Subject properties of the Adyghe absolutive: Evidence from relatives

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1. Introduction[1]

Adyghe, a polysynthetic language belonging to the Northwest Caucasian (Abkhaz-Adyghe) family, is usually considered ergative on the basis of its rules of case marking and morphological cross-reference/indexing (Gishev 1985; Kumakhov et al. 1996; Kumakhov and Vamling 2006 *inter alia*). This language possesses two basic cases,[2] which are labeled 'nominative' and 'ergative' in a lot of works in Russian and Georgian, but which I will call 'absolutive' and 'oblique' following the conventional typological terminology (cf. Haspelmath 2008).[3] The distribution of these cases for the most part fits into the ergative scheme. In particular, the Adyghe case system treats the intransitive subject and the transitive patient alike and contrasts them to the transitive agent (and in fact, to all other arguments cross-referenced somewhere within the clause, since all of them are marked by the same oblique case). This is illustrated in the following examples:[4]

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[2] Many descriptions of Adyghe postulate also a few more cases like 'instrumental' and 'transformational/adverbial' (see, for instance, Rogava and Kerasheva 1966; Zekokh 1969; Kumakhov 1971; Paris 1989). It is not clear, however, that these "cases" can be reasonably included into the same paradigm as the two cases discussed here. The conception contrasting the direct and oblique cases in Adyghe can be found already in Janashia's Circassian 1929 diaries (Janashia 2007).

[3] This use of the term 'absolutive' (Russian: 'абсолютив', 'абсолютивный/абсолютный падеж') is quite widespread in modern studies on Adyghe (like the ones mentioned in the beginning of the paper). Of course, it should not be confused with a homonymous term used for certain kinds of converbs. Just like the term 'nominative' is not always used for forms employed for nomination, the appearance of the term 'absolutive' currently does not imply the formal unmarkedness of the form. The term 'oblique' is used for the non-absolutive case in the closely related Kabardian language by Colarusso (1992) among some others. I thank the audience of the conference for discussion which made me clarify the terminology.

[4] Abbreviations used in glosses are: A – agent, ABS – absolutive case or absolutive personal prefix, ADV – adverbial/predicative, AUX – auxiliary morpheme, BEN – benefactive, CAUS – causative, DIR – directional, DYN – dynamic, FUT – future, IMP – imperative, INS – "instrumental case," IO – indirect object, LOC – locative preverb, OBL – oblique ("ergative") case, OPV – oblique preverb, PL – plural, POSS – possessive, PP – postpositional object, PR – possessor, PST – past, RE – reversive/refactive, REL – relative prefix. Numbers denote persons. Null morphemes

(1)   məẑ̥e-r   jən-ew   beɣə-ʁe
      stone-ABS   big-ADV   inflate-PST
      'The stone inflated very much.'

(2)   zə ʔahə-r   hač'e-m   ə-šxə-ʁ
      one part-ABS   guest-OBL   3SG.A-eat-PST
      'The guest ate one piece (of it).'

The first of these examples presents an intransitive clause with a single argument marked with the absolutive suffix *-r*, while the second shows a transitive clause where the agent takes the oblique suffix *-m* and the patient takes the absolutive marker. Note that case marking is usually absent on pronouns, typical proper names, possessive phrases, and non-specific noun phrases.[5] Despite this, below I will use the term 'absolutive argument' for both intransitive subjects and transitive patients in general, taking it for granted that under appropriate conditions the arguments under discussion could get an expression containing the absolutive marker.[6]

The cross-reference system follows the ergative scheme as well. In Adyghe, most participants of the situation can be indexed either within a verb or within a noun (as is the case with possessors) or a postposition (as is the case with postpositional objects). The paradigms of cross-reference markers used for agents, on the one hand, and for intransitive subjects and transitive patients, on the other hand, are different. In particular, as the examples given above indicate, 3rd person intransitive subjects and transitive patients are not indexed within the verb – in contrast to 3rd person agents which get overt indices.[7]

The ergative scheme also manifests itself overtly in relativization, i.e. the formation of relative clauses on the basis of a *target argument* (an argument of the embedded clause which, roughly, is coreferent to an argument of the matrix clause). In general, relativization of both

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are only glossed where they are relevant. The transcription is based on the transcription used in the Moscow Caucasiological School: in particular, ejectives are marked with the dot and palatalization is marked with the apostrophe.

