

# Long-distance Agreement in Khwarshi

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**ABSTRACT.** Khwarshi, a Nakh-Dagestanian language, presents an unusual pattern of agreement in complement clauses called long-distance agreement whereby the complement taking verb in the matrix clause agrees with the absolutive argument inside the complement clause.

## 1 Introduction

Khwarshi nominal morphology is very rich in such categories as case, gender and number. Gender is made explicit by agreement on verbs, adjectives, adverbs and postpositions. There are five genders in the singular and two in the plural. In order to understand agreement it is necessary to look at verb structure. The Khwarshi verb consists of the stem which can be preceded by a gender prefix and followed by a suffix. So two classes of verbs are distinguished, those starting with vowels have an initial slot for the gender agreement marker. The other class of verbs has initial consonants and does not take any agreement. It should be noted that the agreement is always with absolutive argument.

### 1.1 Unusual agreement in complement clauses

The following unusual agreement phenomenon is found in complement clauses with verbs of cognition. In such complement clauses two possibilities of verb agreement are found: a) agreement with the sentential complement as a complex NP, treating it as a noun of Gender IV (1); b) agreement with the absolutive argument of the complement clause (2)<sup>1</sup>. In the latter case one can speak of Long-Distance Agreement (LDA), which is found in Khwarshi as well as in other related languages.

For Tsez (a language closely related to Khwarshi), it is argued by Polinsky (2000) that the choice between the two possibilities of agreement is related to topicality. In this paper I claim that long-distance agreement in Khwarshi correlates with the *focus and topic* status of the absolutive argument of the subordinate clause.

(1) *Išet'u-l*                      *l-iq'-še*                      *goli*    *uža*                      *bataxu*

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<sup>1</sup> Glossing: ABL-ablative, CVB-converb, GNT-general tense, INS-instrumental, LAT-lative, PST.PTCP-Past Participle, PST.W-Past Witnessed, PST.UW-Past Unwitnessed, QUOT-quotative, VERS-versative, I, II, III, IV, V - genders.

Mother.OBL-LAT IV-know-PRS COP boy.ERG bread(V)  
*y-acc-u.*  
 V-eat-PST.PTCP  
 ‘Mother knows that the boy ate bread.’ Local Agreement (LA)

- (2) *Išet’u-l y-iq’-še goli uža bataxu*  
 Mother.OBL-LAT V-know-PRS COP boy.ERG bread(V)  
*y-acc-u.*  
 V-eat-PST.PTCP  
 ‘Mother knows that the boy ate bread.’ Long-Distance Agreement (LDA)

## 2 Long-distance agreement analysis

Polinsky and Postdam (2001) claim that the long-distance agreement trigger in Tsez has to be an embedded topic. Adjuncts, *wh*-phrases and non-absolute topics prevent LDA in Tsez. According to the preliminary analysis, Khwarshi allows long-distance agreement not only with topicalized elements but also with focused elements. Polinsky (personal communication) suggests that *d*-linked *wh*-expressions can trigger LDA in Khwarshi. Below I present an analysis of LDA from the perspective of information structure.

### 2.1 Particle *-n*

There is a general particle *-n* that occurs in all languages of the Tsezic group. The main function of this particle is to form coordinate clauses so the translation is ‘*and*’. This particle can function as an additive focus particle with the meaning ‘*also, too, even*’ (3). König (1991) notes ‘there is an interesting tie-up between additive focus particles and coordination in many languages. Coordinating conjunctions (*and*) and additive particles (*even*) correspond to the same lexical item in other languages.’

- (3) *Di-l dada ciyo-λ’o-zi-n gōq λun il-in ile.*  
 I.OBL-LAT father salt-SUP-ABL-AND love QUOT say-PST.UW she.ERG  
 ‘I love you father even more than salt, she said.’ [Sisters.008]

Polinsky and Postdam (2001) point to the same particle in another related language Tsez that functions as a topic marker. The following Khwarshi example can be considered as a sentence with topic: [The text is about a father who tells his sons about his will before dying].

- (4) *žu-n ø-uh-un guc’-un židu .*  
 he-TOP I-die-CVB look-PST.UW they  
 ‘When he died, they looked (there).’ [PRINCES.005]

## 2.2 Topic

There are two agreement patterns in a complement clause with an overt topic marker (*-n*) on the embedded object: local and long-distance (5a). The scope of the topic is only over the dependent clause.

Sentence (5b) is an example of topicalization (or fronting) where the topic (*zihe-n* ‘cow’) has a wide scope over the whole sentence. It is possible to use particles other than *-n* like *-gon* ‘even, and’, *-čun/-kun* ‘even, and’. So in order to have obligatory LDA the topic should be fronted.

