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SUCCESSFULLY LOOKING FOR SYNTAX IN MEHWEB DARGWA RELATIVE CLAUSE CONSTRUCTIONS

BASIC RESEARCH PROGRAM

WORKING PAPERS

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East Caucasian relative clause constructions (RCCs) are thought by some to be constructed mainly on the basis of semantic and pragmatic information and not to elaborate on the syntax of the relative clause. In this paper, we consider RCCs in one of the East Caucasian languages, namely Mehweb Dargwa, and argue that, despite the fact that its RCCs can be organized on a semantic basis, their functioning can also rely on syntactic information. In particular, we present evidence that Mehweb Dargwa has grammaticalized the resumptive use of reflexive pronouns, which can be contrasted with other uses of reflexive pronouns due to the restrictions on animate antecedents observed only in RCCs.

Keywords: Daghestan, East Caucasian, Dargwa, Mehweb Dargwa, relative clause constructions, relativization, resumptive pronoun

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1. Introduction

Relativization is usually thought of as a mechanism which operates with some argument of a subordinate clause (see, for example, de Vries 2004). For example, in *the paper we are writing __* the relativized argument is the direct object of the verb, while *the idiot that __ wrote this sentence* presupposes that the relativized argument is the verb's subject.[4] Note that normally scholars of relative clause constructions (RCCs) think of relativized arguments as syntactic positions and not as semantic roles. Indeed, studies of RCCs have revealed a number of restrictions on their formation which clearly have syntactic nature. These restrictions include, for instance, the continuous distribution of relative constructions along the Noun Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy (NPAH) SUBJECT › DIRECT OBJECT › INDIRECT OBJECT › OBLIQUE OBJECT › POSSESSOR › OBJECT OF COMPARISON (Keenan & Comrie 1977)[5] and non-relativizability of arguments embedded in syntactic islands, like indirect questions and parts of the coordination construction (Ross 1967).

The universality of this conception was called into question by Comrie (1996, 1998), who proposed, following Matsumoto 1988, 1997, that some languages construct what is usually called an RCC in their descriptions on a semantic basis rather than on a syntactic basis. Such languages need to establish a semantic link between the matrix clause and the subordinate clause which would be sufficient for the characterization of some argument in the matrix clause. This link sometimes involves an argument of the subordinate clause but it need not necessarily. Hence a new term was coined for this phenomenon, namely *generalized noun modifying clause constructions*. Not surprisingly, languages showing this kind of construction do not have the syntactic restrictions proposed for languages with "canonical" relative clauses.

As we will see below, the contrast between RCCs proper and generalized noun-modifying clause constructions is not clear-cut. That is why in this paper we will use the terms *relative clause* and *relative clause construction* irrespectively of what we think about the mechanisms that work behind the attributive patterns we discuss.[6] Nonetheless, we will distinguish between *syntactically-oriented RCCs* and *semantically-oriented RCCs* depending on whether or not we believe that, in a given case or set of cases, the syntactic information is relevant.

This paper presents a preliminary description of Mehweb Dargwa RCCs in the perspective outlined above. Dargwa languages constitute a branch of the East Caucasian family and are

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[4] In both examples a gap is shown in the place of the relativized argument.

[5] This hierarchy was later extended and modified (for example, for ergative languages it was argued that the transitive undergoer may have preference over the ergative argument); see Lehmann 1984: 211ff, Liao 2000, and specifically for Daghestanian languages, Lyutikova 1999, 2001.

[6] The term *attributive clause* occasionally used in literature is also misleading, since cross-linguistically relatives do not always function as syntactic attributes (cf. internally-headed RCCs or the amazingly wide use of headless RCCs in some languages).

spoken in Central Daghestan. At the clause level, these languages are double-marking and display the ergative system both in case marking and in verb agreement, a remarkable exception being person marking, the rules for which vary across idioms (Sumbatova 2011). As for the word order, all East Caucasian languages can be characterized as left-branching, although showing considerable freedom in independent clauses.