[5] Here and below, the term 'noun phrase' (NP) is used pretheoretically, without making any distinction between different types of nominals.

[6] In fact, it is not obvious that the 1st and 2nd singular pronouns appearing as intransitive subjects or transitive patients are grammatically absolutive in Adyghe (see Arkadiev et al. forthc.: § 9.2.3). Hence, in what follows I will mostly disregard locutor pronominal analogues of absolutives.

[7] If the absolutive argument is plural, the predicate can contain the plural suffix *-xe*. However, this marker does not belong to the same morphological system as cross-reference markers.

intransitive subjects and transitive patients does not change the expression of the argument structure in the verb. In Adyghe, as in many other languages, relativization cannot apply to 1st and 2nd person arguments, and since 3rd person absolutive arguments are not indexed within the predicate, the predicate of the relative clause does not contain an absolutive relative marker either. This is demonstrated by the pairs of examples (3)–(4) and (5)–(6): here the first examples represent independent clauses and the second examples show relative constructions based on the first examples.

Relativization of the intransitive subject:

(3) š̥eferə-r   qe-ḳ̥a-ʁ
     driver-ABS   DIR-go-PST[8]
     'The driver came.'

(4) qe-ḳ̥a-ʁe   š̥eferə-r
     DIR-go-PST   driver-ABS
     'the driver who came'

Relativization of the transitive patient:

(5) se   txəλə-r   s-ʔəʁ
     I   book-ABS   1SG.A-hold
     'I am holding the book.'

(6) se   s-ʔəʁ   txəλə-r
     I   1SG.A-hold   book-ABS
     'the book that I am holding'

Relativization of non-absolutive arguments requires the replacement of the cross-reference prefix of the target with the relative prefix zə-, as is shown in (7)–(8) for the relativization of the agent and in (9)–(10) for relativization of a possessor, the latter examples also indicating that the relative prefix need not occur on the predicate of the relative clause:

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[8] Note that independent predicates under some conditions may drop the last vowel. Here, for example, the full form of the past suffix is -ʁe.

Relativization of the agent:

(7) č'ale-m   apč'ə-r   ə-qʷəta-ʁ
    boy-OBL   glass-ABS   3SG.A-break-PST
    'The boy broke the glass.'

(8) apč'ə-r   zə-qʷəta-ʁe   č'ale-r
    glass-ABS   REL.A-break-PST   boy-ABS
    'the boy that broke the glass'

Relativization of a possessor:

(9) qəpċe-m   Ø-jə-thape-xe-r   pə-teqʷə-ž'ə-ʁe-x
    plum-OBL   3SG.PR-POSS-leaf-PL-ABS   LOC-disperse-RE-PST-PL
    'The leaves of the plum tree have fallen.'

(10) z-jə-thape-xe-r   pə-teqʷə-ž'ə-ʁe-xe   qəpċe-r
     REL.PR-POSS-leaf-PL-ABS   LOC-disperse-RE-PST-PL   plum-ABS
     'the plum tree, whose leaves have fallen'

Thus, in relativization, again, the intransitive subject and the transitive patient are contrasted to the agent and other arguments. This is actually quite expected for ergative languages, as is argued by Lehmann (1984: 211ff).

The data presented above clearly show that absolutives are opposed to all other arguments as concerns their coding. But as is well-known, this does not automatically imply that absolutives have a privelleged status in the grammatical system (Dixon 1994; Falk 2006). In this paper, I will show that in addition to the facts provided above, relativization presents a few arguments exactly for such a status. The relevant data and their preliminary interpretation are discussed in Sections 2–4. In Section 5 I show that these data point to the fact that absolutive arguments in Adyghe have subject properties. The last section concerns with the implications of this claim for the grammatical typology.

