

# Agreement in Some Languages of Daghestan and The Architecture of Grammar

The Northeast Caucasian (NEC) family (van den Berg 2005) consists of at least 30 distinct languages, mostly spoken in Daghestan. A feature of central importance in nearly all of the languages (except Lezgian, Agul and Udi) is the assignment of nouns to **Noun Classes** (grammatical genders). Typically, some of these are partially based on semantics but primarily arbitrary, and the class system usually includes the marking of number (though number may also be marked separately in some languages).

Verbs agree in Noun Class throughout the family with the Absolutive DP of the clause or with the head noun within the DP. When the sentence involves an auxiliary and a non-finite form, the agreement pattern is for both (or all, in case of more complex forms) verbs to show agreement with the Absolutive. What is quite striking about this agreement pattern is the range of elements to which it can extend. This includes (in Archi: cf. Kibrik 1997, 2004) some adverbs; certain pronominal forms, such as the oblique singular first person singular pronoun and the first person plural inclusive ergative pronouns; and an emphatic element *-ej-CM-u* that can be added to various adverbial types.

Harris & Antonenko (2009) argue that this pattern is inconsistent with Baker's (2008) theory of Agreement, specifically the **The Case-Dependency of Agreement Parameter**: F agrees with DP/NP only if F values the case feature of DP/NP or *vice versa*. A language like Archi shows agreement on multiple elements of the clause with the same Absolutive DP, and not all of these could be said to value the case of that DP. An alternative mechanism, *Concord*, cannot account for the multiple agreement because, for Baker, concord is universally linked to case marked elements, such as adjectives or participles. In Archi, the multiple agreement shows up on converbs, some adverbs, and some pronouns.

Furthermore, a number of NEC languages have developed a system of person agreement in addition to the usual system of noun class agreement. Although the conditions governing person agreement vary among the languages involved, a distinguishing characteristic of this morphosyntactic pattern is the fact that unlike noun class agreement, it is *not* linked to Absolutive DPs. The content of Baker's rejection of the "Borer-Chomsky Conjecture" is the idea that within an area of grammar, parametric variation characterizes entire languages, not specific constructions. Since the NEC languages with person agreement apparently have two distinct kinds of agreement with distinct properties, it does not seem possible to characterize 'Agreement' in a consistent way for such languages, contrary to Baker's view.

I argue in this paper that the character of noun class agreement in the NEC languages is such that the logic of the "Case Dependency of Agreement" parameter does not apply. Rather, the agreeing forms (verbs, adjectives, adverbs, pronouns, emphatic suffixes) are all supplied with class features by "co-valuation" with a structurally suitable element bearing [Absolutive] case and specified class in a way that does not constitute "Agreement" in Baker's sense and thus does not conflict with this parameter.

The combination of person and class agreement similarly does not conflict with Baker's proposals, once we recognize that person marking is not only a syntactic relation, but also involves the morphology. Idiosyncrasies in the set of arguments marked on the verb for person follow from the specifics of morphological realization, and not from unusual restrictions on the operation of a syntactic rule.

## References

- Baker, Mark C. 2008. *The syntax of agreement and concord*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- van den Berg, Helma. 2005. The East Caucasian language family. *Lingua* 115. 147–190.
- Harris, Alice C. & Andrei Antonenko. 2009. Distributed agreement in Archi and other languages. Presented at Mediterranean Morphology Meeting 7, Cyprus, 12 September.
- Kibrik, Aleksandr E. 1997. Archi (Caucasian — Daghestanian). In Andrew Spencer & Arnold Zwicky (eds.), *Handbook of morphology*, 455–476. London: Basil Blackwell.
- Kibrik, Aleksandr E. 2004. Archi. In Michael Job (ed.), *The indigenous languages of the Caucasus*, vol. 3, 297–365. Ann Arbor: Caravan Books.