Relativization in Shapsug Adyghe

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Abstract

This paper discusses peculiarities of relativization in Shapsug Adyghe, a variety of the polysynthetic Adyghe language belonging to the Northwest Caucasian family. In general, Adyghe relative constructions display a number of interesting phenomena such as morphological marking of the target role, relativization of several arguments within a single construction, and an internally-headed relative construction with the semantic head being marked by a specific exponent. The Shapsug variety i) presents evidence against the contrast between finite forms and participles, which was proposed for the language in most descriptions, ii) restricts relativization of possessors to possessors of absolutive arguments, and iii) displays typologically unique internally-headed constructions with internal heads marked by the external case. It is suggested that these peculiarities actually highlight certain properties of the Adyghe relative constructions that remain implicit in the standard language.

Keywords: Northwest Caucasian languages, finiteness, internally-headed relative constructions, constraints on relativization

1 Introduction[*]

This paper aims at describing relativization in the Shapsug dialect of Adyghe, a Northwest Caucasian language spoken primarily in the North Caucasian regions of the Russian Federation and the Near East. Spoken by several hundred thousand people and being taught in dozens of schools in the Northwest Caucasus, Adyghe can be considered a relatively prosperous language, but this applies more to the standard variant based on the Temirgoi dialect than to the peripheral dialects of the language.[1]

The Shapsug dialect discussed here is similar to Standard Adyghe in most grammatical respects.[2] Nonetheless, we will see that as relativization is concerned,

[1] The precise number of Adyghe speakers is unknown because of the lack of precise information about speakers in the diaspora: it is generally accepted that most Adyghe live outside the Caucasus but their language proficiency varies. The number of Adyghe first-language speakers in Russia exceeds 120,000 (Koryakov 2006: 22).
[2] The main descriptions of Shapsug are Kerasheva 1957 and Smeets 1984. Note, however, that the variety discussed by Smeets differs from the variety discussed here both in phonology and in grammar.

Shapsug Adyghe shows a number of specific features, including the presence of previously unnoticed syntactic constraints and even new relative constructions (the latter being seemingly unique typologically).

The variety of Shapsug that this paper deals with is spoken in the village of Aguy-Shapsug, about ten kilometers from Tuapse, a port on the eastern coast of the Black Sea. Unlike many other North Caucasian varieties of Adyghe, Shapsug has not undergone much influence from Standard Adyghe. However, the variety studied here has been undeniably influenced by Russian. Nonetheless, the dialect is still spoken daily in Aguy-Shapsug and retains all the major features of Adyghe.[3]

Like other Northwest Caucasian languages, Adyghe is highly polysynthetic: this language allows quite complex word forms which encode a large bulk of information on the participants of the situation and on its inherent aspectual and modal characteristics. Some prominent features of the language can be illustrated by the following example:[4]

(1) a çəfə-xe-me   ja-čele-çəḳ^w   ŝahəʁ-er a-q^wəta-ʁ
   that person-PL-OBL:PL 3PL(PR)+POSS-boy-small fence-ABS 3PL(A)-break-PST
   'Those people's children broke the fence'.

Most thematic roles are cross-referenced by person prefixes (organized on an ergative basis and contrasting the intransitive subject and the transitive patient/undergoer to other roles) either within the predicate or within a noun or a postposition. In (1), for example, we find that the agent ('children') is cross-referenced on the predicate of the clause and the possessor ('those people') is cross-referenced on its head noun (the combination of the 3rd person plural prefix *a-* with the possessive prefix *jə-* is realized as *ja-*).[5] Note that 3rd person absolutives (as opposed to 1st and 2nd person absolutives) are not overtly cross-referenced, hence the absence of the absolutive person prefix in (1).

Nominal case marking also follows the ergative scheme. Noun phrases (NPs) in Standard Adyghe can be marked by one of two cases, namely absolutive (*-r*) and oblique (with the basic exponent *-m*). Absolutive is used for intransitive subjects and transitive undergoers. Oblique is found with all other arguments cross-referenced somewhere within the clause, including transitive actors, which is why it is traditionally called "ergative" (see Kumakhov et al. 1996; Kumakhov and Vamling 2006; Zekokh 1969 *inter alia*). Case markers are sometimes omitted, especially when the NP is undeniably definite (if it is a personal pronoun, a proper noun or a possessive phrase) or, by contrast, is non-specific—this holds, however, more for the absolutive than for the oblique. In the Shapsug variety

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[3] It is worth mentioning, though, that in Aguy-Shapsug, younger generations and older generations were said by local people to speak in "two different Shapsug languages": the speech of the youngest generation in fact deviates from other Adyghe dialects quite dramatically. This makes the position of the variety highly endangered, despite the fact that the number of people who can use Adyghe in the village presumably exceeds 1,000.