2. Word order restrictions in relative clauses

For the most part, Adyghe NPs have syntactically transparent structure. However, in the domain of relative clauses one can observe patterns which look unexpected. These can be placed under two rubrics, namely the position of the semantic heads in "internally-headed relative

clauses" and the position of "displaced demonstratives". Interestingly, both phenomena contrast absolutive arguments with other arguments.

2.1. Internally-headed relative clauses and the position of the semantic head

Relative constructions are often considered to represent a kind of attributive structure whence a clause serves as a modifier of some noun; see, for instance, Nikolaeva 2006. Yet, Adyghe, like Abkhaz and many other polysynthetic (and not only polysynthetic) languages (cf. Kibrik 1992; Baker 1996: 162ff), presents a pattern which *prima facie* contradicts this conception of relatives, namely "internally-headed relative constructions" illustrated in (11):

(11) [a-č'e   **çəf-ew**   k̡̊e-š'tə-m]   sə-λ-e-χ̣̊ə
      that-INS   person-ADV   go-FUT-OBL   1SG.ABS-LOC-DYN-look.for
      'I am looking for a person who will go there.'

Here, the *semantic head*, i.e. the nominal that provides "sortal description", which is further semantically restricted by the relative clause, is marked with the "adverbial" marker *-ew* and seemingly appears within the relative clause.[9] Thus, at first glance the semantic head turns out to be embedded within its own modifier.

Curiously, for many speakers, the position of the *internal head* is somewhat restricted. For instance, the following two expressions are judged as infelicitous:

(12) *zə-paŝhe   **čəγ-ew**   jə-tə-r
      REL.PP-front   tree-ADV   LOC-stand-ABS
      (Expected: 'the tree in front of which it was (lit. stood)'.)

(13) *dəŝe-r   **təʁ̊ak̊-ew**   zə-ʔe.pə-teq̊ə-ʁe-r
      gold-ABS   thief-ADV   REL.IO-LOC-disperse-PST-ABS
      (Expected: 'the thief, who dropped the gold (lit. out of whose hands the fold fall)'.)

The observations related to the ill-formedness of these examples can be formulated in the following way:

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[9] Besides the internally-headed relative construction, Adyghe also has an externally-headed construction, where the semantic head follows the relative clause; see examples (4), (6), (8), (10).

(14) A. The internal head cannot be placed between a constituent containing a relative prefix and the predicate of the relative clause; cf. (12).

B. The internal head cannot be placed between the absolute NP and the predicate of the relative clause; cf. (13).

Non-absolutive NPs that do not contain relative prefixes do not restrict the position of the internal head. Cf. (15), where the internal head occurs between the pronoun referring to the agent and the predicate:

(15) [se **pedark-ew** qe-s-hə-ʁe-r]   s-šepχₒə   peja-ʁ
       I   gift-ADV   DIR-1SG.A-carry-PST-ABS 1SG.PR-sister   for-PST
       'The gift that I brought was for my sister.'

2.2. "Displaced demonstratives"

An even more amazing fact about Adyghe relative constructions (both internally-headed and externally headed) is that they can "displace" demonstratives characterizing the whole matrix NP:

(16) qa-h   [zawxₒezə-m newəš'   mə   ə-ŝə-ž'ə-š't   ʔane-r]
       DIR-carry(IMP) steward-OBL   tomorrow this 3SG.A-make-RE-FUT table-ABS
       'Bring this table which the steward will repair tomorrow!'

As this example shows, such demonstratives can occur within the relative clause.

As far as the position of these "displaced" demonstratives is concerned, we observe constraints that are very similar to those mentioned above for internal heads:

(17) A. The "displaced demonstrative" cannot occur between a constituent containing a relative prefix and the predicate of the relative clause; cf. (18).

B. The "displaced demonstrative" cannot occur between the absolutive NP and the predicate of the relative clause; cf. (19).

