

ЭГОФОРИЧНОСТЬ КАК ИНТЕРПРЕТИРУЕМОЕ СОГЛАСОВАНИЕ*

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Статья посвящена эгофоричности в мегебском даргинском, нахско-дагестанском языке. Основная идея этой статьи заключается в том, что эгофоричность стоит анализировать как синтаксический феномен, поскольку в мегебском она чувствительна к синтаксической локальности. Предлагается считать, что синтаксическая часть эгофоричности включает в себя два зонда: по признакам лица и по референциальным индексам, причём первый релевантен для реализации эгофорической морфологии, а второй — для эгофорической интерпретации.

Ключевые слова: эгофоричность, согласование, *de se*.

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EGOPHORICITY AS INTERPRETABLE AGREEMENT*

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This paper deals with egophoricity in Mehweb Dargwa, an East Caucasian language. The main proposal of this paper is that egophoricity should be analyzed as a syntactic phenomenon, due to its sensitivity to syntactic locality in Mehweb. The syntactic part of egophoricity is argued to involve two probes: a person probe and an index probe, the first being relevant for realization of egophoric morphology and the second for egophoric interpretation.

Keywords: egophoricity, agreement, *de se*.

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1. Introduction

Egophoricity (also known as conjunct/disjunct marking, [Hale 1980]) is a phenomenon of a certain marker having a peculiar syntactic-pragmatic distribution, the basic generalization of which is as follows.

- (1) Egophoric marking arises when
 - a. the subject is first person and the clause is declarative.
 - b. the subject is second person and the clause is declarative.
 - c. the clause is an attitude report and the subject is coreferent to the attitude holder.

Although this phenomenon has attracted quite an attention from typological literature lately ([Floyd et al. 2018; Bergqvist, Kittilä 2020]), there exists only one formal analysis of egophoricity, given in [Coppock, Wechsler 2018]. The core property of their analysis is that it is purely morphosemantic. The slightly changed semantics for the egophoric marking, as in [Coppock, Wechsler 2018], are given in (2).

- (2) $[[\text{EGO}]] = \lambda P_{\text{et}}. \lambda x: x = \text{SELF}. P(x)$

The main idea of [Coppock, Wechsler 2018] is that egophoricity introduces a presupposition of self-ascription (hence, the contextual SELF primitive): the external argument of the main predicate of the clause is thought to coincide with the individual epistemically responsible for the expressed proposition being true. The notion of subject from the basic generalization given in (1) is translated into their analysis as the x argument of the EGO function. Possibly, it can be interpreted as the following structure existing on LF: [Subj [EGO [TP]]], where syntactic subject corresponds to the x argument and TP corresponds to the P argument.

In this paper I argue against a purely morphosemantic approach, which directly links the egophoric morphology to its interpretation. The relevant data comes from egophoricity in Mehweb Dargwa, an East Caucasian language spoken by ca. 400 people in Dagestan [Dobrushina 2019]. Based on data from Mehweb I argue that egophoricity in Mehweb is sensitive to syntactic locality, which motivates an analysis that makes use of the AGREE operation in contemporary minimalist syntax [Chomsky 2000 *et seq.*].

Namely, I suggest that egophoricity should be analysed as interpretable agreement. The core approach pursued in this paper is that egophoricity involves two distinct probes: an index probe (for example, [Arregi, Hanink 2021]) and a person probe. The person probe is responsible for the egophoric morphology, while the index probe is responsible for interpreting the utterance as self-ascriptive.

Moreover, in attitude reports, egophoricity behaves the same as agreement shift [Sundaresan 2011; Messick 2016 *inter alia*], the phenomenon of a certain feature mismatch between the subject and the verb in *de se* attitude reports. This allows to reduce egophoric marking in attitude reports to another phenomenon, namely, agreement shift, uniting different strategies of self-ascription available in human languages. Thus, under the approach pursued here, egophoricity is understood as interpretable shifted agreement.

The paper is organized as follows. In section 2, I will review egophoricity in Kathmandu Newari and the semantic analysis of [Coppock, Wechsler 2018], while changing it slightly for the purposes of continuity between the sections. In section 3, I will introduce data from Mehweb Dargwa and point out a peculiar interaction between egophoricity and the East Caucasian biabsolute construction in Mehweb. In section 4, I will elaborate on the idea of a syntactic analysis for egophoricity in Mehweb and draw parallels between egophoricity and agreement shift, suggesting a possible diachronic explanation for egophoricity appearing in Mehweb. Section 5 concludes.