[4] All examples are from Shapsug Adyghe, until stated otherwise. The transcription is based on the transcription used by the Moscow Caucasiological School and is different from that of IPA in several respects: in particular, ejectives are marked with the dot and palatalization is marked with the apostrophe; the colon marks tense consonants. Abbreviations used in glosses are as follows: A – agent; ABS – absolutive (case or person prefix); ADD – additive particle; ADV – "adverbial" (predicative) suffix; AUG – augment; AUX – auxiliary morpheme; BEN – benefactive preverb; CAUS – causative; DIR – directive; DYN – dynamic; INSTR – instrumental preverb; IO – indirect object; ITER – iterative; LOC – locative preverb; NEG – negation; OBL – oblique case; OPV – general oblique preverb; PL – plural; POSS – possessive prefix; PR – possessor; PST – past; RE – reversive/refactive; REL – relative; SG – singular. Null morphemes are only glossed where they are relevant.

[5] The possessor cross-reference markers are only distinguished for ease of exposition. Formally they belong to the same series as markers of indirect objects.

discussed here, the system of case marking is basically the same, but the rules of marking absolutes are more complex and are not completely understood yet: some absolutive NPs can take either the marker -(e)r or the marker -e (or remain unmarked). Moreover, nominal stems can take other syntactically-relevant markers, but it is not obvious that these morphemes are case markers proper. The most important of these is the "adverbial" suffix -ew used with various kinds of predicative expressions (Vydrin 2008) and also in relative constructions, as we will see later.

The structure of this paper is as follows. Section 2 presents a description of the main mechanisms of relativization in Adyghe in general and in Shapsug Adyghe in particular. Section 3 is devoted to a specific syntactic constraint found in the Shapsug dialect and to the best of my knowledge unnoticed elsewhere in Adyghe dialects, which puts a restriction on the relativization of possessors. Section 4 deals with some new relative constructions observed in Shapsug. Section 5 contains conclusions.

2 General features of the Adyghe relativization

The general make-up of the Shapsug relativization is substantially similar to relativization in Standard/Temirgoi Adyghe. Consequently, for the most part this section presents the basic facts about Adyghe relativization in general.[6] Adyghe has manifold patterns of expressing relativization. This multiplicity is related to two parameters, namely the role of the target and the way the semantic head is introduced.[7] A further issue discussed in this section concerns the means that are usually considered to mark relative clauses as subordinated.

2.1 Determining the role of the target

In reference to the role of the target, Adyghe has two strategies. The first of them does not involve any specific changes within the clause and is used when the target of relativization is the absolutive argument; compare a simple sentence (2a) and its relative counterpart (2b):[8]

(2) a. wəč:enə-xe   t:-jə-č:əle   qe-ḵʷa-ʁe-x
         scholar-PL   1PL(PR)-POSS-village   DIR-go-PST-PL
         '(Some) scholars came to our village'.

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[6] A detailed discussion of the Temirgoi relativization can be found in Hewitt 1979 and also partly in Bizhoev 1991; certain specific aspects are considered in Lander 2005; 2009; to appear.
[7] Following a well-established tradition, the term 'semantic head' is used here for a noun (or occasionally even a complex nominal) which lexically describes the participant referred to by the matrix NP. This implies that the semantic head need not coincide with the syntactic head, because it need not possess (all) the properties of the latter. The term 'target' refers to that participant of the situation expressed with a relative clause that is stated to be the same as the referent of the matrix NP.
[8] The examples of relatives in this section all manifest an internally-headed relative construction, where the semantic head is seemingly expressed within the relative clause and is marked with the above-mentioned "adverbial" suffix -ew (see Section 2.2). The "external" case, which marks the matrix NP—e.g., -me in (2b)—does not affect the choice of a relative pattern in any way.

b. wəč:enə-x-ew   t:-jə-č:əle   qe-ḳʷa-ʁe-xe-me
scholar-PL-ADV   1PL(PR)-POSS-village   DIR-go-PST-OBL:PL
'those scholars who came to our village'

The second strategy is found with non-absolutive targets and requires the replacement of the target person prefix with the relative prefix whose basic form is *zə-* (in Shapsug it sometimes appears as *zjə-*). In simple clauses, any non-absolutive arguments of the predicate that are cross-referenced can be relativized in this way. Thus, (3) displays relativization of the agent and (4) provides an example of relativization of a genuine indirect object.[9]

(3) a.   psəχʷə-m   s-jə-xat:e   zewəžə
          river-OBL   1SG(PR)-POSS-vegetable.garden   all

          ə-ʁe-ḳʷedə-ʁ
          3SG(A)-CAUS-disappear-PST
          'The river destroyed the whole of my vegetable garden'.

    b.   psəχʷ-ew   s-jə-xat:e   zewəžə
          river-ADV   1SG(PR)-POSS-vegetable.garden   all

          zə-ʁe-ḳʷedə-ʁe-r
          REL(A)-CAUS-disappear-PST-ABS
          'the river that destroyed the whole of my vegetable garden'