The infelicitous examples (18) and (19) provide the "negative" material illustrating the two constraints:

(18) *sₒəretəš-ew   z-jə-nəbǯeʁₒə-xe-m   **mə** a-fe-zə-txə-ʁe-m

painter-ADV   REL.PR-POSS-friend-PL-OBL   this   3PL.IO-BEN-REL.A-писать-PST-OBL

(Expected: 'this painter who drew [this] for his friends';

lit. 'this painter who drew [this] for whose friends'.[10])

(19) *q-je-ǯ   [newəš' ʔane-r   **mə** zə-šə-ž'ə-š't   zawxₒezə-m]

DIR-OPV-call   tomorrow   table-ABS   this   REL.A-make-RE-FUT   steward-OBL

(Expected: 'Call this steward who will repair the table tomorrow'.)

Again, the presence of non-absolutive NPs that do not contain relative prefixes does not affect the positional potential of demonstratives, as was already shown in (16) above.

2.3. Towards an explanation

Lander (2005; in prep.) proposed that the facts like the ones just described can be accounted for if we assume that non-absolutive NPs do not serve as syntactic arguments in Adyghe clauses but only provide syntactically optional information about arguments expressed by indexing prefixes. Typologically, this assumption is well-grounded: indeed, similar proposals capture many peculiarities of other polysynthetic languages (see Van Valin 1985; Mithun 1986; Jelinek, Demers 1994; Baker 1996).

Given this assumption, the following generalization over (14) and (17) can be made:

(20)   Neither *internal heads* nor *displaced demonstratives* can appear within that part of the relative clause which contains the obligatory elements of the construction: the syntactic core (i.e. the predicate and its syntactic arguments) and the constituents containing reference to the target of relativization.

Under this analysis, the absolutive NP is the only full noun phrase in Adyghe which can express a syntactic argument.

3. The absolutive constraint on multiple relativization

Adyghe and other (non-extinct) Northwest Caucasian languages display a very interesting phenomenon of *multiple relativization*, whereby a single relative clause can contain several

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[10] The ill-formedness of (18) is not due to multiple targets, because the presence of several target arguments is allowed in Adyghe, see Section 3.

targets of relativization if they are coreferent (see Dumézil 1932: 245; Hewitt 1979a; Lander, forthc. for examples and discussion). Multiple relativization in Adyghe is illustrated by (21):

(21) **z-jə-ʁˌəneʁˌə**   pŝaŝe-r   ŝˌə   **zə-λeʁˌə-ʁe-r**
      REL.PR-POSS-neighbour   girl-ABS   good   REL.A-see-PST-ABS
      'the one who fell in love with his own neighbour girl'
      Literally: 'the one who fell in love with whose neighbour girl'

In this example we find two coreferent participants, namely the experiencer and the possessor of the absolutive argument, which are both marked as relativized.

    Notably, in Adyghe multiple relativization is optional.[11] In other words, if relativization touches upon a participant that is coreferent to another participant, it can be marked just for one of them.[12] This is shown in (22), which is parallel to (21) and can have the same meaning, but contains only one occurrence of the relative prefix:

(22) **Ø-jə-ʁˌəneʁˌə**   pŝaŝe-r   ŝˌə   **zə-λeʁˌə-ʁe-r**
      3SG.PR-POSS-neighbour   girl-ABS   good   REL.A-see-PST-ABS
      a. 'the one who$_i$ loved his/her$_j$ neighbour'
      b. 'the one who loved his own neighbour'

As the first translation indicates, unlike the preceding example, (22) does not require the coreference of the possessor and the agent.

    The absolutive argument comes into play where we consider relativization of arguments that are coreferent to the absolutive. If in independent clauses this coreference is marked overtly by means of the reflexive prefix (homophonous to the relative prefix), this marking is retained in relative forms:[13]

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[11] Interestingly, in the related Abkhaz language, multiple relativization (in the case of coreferent arguments) seems to be obligatory (Hewitt 1979b). However, Abkhaz does not exhibit the constraint discussed in this section.

[12] In the case of multiple coreferent arguments, relativization first applies to an argument that is higher in the hierarchy Agent > Indirect object > Possessor > Postpositional object; see Lander forthc.