2. Egophoricity in Newari and the semantic analysis: A review

2.1. Newari data

The egophoric distribution is exemplified in the following sentences from Kathmandu Newari (the data comes from [Coppock, Wechsler 2018]).

- (3) a. *jĩ a:pwa twan-ā.*
 I.ERG much drink-PST.EGO
 ‘I drank a lot.’ {a = b} [Coppock, Wechsler 2018: 40]
- b. **jĩ a:pwa twan-a.*
 I.ERG much drink-PFV
- (4) a. **jĩ a:pwa twan-ā lā?*
 I.ERG much drink-PST.EGO Q
 ‘Did I drink a lot?’ {a = b} [Coppock, Wechsler 2018: 40]

b. *jĩ* *a:pwa* *twan-a* *lā?*
 I.ERG much drink-PFV Q

(5) a. *chā:* *a:pwa* *twan-a*.
 you.ERG much drink-PFV
 ‘You drank a lot.’ {a = b} [Coppock, Wechsler 2018: 40]

b. **chā:* *a:pwa* *twan-ā*.
 you.ERG much drink-PST.EGO

(6) a. *chā:* *a:pwa* *twan-ā* *lā?*
 you.ERG much drink-PST.EGO Q
 ‘Did you drink a lot?’ {a = b} [Coppock, Wechsler 2018: 40]

b. **chā:* *a:pwa* *twan-a* *lā?*
 you.ERG much drink-PFV Q

(7) a. *wā:* *a:pwa* *twan-a*.
 3SG much drink-PFV
 ‘He drank a lot.’ {a = b} [Coppock, Wechsler 2018: 40]

b. **wā:* *a:pwa* *twan-ā*.
 3SG much drink-PST.EGO

(8) a. *wā:* *a:pwa* *twan-a* *lā?*
 3SG much drink-PFV Q
 ‘Did he drink a lot?’ {a = b} [Coppock, Wechsler 2018: 40]

b. **wā:* *a:pwa* *twan-ā* *lā?*
 3SG much drink-PST.EGO Q

The pairs of examples above show that egophoric marking is obligatory in declarative clauses with a first person subject (3), while being ungrammatical in interrogatives with a first person subject (4). On the other hand, interrogative clauses with a second person subject (5) require egophoric marking, while declaratives with a second person subject are ungrammatical with egophoric marking (6). A third person subject is unable to trigger egophoric marking in an independent sentence regardless of the illocutionary force (7)–(8).

The situation changes, however, once we take attitude reports into account. As shown in examples (9)–(10), egophoric marking indicates the third person subject being coreferent to the attitude holder (9). When egophoric marking is absent, the subject is interpreted to be distinct from the attitude holder (10).

- (9) *syām-ā wā a:pwa twan-ā dhakā: dhāl-a.*
 Syam-ERG 3SG much drink-PST.EGO COMP say-PFV
 ‘Syam_i said that he_i drank a lot.’ [Coppock, Wechsler 2018: 40]
- (10) *syām-ā wā a:pwa twan-a dhakā dhāl-a.*
 Syam-ERG 3SG much drink-PFV COMP say-PFV
 ‘Syam_i said that he_j drank a lot.’ [Coppock, Wechsler 2018: 40]

2.2. Egophoricity and self-ascription

Importantly, coreference is not enough for egophoric marking to arise. As noted by [Coppock, Wechsler 2018], the sentence (9) is false in the following context.

- (11) *Syam is looking at a photo from a wild party in which someone is wearing a lampshade on his head. Syam points at the intoxicated partier and says to you, “That guy drank too much”; unbeknownst to Syam, it is himself in the picture.*

This is a context where the ascription of property to oneself is not conscious, and that makes egophoric marking unavailable (and the sentence with egophoric marking false). Since it is not conscious, ascription of property in (11) cannot be self-ascription, since Syam did not refer to himself, but to an individual who happened to be Syam, while not being Syam in Syam’s mind. This motivates a view of egophoricity being sensitive to self-ascription. As [Lewis 1979] says, “Self-ascription of properties might suitably be called belief or knowledge *de se*”. Thus, we get a slight revision of the basic generalization given in the introduction.

- (12) Egophoric marking arises when:
- a. the subject is first person and the clause is declarative.
 - b. the subject is second person and the clause is declarative.
 - c. the clause is an attitude report, the subject is coreferent to the attitude holder and the attitude is read *de se*.