(4) a.   s-jə-pχʷ ereλf   a-r   Ø-je-s-ʔʷa-ʁ
          1SG(PR)-POSS-grandchild   that-ABS   3SG(IO)-OPV-1SG(A)-tell-PST
          'I told this to my grandchild'.

    b.   s-jə-pχʷ ereλf-ew   a-r   z-e-s-ʔʷa-ʁe-r
          1SG(PR)-POSS-grandchild-ADV   that-ABS   REL(IO)-OPV-1SG(A)-tell-PST-ABS
          'that grandchild of mine whom I told this'

The range of arguments of the predicate can be broadened by means of applicative prefixes, which introduce additional person prefixes. There are quite a number of applicative prefixes in Adyghe, which express such relations as benefactive, malefactive, various kinds of location, etc. The following examples show what relativization of the beneficiary looks like: in (5a) the beneficiary is introduced with the benefactive prefix *fe-* and in (5b) the person prefix subcategorized by this marker is replaced with the relative prefix.

(5) a.   mə   xaŝʷe-r   a-f-a-wəqebzə-ʁ   ležeḳʷ e.p:sewaqʷe-me
          this   field-ABS   3PL(IO)-BEN-3PL(A)-clear-PST   peasant-OBL:PL
          'This field was cleared for peasants'.

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[9] The genuine indirect object is introduced by a general oblique preverb and is thus structurally similar to indirect objects introduced by applicative markers and discussed immediately below.

b. ležeǩʷe.p:sewaqʷ-ew xaŝʷe-r zə-f-a-wəqebzə-ʁe-me
peasant-ADV field-ABS REL(IO)-BEN-3PL(A)-clear-PST-OBL:PL.
'the peasants for whom the field was cleared'

Finally, in Shapsug Adyghe, as in other dialects, it is possible to relativize some arguments that are cross-referenced outside of the predicate. The examples in (6) demonstrate that relativization of possessors is organized similarly to relativization of other non-absolutive arguments: the possessor person prefix is replaced with the relative prefix.

(6) a. a wəne-xe-me ja-ŝhanʁʷəp:č:e-xe-r jənə-x
that house-PL-OBL:PL 3PL(PR)+POSS-window-PL-ABS big-PL
'The windows of these houses are big'.

b. wən-ew z-jə-ŝhanʁʷəp:č:e jənə-xe-r
house-ADV REL(PR)-POSS-window big-PL-ABS
'the house whose windows are big'

A peculiar feature of all living Northwest Caucasian languages is multiple relativization: when a clause contains several coreferential non-absolutive roles affected by relativization, all of them can (though need not) be marked with a relative prefix (see Lander 2009 for a discussion). In (7) the possessor of the absolutive argument is coreferential with the agent, hence both roles are marked as relativized.

(7) čal-ew z-jat:e zə-λeʁʷə-ʁe-r
boy-ADV REL(PR)-POSS+father REL(A)-see-PST-ABS
'the boy who saw his own (lit. whose) father'

2.2 Introducing the semantic head

In general, the semantic head of the Adyghe relative construction can be introduced in two ways, normally interchangeable.[10] In the *externally-headed construction*, the semantic head follows the relative clause and takes the case of the whole NP:

(8) se [qe-ǩʷe-žə-ʁe çəf-er] neʔʷas-ew čə-ʁe
I DIR-go-RE-PST person-ABS acquaintance-ADV 1SG(A)+do-PST
'I got acquainted with a person who came (from there)'.

In Shapsug, this construction can appear in two forms: the predicate of the relative clause can either be incorporated into the head or remain syntactically autonomous.[11] The relevant test for incorporation relates to an alternation replacing the vowel /e/ with the

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[10] The constructions discussed in this subsection do not exhaust all constructions found in Adyghe. First, a relative construction can lack a semantic head altogether; cf. (22). Second, in Shapsug we also find other constructions described in Section 4.

[11] This is also observed in the standard language (cf. Arkadiev and Testelets 2009: 127). The distribution of these patterns is still unclear.

vowel /a/, whose occurrence depends on the border of the stem.[12] Consider (9a), in which the predicate of the relative clause can appear in two forms: where the predicate of the relative clause appears as *reꝁ^waʁe*, the e/a-alternation occurs, but in a parallel form *reꝁ^weʁe* no alternation is found, which suggests that the predicate is incorporated into the head. Notably, where the head contains a possessive prefix, which can mark the left border of a word, the alternation within the preceding predicate of the relative clause is obligatory (9b), since it cannot be incorporated into its head anymore.