[13] Note that the choice of the controller in the reflexive construction is motivated semantically and not structurally: the controller should have certain agentive properties. Consequently, not only grammatical agents can control reflexivization of absolutives but also indirect objects (where they represent "demoted agents", e.g., a causee in causative forms based on transitive stems, a potential agent in potential forms, etc.); see Letuchiy 2009 ms.

(23) zə-zə-thač'ə-ʁe-r

     RFL.ABS-REL.A-wash-PST-ABS

     'the one who washed himself'

In (23), a reflexive prefix occurs in the absolutive slot marking its coreference to the agent, which is further relativized.

     But if the reflexive pattern is impossible, one cannot relativize an argument which is coreferent to the absolutive argument. Consider (24):

(24) z-jate   ə- λeʁ̥ə-ʁe-r

     REL.PR-POSS+father   3SG.A-see-PST-ABS

     'the one whose father saw him/her (someone else)'

     *'the one whom his own father saw'

Since relativization of the absolutive is unmarked, (24) hypothetically could contain either a relativized absolutive or a non-relativized absolutive, which – other things being equal[14] – could be coreferent to the possessor of the agent. Yet these expectations are not borne out. This construction can only be interpreted as containing the non-coreferent possessor and patient. If these arguments turn out to be coreferent, the possessor is not marked as relativized:

(25) jate   ə-λeʁ̥ə-ʁe-r

     POSS+father   3SG.A-see-PST-ABS

     'the one$_i$ whom his/her$_{i/j}$ father saw'

     Given all this, I conclude that (i) relativization of the absolutive argument blocks relativization of other arguments, and therefore (ii) if the absolutive argument can be relativized at all, it should be relativized before all other arguments are relativized.

4. Possessor relativization

     The last topic to be discussed in this paper concerns relativization of the possessor, which also may contrast the absolutive argument with other arguments.

     The standard Adyghe (based on the Temirgoi dialect) does not restrict relativization of the possessors. However, some varieties of the language prohibit relativization of possessors of

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[14] To be sure, here I disregard any syntactic and semantic hierarchies like the one mentioned in Note 12.

non-absolutive arguments. Below I will illustrate this with the data from Shapsug Adyghe as is spoken in the village of Aguy-Shapsug (see Lander 2008 ms. for details).

The relevant Shapsug examples are given in (26)–(29).

(26)–(27) demonstrate the allowed relativization of the possessor of the absolutive argument: the prefix cross-referencing this possessor in the absolutive NP is replaced with the relative prefix:

Relativization of the possessor of the absolutive argument:

(26) šk:olə-m   Ø-jə-wəna-ŝha   be   mə-ŝ-ew   a-ʁe-la-ʁe
      school-OBL   3SG.PR-POSS-house-head   many   NEG-do-ADV   3PL.A-CAUS-colour-PST
      'They coloured the roof of the school not so long ago.'

(27) šk:ol-ew   z-jə-wəna-ŝha   be   mə-ŝ-ew   a-ʁe-la-ʁe-r
      school-ADV   REL.PR-POSS-house-head   many   NEG-do-ADV   3PL.A-CAUS-colour-PST-ABS
      'the school whose roof they coloured not so long ago'

The next set of examples shows apparent relativization of the possessor of the non-absolutive argument. Nonetheless, the comparison of the independent clause (28) with the relative construction (29) reveals the fact that the latter contains an "additional" relative prefix, which is placed instead of the personal prefix corresponding to the indirect object of the verb 'is looking at'. This prefix cannot, of course, refer to the target argument of the whole construction (i.e. the pupil), because it is the copy-book that serves as the indirect object here. Since the two relative prefix cannot be linked to the same referent, it seems that the "additional" relative prefix reflects the presence of an additional embedded relative construction, and the literal translation of (29) is 'the pupil whose copy-book is [what I am looking at]'.