Such disjunctive generalizations are, however, unsatisfying. What do these contexts have in common? [Coppock, Wechsler 2018] argue that all these contexts are self-ascriptive. It is clear that *de se* attitude reports are self-ascriptive, that is their definition. How does self-ascription derive the interrogative flip, though?

Since *de se* attitude reports are analyzed as centered worlds (individual-world pairs, [Lewis 1979]), [Coppock, Wechsler 2018] suggest that unembedded propositions are to be understood as centered with respect to the epistemic authority of the proposition. When the sentence is a regular declarative, the speaker is responsible for the uttered proposition being true (due to the Gricean maxim of quality).

When the sentence is a polar interrogative, the one responsible for the proposition is the addressee, because under the mainstream semantics for questions a question denotes a set of alternatives. In case of polar interrogatives, this set is simply $\{p, \neg p\}$. Since addressee is responsible for her answer being true (due to the Gricean maxim of quality), she is committed to either p , or $\neg p$.

Thus, if we accept the epistemic authority as the center of propositions marked with egophoricity, the interrogative flip follows. We can then introduce a contextual parameter *SELF* that coincides with the speaker in declaratives, addressee in interrogatives and the attitude holder in attitude reports. The generalization in (12) is thus derived from independent properties associated with self-ascription.

2.3. Concluding the review

This section has introduced the basics of the grammatical phenomenon of egophoricity and has shown how exactly does the account in [Coppock, Wechsler 2018] reduce egophoric distribution to self-ascription.

Although the semantics in their account appear convincing, their analysis and the framework of their work (an extension of logic of indexicals from [Kaplan 1979]) allows for no syntactic conditions on egophoricity. Importantly, it leaves no room for a possibility of a syntactic process blocking the egophoric marking. In the next section, I will show that this type of interaction between syntax and egophoric marking is exactly what is observed in the egophoric system of Mehweb Dargwa, motivating the need for an alternative analysis based on AGREE.

3. Mehweb Dargwa data

3.1. Mehweb egophoricity

In a collection of articles about certain aspects of Mehweb grammar, [Daniel 2019] and [Ganenkov 2019] refer to a certain Mehweb affix as an egophoric marker.

The marker */-ra/* or */-na/¹* (glossed as EGO) has the distribution one expects an egophoric marker to have. It is observed in declarative sentences with first person subjects (13)–(14) and in interrogatives with second person subjects (15)–(16), while a third person subject cannot trigger this marker in any independent clause (17)–(18).

¹ [Daniel 2019] lists all allomorphs of the egophoric marker. These two are the most prominent ones.

In (13), the subject is a first person pronoun *nu* ‘I’ and the clause is declarative, making the egophoric marking obligatory. In (14), on the other hand, the clause is interrogative, which, coupled with a first person subject *nu* ‘I’, makes egophoric marking impossible.

A similar situation is seen in (15)–(16). In (15), the subject is a second person pronoun *ħu* ‘you’ and the clause is interrogative, making the egophoric marking obligatory. In (16), on the other hand, the clause is declarative, which, coupled with a second person subject *ħu* ‘you’, makes egophoric marking impossible.

(13) a. *nu usaʔ-un-na.*

I M.fall.asleep:PF-AOR-EGO

‘I fell asleep.’ {a = b} [Daniel et al. 2019: 201]

b. **nu usaʔ-un.*

I M.fall.asleep:PF-AOR

(14) a. *dag nu-ni sija b-aqʔ-ib-aʔ*

yesterday I-ERG what N-do:PF-AOR-Q

‘What did I do yesterday?’ {a = b} [Daniel et al. 2019: 202]

b. **dag nu-ni sija b-aqʔ-i-raʔ*

yesterday I-ERG what N-do:PF-AOR-EGO.Q

(15) a. *ħu dag kuda w-aʔqʔ-un-naʔ*

you yesterday where M-go:PF-AOR-EGO.Q

‘Where were you yesterday?’ {a = b} [Daniel et al. 2019: 202]

b. **ħu dag kuda w-aʔqʔ-un-aʔ*

you yesterday where M-go:PF-AOR-Q

(16) a. *ħu-ni poʔroʔm b-uʔrʔ-aq-ib.*

you-ERG glass N-break:PF-CAUS-AOR

‘You broke a window.’ {a = b} [Daniel et al. 2019: 202]