For decades, Dargwa idioms were considered dialects of a single language, with the rare exceptions of a few lects which were granted the status of separate languages. As a result, for a long time most studies of Dargwa were devoted to Standard Dargwa, based on the Aqusha dialect (see Abdullaev 1954 for a detailed reference grammar in Russian, which also used data from dialects, and van den Berg 2001 and Isaev 2004 for grammatical sketches in English). Recently the treatment of the branch as a single language was called into question, and speaking of a multitude of Dargwa languages is now considered normal (cf. Koryakov 2002).

Being geographically separated from other Dargwa idioms by the dialects of Avar, which belongs to another branch of the family, Mehweb Dargwa has a peculiar status even within this multitude.[7] While in its first monographic description, by Magometov (1982), it was considered a Dargwa dialect, Khajdakov (1985) already treated it equally with Standard Dargwa. While the Mehweb variety received some description, the nearly all main studies of Mehweb Dargwa passed over discussion of its syntactic structure.

This paper is based on our fieldwork in Mehweb in 2013 and 2015. Most data were obtained through elicitation sessions. The structure of the paper is as follows: in Section 2 we describe the context in which we discuss the Mehweb Dargwa RCCs; in Section 3 we give basic information on relative clauses in this language; Section 4 is devoted to certain aspects of Mehweb Dargwa RCCs that point to their syntactic nature; and Section 5 discusses these data from a theoretical point of view. The last section presents conclusions.

2. East Caucasian relative clauses

As is typical of left-branching languages, the basic RCC in East Caucasian languages involves a relative clause preceding its head (if any). [8] In grammars, the form of the verbal predicate of the subordinate clause is traditionally described as a participle, although its real place in the verb paradigm may vary.

At first glance, East Caucasian RCCs seem like good candidates to be considered semantically-oriented. Alexander Kibrik (1980:33) noticed that the syntactic characteristics of

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[7] For the current sociolinguistic situation in Mehweb, see Kozhukhar & Barylnikova 2013.
[8] A survey of the data available for East Caucasian relatives can be found in Barylnikova 2015.

the relativized argument are not crucial for these constructions. Indeed, the role of the relativized argument cannot be deduced from the form of the predicate of the relative clause, neither can it be unambiguously recovered on the basis of any other grammatical properties of the construction. There are no dedicated relative pronouns that mark the relativized argument, and the absence of a corresponding NP cannot serve as a reliable clue, since East Caucasian languages easily omit argument NPs even in independent clauses. Hence Comrie & Polinsky (1999), who analyzed RCCs in Tsez belonging to this family, argued that they are constructed on the basis of semantic frames. Daniel & Lander (2008, 2010) also proposed that RCCs in East Caucasian languages do not elaborate on syntactic information. In this section we will illustrate the argumentation concerning these points with examples from Tanti Dargwa, a language belonging to the same branch of the family as Mehweb Dargwa (see Sumbatova & Lander 2014 for details).

In general, Tanti Dargwa does not show any restrictions on what grammatical role is relativized. In this language, not only does the RCC relativize all roles in NPAH, but it is also not sensitive to syntactic islands. The following examples (both elicited) demonstrate what should presumably be described as relativization out of relative clauses and coordination constructions:

(1) dam   č-ib-se   k:ata   b-ibš:-ib   x:unul
    I.DAT   bring.PFV-AOR-ATR   cat   N-run.away.PFV-AOR   woman
    simi   r-ač'-ib
    anger   F-enter.PFV-AOR
    Lit., 'The woman which the cat that she brought to me ran away got angry.'

(2) ʔaˤħmad-li=ra   sun-ni=ra   mura   d-ert:-ib   admi
    Ahmad-ERG=ADD   self-ERG=ADD   hay   NPL-mow.PFV-AOR   man
    dila   χ:ut:u=sa-j
    I.GEN   father.in.law=COP-M
    'The man with whom Ahmad mowed the hay (lit., Ahmad and who mowed the hay) is my father-in-law.'