Apparent relativization of the possessor of the non-absolutive argument:

(28) čelježak̥e-m   Ø-jə-tːetːrad   s-Ø-je-pλe-štə-ʁe
      pupil-OBL   3SG.PR-POSS-copy.book   1SG.ABS-3SG.IO-OPV-look.at-AUX-PST
      'I was looking at the pupil's copy-book.'

(29) čelježak̥-ew   z-jə-tːetːrad   sə-z-e-pλe-štə-ʁe-r
      pupil-ADV   REL.PR-POSS-copy.book   1SG.ABS-REL.IO-OPV-look.at-AUX-PST-ABS
      'the pupil at whose copy-book I was looking'
      Literally: 'the pupil whose copy-book is [what I am looking at]'

It seems, therefore, that in order to relativize the possessor of a non-absolutive argument, Shapsug Adyghe has to transform a sentence into a "pseudo-cleft" structure where the former non-absolutive argument would appear as absolutive.

It is worth mentioning that for many speakers of Adyghe, possessors of the absolutive argument stand apart from other possessors also in that only the former can be separated from their possessa, thus forming a kind of the "external possession" construction. In (30), for instance, the possessor 'that person's' of the intransitive subject ('its field') is topicalized:

(30) a   çəfə-m   a   zemanə-m   Ø-jə-ṣ̂ef   je.ʁa.ṣ̂e.m   dexa-ʁe
      that   person-OBL that   time-OBL   3SG.PR-POSS-field permanently beautiful-PST
      'That person's field that time was always beautiful.'

Notably, in some sense both relativization and external possession constructions can be considered to reprepresent a single phenomenon of "extraction", whereby a part of an utterance is made more structurally accessible because of its relevance.

5. Discussion

In this section I will argue that the facts discussed above may suggest that the absolutive argument in Adyghe has subject properties.

The absolutive argument is the only argument expressed by means of a core NP. If we restrict ourselves to the syntactic level, this would leave us with the absolutive NP as the only candidate for the syntactic subject, since subjects undeniably belong to the syntactic core of the clause. However, if we take into consideration the morphology as well, at first glance, this does not indicate that the absolutive argument has subject properties. Indeed, even if the NPs corresponding to other arguments are not core NPs, this does not tell us anything about these arguments if we assume that they are actually expressed by cross-reference personal prefixes. However, there do exist facts about Adyghe that suggest that the exceptional "coreness" of absolutive NPs under discussion really manifests a subject property.

There is ample evidence that in the Adyghe verb form, the string of cross-reference prefixes is constructed in the course of speech and provides an example of a "word-internal syntax" (cf. Lander and Letuchiy, to appear). None of the cross-reference prefixes are grammatically obligatory in all contexts, even the agent prefixes can be "eliminated" in some constructions such as the potential construction (see Letuchiy 2009 ms., Vydrin and Lander, this

volume) and the resultative construction. For the latter, this is shown in (31), which can be compared with (32) containing the agent prefix:[15]

(31) mə-r   ʁˌəčə-m   xe-ŝə.č'ə-ʁ
      this-ABS   iron-OBL   LOC-make-PST
      'This is made of iron.'

(32) mə-r   ʁˌəčə-m   x-a-ŝə.č'ə-ʁ
      this-ABS   iron-OBL   LOC-3PL.A-make-PST
      'They made it of iron.' (Also possible as an impersonal construction.)

For the absolute argument, the situation is different. When the absolutive indexing prefixes are absent in the predicate, the information about the absolutive argument can be obtained from the absolutive NP and in fact, this is the only NP that can establish an argument without a corresponding indexing prefix.[16] If there is neither an absolutive NP nor an absolutive index in the verb, its meaning (or the main features of the absolutive argument) should be reconstructed either from other constituents of the clause or from the context, but it should be reconstructed after all.[17]

Thus, no argument *except for the absolutive* should get an obligatory grammatical expression in Adyghe. Now, subjects are usually taken to be the most obligatory arguments, for although "subjectless clauses" exist, they are always considered marginal. Hence indeed, this point can be thought of as an argument for the subjecthood of the absolutive argument in Adyghe.