(5)

a. *Uža-l*                    *l/b-iq’-še*                    *zihe-n*  
 boy.OBL-LAT    IV/III-know-PRS    cow(III)-AND  
*b-iti-xx-u.*  
 III-divide-CAUS-PST.PTCP  
 ‘The boy knows that the cow was stolen.’    LA/LDA

b. *Zihe-n*                    *uža-l*                    *b-iq’-še*  
 cow(III)-AND    boy.OBL-LAT    III-know-PRS  
*b-iti-xx-u.*  
 III-divide-CAUS-PST.PTCP  
 ‘The boy knows that the cow was stolen.’    LDA

## 2.3 Focus

There is no overt focus particle in the language. Rochemont (1998: 337) defines the following diagnostic feature for focus: in a well-formed information question-answer pair, the focus is the constituent that is wh-questioned in the question. In the following D-linked question *zihe* ‘cow’ is already in the focus position. The focused element has a wide scope over the whole question sentence in (6a). But there are still two possibilities of agreement in such a d-linked question (6a). However, long-distance agreement is preferred. The answer to the d-linked question can have two possibilities of agreement: local and long-distance (6b).

(6)

a. *Dogu*    *zihe*                    *b-ot’uq’q’-u*                    *l/b-iq’-še*                    *uža-l.*  
 which    cow(III)    III-come-PST.PTCP    IV/III-know-PRS    boy.OBL-LAT  
 ‘Which cow does the boy know came?’                    LA/LDA

b. *Uža-l*                    *l/b-iq’-še*                    *k’aba*    *zihe*                    *b-ot’uq’q’-u.*  
 boy.OBL-LAT    IV/III-know-PRS    black    cow(III)    III-come-PST.PTCP  
 ‘The boy knows that the black cow has come.’                    LA/LDA  
 But LDA occurs obligatorily when the embedded object of the complement clause is fronted in an answer to the question (6a).

- c. *K'aba zihe b-ot'uq'q'-u b-iq'-še uža-l.*  
 black cow(III) III-come-PST.PTCP III-know-PRS boy.OBL-LAT  
 'The boy knows that the black cow has come.' LDA

In example (6c), the focused element has to be fronted in order to have obligatory LDA.

### 2.3.1 WH-expressions

Example (7) is a statement sentence with a wh-phrase which has scope over the dependent clause and again there are two possibilities of agreement.

- (7) *Uža-l l/b-iq'-še lu [foc] zihe*  
 boy.OBL-LAT IV/III-know-PRS who.ERG cow(III)  
*b-iti-xx-u.*  
 III-divide-CAUS-PST.PTCP  
 'The boy knows who has stolen the cow.' LA/LDA

Example (8) is a question sentence where the wh-phrase has a wide scope over the sentence and in this case long-distance agreement is the only possible agreement.

- (8) *lu [foc] zihe b-iti-xx-u uža-l*  
 who.ERG cow(III) III-divide-CAUS-PST.PTCP boy.OBL-LAT  
*b-ak-i.*  
 III-see PST.W  
 'Who did the boy see steal the cow?' LDA

## 3 Clause Union

In this section I look at clause union constructions in Khwarshi. I also argue that long-distance agreement is not the product of clause union. In Khwarshi constructions with modal verb 'must' plus infinitive are true clause union constructions.

Clause union constructions have the following features: change in case marking, word order restriction and adverbial scope.

Feature I. The first criterion for clause union is presented in the following examples where there is difference in case marking and agreement patterns. Note that the agreement is triggered by the argument in absolutive case.

In sentence (9a), the subject is marked with absolutive case and the main verb (past participle and auxiliary) shows agreement with the subject in number and gender forming one clause while the infinitive agrees with its direct object forming another independent clause. Such constructions are called biabsolutive or biclausal constructions.

(9)

- a. [ *Uže*                    [ *heše*                    *b-ez-a*]                    *ø-ukk-u*  
 Boy(I).ABS    book(III).ABS    III-take-INF    I-must-PST.PTCP  
*ø-eč-i*.  
 I-be-PST.W  
 ‘The boy had to buy a book.’

Sentence (9b) shows different case marking and different agreement. The subject is marked for ergative case and the main verb that consists of the auxiliary verb ‘to be’ in the past tense and past participle shows agreement in number and gender with the only absolutive, that is the argument of the infinitive, thus forming one complex predicate, that is one clause. Such monoclausal constructions where main and subordinate clauses become one clause are called *clause union*.

- b. *Uža*                    [ *heše*                    *b-ez-a*                    *b-ukk-u* ]  
 Boy(I).ERG    book(III).ABS    III-take-INF    III-must-PST.PTCP  
*b-eč-i*.  
 III-be-PST.W  
 ‘The boy had to buy a book.’