b. **ħu-ni poʔroʔm b-uʔrʔ-aq-i-ra.*

you-ERG glass N-break:PF-CAUS-AOR-EGO

(17) a. *rasuj-ni di-ze ca ħabar b-urh-ib.*

Rasul-ERG I-INTER(LAT) one story N-tell:PF-AOR

‘Rasul told me a story.’ {a = b} [Daniel et al. 2019: 204]

b. **rasuj-ni di-ze ca ħabar b-urh-i-ra.*

Rasul-ERG I-INTER(LAT) one story N-tell:PF-AOR-EGO

- (18) a. *sija b-iq'-uwe le-w-a rasul?*
 what n-do:IPF-CVB.IPFV AUX-M-Q Rasul
 'What is Rasul doing?' {a = b} [Daniel et al. 2019: 227]
- b. **sija b-iq'-uwe le-w-ra rasul?*
 what N-do:IPF-CVB.IPFV AUX-M-EGO Rasul

In attitude reports this marker behaves exactly as expected, it marks coreference with the attitude holder. In (19), a long-distance reflexive *sunejni* is interpreted as bound by Rasul, which is marked by the egophoric morphology.

- (19) *rasul uruχ w-a^ʕq-ib sune-jni mašin*
 Rasul be.afraid M-LV:PF-AOR self-ERG car
- (*b-u^ʕrʔ-aq-i-ra* / **b-u^ʕrʔ-aq-ib*) *ile.*
 N:break-CAUS-AOR-EGO N:break-CAUS-AOR COMP
 'Rasul_i was afraid that he_i broke the car.' [Daniel et al. 2019: 214]

Examples in (20) constitute a minimal pair with respect to coreference to the attitude holder. Since Mehweb has indexical shift [Ganenkov 2019], first/second person pronouns can refer to the attitude holder.² In (20), an interpretation of a first person pronoun as referring to the attitude holder (Rasul) requires egophoric marking (20a), while an interpretation of a first person pronoun as referring to someone else makes egophoric marking ungrammatical (20b).

- (20) a. *rasul uruχ w-a^ʕq-ib nu-ni mašin*
 Rasul be.afraid M-LV:PF-AOR I-ERG car
- (*b-u^ʕrʔ-aq-i-ra* / **b-u^ʕrʔ-aq-ib*) *ile.*
 N:break-CAUS-AOR-EGO N:break-CAUS-AOR COMP
 'Rasul_i was afraid that he_i broke the car.' [Daniel et al. 2019: 214]
- b. *rasul uruχ w-a^ʕq-ib nu-ni mašin*
 Rasul be.afraid M-LV:PF-AOR I-ERG car
- (*b-u^ʕrʔ-aq-ib* / **b-u^ʕrʔ-aq-i-ra*) *ile.*
 N:break-CAUS-AOR / N:break-CAUS-AOR-EGO COMP
 'Rasul_i was afraid that I_j broke the car.' [Daniel et al. 2019: 214]

² In imaginary English with indexical shift, the sentence *John thinks that I am smart* has two interpretations. Either John thinks that he himself is smart, or John thinks that the speaker is smart.

So far, nothing is out of ordinary, we have just confirmed that Mehweb egophoricity is indeed egophoric. Interesting part is the interaction of Mehweb egophoricity with the distinctly East Caucasian biabsolutive construction, which is the topic of the next subsection.

3.2. Biabsolutive construction and egophoricity

3.2.1. The structure of the biabsolutive construction

3.2.1.1. Mehweb biabsolutive construction

Biabsolutive construction in East Caucasian languages is a peculiar class of sentences where both the external and internal arguments of the predicate bear an absolutive case, which is an unexpected configuration in ergative languages like the East Caucasian ones. They usually involve some progressive aspectual semantics.

For example, in (21) both the external argument *nu* ‘I’ and the internal argument *kung* ‘book’ both bear an absolutive case. This example is contrasted with example in (22), which only differs from (21) with respect to the case marking on the external argument (subsequently, the absolutive object controls gender-number agreement).

(21) *nu kung luč'-uwe le-w-*(ra).*
 I book read:IPF-CVB.IPFV AUX-M-EGO
 ‘I’m reading the book.’ [Daniel et al. 2019: 228]

(22) *nu-ni kung luč'-uwe le-b-(*ra).*
 I-ERG book read:IPF-CVB.IPFV AUX-N-EGO
 ‘I’m reading the book.’ [Daniel et al. 2019: 228]

Since the subject of both sentences is a first person pronoun, we could expect egophoric marking both in (21) and in (22), similarly to (13). However, egophoric marking is infelicitous in (22), while being obligatory in (21). The only difference between (13) and (21)–(22) is the presence of a periphrastic verbal form, which involves an imperfective converb, suggesting that there may be additional verbal structure, which makes the case contrast in (21)–(22) possible.