Therefore it seems that Tanti Dargwa lacks syntactic constraints on relativization. Moreover, a relative clause can appear even if there is no argument in the subordinate clause that could be relativized. Cf. (3):

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(3) ʕuˤ   dam   muher-liːcːeːr   r-iž-ib-se   dila   Ɂaˤmru
     you(SG) I.DAT   dream-OBL-INTER-EL   F-sit.PFV-AOR-ATR   I.GEN   life

     alžana=ʁuna=saːtːe
     heaven=LIKE=COP-NPL+PST

     'My life when I dreamt about you (lit., when you sat into my dream) was heaven-like.'

It is impossible to describe (3) as the result of any syntactic operation which deals with an argument of the relative clause. Hence this RCC is likely semantically-oriented.

Still, it is doubtful that East Caucasian relatives never apply to syntactic information. As Daniel & Lander (2013) have shown, the frequency of relativization of a syntactic position may depend on whether a language displays ergative features or not, even for this family. Thus it may be that syntax is still engaged here, even though sometimes these relatives rely on semantics and pragmatics only.

In addition, constraints on relativization have been reported for some East Caucasian languages. For example, according to Tatevosov (1996: 215), Godoberi does not relativize possessors, objects of comparison and objects of postpositions. Sumbatova & Mutalov (2003) note that in Itsari Dargwa "[r]elativization is impossible only for constituents of coordinate clauses and at least doubtful for the constituents of adverbial clauses". Lyutikova (1999, 2001) reports that Tsakhur and Bagwalal prohibit relativization for these positions as well. Yet it is worth noting that informants do not always accept relativization of such participants without an appropriate context, even in languages whose RCCs are commonly believed to be semantically-oriented.

Another problem for a purely semantic treatment is posed by the fact that in many East Caucasian languages the relativized argument may be expressed within a relative clause by a reflexive pronoun, as in (4). Such pronouns look like resumptive pronouns, which directly point to the *syntactic* position that is relativized.

(4) du   (sun-ni-šːu)   qʼ˳-aˤn-se   qali
     I   self-OBL-AD(LAT)   go.IPFV-PRS-ATR   house
     'the house where I am going'

Still, these pronouns differ from typical resumptives in various significant ways.

First, East Caucasian languages use reflexive pronouns for referring to relativized arguments, while typical resumptives are non-reflexive, as is explicitly stated in the following quote from McCloskey 2006: 97:[9]

> [...] resumptive pronouns simply *are* (formally) pronouns. I know of no report of a language that uses a morphologically or lexically distinct series of pronouns in the resumptive function. If we take this observation to be revealing, there can be no syntactic feature which distinguishes resumptive pronouns from ordinary pronouns...

Yet the appearance of reflexive pronouns in RCCs may be related to the fact that reflexive pronouns in this family have very wide distribution: for example, they are used as logophors, and even are found in independent clauses both as intensifiers and as pronominals (Testelets & Toldova 1998). This means that reflexive pronouns in East Caucasian languages may be much more "ordinary" than their counterparts in Standard Average European languages.

Second, East Caucasian languages sometimes even allow resumptive reflexive pronouns in the most privileged syntactic positions occupying the top of NPAH, such as those of the intransitive subject (5), transitive actor (6) and transitive undergoer (7). Cf. the following Tanti Dargwa examples:

(5) (sa‹r›i)   dam-šːu   r-ač'-ib   rursːi
     self‹F›   I.OBL-AD(LAT)   F-come.PFV-AOR   girl
     'the girl that came to me'

(6) (sun-ni)   čutːu   b-erkː-un   umra
     self-ERG   chudu[10] N-eat.PFV-AOR   neighbor
     'the neighbor who ate chudu'