(9) a. agʷəjape re-ꝁʷa-ʁe / re-ꝁʷe-ʁe çəf-e
         Agoi   DYN-go-PST / DYN-go-PST person-ABS
         'the person who went to Agoi'

     b. agʷəjape re-ꝁʷa-ʁe / *re-ꝁʷe-ʁe s-jə-drug-e
         Agoi   DYN-go-PST / DYN-go-PST 1SG(PR)-POSS-friend-ABS
         'that friend of mine who went to Agoi'

The semantic head can also be introduced within the relative clause. In this case it is usually marked with the "adverbial" suffix -*ew* (but see Section 4):

(10)   [le-r   hač-ew   zjə-šxə-ʁe-r]   jə-gʷə-raz-ew
         meat-ABS   guest-ADV   REL(A)-eat-PST-ABS POSS-heart-pleased-ADV

         ra-χʷə-ʁe
         DYN-happen-PST
         'The visitor who ate the meat was very pleased'.

This structure is akin to *internally-headed relative constructions*, which are very widespread in polysynthetic languages (see Jelinek 1987; Kibrik 1992; Baker 1996). A remarkable feature of the Adyghe internally-headed relative is that in this construction the semantic head does not receive marking appropriate to its role within the relative (as is observed, for example, in Quechuan languages; see Cole 1987) but takes a specific marker. Moreover, although in general, the order of NPs within Adyghe relative clauses is more or less free, the semantic head is somewhat restricted as to its position. In particular, many speakers of both Temirgoi and Shapsug Adyghe respect the following constraints:

(i) the semantic head is not likely to occur between the absolutive phrase and the predicate of the relative clause (though (10) indicates that for some speakers this constraint is optional) and

(ii) the semantic head cannot appear between a constituent containing a relative prefix and the predicate of the relative clause.

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[12] Roughly, the rules of the alternation are as follows. If a stem (which does not include some markers) in its basic form ends up with two syllables whose underlying form contain two /e/, then the first of these vowels is replaced with /a/. If these conditions are satisfied but the alternation does not occur, the lexical item is considered to be incorporated into an item following it. This view is supported by the position of some markers, which treat such combinations as a whole. See Smeets 1984: 206-211 and Arkadiev and Testelets 2009: 122-131 for a detailed discussion of the rule.

In (11a) the first constraint is illustrated, and (12a) demonstrates the infelicitous violation of both constraints ((11b) and (12b) are the corresponding examples with acceptable word order). For reasons that will become clear in Section 3, it is impossible to construct a Shapsug example that would violate the second constraint but not the first.[13]

(11) a. *jatːe   čal-ew   zə-ƛeʁʷə-ʁe-r
         POSS+father   boy-ADV   REL(A)-see-PST-ABS

     b. čal-ew jatːe zə-ƛeʁʷə-ʁe-r
         'the boy who saw his father'

(12) a. *z-jə-wəna-ŝha   wən-ew   qʷəta-ʁe-r
         REL(PR)-POSS-house-head   house-ADV   break-PST-ABS

     b. wən-ew z-jə-wəna-ŝha qʷəta-ʁe-r
         'the house whose roof has broken'

We thus find that the "internal head" should occur outside some syntactic domain which obligatorily includes the predicate, all constituents containing a relative prefix, and most likely the absolutive phrase. Crucially, however, oblique NPs and adjuncts need not belong to this domain if they do not contain a relative marker. This can be accounted for with two assumptions.

First, let us assume that both adjuncts and oblique NPs do not constitute parts of the syntactic core of the relative clause, which contains the predicate and its arguments. In fact, in polysynthetic languages cross-reference markers may behave similarly to syntactic arguments, while the corresponding NPs often show properties close to adjuncts (cf. Van Valin 1985; Jelinek and Demers 1994; Baker 1996; Mithun 2003 among many others). I hypothesize that oblique NPs may indeed function as adjuncts and hence need not be included in the syntactic core. Note that in this approach, the absolutive NP is not treated in the same vein as oblique NPs, because it may constitute a part of the core. Second, I suggest that while relativization cannot proceed without the interpretation of the clausal core and the constituents containing the target, it need not necessarily involve the interpretation of adjuncts.

While the details of this hypothesis need further elaboration, these two assumptions imply that the "internal head" already appears in the syntactic structure after relativization occurs, because it cannot be included in that part of the clause that is affected by relativization.[14] Later, we will see that this hypothesis may shed light on some constructions observed in Shapsug Adyghe.

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[13] For Temirgoi Adyghe, the second constraint can be illustrated by the contrast between *čər-ew zə-paŝxe jə-tə-r* [tree-ADV REL(PR)-front LOC-stand-ABS] 'the tree in front of which (he) is standing' and the infelicitous **zə-paŝxe čər-ew jə-tə-r* [REL(PR)-front tree-ADV LOC-stand-ABS].

[14] The idea that in some internally-headed relative clauses the "internal head" is actually constructed outside of the relative clause is by no means new; see Grosu 2000 for a discussion.

