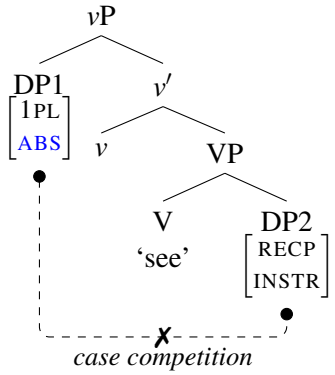
Following Ershova (2019), I assume that the RECP prefix *ze–* is the exponent of φ-agreement with the RECP pronoun (28a), which is itself phonologically null (28b). The exponents in (28) are analogous to the exponents of other pronouns and corresponding φ-agreement affixes in Adyghe/Kabardian (29).

(28) a. [RECP] ↔ *ze–* / __ φ_{PROBE}
b. [RECP] ↔ *Ø*

(29) a. [1SG] ↔ *sə–* / __ φ_{PROBE}
b. [1SG] ↔ *se*

A RECP sentence in Adyghe (30) and Kabardian is, then, derived as follows:

(30) te-**ze**-re-λeʁʷə-ʁ
1PL.ABS-RECP-INSTR-see-PST
'We saw each other.'



The RECP is base-generated as the object of 'see' in (31), while its antecedent is base-generated as the subject. Because the RECP is invisible to the DCH (27a), it cannot be a case

competitor. As a result, its antecedent is assigned unmarked ABS, instead of the expected dependent ERG. In order to be licensed, the RECP is itself assigned Last Resort INSTR.[5]

In this analysis, binding takes place at the *v*P level (25), the smallest phase that contains the RECP and its antecedent, viz. the ABS subject. RECP binding in Adyghe and Kabardian is, thus, wholly ordinary. The unordinary-looking morphosyntax is simply a byproduct of the particular case properties of the RECP, combined with the independent workings of the DCH, as well as with language-specific nominal licensing strategies.

That it is not far-fetched to attribute such an idiosyncratic property to the RECP pronoun is suggested by the fact that reflexive binding in Adyghe (Ershova 2019, 2023) and Kabardian has ordinary morphosyntax. The *φ*-prefix that crossreferences the reflexive's antecedent is an ERG prefix that is adjacent to the verb stem, while the reflexive *zə–* is the outermost prefix, a slot reserved for ABS-agreement (9). If the reflexive prefix is moved closer to the verbal stem, an INSTR-prefix is added between them, and the antecedent of the reflexive is crossreferenced by an ABS-prefix, the result is ungrammatical (31b).

(31) a. *pro* *pro*$_{\text{REFL}}$ zə-t-λeʁ$^{\text{w}}$ə-ʁ
1PL.ERG REFL.ABS REFL-1PL.ERG-see-PST

b. *te ***pro**$_{\text{REFL}}$ tə-zə-re-λeʁ$^{\text{w}}$ə-ʁ
1PL.ABS REFL.INSTR 1PL.ABS-REFL-INSTR-see-PST
Int.: 'We saw ourselves." ((31a) from Ershova 2023:(38b))

The verbal morphology in the ungrammatical reflexive sentence (31b) mimics that of a grammatical RECP sentence (30). Conversely, the omission of an INSTR prefix yields an ill-formed RECP sentence (32)—cf. its reflexive counterpart (31a).

(32) te ***pro***$_{\text{RECP}}$ tə-qe-ze-*(re-)λeʁ$^{\text{w}}$ə-ʁ
1PL.ABS RECP.INSTR 1PL.ABS-DIR-RECP-*(INSTR-)see-PST
'We saw each other.'

The asymmetry between reflexive (31) and RECP (32) binding sentences can be construed as follows. The reflexive pronoun is visible to the DCH, which is, thus, able to be a case competitor for its antecedent. The latter can, then, be assigned the expected ERG (31a). Assuming that INSTR assignment is a Last Resort licensing strategy, if the reflexive pronoun can be assigned case by the usual means, then INSTR assignment is not called for and, therefore, it is prohibited (31b). Given that no other option is available for the RECP pronoun, INSTR is obligatory in the corresponding RECP sentence (32).