(7) (sa‹b›i)   umra-li   b-erkː-un   čutːu
     self‹N›   neighbor-ERG   N-eat.PFV-AOR   chudu
     'the chudu that the neigbor ate'

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[9] In fact, McCloskey's claim may represent an overgeneralization: reflexives used as resumptives are found outside the East Caucasian family as well. For example, Lee (2004) provides a detailed discussion of the resumptive use of a reflexive pronoun in Korean, Csató & Uchturpani (2010) describe reflexive resumptives in Uyghur, and Csató & Johanson (1998: 219) report the resumptive function of reflexives in Turkish.
[10] Chudu is a local thin pie.

Typical resumptive pronouns in relatives prefer the positions that occur lower in syntactic hierarchies (Keenan & Comrie 1977: 92; Maxwell 1979). Hence East Caucasian resumptives are different from typical resumptives.[11]

Daniel & Lander (2008) suggested that reflexives in relatives do not serve to mark the relativized position, i.e. they are only anaphoric devices, independent of relativization. If so, their existence does not contradict the idea that East Caucasian RCCs do not apply to syntactic information. Yet we will present some new data from Mehweb Dargwa which make the issue of the use of reflexives more intriguing and return us to the idea that these are indeed resumptives.

3. Relatives in Mehweb: first acquaintance

The basic RCC in Mehweb Dargwa involves a relative clause which precedes the head of the noun phrase, if any. The predicate of the relative clause is marked with an attributive suffix, which has allomorphs -*il*, -*i*, and -*l*. The same suffix is found with some other attributes, such as adjectival attributes. Some examples of RCCs are given in (8)–(9):

(8) naˁʁ iz-u-l   insan
     hand hurt.IPFV-PRS-ATR   person
     'a person whose hand hurts'

(9) nu   q'-oˁ-we   d-uʔ-ub-i   huni
     I   go-PRS-CVB   N-be.PFV-AOR-ATR   road
     'the road I was going with'

According to Magometov (1982: 112–115) and Khajdakov (1985: 105–107), Mehweb Dargwa distinguishes between three types of the participles with the respect to the stem they are formed with and the variant of attributive suffix they adjoins; cf. Table 1.

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[11] Again, there certainly do exist languages which allow resumptives in the subject position, but these uses are usually believed to be exceptional. Actually, we do not have information on the degree of markedness of such uses as (5)–(7) in East Caucasian languages.

Table 1. Participles in Mehweb Dargwa

Participle	Base	Marker
Past	aorist	*-i*
Present	bare verbal stem + epenthetic vowel *-i-*	*-u-l*
Future	infinitive	*-i*

While the past and future participles are morphologically transparent and include just the corresponding base and the attributive suffix, the present participle contains also the former marker of the present tense *-u*, which is also found in present converbs. While it is glossed simply as PRS in this paper, one should bear in mind that its distribution is limited to just a few non-finite forms.[12]

We may take the participles listed above as the canonical predicates of relatives. However, it should be noted that the predicates of relative clauses are not confined to these participles. For example, we also have RCCs where the attributive suffix is added to the copula / existential verb, as in (10)–(11):

(10) kʷiha b-erh-u-we   le-w-i   adami-li-ze   nu g-ub
     ram   N-slaughter.PFV-PRS-CVB COP-M-ATR man-OBL-INTER(LAT) I see.PVF-AOR
     'The man who was slaughtering a ram saw me.'[13]

(11) qali   le-b-i   dursi d-ak'-ib
     house   EXST-N-ATR   girl   F1-come.PFV-AOR
     'The girl who has her own house came.'

As shown by examples, the relativized argument need not be expressed overtly. As in Tanti Dargwa, it is not difficult to construct an example where the relation between the relative clause and the head should be established by the context:

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[12] The finite present tense is expressed periphrastically by a combination of the present converb with a copula.
[13] The example is especially interesting because it relativizes one of the arguments of the so-called bi-absolutive construction. Cf. the original independent construction:

(i)   adami   kʷiha   b-erh-u-we   le-w
      man   ram   N-slaughter.PFV-PRS-CVB   COP-M
      'The man is slaughtering a ram.'

