

Dynamic locality, split ergativity and adposition agreement in Avar

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Introduction

Alignment splits, both TAM- and argument-marking based, often postulate **added structure** (e.g. Coon & Preminger 2017):

- (1) a. Ehiztariak otsoa harrapatu d- Ø- u- Ø **ERG ALIGNMENT**
hunter.ERG wolf.ABS caught 3ABS-SG.ABS-AUX-3SG.ERG

'The hunter has caught the wolf.'

- b. Emakumea ogia ja- te- n ari d- a **SPLIT ALIGNMENT**
woman.ABS bread.ABS eat-NMLZ-LOC PROG 3ABS-AUX

'The woman is eating the bread.'

(Basque; Laka 1996)

The additional locative structure “hides” the internal argument from the configurational procedure of case assignment.

Aims and claims

What do we do with languages where alignment splits are optional and structural differences not easily discernible?

Aims:

- examine the properties of an optional-split system in Avar
- focus on two patterns involving adposition agreement

Claims:

- an additional source for alignment splits: spellout

Avar: Background

- East Caucasian (Republic of Daghestan)
- ca. 700K speakers
- morphologically ergative in both **agreement** and **case marking**
- head-final
- free word order
- some vP-level adpositions and oblique objects agree with ABS-argument

Case and agreement in Avar

Avar agreement tracks unmarked case on S- and O-arguments:

(2) a. insuca xer b-ec- ul- e- b b-uk'-ana
father.ERG hay.ABS N-MOW-PRS-PTCP-N N-be-PST

'Father was mowing (the) hay.'

b. ħimal r- ač'- ana
kids.ABS PL-COME-PST

'The kids have come.'

Agreement is in number and gender

- no person agreement attested
- not all verbs realise agreement overtly

The Avar biabsolutive construction (Forker 2012)

In periphrastic tenses, the A-argument can appear in unmarked case:

(3) a. **insuca** xer b-ec- ul- e- b b-uk'-ana **ERGATIVE**
father.ERG hay.ABS N-MOW-PRS-PTCP-N N-be- PST

'Father was mowing (the) hay.'

b. **emen** xer b-ec- ul- e- w w-uk'-ana **BIABSOLUTIVE**
father.ABS hay.ABS N-MOW-PRS-PTCP-M M-be- PST

'Father was mowing hay.'

Crucially, no discernible locative morphosyntax.

Also, semantic differences between the two constructions:

- the O-argument in the biabsolutive construction can't be interpreted as topical/given/definite

The ABC: key properties

agreement with both subject and object

- (4) **emen** xer b-ec- ul- e- **w w-uk'-ana**
father.ABS hay.ABS N-mow-PRS-PTCP-M **M-be- PST**

'Father was mowing hay.'

Os cannot precede As:

- (5) *xer **emen** b-ec- ul- e- **w w-uk'-ana**
hay.ABS **father.ABS** N-mow-PRS-PTCP-M **M-be- PST**

('Father was mowing hay.')

Puzzle I: Oblique argument extraction restriction

Agreeing oblique arguments may not be extracted to vP-peripheral position:

- (6) a. ɦimal **ɦim** ɦert'inie t'o- l- e- l r- ugo
kids.ABS **water.ABS** <N>jug.ILL POUR-PRS-PTCP-PL PL-AUX.PRS
'The kids are pouring (the) water into a/the jug.' [neutral order]
- b. (*ɦert'inie) ɦimal ɦert'inie **ɦim** t'o- l- e- l r- ugo
 <N>jug.ILL kids.ABS <N>jug.ILL **water.ABS** POUR-PRS-PTCP-PL PL-AUX.PRS
'The kids are pouring (the) water into a/the jug.' [derived position]

Puzzle II: Agreement variability on agreeing adjuncts

Agreeing event-modifying adpositions (postpositions and adverbs) can agree with either ABS argument:

- (7) a. hani-**w** **emen** (*hani-**w**) xer b-ec- ul- e- w w-uk'-ana
here-**M** **father.ABS** here-M hay.ABS N-MOW-PRS-PTCP-M M-be- PST
- b. emen hani-**b** **xer** b-ec- ul- e- w w-uk'-ana
father.ABS here-**N** **hay.ABS** N-MOW-PRS-PTCP-M M-be- PST
- 'Father was mowing (the) hay here.'