This case-based analysis of the morphosyntax of RECP constructions in Adyghe and Kabardian gives rise to a few predictions, which we go over in the next sections.

[5]Ershova (2019, 2023) takes *zere* to be a monomorphemic affix with *ze* as an allomorph. See Fong (In prep.) for arguments against this view.

4.1 Lexical case available to RECP

As we saw in (12), certain transitive predicates in Adyghe and Kabardian are idiosyncratically able to assign lexical case to their object. Under the assumption that lexical case is assigned along a θ-role, lexical case assignment must precede case assignment or licensing operations. If the RECP is assigned lexical case, we predict that INSTR case assignment is dispensed with, this being a Last Resort strategy to license the RECP. That this prediction is borne out by facts is shown by the Kabardian paradigm in (33).

'Speak' is another transitive verb that assigns lexical **OBL** to its object. In (33a), the object of this verb is a RECP. Its antecedent retains the ABS case that it is marked with in baseline. The RECP prefix *ze–* is not followed by an INSTR prefix. In fact, if this morpheme does occur in the verbal complex, the result is ungrammatical (33b).

(33) a. [&P marjǝje-re pjetjer-re] ***pro***$_{\text{RECP}}$
Maria-COORD Peter-COORD RECP.OBL
Ø-**ze**-psa λ-a-xe-š'
3PL.ABS-RECP-speak-PST-3PL.ABS-IND
'Maria and Peter spoke to each other.'

b. **pro* *pro*$_{\text{RECP}}$ Ø-ze-ra-pseλ-a-xe-š'
3PL.ABS RECP.INSTR 3PL.ABS-RECP-INSTR-speak-PST-3PL.ABS-IND
Int.: 'They talked to each other.'

In a sentence with an ERG/ABS frame, INSTR is obligatorily assigned to RECP (32) because the RECP cannot be licensed otherwise. Conversely, if the RECP is independently licensed with lexical case (33a), INSTR assignment is superfluous and, thus, prohibited (33b).

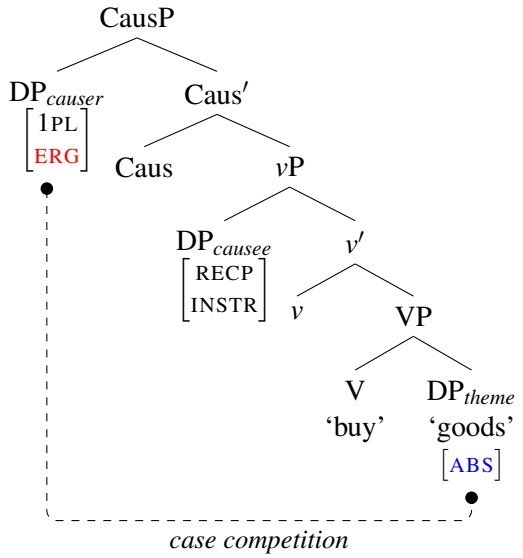
4.2 ERG antecedent

The main proposal put forward here is that the RECP in Adyghe and Kabardian is not visible to the DCH (10). Because the RECP is not a viable competitor, its antecedent cannot be assigned dependent ERG, so it is assigned unmarked ABS instead. We predict that the antecedent *can* be assigned dependent ERG so long as a case competitor is available.

This prediction is also correct. In causativized transitives (23), there is a third DP, besides the RECP and its antecedent, which can feed dependent ERG to the latter. The RECP is the causee in (23). The underlying theme can be a competitor for the RECP's antecedent, the causer of this sentence, which can, then, be assigned the expected ERG.[6]

[6]The RECP can also be the underlying theme, in which case it is bound by the causee. The latter is assigned unmarked ABS and not dependent **OBL** (cf. (15)), which is exactly what the current analysis predicts. See Fong (In prep.) for data and details.