(12) nu-ni   b-erk-un-na   itti   b-urh-es   b-aq-ib-i   t'ult'

I-ERG   N-eat.PFV-AOR-LCT   that   HPL-become.PFV-INF   HPL-hit.PFV-AOR-ATR   bread

'I ate the bread which served as the reason for them to beat each other.'

Still, if the relativized argument can be reconstructed, it usually can be expressed with a pronoun *sa‹CL›i* (here CL is a noun class marker),[14] which has multiple suppletive forms and whose partial paradigm is given in Table 2. This pronoun may also serve as a reflexive pronoun (not necessary with a local antecedent), as a logophoric pronoun, and as an intensifier (cf. Kozhukhar 2014).

Table 2. Case-number-gender forms of the pronoun *sa‹CL›i*

		NOM	ERG	GEN	DAT	INTER-LAT
	M	*sa‹w›i*				
3SG	**F/F1**	*sa‹r›i*	*sune-jni*	*sune-la*	*sune-s*	*sune-ze*
	N	*sa‹b›i*				
3PL	**HPL**	*sa‹b›i*	*ču-ni*	*ču-la*	*ču-s*	*ču-ze*
	NPL	*sa‹r›i*				

Some examples of the use of *sa‹CL›i* as a resumptive are given below. In (13) it appears in the indirect object position, in (14) it serves as the possessor of the intransitive subject, and in (15) it refers to the experiencer with the "affective" verb:

(13) nu-ni   ču-s   kung   gib-i   ule

I-ERG   self.PL.OBL-DAT   book   give.PFV-ATR   child.PL

b-aˁq'-un   uškuj-ħe

HPL-go.PFV-AOR   school-IN(LAT)

'The children to whom I gave a book went to school.'

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(14) insan   sune-la   xunul   le-r-i   quli   w-ak'-ib

man   self.OBL-GEN   woman   COP-F-ATR   house.IN(LAT)   M-come.PVF-AOR

'The man entered the house his wife lives in.'

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(15) šejtan   ču-ze   gu-b-i   buk'unu-me

demon   self.PL.OBL-INTER(LAT)   see.PFV-AOR-ATR   shepherd-PL

uruχ   b-aq'-ib

fear   N-do.PFV-AOR

'The shepherds who saw a demon were scared.'

4. Syntactic orientedness

Even though the Mehweb data show considerable resemblance to Tanti Dargwa, there are also important differences between the two idioms which suggest that relativization in Mehweb may be syntactically-oriented.

4.1. Resumptives at the top of NPAH

Unlike in Tanti Dargwa, the pronoun *sa‹CL›i* is sometimes considered infelicitous at the top of NPAH. Cf. the following example where the position relativized into is the actor of a transitive clause:

(16) (*sune-jni)   kʷiha b-erh-un-i   adami-li-ze   nu gu-b

self.OBL-ERG ram   HPL-slaughter.PFV-AOR-ATR   man-OBL-INTER(LAT) I   see.PFV-AOR

'The man who slaughtered the ram saw me'.

When used in the intensifier function, *sa‹CL›i* is normally accompanied by the emphatic clitic *=al*. Crucially, the same speaker who found the use of the resumptive in (16) infelicitous allows the pronoun enclitisized by *=al* in the same position:

(17) sune-jni=jal   kʷiha b-erh-un-i   adami-li-ze

self.OBL-ERG=EMPH   ram   HPL-slaughter.PFV-AOR-ATR   man-OBL-INTER(LAT)

nu   gu-b

I   see.PFV-AOR

'The man who himself slaughtered the ram saw me'.