2.3 Marking the relative

Besides the possible presence of the relative prefix, relative clauses can show two additional differences from typical independent declarative clauses:

(i) the predicate of the relative clause is negated by the prefix *mə-*, while independent declarative predicates almost always take the negative suffix *-ep*; compare an independent clause (13a) with a relative clause (13b):

(13) a. s-jə-pχ^wereλf jə-zaq^w:-ew šk:olə-m re-ḳ^we-r-ep
1SG(PR)-POSS-grandchild LOC-alone-ADV school-OBL DYN-go-DYN-NEG
'My grandchild does not go to the school alone'.

b. s-jə-pχ^wereλf-ew jə-zaq^w:-ew šk:olə-m
1SG(PR)-POSS-grandchild-ADV LOC-alone-ADV school-OBL

re-mə-ḳ^we-re-r
DYN-NEG-go-DYN-ABS
'that grandchild of mine who does not go to the school alone'

(ii) present tense dynamic predicates[15] of relative clauses can contain the dynamic suffix *-re* instead of the dynamic prefix *e-/me-* found in independent clauses:

(14) a. k':etːəw-er me-č:əje
cat-ABS DYN-sleep
'The cat is sleeping'.

b. wə-ne-mə-s k':etːəw-ew č:əje-re-m
2SG(ABS)-DIR-NEG-touch cat-ADV sleep-DYN-OBL
'Don't touch the sleeping cat'.

These differences in marking constitute the main argument for contrasting the predicates of relative clauses with finite predicates and distinguishing a special category of participles found in most descriptions of Adyghe (see Bizhoev 1990: 4-21 for an overview). However, none of these features is specific to the context of relative constructions. For example, Smeets (1984), Paris (1989: 249ff) and Lander and Sumbatova (2007) argued that the choice of the prefixal negation most likely has a semantic motivation rather than being related to any syntactic configurations. Indeed, the prefix *mə-* can be found in various kinds of clauses and occasionally even in independent predicates (see also Rogava and Kerasheva 1966: 253-254); cf. the following example from a Shapsug text:[16]

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[15] Predicate tokens in Adyghe are divided into the stative class, which includes most uses of nominals, adjectives and a few verbal predicates like 'sit', 'stand', 'lie', 'be', and the dynamic class, which includes most verbal predicates.
[16] The second verb in (15) shows the complex imperfective tense, which is marked by a combination of a morphologized auxiliary and a past suffix.

(15)   češə   maf-jə   re-mə-ṭəsə-ʁ,   re-laže-štə-ʁ
       night   day-ADD   DYN-NEG-sit.down-PST DYN-work-AUX-PST
       'He did not take a rest (lit. sat down) during days and nights, (and always) was working'.

Consequently, the choice of the negative marker cannot be used as a strong criterion for (non-)finiteness.

The situation with the dynamic suffix is somewhat more complex. It is found primarily in relative clauses (and negative contexts such as (13a) above). That is why it is occasionally considered a participial marker (Bizhoev 1991: 23). Nonetheless, the Shapsug dialect shows evidence against such treatment of this suffix.

The counterargument relies on the fact that while forms like *č:əjerem* in (14b) are quite perfect for speakers,[17] the suffix *-re* in the relevant contexts is essentially optional. Rather, another affix—which paradoxically has the same basic form but which is a prefix—turns out to be sufficient in the same contexts. The prefix *re-* appears with dynamic predicates that have neither overt person prefixes nor applicatives nor a directional prefix, i.e. with those predicates that when used independently in present tense take the dynamic prefix *me-*. For many speakers, *re-* is only used where the prefix *me-* cannot appear, that is in non-finite present tense contexts and in non-present tense contexts (both finite and non-finite); cf. (15), where this marker is found in independent past clauses. For others, *re-* can even replace the prefix *me-*. In either case, this prefix does appear with predicates of relative clauses, independently of their tense:

(16) a.   re-bəbə-re   bzəwe-r
          DYN-fly-DYN   bird-ABS
          'a flying bird'

      b.   re-bəbə-štə-ʁe   bzəwe-r
          DYN-fly-AUX-PST   bird-ABS
          'a bird that was flying'

Example (16a) shows that in the present tense relative clauses the dynamic prefix *re-* can co-occur with the dynamic suffix *-re*. Most speakers, however, allow the presence of one of these morphemes in the predicate even in the absence of the other. Hence in expressions like (16a), one can also observe forms like *re-bəbə* and *bəbə-re* along with forms such as *re-bəbə-re* 'which is flying'.[18] Since the use of the prefix *re-* is not confined to relative clauses, yet this prefix obviously can fulfill the same functions as the suffix *-re*, it is unlikely that the functions of the latter can be somehow related to marking dedicated participial forms. Indeed, under the assumption that the suffix *-re* changes the syntactic class of the verb, we would not be able to identify this class in the case of forms lacking this suffix. Since the negation does not distinguish participial forms either, it seems that at least for Shapsug Adyghe no such forms should be postulated.