(34)



Unlike what happens in a HIGH ABS analysis §3, no stipulation is necessary as to whether or not HIGH ABS movement needs to be invoked in order for binding to be possible. Under the present analysis, the RECP can be uniformly generated in the c-command domain of its antecedent, irrespective of the case that the latter is assigned. Whether the antecedent of a RECP surfaces with ABS (30) or ERG (23) is a function of the independent workings of the DCH and is dissociated from binding.

4.3 Antecedent back to ABS

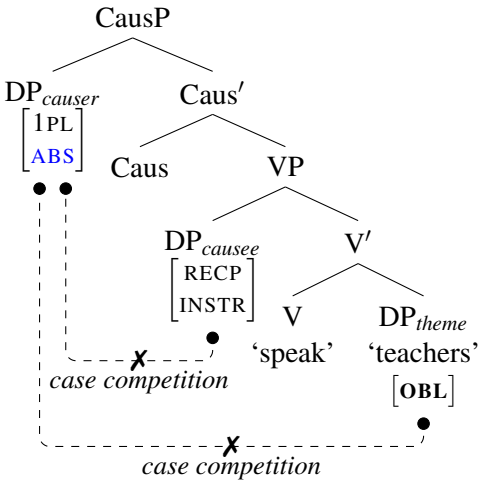
A related prediction the present analysis makes is that, even if a third DP is added to a RECP sentence, if it is not a viable competitor for the RECP's antecedent, the latter retains unmarked ABS and cannot be assigned dependent ERG. This prediction is likewise corroborated by the facts, as shown by the Kabardian data in (35).

As we saw in (33a), 'speak' assigns lexical case to its object, yielding an ABS/**OBL** frame. In (35), this verb is causativized, with RECP again occupying the causee position. The underlying theme takes up the lexical **OBL** assigned by the causativized verb, while the causer binds the RECP and is marked with ABS and not ERG case (cf. (23)).

(35) de *pro*$_{\text{RECP}}$ **jeʁeʒ'aklwə-ex-em**
1PL.ABS RECP.INSTR teacher-PL-OBL
də-ze-r-**je**-ʁe-pse λ-a-š'
1PL.ABS-RECP-INSTR-3PL.OBL-CAUS-speak-PST-IND
'We made each other speak to the teachers.'

The RECP's antecedent in (35) is assigned unmarked ABS because neither the RECP nor the underlying theme are viable case competitors: the former is not visible to the DCH to begin with, while the latter becomes invisible by virtue of having been assigned lexical case:

(36)



A further prediction the current analysis makes is that, if the RECP takes up the lexical case assigned by the causativized ‘speak,’ not only is Last Resort INSTR eschewed §4.1, dependent ERG becomes available to the causer again, since the causee is now a viable competitor to it. This prediction is borne out by the facts too:

(37) wəe [&P mjerjəse-re larjəs-re] ***pro***$_{\text{RECP}}$
2SG.ERG Larise-COORD Merisa-COORD RECP.OBL
Ø-**ze**-b-ʁe-pse λ-a-š’
3PL.ABS-RECP-2SG.ERG-CAUS-speak-PST-IND
‘You made Merisa and Larise speak to each other.’

The causee (and RECP’s antecedent in (37)) is itself assigned unmarked ABS.

Once more, no stipulation is made about whether or not HIGH ABS movement is necessary for RECP binding or about the case that the RECP‘s antecedent surfaces with. HIGH ABS movement is dissociated from binding in the present analysis and the case of any DP is independently regulated by the DCH and Last Resort.

5. Conclusion

Despite appearances, RECP sentences in Adyghe and Kabardian are ordinary. As in other languages, the RECP can be uniformly generated below its antecedent, and binding can take place as early as possible. The particular morphosyntax that these sentences exhibit is a byproduct of: (*i*) the case properties of the RECP pronoun, (*ii*) the strategy employed to license it (viz. Last Resort INSTR), and (*iii*) the independent workings of the DCH.

As such, the Ban on ergative anaphors (3) holds of Adyghe and Kabardian too. Moreover, RECP binding in Adyghe and Kabardian does not provide empirical support for a HIGH ABS theory of syntactic ergativity.

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