This example demonstrates that the impossibility of using *sa‹CL›i* in this position cannot be attributed to any morphosyntactic rule that would prohibit this pronoun in this position.

Notably, there are also speakers who have no problems with the use of simple resumptive in all core syntactic positions, including the positions of the intransitive subject (18) and transitive actor (19):

(18) sa‹b›i   dupi-če-b   b-urh-uwe   b-uʔ-ub-i
     self‹HPL›   ball-SUP-HPL(ESS)   HPL-play.IPFV-CVB   HPL-be.PFV-AOR-ATR
     ule   quli   ʔaˤr-b-aq'-un
     child.PL   home.IN(LAT)   away-HPL-go.PFV-AOR
     'The children who played with the ball went home.'

(19) ħaˤnči ču-ni   b-aq'-ib-i   ħuhe
     work   self.OBL.PL-ERG   N-do.PFV-AOR-ATR   woman.PL
     ħaˤrbaˤq'-un   quli
     go.away.PFV-AOR   house.IN(LAT)
     'The women who did all their work went home'.

Our data concerning the possibility of the use of a resumptive at the top of NPAH are not definitive, then, but the fact that some speakers are more restrictive in the use of *sa‹CL›i* in the resumptive function suggests that this function may be governed by grammatical rather than semantic rules.

4.2. Coordinate structure constraint

Mehweb Dargwa does not allow relativization out of a conjunct in the coordination construction and hence follows one of the island constraints, namely the coordinate structure constraint. (20a) illustrates the coordination construction marked with the additive clitic *=ra*. (20b) demonstrates an unsuccessful attempt at relativizing one of the coordinands.

(20) a. musa-ni=ra   di-la   uzi-li-ni=ra   heš kung b-elč'-un

   Musa-ERG=ADD I.OBL-GEN brother-OBL-ERG=ADD this book N-read.PFV-AOR

   'Musa and my brother read this book.'

   b. *nu-ni=ra   sune-jni=ra   heš   kung   b-elč'-un-i

   I-ERG=ADD self.OBL-ERG=ADD this   book   N-read.PFV-AOR-ATR

   adami   w-ak'-ib

   man   M-come.PFV-AOR

   (Expected: 'The man who read this book together with me (lit., I and who read this

   book) came.')

This contrasts Mehweb Dargwa with Tanti Dargwa, where the coordinate structure constraint does not apply (cf. (1)–(2) above), and again suggests that syntactic rules might be at work here.

4.3. Resumptive pronouns are resumptive, after all!

In general, reflexives in Dargwa languages and in Mehweb in particular are insensitive to the animacy or humanness of their antecedent. This is shown in (21)–(22), where in the first example *sunes* has an animate (human) antecedent and in the second example *sunela* has an inanimate antecedent:

(21) it-i-ni   sune-s   kung   as-ib

   this-OBL-ERG self.OBL-DAT book   buy.PFV-AOR

   'He bought a book for himself.'

(22) nu-ni gi-ra   mažar sune-la   w-eħ-i-ze

   I-ERG   return-LCT gun   self.OBL-GEN   M-owner-OBL-INTER(LAT)

   'I returned the gun to its owner.'

However, the appearance of *sa‹CL›i* in the resumptive function is only possible if the head of the relative is animate. Examples (23)–(24) show the possibility of the use of the pronoun in RCCs with human and non-human animate antecedents:

(23) nu-ni   sune-s   diʔ   g-ib-i   ħanq'aka-jni
     I-ERG   self.OBL-DAT   meat   give.PFV-AOR-ATR   shepherd-ERG
     'the shepherd whom I gave the meat'

(24) sune-la   kʷač'   b-urħak-ib-i   gatu
     self.OBL-GEN   leg   N-break.PFV-AOR-ATR   cat
     'the cat whose leg broke'

(25) demonstrates that a resumptive reflexive with an inanimate antecedent is infelicitous:

(25) (*sune-la)   baʔħ   ark-ib-i   qali
     self.OBL-GEN   wall   fall.down.PFV-AOR-ATR house
     'the house whose wall crashed down'

Interestingly, this restriction does not correlate with the gender system of Mehweb Dargwa, which contrasts humans and non-humans rather than animates and inanimates (see fn. 14).

