

**PERSONAL PRONOUNS AS HEADS OF NEGATIVE SUBORDINATE CLAUSES IN ADYGHE:
A MORPHOLOGICAL PUZZLE**

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Adyghe (West Circassian) is notable for its highly omnipredicative (in terms of Launey 1994) character: almost any lexeme can function as an argument, a predicate or a nominal modifier (Lander & Testelefs 2006; Aspekty 2009: 30-40). Personal pronouns, however, stand out in that they require a special marking to be used in predicate position, namely the predicative morpheme *-rə*, not encountered anywhere else in the grammar of Adyghe.

- (1) *t-jə-direktor-ər* *we-rə*
1PL-POSS-director-ABS you-PRED
'Our director is you.' (= 'It is you who are our director')¹

The question naturally arises as to whether *-rə* is a predicative suffix attached to pronominal roots or a copula verb itself marked for inflection, and whether the two analyses can in fact be distinguished. Adyghe pronominal predicates are able to attach virtually the full range of verbal (or, better say, predicative) morphology, including clausal negation, TAM categories, subordination markers and even cross-reference (albeit mostly in contexts that are pragmatically somewhat unnatural):

- (2) *se* *sə-we-r-ep*
I 1SG.ABS-you-PRED-NEG
'I am not you.'
- (3) *se* *sə-we-rə-ɣ-ep*
I 1SG.ABS-you-PRED-PAST-NEG
'I was not you.'
- (4) *se* *sə-we-rə-n-ew* *sə-faj*
I 1SG.ABS-you-PRED-POT-ADV 1SG.ABS-want
'I would like to be you.'

While such situation is in itself rather typologically peculiar, a special problem is posed by pronominal predicates heading negated subordinate clauses. In these forms, the (narrow scope) negative prefix *mə-*, normally placed in the "pre-base" zone of Adyghe verb (see Korotkova & Lander 2010 for details) follows the pronominal "root", with affix *-r(ə)-* of unknown origin (optional for some speakers) inserted in-between:

- (5) *se* *qe-s-ɬʷa-ɣ* *sə-zere-we-r-mə-rə-š't-ər*
I DIR-1SG.A-say-PAST 1SG.ABS-FACT-you-R-NEG-PRED-FUT-ABS
'I said that I would not be you.'

This affix ordering provides evidence that what is glossed here as PRED should be analyzed as the root morpheme; while *we-* in (1-5) is an (ergative) cross-reference prefix. The latter is therefore introduced in by the preverb *r(ə)-* (formally identical to instrumental preverb), which is only visible in examples like (5) where intervening negation marker *mə-* prevents it from amalgamation with the copula root (*we-rə* < **we-rə-rə*). A partial parallel is provided by Russian, in which the copula verb *byť* 'to be' can take instrumental objects in non-present tenses.

While this account remains the most plausible up to date, it still has two significant weak points: (i) it is not clear why only pronominal, but not nominal arguments are treated as Instruments in equative clauses; (ii) the morphonological process assumed under this analysis (*rə* < *rərə*) is not typical for Adyghe. Several alternative proposals will be discussed in the talk.

¹ This study is based on our field materials (2005, 2006, 2010) and a selection of modern literary and journalistic texts. See also (Aspekty 2009: 33).

Yet they all are unsatisfying in that each of them postulates a special morphological device (either a specialized morpheme or a non-trivial process/rule without parallels elsewhere within the Adyghe language system) reserved for such a peripheral case as personal pronouns/pronominal copulas heading subordinate clauses under negation. What is more, it seems virtually impossible to make a decisive choice between these hypotheses based on language data rather than on some theory-internal considerations: since the phenomenon in question is observable only in highly specialized and marginal contexts, it is problematic to devise any test. The case may be that here we face an unsolvable puzzle of Adyghe morphology.

References:

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