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[17] In other words, speakers agree with their existence. Still, some of them state explicitly that such forms are more typical for other Adyghe dialects.
[18] Moreover, some speakers even allow the absence of both affixes, although this seems to be less normal. Thus, the form *bəbə* meaning 'flying' is sometimes possible as well; cf. also the form *kʷe-r* [go-ABS] cited by Kerasheva 1957: 274 as '(the one) who goes,' which also lack any dynamic marker.

3 Relativization of the possessor

As mentioned above, relativization of the possessor is allowed in Adyghe. Yet Shapsug reveals an interesting constraint in this respect. In particular, in the variety described here, normally only relativization of the possessor of the absolutive argument is possible.

Relativization of the possessor of the absolutive argument is illustrated in (6) above and also in (17)-(18) below. In (17) the relative prefix occurs in the intransitive subject and in (18) it appears in the phrase referring to the undergoer within a transitive clause.

(17)   χʷəẑə   jə-čːəɣ-ew   z-jə-tːhapče-xe-r   be   ŝa-ʁ-ew
        pear   POSS-tree-ADV   REL(PR)-POSS-leaf-PL-ABS many   do-PST-ADV

        ʁʷež-ew   χʷə-žə-ʁe-xe-m
        yellow-ADV   happen-RE-PST-PL-OBL
        'the pear tree whose leaves turned yellow long ago'

(18)   škːol-ew   z-jə-wəna-ŝha   be   mə-ŝ-ew
        school-ADV   REL(PR)-POSS-house-head many   NEG-do-ADV

        a-ʁe-la-ʁe-m
        3PL(A)-CAUS-colour-PST-OBL
        'the school whose roof was coloured not so long ago'

These examples contrast with the following ones, which at first glance show relativization of the possessors of an agent (19), a genuine indirect object (20) and an (instrumental) argument introduced by an applicative marker (21).

(19)   çəfə-x-ew   z-jə-čele-çəǩʷ   ŝaheʁe-r
        person-PL-ADV   REL(PR)-POSS-child-small fence-ABS

        zə-qʷəta-ʁe-xe-me
        REL(A)-break-PST-PL-OBL:PL
        'those people whose children broke the fence'

(20)   çəf-ew   z-jə-čele-çəǩʷ   txəλ
        person-ADV REL(PR)-POSS-child-small book

        qə-ze-r-a-mə-tə-ʁe-xe-r
        DIR-REL(IO)-OPV-3PL(A)-NEG-give-PST-PL-ABS
        'those people whose children were not given books'

(21)   faḳ^w-ew   z-jə-mašjəne   se ade
         driver-ADV   REL(PR)-POSS-car I   there

sə-ze-re-ḳ^we-ʁa-ʁe-r
1SG(ABS)-REL(IO)-INSTR-go-PST-PST-ABS
'the driver whose car I had gone there in (lit. by)'

Note, however, that in (19)-(21) the relative prefix is used twice, within the nominal whose possessor is relativized and within the predicate. Moreover, the position of the relative prefix within the predicates of these clauses apparently does not correspond to the roles of the target of relativization in the matrix constructions. Rather the relative prefix replaces the person prefix corresponding to the nominal whose possessor is relativized, i.e., the agent prefix in (19), the genuine indirect object prefix in (20) and the indirect object introduced with the instrumental preverb in (21).

      Given the fact that in these examples the relative prefix in the predicates of relative clauses cannot be associated with the targets of the whole constructs, it is likely that each example in (19)-(21) contains another embedded relative construction, whose target is coreferential with the NP whose possessor is relativized. Consider (22), which is similar to (19) in that it seemingly expresses relativization of the possessor of an agent.

(22)   [z-jə-t:et:ež   [mə   šk:olə-r   zə-ŝə-ʁe]]-r
         REL(PR)-POSS-grandfather that   school-ABS   REL(A)-do-PST-ABS
         'the one whose grandfather built that school'

      I propose that the literal translation of this example is 'the one whose grandfather is one who built that school'. Hence in reality (22) contains two relatives, one being embedded into another. Indeed, Adyghe lacks an overt copula, so nothing prevents such a treatment, which explains the appearance of the second relative marker.[19] Note that the NP whose possessor is relativized now has the absolutive role. This means that in order for a possessor of a non-absolutive argument to be relativized, the possessum must be "promoted" to absolutive status. Apparently, this proposal explains the examples (19)-(21) as well.