The restriction of *sa‹CL›i* to animates is crucial exactly because it is not observed in non-resumptive uses. As such, it separates the resumptive function from other functions of the pronoun and goes against Daniel & Lander's (2008) hypothesis that reflexive pronouns in Daghestanian RCCs are not used as resumptives per se. If Mehweb Dargwa has developed the dedicated resumptive use of pronouns characterized by specific restrictions, the RCCs involving such pronouns should be recognized as syntactically oriented. Again, no constraint of this kind is observed in Tanti Dargwa, where the reflexive pronoun easily occurs in the place of a relativized argument with an inanimate antecedent (4).

4.4. Realizations of functions of sa‹CL›i

In theory, while referring to a relativized argument within a relative clause, *sa‹CL›i* may fulfill not only the resumptive function but also the intensifier function and the reflexive proper function. These functions could in theory be distinguished on the basis of (i) the restriction to animates in the resumptive function, and (ii) the presence of the clitic *=al* in the intensifier function. In reality, however, the picture is more complex.

The intensifier function of *sa‹CL›i* is indeed observed, for example, in the following example:

14

(26) ʁarʁu-be ardik-ib   sa‹r›i(*=jal)   d-uʔ-ub-i
     stone-PL fall.down.PFV-AOR   self‹CL›(*=EMPH)   NPL-be.PFV-AOR-ATR
     merʔ-an-i-če-la
     place-PL-OBL-SUP-EL
     'The stones rolled from their own places.'
     (Lit., 'The stones rolled from the place they themselves occupied.')

In (26) *sari* refers to the intransitive subject and requires the emphatic clitic. Its inability to function as a resumptive (without the clitic) may be explained either by its high position in NPAH or by its inanimate reference. Importantly, the inanimate reference does not block its appearance in the intensifier function.

The realization of the reflexive function within a relative clause, on the other hand, turns out to be impossible, as (27) shows:

(27) nu-ni (*sune-la)   w-eħ-i-ze   g-ib-i
     I-ERG self.OBL-GEN M-owner-OBL-INTER(LAT) give.PFV-AOR-ATR
     mažar   b-aˀrʔ-ob
     gun   N-break.PFV-AOR
     'The gun that I returned to its owner broke.'

In this example, *sunela* could be expected to mark the coreference of the possessor with the undergoer argument (which is then relativized), yet it does not. Since the reflexive is possible in the same position in the independent clause (22), we suspect that the effect observed in (27) is due to the fact that the pronoun is interpreted as a resumptive, in which case it violates the animacy restriction.

Thus the resumptive function blocks the reflexive function. This rule is not likely to be based on any semantic principle independent of the grammar, so we take it to be another piece of evidence for grammaticalization of the resumptive function in this language.

5. Towards an explanation of the Mehweb pattern

To sum up, even though RCCs in Mehweb can be organized on a semantic basis, in many cases their functioning relies upon strict syntactic mechanisms. At least when the relativized argument

is animate, the construction may resemble much more closely RCCs described for better known languages in a traditional fashion. These data support the conclusion made by Daniel & Lander (2013) that the borderline between RCCs involving syntactic mechanisms and RCCs which are based on the semantic information may not be strict.

We have no obvious explanation for the Mehweb pattern we observed above. Nonetheless we present below some speculations concerning this issue.