Notably, the biabsolutive construction does not behave the same in different East Caucasian languages. For example, [Gagliardi et al. 2014] argue that the biabsolutive construction in Lak should be analyzed as monoclausal, while the

biabsolutive construction in Tsez should be analyzed as involving control [Gagliardi et al. 2014].

For Mehweb, [Ganenkov 2019] suggests that the biabsolutive construction involves control. Evidence comes from agentivity restrictions on the subject and the morphological make-up of reciprocals in the biabsolutive construction.

3.2.1.2. Agentivity restriction

The biabsolutive construction becomes ungrammatical or noticeably degraded if the subject is not agentive, as shown in (23). The subjects *ʙʷaʃr* ‘wind’ and *c’a* ‘fire’ are not agentive in any sense of the word, which is what makes these sentences ungrammatical. The ergative counterparts of these examples in (24) are completely acceptable, showing that the source of unacceptability in (23) is indeed the agentivity restriction of the biabsolutive construction.

(23) a. *ʔʔʙʷaʃr ʙut’-be šiʃ d-uk’-aq-uwe le-b.*
 wind tree-PL move NPL-LV:IPF-CAUS-CVB.IPFV AUX-N
 Int.: ‘The wind is shaking the trees.’ [Daniel et al. 2019: 228]

b. **c’a qul-le ig-uwe le-b.*
 fire house-PL burn:IPF-CVB.IPFV AUX-N
 Int.: ‘The fire is burning houses.’ [Daniel et al. 2019: 228]

(24) a. *ʙʷaʃl-li-ni ʙut’-be šiʃ d-uk’-aq-uwe le-r.*
 wind-OBL-ERG tree-PL move NPL-LV:IPF-CAUS-CVB.IPFV AUX-NPL
 ‘The wind is shaking the trees.’ [Daniel et al. 2019: 193]

b. *c’a-li-ni qul-le ig-uwe le-b.*
 fire-OBL-ERG house-PL burn:IPF-CVB.IPFV AUX-N
 ‘The fire is burning houses.’ [Daniel et al. 2019: 193]

This restriction constitutes a similarity between Mehweb biabsolutive construction and obligatory control, which is argued to involve an agentivity restriction [Zu 2016], making it possible to suggest that Mehweb biabsolutive construction involves control.

3.2.1.3. Reciprocals

Mehweb reciprocals consist of two numerals *ca* ‘one’, with one bearing the case of the NP binding the reciprocal and the other one bearing the case, which any DP would have in the reciprocal’s position.

In example (25) it is shown that the verb marks its non-subject argument with the superlative case, while the subject is in absolutive. Thus, in (26), the

reciprocal consists of two numerals *ca* ‘one’, one in absolutive case (*ca*) and one in superlative (*caliče*).

- (25) *čija ħule d-iz-ur-a sune-la=l urši-li-če?*
 who.ABS look F1-LV:PF-AOR-Q SELF-GEN = EMPH son-OBL-SUPER(LAT)
 ‘Who looked at her son?’ [Daniel et al. 2019: 192]

- (26) *uz-be ca-li-če ca ħule b-iz-ur.*
 brother-PL.ABS one-OBL-SUPER(LAT) one.ABS look HPL-LV:PF-AOR
 ‘Brothers looked at each other.’ [Daniel et al. 2019: 219]

Similarly, in example (27) the external argument *ʔaliini* ‘Ali’ is marked with ergative case and the internal argument *sinka* ‘bear’ is marked with absolutive case, while in (28) the two parts of the reciprocal are the ergative (*calini*) and the absolutive (*ca*) forms of the numeral ‘one’.

- (27) *ʔali-ini sinka b-aʔbʔ-ib.*
 Ali-ERG bear.ABS N-kill:PF-AOR
 ‘Ali killed a bear.’ [Daniel et al. 2019: 191]

- (28) *uz-be-ni ca-li-ni ca b-aʔbʔ-ib.*
 brother-PL-ERG one-OBL-ERG one.ABS HPL-kill:PF-AOR
 ‘The brothers killed each other.’ [Daniel et al. 2019: 191]

What’s crucial, it is that in the biabsolutive construction the reciprocal consists of an absolutive numeral and an ergative one, despite there being no overt ergative nominal in the structure. Consider examples (29) and (30). In (29), it is shown that the verb ‘help’ in Mehweb is a ditransitive version of *aq* ‘do’, which takes the absolutive form of the noun *kumak* ‘help’, an ergative argument, the one who helps, *nuni* ‘I’ in (29), and a dative argument, the one who is being helped, *uršilis* ‘son’ in (29).