If the absolutive argument can be relativized at all, it must be relativized before all other arguments are relativized. This can be easily interpreted as supporting evidence for the claim

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[15] The resultative forms are called 'subjectless participles' (Russian 'бессубъектные причастия') in Kerasheva 1970; 1977. Note, however, that there is no evidence that the primary function of these forms is the attributive one, as one could expect if they were participles.

[16] There are certain facts suggesting that postulation of null indexing prefixes which cross-reference 3rd person absolutives is unwarranted. These concern the expression of number as well as certain facts about case marking. Note also that in the related Abkhaz language, where there are overt 3rd person absolutive personal prefixes, they are omitted if the corresponding NP immediately precedes the verb. The absence of 3rd person indexing markers in polysynthetic languages is discussed in Mithun 1986.

[17] There is evidence that even "impersonal" verbs in Adyghe (like 'to rain') are not "absolutiveless", for a trace of the absolutive argument can be found even for them.

that absolutive arguments are most accessible to relativization. Now, as Keenan and Comrie argued in their well-known 1977 paper, it is subjects that are most accessible to relativization.[18]

It should be noted in passing that the facts discussed with respect to multiple relativization can also get a different explanation if we interpret the role of the so-called relative prefix in a different way. As the Shapsug example (29) showed, this prefix can be used similarly to voice markers in many other languages: in particular, it can assign the absolutive status to non-absolutive roles. Of course, this interpretation also supports the idea that the absolutive argument has subject properties, since voice normally operates with the subject category.

The possessor of the absolutive argument is most accessible to extraction. It is generally assumed that extraction is easier with less embedded arguments. From this it can be entailed that the possessor of the absolutive argument is less embedded than possessors of non-absolutive arguments and hence the absolutive argument is less embedded than non-absolutive arguments. We can therefore again relate this fact to the accessibility of the absolutive argument, which points in the direction of its subjecthood. Actually, the facts concerning the extraction of the possessor have been used as subject criteria for other languages as well; cf. Kroeger (1995) on Philippine languages.[19]

To sum up, relativization indeed shows that the absolutive argument has behavioral properties of subjects.

6. Conclusion

In this paper I have shown that in Adyghe the absolutive argument has special properties suggesting that it has a privileged status within the grammatical system. This correlates with the peculiar absolutive encoding, which contrasts the absolutive argument to all other arguments. Moreover, the facts presented above nicely agree with Letuchiy's (2009 ms.) conclusion that Adyghe is a syntactically ergative language, the conclusion which was made mainly on the basis of various morphological derivations.

But does this mean that the Adyghe absolutive argument should be considered the subject argument in the same sense as, say, nominative arguments of verbal predications in many European languages? That is not obvious for several reasons. First, if we take separate subject

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[18] An alternative view was proposed in Fox 1987 who proposed that the intransitive subject and the transitive patient are the roles that are most prone to relativization even in accusative languages like English. This proposal was challenged by Cristofaro 2003 and Gordon and Hendrick 2005, but if Fox's claim is true, then this line of argumentation does not relate the absolutive argument with subjecthood.

[19] Peter Arkadiev (pers. com.) noted that it may be that external possession is more typical for the absolutive argument even in accusative systems. While this hypothesis seemingly makes sense for some kinds of external possession constructions, it is surely not universal; see Payne and Barshi 1999: 10–14 for discussion of this issue.

properties to be non-decisive, in the spirit of Keenan's 1976 influential paper, the properties suggested here and in Letuchiy 2009 ms. may look too marginal for claiming that absolutives in Adyghe are subjects as compared to the very general criteria proposed for subjects in other works. Moreover, the absolutive argument turns out to be firmly contrasted with all other participants of the situation irrespectively of their grammatical status, while European languages usually display a more apparent opposition between subjects and objects on the one hand and other kinds of NPs on the other hand. This suggests that the Adyghe system probably need not be analyzed in standard terms and that the criteria of subjecthood have to be differentiated as they are applied to different languages.