      This poses a question about what happens when the promotion to absolutive is impossible. Such a situation is observed, for example, when the relativized participant serving as the possessor of a non-absolutive argument is coreferential with a relativized role within the predicate. In (23), a relative prefix in the verb marks relativization of the agent, which is thought to be coreferential with the possessor of the beneficiary:

(23)   çal-ew   jat:e / *z-jat:e   wəne fə-zə-ŝe-re-r
         boy-ADV   POSS+father / REL(PR)-POSS+father house BEN-REL(A)-do-DYN-ABS
         'the boy$_i$ who built a house for his$_{i/j}$ father'

---

[19] In fact, referential/specific nominal predicates in Adyghe usually require a particular construction, which is different from the one observed in (22), despite the fact that the predicate of the relative clause in this example is likely to be specific. However, that special construction never appears in relative constructions, where the contrast between different kinds of nominal predicates is neutralized.

The promotion of the possessum to the absolutive role is blocked in this case, because it requires its relativization out of a clause which is already marked as relative in its predicate, and in Adyghe, as in many other languages, relative clauses constitute "islands" which cannot include targets of other relatives. (23) demonstrates that in such cases the possessor cannot be marked as relativized in this case, despite the overall possibility of multiple relativization in Adyghe (see Section 2.1 above).

Since the possessor is not marked as relativized in (23), it need not be coreferential with the agent, although the coreference is not excluded as it is not excluded in independent clauses.

When the relativized possessor is deeply embedded, the constraint requiring its possessum to be the absolutive argument can fail, as in the following example:

(24)   çəf-ew   z-jatːe   jə-wəne
            person   REL(PR)-POSS+father   POSS-house

            s-Ø-je-p:λə-re-r
            1SG(ABS)-3SG(IO)-OPV-look.at-DYN-ABS
            'the person at whose father's house I am looking'

(24) is an example of relativization of the possessor of the possessor of the non-absolutive argument. The construction involves just one relative marker, hence no structural changes can be postulated for this clause.

Thus, in Shapsug the constraint requiring the relativized possessor to be a dependent of the absolutive is not without exception. But in the Temirgoi dialect it does not seem to exist at all. This is illustrated in the following example, where the target of relativization is the possessor of the comitative argument:

(25)   z-jate   Ø-da-ķʷe-š'tə-ʁe-r
            REL(PR)-POSS+father   3SG.IO-COM-go-AUX-PST-ABS
            'the one with whose father he went' (Temirgoi)

It is not apparent whether the restriction discussed here is an innovation or reflects an earlier stage. Hypothetically, this could be a confinement related to Keenan and Comrie's (1977) well-known hierarchy of NP accessibility, which states that possessors are less likely to be relativizable than most other roles. Naturally, we can expect that relativization of possessors, even if possible, can show additional constraints like the one discussed above.

At the same time, Shapsug Adyghe can be compared to languages where some possessors are more easily relativized than other possessors. For instance, in Tagalog only possessors of subjects can be relativized (Ceña 1979), and in Turkish relativization of possessors of subjects employs the same strategy as subjects, while relativization of other possessors usually (yet not always) displays another strategy (Göksel and Kerslake 2005: 440-441). Against this background, the constraint restricting possessor relativization in Shapsug Adyghe to possessors of absolutives may serve as an argument for a distinctive syntactic status of absolutives as compared to other arguments (cf. Lander, to appear).

4 New relative constructions

Multiple examples given above show that Shapsug Adyghe easily use the internally-headed relative construction with the semantic head marked with the "adverbial" suffix, the construction which is found in other Adyghe dialects as well. In the Shapsug variety discussed here, however, one can also observe deviations from this pattern, where the internal head either appears unmarked or receives proper case marking.

The first of these patterns is illustrated in (26). Here the relative clause describing the location argument of the matrix verb is clearly subordinated—it is marked with an external oblique case on its (presumably nominalized) predicate. However, the semantic head lacks any marker of its role:[20]

(26) [t:xe-m   wəne   t:a-te]-m_NP   se-Ø-šə-ʔ
       mountain-OBL   house   LOC-stand-OBL   1SG(ABS)-3SG(IO)-LOC-be
       'I live in the house which is on the mountain'.

More interesting is the second pattern, where the semantic head receives the absolutive or oblique case marking. This construction is not always used consistently, perhaps because of its recent origin: it has been observed among speakers who are younger than 45 and the older generations do not seem to accept it at all. An example of this pattern is given in (27):

(27) det:sk:isadik:ə-m   čef-ew   çale-xe-r   šə-g'eg^{w}ə-ʁ^{w}e-štə-ʁe-xe-r
       kindergarten-OBL   merry-ADV   boy-PL-ABS   LOC-play-ITER-AUX-PST-PL-ABS

       f^w-ew   re-k^{w}e-ʁ^{w}e-štə-ʁ
       big-ADV   DYN-cry-ITER-AUX-PST
       'The children who were merrily playing in the kindergarten were crying loudly'.