Towards an analysis: Background assumptions

Both case assignment and agreement licensing obtain low (Rudnev 2015):

- all cases are preserved in non-finite clauses
 - unexpected if a high head is responsible for assigning ABS case
- event nominalisations and infinitival clauses are incompatible with clausal negation
 - characteristic of T-less complementation (Wurmbrand 2001)
- morphological containment of infinitives within causatives and of event nominalisations within infinitivals
 - Caus° is a low head inside the event zone
- agreement in causatives

Case and agreement preservation in all clause types

I illustrate the unergative case but the pattern holds elsewhere as well

- (8) a. was w-eker- an-a insuqe
boy.ABS M- $\sqrt{\text{run}}$ -PST-FIN father.APL
'The boy ran to his father.' [finite]
- b. [was insuqe w-eker- i] hik'a- b iš b-ugo
boy.ABS father.APL M- $\sqrt{\text{run}}$ -NMLZ good-N thing.ABS N-be.PRS
'The boy running to his father is a good thing.' [nominalisation]
- c. kinazego b-oł'ana [was insuqe w-eker- ize]
everyone.DAT N-want.PST boy.ABS father.APL M- $\sqrt{\text{run}}$ -INF
'Everyone wanted the boy to run to his father.' [infinitive]

→ ABS ≠ NOM, *pace* Legate 2008

Case and agreement in complex predicates

Both the lexical verb and the causative *do* contain agreement slots

- (9) insuca wasasda **mašinal** r- ič- i- z- a- r- una
father.ERG son.LOC **cars.ABS** PL- sell-NMLZ-INF-CAUS-PL-PST

'Father made the boy sell the cars.'

Causative (*ričizaruna*) contains infinitive (*ričize*), which in turn contains nominalisation (*riči*).

→ if Caus^o is a head in the event zone, then so is its complement

Approximate clausal syntax

For causatives:

(10) (T > Asp >) Causer > v_{caus} > Causee > v > V_{lex} (...)

For periphrastic TAM-forms:

(11) (T > Asp >) v_{EVT} > DP_{subj} > v_{init} > V/√ > DP_{obj}

v_{EVT} is the progressive head (Ramchand & Svenonius 2014, Ramchand 2018), and the insertion site of the auxiliary

All v heads serve as ϕ -probes.

Directionality of valuation

Probes c-command goals (Chomsky 2000, 2001, Carstens & Diercks 2013, Preminger 2013), not *vice versa*

Upwards probing/downwards valuation (Zeijlstra 2012, Bjorkman & Zeijlstra 2019)
struggle with

- vP-internal object agreement
- adposition agreement

Upwards probing also incorrectly predicts subject agreement for PP^ϕ s occurring between $DP_{\text{subj}}^{\text{ERG}}$ and $DP_{\text{obj}}^{\text{ABS}}$

Maximal projections can also act as probes (Carstens 2015, Clem 2019, Rudnev 2019)

Towards an analysis: Case

ERG is a dependent case assigned within a spellout domain (Bittner & Hale 1996, Baker 2012, Marantz 1991, Levin & Preminger 2014):

$$(12) \quad [_{\text{Domain } 1} \text{DP}_{\text{subj}}^{\text{ERG}} [\text{DP}_{\text{obj}}^{\text{ABS}} \text{V}] \text{v}]$$

The biabsolute construction arises due to **opportunistic early spellout**:

$$(13) \quad [_{\text{Domain } 2} \text{DP}_{\text{subj}}^{\text{ABS}} [_{\text{Domain } 1} \dots \text{DP}_{\text{obj}}^{\text{ABS}} \text{V}] \text{v}]$$

(similar in spirit to Coon & Preminger 2017)

Towards an analysis: Puzzle I

Puzzle I: rigidity of constituent order in biabsolute construction

(14) * DP_{obj}^{ABS} DP_{subj}^{ABS} ...