Feature II. Another fact supporting the clause union analysis is a word order restriction, i.e. that there are clear-cut clause boundaries in the biabsolutive construction while there are no clause boundaries in the ergative construction. In other words, the ergative constructions allow flexible word order, unlike the biabsolutive constructions. In the biabsolutive construction in (10a). the main verb (that is participle plus copula) agrees in gender and number with the agent and the infinitive agrees with its argument. In such constructions it is not possible to insert the main verb between the infinitive and its argument (example (10b), is ungrammatical) while there is no such restriction in the ergative (monoclausal) constructions (11).

#### Biclausal construction

(10)

- a. *Mo*                    *y-ukk-u*                    *goli*                    *heše*                    *b-ez-a*.  
 You(II).ABS    II-must-PST.PTCP    COP    book(III).ABS    III-take-INF  
 ‘You have to buy a book.’
- b. \**Mo*                    *heše*                    *y-ukk-u*                    *b-ez-a*                    *goli*.  
 You(II)/ABS    book(III).ABS    II-must-PST.PTCP    III-take-INF    COP  
 ‘You have to buy a book.’

#### Monoclausal construction

(11)

- a. *Me*                    *b-ukk-u*                    *goli*                    *heše*                    *b-ez-a*.  
 You(II).ERG    III-must-PST.PTCP    COP    book(III).ABS    III-take-INF

‘You have to buy a book.’  
 b. *Me heše b-ukk-u b-ez-a goli.*  
 You(II).ERG book(III).ABS III-must-PST.PTCP III-take-INF COP  
 ‘You have to buy a book.’

Feature III. The other fact is the behavior of adverbial scope. In biclausal constructions adverbs with different clausal scope can occur while in clause union constructions this is not possible.

### 3.1 Long-distance agreement vs. clause union in Khwarshi

Haspelmath (1999) suggests that the clause union analysis is appropriate for Godoberi, and might be appropriate for Tsez (although he lacked relevant data.)

But Polinsky and Comrie (1999) for Tsez reject it for the following reasons: 1) there is no case changing as in the classical clause union constructions; 2) the behavior of adverbial scope seems to point to biclausal status of these constructions. Below, I present several arguments that prove that the clause union analysis is inapplicable when analyzing long-distance constructions in Khwarshi.

Argument I: There is *no case change* in such complement clauses in Khwarshi (consider examples with long-distance agreement above).

Argument II: The *behavior of adverbs* points to biclausal status. The following example of a complement clause shows that long-distance agreement is possible, even though each clause has its own time adverbial.

(12) [*Bataxu-n huniža uža y-acc-u*]  
 Bread(V)-AND yesterday boy.ERG V-eat-PST.PTCP  
 [*išet'u-l žeq'ul y-iq'-še*].  
 mother.OBL-LAT today V-know-PRS  
 ‘The mother knew today that the boy had eaten bread yesterday.’

Argument III: Behavior of reflexives. In the following example the reflexive pronoun shows coreferentiality with its antecedent (*uža* ‘boy/ERG’) within one clause the complement clause, since the reflexives are strictly local and can be triggered by subjects. If this were clause union, the argument of the complement clause (namely *uža* ‘boy/ERG’) would no longer be subject and no longer able to be the antecedent to the reflexive.

(13) *Išet'u-l l-iq'-še uža ise-isu-γo-γul*  
 Mother.OBL-LAT IV-know-PRS boy.ERG REFL-APUD-VERS  
*kayat b-ešut't'-u.*  
 letter(III) III-send-PST.PTCP  
 ‘The mother knows that the boy has sent himself a letter.’

Argument IV: Word order within LDA. Haspelmath (1999) points out the correlation of discontinuous word order and long-distance agreement in Godoberi. He notes that if the dependent clause is continuous, long-distance agreement is optional and if the ‘subordinate clause’ is discontinuous, LDA is obligatory. This also applies to Khwarshi data (cf. examples (5a) and (5b) repeated in (14a). and (14b)).

(14)

a. *Uža-l*                      *l/b-iq’-še*                      *zihe-n*  
boy.OBL-LAT    IV/III-know-PRS    cow(III)-AND  
*b-iti-xx-u.*  
III-divide-CAUS-PST.PTCP  
‘The boy knows that the cow has been stolen.’ LA/LDA

b. *Zihe-n*                      *uža-l*                      *b-iq’-še*  
cow(III)-AND    boy.OBL-LAT    III-know-PRS  
*b-iti-xx-u.*  
III-divide-CAUS-PST.PTCP  
‘The boy knows that the cow was stolen.’ LDA

Example (14b) has a discontinuous word order. This sentence could be considered as an example of clause union, while sentence (14a) is an example of embedding. However, since fronted elements are strictly in initial position, word order does not provide independent evidence for clause union.

## 4 Conclusion

In this work I have presented evidence for the claim that long-distance agreement is triggered by the absolutive object of the embedded clause that is either topic or focus of the sentence. So, the strong predictor of LDA is a fronted topic or focus. And I have also argued that the clause union analysis is not borne out for LDA in Khwarshi.

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