What is surprising about this construction is that the case shown by the semantic head is essentially the "external" case assigned to the matrix NP rather than the "internal" case dictated by the role of the target. While this is not obvious in (27), where the external case and the internal case coincide, examples (28)-(29) make this clear. In (28) the target of relativization has a comitative role (requiring the oblique case) within the relative clause but the matrix NP is the intransitive subject (marked with absolutive), hence the semantic head takes the absolutive suffix. In (29) the NP containing the relative construction describes the indirect object of the bivalent, yet formally intransitive verb *pλ-* 'look at' and hence is marked by the oblique suffix—and so does the semantic head despite the fact that within the relative clause it refers to the intransitive subject requiring the absolutive marker.

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[20] Another peculiarity of this example is the form of the absolutive prefix, whose vowel is "upgraded" to /e/. While this alternation exists in other varieties of Adyghe as well, it normally does not apply to absolutive person prefixes.

(28)   sadik:ə-m-g'e   medsest:ra-r   / *medsest:ra-m   ʔʷefə
           kindergarten-OBL-INSTR   nurse-ABS   nurse-OBL   work

           zə-da-ʔa-če-re-r   nəbžəče
           REL(IO)-COM-LOC-1SG(A)+do-DYN-ABS   young
           'The nurse with whom I work in the kindergarten is young'.

(29)   se s-j-e-pλ   ble-m / *ble-r   re-č:əje-re-m
           I   1SG(ABS)-OPV-DYN-look.at   snake-OBL / snake-ABS   DYN-sleep-DYN-OBL
           'I am looking at a sleeping snake'.

These examples pose a natural question of whether the semantic head in the construction under discussion is really embedded in the relative clause or not. On the one hand, the word order in (27) and (28) suggests that the semantic head is embedded, since it can be placed among other constituents of the relative clause. On the other hand, some speakers who allow the pattern illustrated in (27)-(29) also admit optional case-marking on the predicate of the relative clause in the externally-headed construction, as in (30). Such case-marking explicitly demonstrates the subordinated status of the relative clause. Nonetheless, unlike in Shapsug, this is totally impossible in Temirgoi Adyghe.

(30)   txe-m   ta-te-m   wəne-m   se-šə-ʔ
           mountain-OBL   LOC-stand-OBL   house-OBL   1SG(ABS)- LOC-be
           'I live in the house which is on the mountain'.

This perhaps may serve as an argument that the strange pattern shown in (28)-(29) is nothing more than a result of dislocation of some material within externally-headed constructions.

5 Conclusion

To sum up, relativization in Shapsug Adyghe as is spoken in the village of Aguy-Shapsug shows a few features that distinguish it from parallel constructions in Standard Adyghe.

First, Shapsug Adyghe displays a different use of dynamic markers in predicates of relatives. In particular, the use of the suffix *-re*, which in the standard language is almost confined to relative contexts, is optional in this dialect, perhaps due to the presence of the dynamic prefix *re-*, which is found, however, in independent clauses as well.

Second, the Shapsug dialect tends to restrict possessor relativization to possessors of absolutive arguments. Keeping apart some peculiar contexts, relativization of possessors of other arguments requires reorganization of the construction and the "promotion" of these latter arguments to the absolutive status.

Third, the semantic head of the construction can be introduced in ways other than those found in the standard language: Shapsug Adyghe developed an internally-headed construction where the semantic head remains unmarked and also a construction where it is marked with the case of the matrix NP.

Although these differences may at first glance look very strong, it should be emphasized that they do not necessarily imply that relativization in Shapsug Adyghe is

organized in ways different from relativization in Standard Adyghe. Lander (2005) has argued that Standard Adyghe lacks a contrast between participles and finite forms (contrary to statements found in most descriptions of the language). The optionality of the dynamic suffix in the dialect under discussion only points in the same direction because it shows that this suffix cannot be taken as a dedicated participial marker. Further, while the problem of subjecthood is rather complex and has no unequivocal solution for Adyghe, there are arguments in favor of the syntactic pivot status of the absolutive in Adyghe (see Letuchiy 2009 ms., Lander, to appear): for example, the absolutive is the only obligatory argument., with some minor exceptions it cannot be affected by valency change and it is most accessible to relativization (as demonstrated by some specific constraints on multiple relativization). Clearly, the restriction of possessor relativization to the possessors of absolutives corresponds to this picture. Finally, even new relative constructions in Shapsug Adyghe do not, strictly speaking, go against the principles of organization of relative constructions in the standard language. Thus, as mentioned in Section 2.2, there is evidence that in Temirgoi internally-headed relatives, the semantic head actually comes into play after relativization occurred. The Shapsug construction where semantic heads are marked for the case of the matrix NP—and hence show properties of an external head—could result from a natural development of the formally inexplicit Adyghe internally-headed constructions, where the semantic head is still to some extent external.

Methodologically, this study paradoxically demonstrates to us that deviations from a general pattern can sometimes make this pattern more explicit than it looks. Thus, Shapsug deviations provide us with explicit support of the claims which were made earlier for Temirgoi Adyghe but which were only based on implicit evidence.

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