(15) * PP ϕ DP_{subj}^{ABS} DP_{obj}^{ABS} ...

I adopt the small-clause analysis of oblique objects (Hoekstra & Mulder 1990):

(16) [_{VP} DP^{ERG} [_{VP} [_{VP} [_{SC} DP_[ϕ]^{ABS} [_{PP} DP^{GEN} P_{[$u\phi$]]]] V] v_[$u\phi$]]]}

The structure containing the direct and oblique argument must necessarily be spelled out:

(17) [_{Domain 2} DP_{subj}^{ABS} [_{Domain 1} ... DP_{obj}^{ABS} PP ϕ V] v]

There can therefore be no extraction of either DP_{obj}^{ABS} or PP ϕ .

Towards an analysis: Puzzle II

Puzzle II: Agreement variability in event-modifying PP ϕ s

(18) PP ϕ DP $_{\text{subj}}^{\text{ABS}}$ DP $_{\text{obj}}^{\text{ABS}}$...

(19) DP $_{\text{subj}}^{\text{ABS}}$ PP ϕ DP $_{\text{obj}}^{\text{ABS}}$...

Solution: downwards phrasal probing (Carstens 2015, Clem 2019, Rudnev 2019)

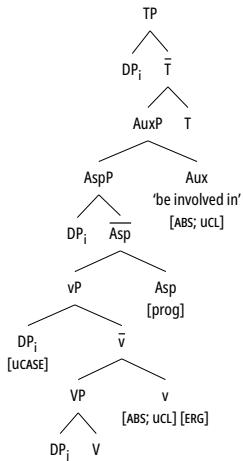
- (20) a. [Domain₂ DP $_{\text{subj}}^{\text{ABS}}$ [Domain₁ PP ϕ [Domain₁ ... DP $_{\text{obj}}^{\text{ABS}}$ V] v]] [object agreement]
- b. [Domain₂ PP ϕ [Domain₂ DP $_{\text{subj}}^{\text{ABS}}$ [Domain₁ ... DP $_{\text{obj}}^{\text{ABS}}$ V] v]] [subject agreement]
-

Object agreement obtains in Domain 1

- PP ϕ cannot move to vP-peripheral position

Competing approach

Lak biabsolutives involve raising from ERG to NOM (Ganenkov 2016)



Evidence: ERG on reciprocals and complex reflexives

- reduplicated reflexives copy the case of their antecedents
'Ali.ABS self.**ERG** self.ABS deceive do.PROG AUX'
 - Avar also has Lak-style reduplicated reflexives
 - but they never carry ERG in biabsolutive constructions
 - Avar reciprocal binding looks like 'reverse binding'
but see Yamada 2013 for arguments against this
- Avar biabsolutives are unlike their Lak counterparts

Loose end: early spellout and wh-questions

The present analysis predicts that wh-phrases originating in the lowest portion of the biabsolute construction should be impossible.

- (21) a. $\{$ imal **fi**m ki****e t'o- l- e- l r- ug- e- l
 kids.ABS **water.ABS** **<N>**where.ILL pour-PRS-PTCP-PL PL-AUX.PRS-PTCP-PL

'What are the kids pouring water into?'

- b. ki****e $\{$ imal **fi**m t'o- l- e- l r- ug- e- l
 <N>where.ILL kids.ABS **water.ABS** pour-PRS-PTCP-PL PL-AUX.PRS-PTCP-PL

'What are the kids pouring water into?'

However, *ex-situ* wh-phrases show no evidence of having been in the gap position (Rudnev 2015: §4).

Conclusions

- spellout domains play a crucial role in determining alignment in Avar
- this is an additional source of alignment splits, complementary to added structure (Coon & Preminger 2017)

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