Importantly, once we look at this verb in a biabsolutive construction (30) and make the dative argument a reciprocal, one part of the reciprocal is in the dative case (*calis*), while the other is in the ergative case (*calini*), despite the subject *ule* ‘children’ bearing absolutive case, which hints at presence of a silent ergative element in the structure of (30).

- (29) *nu-ni di-la=l urši-li-s kumak b-aq'-i-ra.*
 I-ERG I.OBL-GEN = EMPH son-OBL-DAT help.ABS N-do:PF-AOR-EGO
 ‘I helped my son.’ [Daniel et al. 2019: 195]

- (30) *ul-e ca-li-ni ca-li-s kumak b-iq'-uwe le-b.*
 child-PL.ABS one-OBL-ERG one-OBL-DAT help.ABS N-do:IPF-CVB.IPFV AUX-HPL
 'The kids help one another.' [Daniel et al. 2019: 220]

The conclusion is that there is a silent ergative nominal bearing element in the structure, namely PRO, since the agentivity restriction already gives a reason to pursue a control analysis of Mehweb biabsolutive construction.

3.2.1.4. The structure

Based on the arguments presented above, [Ganenkov 2019] sketches the following structure for Mehweb biabsolutive construction.

- (31) [_{AuxP} DP_{ABS} [_{VP} PRO_{ERG} [DP_{ABS} V]] AUX]

My problem with the sketch presented above is that the c-command relation between the auxiliary and the absolutive subject does not predict that the absolutive subject will control the gender-number agreement, since the absolutive object will be the first φ -feature bearing DP the auxiliary probe finds.³

Importantly, the structure in (31) cannot be vindicated by the auxiliary being unable find any accessible DP and then extending the probing domain in a Cyclic Agree fashion [Béjar, Rezac 2009], since in ergative counterparts to biabsolutive clauses the auxiliary is able to agree with the absolutive object as shown in (32a), where the auxiliary *leb* bears an agreement marker *-b*, which indicates that the closest absolutive argument is animate and plural. Similarly, in (32b), the auxiliary *ler* bears an agreement marker *-r*, which indicates that the closest absolutive argument is inanimate and plural.

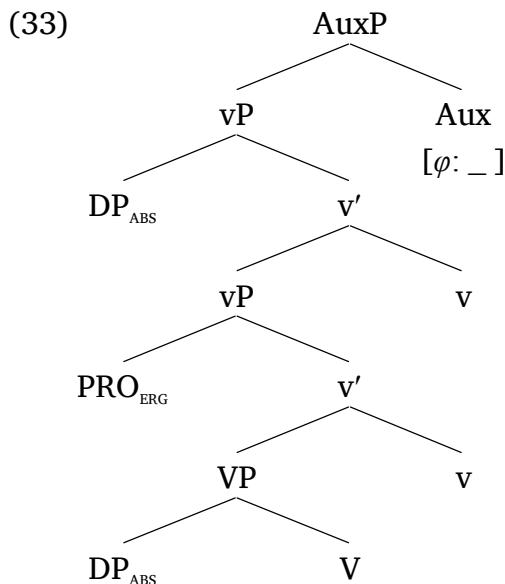
- (32) a. *nu-ni ul-e b-ulc-uwe le-b.*
 I-ERG child-PL.ABS HPL-catch:IPF-CVB.IPFV AUX-HPL
 'I am catching the kids.' [Daniel et al. 2019: 209]

³ The ergative PRO is unable to participate in gender-number agreement in Mehweb, as evident from the data of verbal periphrasis in Mehweb, as in (i). The fact that the auxiliary probe (positioned higher than the vP with both arguments in it) skips the ergative DP shows that the gender-number agreement in Mehweb is tuned to interact with absolutive DPs only (probe-relativized case discrimination, [Deal 2017]).