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Подлежащные свойства адыгейского абсолютивного актанта:
свидетельства относительных конструкций

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Адыгейский язык традиционно описывается как эргативный. Однако при этом обычно имеются в виду только правила маркирования: в адыгейском языке как в морфологии, так и в синтаксисе одинаковое выражение получают подлежащее непереходного предложения и пациенс переходного предложения (объединяемые далее, в соответствии с устоявшейся типологической терминологией, под именем «абсолютивного актанта»; термин «абсолютив» в данном случае не надо путать с аналогичным термином, именующим разряд обстоятельных глагольных форм). В принципе, подобное одинаковое маркирование еще не свидетельствует о том, что абсолютивный актант обязательно выделен в грамматике и занимает в ней привилегированное положение. Тем не менее в статье показывается, что данные относительных конструкций свидетельствуют именно о таком особом статусе абсолютивного актанта в адыгейском языке.

В исследовании рассматриваются три группы фактов.

1. В адыгейских относительных конструкциях именная группа семантической вершины (оформленная «адвербиальным» показателем -ew), а также указательные местоимения могут «вклиниваться» внутрь относительного предложения; ср. (1) [a-č̣’e c̣əf-ew k̯e-š’tə-m] sə-ƛ-e-χ̣ə ‘Я ищу человека, который туда пойдет’ ([тот-INS человек-ADV идти-FUT-OBL] 1SG.ABS-LOC-DYN-искать), (2) qa-h [zawx̯ezə-m newəš’ mə ə-ş̂ə-ž’ə-š’t ʔane-r] ‘Принеси этот стол, который завтра починит завхоз’ (DIR-нести(IMP) [завхоз-OBL

завтра этот 3SG.A-делать-RE-FUT стол-ABS). Однако на позицию «вложенной вершины» и «вложенного указательного местоимения» накладываются некоторые ограничения. В частности, эти элементы именной группы не могут располагаться между группой абсолютивного актанта и сказуемым относительного предложения. Если принять точку зрения, согласно которой рассматриваемые семантически «внешние» элементы не могут находиться внутри ядра относительного предложения, можно сделать вывод, что абсолютивный актант — это единственный актант, который может выражаться ядерной именной группой. Это коррелирует с тем, что выражение всех прочих актантов как в синтаксисе, так и в морфологии грамматически не является обязательным.

2. В абхазо-адыгских относительных конструкциях при условии указания на один и тот же объект одновременно несколько ролей могут маркироваться как релятивизованные (т.е. как описывающие тот же объект, что и вся именная группа); ср. (3) **z-jə-ʁˌəneʁˌə pŝaŝe-r šˌə zə-ʎeʁˌə-ʁe-r** 'тот, кто полюбил свою соседку', букв. 'тот, кто полюбил соседку которого' (REL.PR-POSS-сосед девушка-ABS добро REL.A-видеть-PST-ABS). ЭВ адыгейском языке это явление, однако, невозможно, если один из релятивизованных актантов — абсолютивный. Соответственно, можно сделать вывод, что если абсолютивный актант релятивизуется, он должен быть первым актантом, который релятивизуется. Таким образом, абсолютивный актант оказывается наиболее доступен для этого процесса.

3. В некоторых адыгейских идиомах (в частности, в говорах шапсугов Черноморского побережья) релятивизация посессора допустима только в том случае, если мишенью релятивизации является посессор абсолютивного актанта. С описанным фактом коррелируют также особенности конструкции с внешним посессором в адыгейском языке. Как правило, именная группа посессора в адыгейском языке не может отрываться от именной группы объекта обладания. Исключение составляет посессор абсолютивного актанта, который с легкостью допускает вынос. Таким образом, абсолютивный актант оказывается наиболее доступным для соответствующих операций.

Указанные свойства абсолютивного актанта — его исключительная принадлежность к ядру предложения и наибольшая доступность для операций типа образования относительных конструкций — можно трактовать как характеристики, естественные для подлежащего. В результате обнаруживается, что помимо особого маркирования, выделяющего абсолютивный актант среди других актантов, у него имеются и особые грамматические свойства. Эти свойства противопоставляют его другим актантам и предоставляют ему особый статус в предложении.