1 Introduction

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

Data from Khatagjukaj rural settlement, Republic of Adygea, Russia, unless otherwise indicated.

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(0)- replaces φ-agreement with the relativized participant on the predicate heading the relative clause:

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

(1) a. č‘ale-m apč‘-r ø- ø- qwa*-ta -h
   boy-ABS glass-ABS 3ABS-3SG.ERG break -PST
   Finite clause: ‘The boy broke the glass.’

b. [t(ERG) apč‘-r ø- ze- qwa*-ve] č‘ale-r
   glass-ABS 3ABS-WH.ERG- break -PST boy-ABS
   Relative clause: ‘the boy that broke the glass’

Prefix z(0)- 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:619, 2012; Caponigro & Polinsky 2011).

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

(2) mara č‘etw-ew [t(ERG) {z,-Ø-}ja-šxon za-ma-šxa-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 maf-e- 3ABS-{WH-3SG.IO.}-NEG-hitADV
     who-Q Aslan day-OBL whole 3ABS-{WH-3SG.IO.}-NEG-hitADV
     t(10) Ø-za-de-3eg*-a-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):

1. Wh-agreement in the dependent clause is optional; cf. English translation in 3.
2. The dependent clause may be a syntactic island: direct relativization out of it is ungrammatical.
3. 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 maf-e- 3ABS-{WH-3SG.IO.}-NEG-hitADV
     who-Q Aslan day-OBL whole 3ABS-{WH-3SG.IO.}-NEG-hitADV
     t(10) Ø-za-de-3eg*-a-re] -r
     3ABS-WH.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) * mara č‘etw-ew [proj [t{z,jα-šxon}] a-ma-šxa-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

- Argument DPs trigger φ-agreement on predicate via Agree (Chomsky 2000).
- Wh-agreement = φ-agreement with a wh-trace (Chung 1998; Baier 2016).

3.1 Basic structure of parasitic gap construction:

\[ \text{CP} \rightarrow \begin{array}{c}
\text{YP} \\
\text{PG} \\
\end{array}
\]

\[ \text{XP} \rightarrow \begin{array}{c}
\text{t} \left[ \phi / \text{WH} \right] \\
\text{Op}_1 \\
\end{array} \] 

\[ \text{Agree} \rightarrow \begin{array}{c}
\text{t} \left[ \phi / \text{WH} \right] \\
\text{PG} \\
\end{array} \] 

4 Constraints on multiple wh-agreement and syntactic ergativity

4.1 Absolutive Constraint on Multiple Wh-agreement:

Intra-clausal multiple wh-agreement is ungrammatical if the relativized participant is the absolutive DP (Lander 2009a, 2012).

In terms of parasitic gaps:

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

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

(8) mara pšaš-ew [ t(ABS) { √Ø, *z- } jane ] Ø-q-Ø-fe-š’-a-be -r
here girl-ADV { 3SG,-WH.POSS- } mother 3ABS-DIR-3SG.IO-BEN-dance-PST -ABS
‘Here is the girl whom her son danced.’

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

4.2 Anti-c-command condition on parasitic gaps:

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

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

WEST CIRCASSIAN IS SYNTACTICALLY ERGATIVE:

- Ergative DP and IO are assigned inherent case by v₀ and Appl₀ and remain in-situ within vP (Legate 2008; Pylkkänen 2008).
- Absolutive 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.

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

\[ \text{CP} \rightarrow \begin{array}{c}
\text{C'} \\
\text{TP} \\
\end{array} \] 

\[ \text{DP(ABS)} \rightarrow \begin{array}{c}
\text{t(ABS)} \\
\text{T'} \\
\end{array} \] 

\[ \text{vP} \rightarrow \begin{array}{c}
\text{t(ERG)} \\
\text{v'} \\
\end{array} \] 

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

\[ \text{CP} \rightarrow \begin{array}{c}
\text{C'} \\
\text{TP} \\
\end{array} \] 

\[ \text{DP(ERG)} \rightarrow \begin{array}{c}
\text{t(ABS)} \\
\text{T'} \\
\end{array} \] 

\[ \text{vP} \rightarrow \begin{array}{c}
\text{t(ERG)} \\
\text{v'} \\
\end{array} \] 

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

(8) mara pšaš-ew [ t(ABS) { √Ø, *z- } jane ] Ø-q-Ø-fe-š’-a-be -r
here girl-ADV { 3SG,-WH.POSS- } mother 3ABS-DIR-3SG.IO-BEN-dance-PST -ABS
‘Here is the girl whom her son danced.’

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

(7) mara [ { √Ø, *z- } ] qʷ e  t(ABS) Ø-q-Ø-fe-š’-a-be
here { 3SG,-WH.POSS- } son WH.ABS-DIR-3SG.ERG-bring-PST
woman-ABS
‘Here is the woman whom her son brought.’
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

\[ \Rightarrow \] relativization of ABS + binding/Agree with possessor of ERG renders Weak Crossover violation.

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

\[(13)\] \[ \overrightarrow{\text{Op}}_i \text{ DP}_{\text{ERG}} \text{ pro}_i \text{ Binding+Agree} \text{ ABS} \]

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).


Embedded clauses attach higher than TP?

References


Bittner, Maria & Kenneth Hale. 1996. The structural determination of case and agreement. Linguistic Inquiry 27. 1–68.