- (i) *urši-li-ni kaḡar-t luk'-uwe le-r.*
 boy-OBL-ERG letter-PL.ABS write:IPF-CVB.IPFV AUX-NPL
 'The boy writes letters.' [Daniel et al. 2019: 199]

- b. *urši-li-ni kaʁar-t luk'-uwe le-r.*
 boy-OBL-ERG letter-PL.ABS write:IPF-CVB.IPFV AUX-NPL
 'The boy writes letters.' [Daniel et al. 2019: 199]

To account for the gender agreement data, I propose the sketch of the structure presented in (33). By positing an additional little *v* head into the structure, I derive the c-command relation needed for agreement to arise between the auxiliary and the subject absolutive DP.⁴ This additional *vP* layer is what gives rise to the difference between progressive and non-progressive clauses in Mehweb. The peculiar properties of progressives (availability of biabsolutive marking and unexpected behavior of ergative subjects with respect to egophoricity) are possible because of the additional *vP* layer (and the auxiliary, as will be shown later).



Given the structure in (33), the auxiliary bears a φ -probe that agrees with the absolutive subject of biabsolutive sentences, which is exactly what the gender agreement data shows. The structure in (33) also allows to suggest that the ergative counterpart sentences, like (22), differ from biabsolutives only with respect to the position of their subject. I propose that the ergative subjects in progressive clauses are positioned in the specifier of the lower *vP*, exactly where the *PRO* is present in biabsolutives.

⁴ It may be the case that there is *AspP* right above the higher little *vP* in (31), following the proposal by [Coon, Preminger 2012] that various aspectual splits found in many languages are due to aspectual heads splitting the clause into two domains. Additional evidence for that could come from the imperfective morphology on the lexical verb. I remain agnostic on the issue, since nothing really hinges on it in this paper.

In the next subsection, I will suggest that the structural differences between absolutive and ergative subjects of progressive clauses explain the differences in egophoric marking, namely, the apparent lack of it when the subject is ergative.

3.2.2. Egophoric marking in the biabsolutive construction and its counterpart

As mentioned earlier, the egophoric marking curiously disappears when an ergative (35) counterpart to a biabsolutive sentence (34) is examined. The only noticeable difference between these sentences is the case marking on the subject, *nu* 'I' (absolutive case) in (34) and *nuni* 'I' (ergative case) in (35).

(34) *nu kung luč'-uwe le-w-*(ra).*
 I book read:IPF-CVB.IPFV AUX-M-EGO
 'I am reading a book.' [Daniel et al. 2019: 228]

(35) *nu-ni kung luč'-uwe le-b-(*ra).*
 I-ERG book read:IPF-CVB.IPFV AUX-N-EGO
 'I am reading a book.' [Daniel et al. 2019: 208]

To repeat an important point, there is nothing that makes (35) different from (34) aside from the case marking of the subject and the presence of the egophoric marker. [Ganenkov 2019] reports that no noticeable semantic difference has been observed between biabsolutive progressive clauses and their counterparts with regular ergative marking. Thus, the only difference we may use in an analysis is syntactic if we are to tie together the absence of egophoric marking in (35) with the case marking differences between (34) and (35). Additionally, the explanation of the contrast in (34)–(35) should make use of the difference between structures of progressive and non-progressive sentences discussed earlier, since the contrast in (34)–(35) is found in progressives only.

Given the structure in (33) we can suggest that the ergative subject *nuni* 'I' is positioned in the place of the ergative PRO of the biabsolutive construction. Importantly, this allows us to argue that the ergative subject in that position becomes unavailable for any syntactic operation, making the difference between (34) and (35) a matter of the subject's position in the structure.

Namely, I suggest that the ergative subject is inaccessible due to AuxP intervening as a bearer of ϕ -features, while the absolutive subject moves out of AuxP, making it impossible for AuxP to intervene. As shown above in (32), the auxiliary agrees with the absolutive object, should the progressive clause have a subject in ergative case. Thus, one could hypothesize that any syntactic process

tuned to interact with a φ -feature bearer would first find the AuxP and copy its features onto itself, blocking any interaction with the ergative subject.

We are now able to explain the difference between (34) and (35). The relevant parts of structure for (34)–(35) are given in (36). In both (36a) and (36b) the probe on Aux agrees with the absolutive object and copies its features onto itself.

