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The Relative Clause in Chechen

In Chechen, a NE Caucasian ergative language that is strongly head-final, relativization is expressed using a participle phrase that modifies the head noun. Usually the relativized noun leaves a gap in the relative clause. In my research I find that in several cases the reflexive pronoun fills the gap. I also find that relative clauses can surface in positions that are not directly adjacent to their heads. I explore ways by which these positions can be explained.

Traditional Chechen grammars focus mainly on the *morphology* of participles, while also noting case-agreement between the participle and the head-noun (Maciev 1961, Dzhamalxanov 1972), without exploring the *syntax* of relative clauses headed by participles. More recent works have noted that Chechen (as well as closely related Ingush) relative clauses not only allow relativization of subjects and objects, but also of obliques, that the relativized noun is deleted from the relative clause, and that there is gender agreement between the participle and a nominative within the relative clause (Nichols 1994a, b, 2001). However, the gap is not always left empty. The reflexive pronoun,[1] which already has a wide range of applications (e.g.: local anaphor, logophoric reflexive, long-distance reflexive), can in some instances be used as resumptive pronoun to fill it. These instances take up the mid and lower end of the accessibility hierarchy (Keenan and Comrie 1977). The first instance is when the relativized constituent is both the subject of the relative clause and the subject of the main clause. An example of this is shown in (1). The reflexive *shiena* is the subject of the relative clause (the verb 'to see' in Chechen takes a dative subject), and the noun *Muusa*, with which it is co-referent, is the subject (ergative case) in the main clause. The speaker has the choice to either leave a gap in the relative clause for *Muusa*, or fill the gap with a reflexive pronoun that gets the case and number associated with this subject position.

1) [(**Shiena**$_i$)   i   stag   sielxana   ginchu]   Muusas$_i$ cynga   cwa
    3SgRefl-DAT that   man   yesterday   seen-Rel   Musa-Erg   him-All   one

    duosh aelliera
    word   spoke
    Musa$_i$, who$_i$ had seen the man yesterday, had told him something.

I claim that, when there is a spelled-out resumptive pronoun *shiena* in the sentence above, it is base generated in the relative clause, while the head noun is base generated in the matrix clause. The second instance when a reflexive pronoun is used as a resumptive pronoun is when the relativized constituent is the object inside a PP within the relative clause. This is illustrated in (2) with a noun phrase. The noun *duog* 'heart' is the object of the preposition *chuohw* 'inside', which in its turn is part of the existential clause "There are good thoughts inside a/the heart". When *duog* is relativized it can leave a complete gap in the relative clause, or it can be replaced with a reflexive pronoun that gets the case and the number associated with this position within the PP.

2)   [NP   [CP   [PP   (**Shiena**$_i$) chuohw]   dika   oilanash   jolu]   duog$_i$]
                  3SgRefl-DAT   inside   good   thoughts(G4) G4-PRS   heart(G3)
     A heart inside which there are good thoughts

The third instance when a reflexive pronoun is used as a resumptive pronoun is when the relativized constituent is the possessor of an NP within the relative clause. This is illustrated in (3). The noun

zuda 'woman/wife' is the genitive case possessor within the noun phrase *zudchun majra* "the wife's husband". Again the speaker has the option to either leave a gap in the place of the relativized noun (the usual strategy for Chechen relative clauses) or fill the gap with a reflexive pronoun that gets the case and number of the noun it replaces. It has been noted that the Daghestanian language Tsakhur uses a resumptive pronoun in a similar situation (Kazenin 2001).

3)   [CP   [NP   (**Shien**$_i$)   majra$_j$]   vella   jolu]   zuda$_i$
                        3SgRefl-GEN husband(G1)   G1.died   G2-Prs   woman(G2)

        maarie   jaxara
        marriage(G3) G2.went
        The woman$_i$, whose$_i$ husband$_j$ had died, remarried.

Another feature of the Chechen relative clause that has not been noted in previous studies is the fact that its position within the NP it belongs to can vary. As illustrated in (4) the relative clause modifying the head non *juow* 'daughter' is preceded by a demonstrative and followed by a possessor, an adjective and a numeral. But there are several alternatives to the internal ordering of the noun phrase, as shown in (5).

4)   [NPHara   [cigahw   laettash   jolu]   pacchahwan   xaza   pxi
        this-ABS   there   standing   G2-Prs king-GEN   beautiful   five

         juow]   eesharsh   lyeqush   ju.
        daughter   songs   singingG2-Aux
        These five beautiful daughters of the king, who are standing there, are singing songs.

5)   [NP pacchahwan [cigahw laettash jolu] hara pxi xaza juow] eesharsh lyeqush ju.
        [NP [cigahw laettash jolu] pacchahwan hara pxi xaza juow] eesharsh lyeqush ju.

Moreover, the whole relative clause (be it restrictive or appositive) can be extraposed either to a position immediately following the head noun, or to a clause final position. This is illustrated in (6), where the noun *zuda* 'wife' from the phrase "Mullah Beshir's wife" is the head of the relative clause "whom he had sought three months before".

6)   Cunna [NPBeshir   mollin   zuda]   jiezajelira,   [cuo   qo   butt
        he-DAT   Beshir-ABS mullah-GEN wife(G2)   G2.loved   he   three   month

        hwalxa   liexna   jolu]
        earlier   seek-Pst   G2.Prs
        He fell in love with the wife$_i$ of mullah Beshir$_j$, whom$_i$ he had sought three months before.

In this paper I weigh the pros and cons of two approaches that explain extraposition to a clause final position. The first approach is in terms of the copy theory with distributed deletions (Hornstein 2005). As the VP of the main clause is built, the NP argument containing the relative clause is copied (not moved) to a position to check case. At some point spell-out will occur, and since only one instance of a phrase may be spelled out, there are two possibilities. The first option is that the higher copy of the complete NP is spelled out, and the lower copy is not. The second option is that the head noun is spelled out in the higher copy, but the relative clause in the lower copy, as in (7).

7)   Cunna [[~~tuoghi chuohw wash jolu~~] cwa zuda] jiezajelira
                        [[tuoghi chuohw wash jolu] ~~cwa zuda~~]

The second approach is to assume that the extraposed part is generated as afterthought in a clause coordinate with the main clause (de Vries 2002). The old information in the second clause is deleted before spell-out, as illustrated in (8).

8)   Cunna [&:P [AgrOP1 [NP Beshir Mollin zuda] jiezajelira]   ].
        &:   [AgrOP2 [NP [CP cuo qo butt hwalxa liexna jolu] ~~Beshir Mollin zuda~~] ~~jiezajelira~~]

Concluding, this research shows several new features of the Chechen relative clause. The reflexive pronoun in Chechen is used as a resumptive pronoun for cases spanning the mid and lower end of the accessibility hierarchy. The relative clauses can surface in positions that are not directly preceding or following their heads.

Notes
1.   An almost complete set of reflexive pronouns exists, matching the normal pronouns. See Nichols 1994a for details.

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