First, note that there are quite a number of languages where resumptive pronouns are found in RCCs mostly or even only when the relativized argument is animate; cf. Bošković 2009 on Serbo-Croatian and Bulgarian (Slavic), Csató & Uchturpani 2010 for Uyghur (Turkic), Erteschik-Shir 1994: 104–105 for Hebrew (Semitic), Kawachi 2007 for Sidaama (Cushitic). It may be that the Mehweb system results from grammaticalization of a similar tendency. Still, there are languages where at least in some contexts resumptives tend to be used for inanimates rather than animates, such as Arabic (Al-Zaghir 2013). Sometimes this also can be grammaticalized. For example, Lyutikova (1999: 474–475) reports that in Tsakhur, a distant relative of Mehweb Dargwa, the construction relativizing the object of a postposition only requires a resumptive pronoun if the relativized argument is inanimate.

Second, we may suspect that the most typical uses of relatives are associated with high accessibility of the relativized argument. This is partly reflected in NPAH but can also manifest itself in other parameters such as animacy, which is said to correlate with conceptual accessibility (see some discussion in van Nice & Dietrich 2003). Since more typical uses are more likely to be grammaticalized (see Lander 2015 for discussion), it is expected that relativization based on syntactic (i.e. grammatical) information is found for more accessible arguments. Note, however, that the construction with resumptives retains more semantic transparency (Keenan 1975) and therefore shows less grammaticalization than constructions with the most accessible arguments. In other words, the absence of resumptives at the top of NPAH may be explained by the fact that this top is less based on semantics, but the absence of resumptives for less accessible arguments may be explained by the fact that these constructions do not elaborate on syntactic information.

Still, this approach has a notable shortcoming. The evidence that relativization prefers animate arguments is somewhat scarce,[15] since most studies of the interaction between animacy and relativization are devoted to the way in which animacy affects the predictability of what is

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[15] For example, in Tsakhur, sometimes during elicitation the choice of what is relativized is influenced by animacy (Lyutikova 1999: 476–477), and for Turkish it is reported that headless RCCs by default have animate reference (Kerslake 1998). The latter, of course, may be just the property of headless relatives.

relativized. Moreover, things may be turned the other way round. The most accessible arguments are not normally described with a complex noun phrase with a modifier, since their accessibility allows them to be more economically expressed (such as by means of pronouns, proper names, simple noun phrases, etc.), cf. Ariel 1990. Since the inherent accessibility features of the antecedent and the relativized argument are (normally) identical, this would imply that the target of relativization need not necessary be accessible, at least as far as animacy is concerned. In any case, it is clear that more research is needed on the issue of the interaction between animacy and relativization.

6. Conclusion

In this paper, we provided a sketch of relativization in Mehweb Dargwa against the background of the remarkable freedom of relativization in (some) other East Caucasian languages. In particular, we gave preliminary evidence for the idea that this language has grammaticalized resumptives and relies on syntactic information during relativization more than some other East Caucasian languages.

To be sure, these conclusions should not be taken for granted. In fact, even for resumptives, which we specifically addressed above, it is not clear whether all their uses should be considered alike; as argued by Erteschik-Shir (1994) among others, there are different types of resumptives which may occur even in one and the same language. A deeper investigation of the functioning of relatives in Mehweb Dargwa and other East Caucasian languages including both the analysis of corpora and psycholinguistic experiments certainly may help refine the conclusions presented here.

Abbreviations

AD –localization 'near, at'; ADD – additive; AOR – aorist; ATR – attributive marker; CL – class (gender) marker; COP – copula; CVB – converb; DAT – dative; EL – elative; EMPH – emphatic marker; ERG – ergative; EXST – existential verb; F – feminine; F1 – "unmarried women" class; GEN – genitive; HPL – human plural; IN – localization 'inside'; INTER – localization 'within'; IPFV – imperfective; LAT – lative; LCT – locutor; [16] M – masculine; N – neuter; NPL – neuter plural; OBL – oblique stem; PFV – perfective; PL – plural; PRS – present; PST – past; SG – singular; SUPER – localization 'on the surface'

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[16] The suffix glossed as LCT marks 1SG in affirmative sentences and 2SG in negative and interrogative questions.

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