- (36) a. [EGO[φ :1SG] ..._{XP}[nu[φ :1SG] ..._{AuxP}[Aux[φ :3SG] _{vP}[[v _{vP}[kung[φ :3SG] V]]]]]]]
 b. [EGO[φ :3SG] ..._{AuxP[φ :3SG]}[Aux[φ :3SG] _{vP}[nuni[φ :1SG] [v _{vP}[kung[φ :3SG] V]]]]]]]

In (36a), the egophoric probe finds the absolutive subject and copies its φ -features, which results egophoric marking being present. In (36b), on the other hand, the egophoric probe is unable to find the ergative subject itself, which is ‘hidden’ in the lower clause. Instead, the egophoric probe finds AuxP, the structurally closest XP that bears φ -features. Since the features on Aux are the features copied from the absolutive object, (35) lacks egophoric marking because the absolutive object is not a first person nominal.

There are, undoubtedly, questions for this proposal, which I am unable to answer, considering the lack of clause structure analysis in [Daniel et al. 2019]. For example, in order for the argument presented above to work, ergative subjects in non-progressive clauses should move out of their initial position in specifiers of vPs (as in (36a) and (37a)), since otherwise the egophoric probe would always find the vP first and copy the absolutive argument’s features onto itself (37b).

- (37) a. [EGO[φ : α] ..._{XP}[DP_{ERG}[φ : α] ..._{vP[φ : β]}[~~DP_{ERG}[φ : α]~~ [v[φ : β] [V DP_{ABS}[φ : β]]]]]]]
 b. [EGO[φ : β] ..._{vP[φ : β]}[DP_{ERG}[φ : α] [v[φ : β] [V DP_{ABS}[φ : β]]]]]]]

Nevertheless, since the structural position of the ergative subject is argued to be what distinguishes (35) from (34), egophoric marking should be sensitive to the purely syntactic difference between these sentences. Thus, we have an argument for egophoricity being sensitive to a non-local syntactic dependency, which motivates an AGREE-based analysis of egophoric marking in Mehweb Dargwa.

In the next section, I will try to give a more fleshed out analysis and provide a parallel between egophoricity and *agreement shift*, another phenomenon associated with self-ascription in attitude reports.

4. Analysis

4.1. Egophoricity as interpretable agreement

4.1.1. Quick summary of the proposal

As stated in the previous subsection, egophoricity in Mehweb Dargwa should be modelled via AGREE operation of contemporary minimalist syntax to predict its sensitivity to syntactic locality.

Even if that is the case, a problem arises. Egophoric marking influences interpretation, and that cannot be accounted for without providing a way to interpret the features presented on the egophoric probe (wherever it is located).

The hypothesis I pursue in this section is given in (38)–(39). Firstly, I suggest that egophoric element in the syntactic structure bears two distinct probes: a person probe that copies subject's person features and an index probe that copies subject's referential index (similarly to the system in [Arregi, Hanink 2021]).

Secondly, I argue that the egophoric marker is a spell-out of a [PARTICIPANT] feature ([Harley, Ritter 2002]) on the person probe, to capture the fact that the egophoric verbal form is the same regardless of illocutionary force/person feature on the subject [Daniel 2019]. Interpretation, on the other hand, works by presupposing that the copied index on the index probe is mapped by the assignment function onto the individual SELF.

(38) Interpretation of features on the egophoric index probe:

EGO presupposes that for the index i on the subject DP $g(i) = \text{SELF}$

(39) Realization of egophoric morphology:

EGO[PART] \leftrightarrow /ra/

How would this work for Mehweb Dargwa data? Consider the following example where the subject *nu* 'I' is a first person pronoun and the clause is declarative, which results in egophoric marking on the verb form *usa?-un-na* 'fell asleep'.

(40) *nu usa?-un-na.*

I M.fall.asleep:PF-AOR-EGO

'I fell asleep.' [Daniel et al. 2019: 201]

The probe (wherever it is) finds the subject DP *nu* ‘I’ and copies the subject’s person feature and index onto itself. Then, since the subject bears the privative [PART] feature, the probe gets spelled out as /-ra/. And the index present on the subject is interpreted as being mapped to SELF, the holder of epistemic authority.

For the analysis to work, I will assume that EGO is an evidential head (ModEvid) higher than T and lower than C (according to the Cinque hierarchy, [Cinque 1999]), which appears in structures to be interpreted as self-ascriptive. This idea makes sense considering the evidential nature of egophoricity as a grammatical phenomenon. Henceforth, I will call this head EGO head (for clarity and simplicity).

The proposal above, however, raises an interesting issue of the motivation for having two distinct probes for index and person. Clearly, there is an alternative of a single probe that copies both person feature and index. In the next subsection I will show that the option with two distinct probes is preferable, based on a peculiar agreement pattern in present progressive clauses of Mehweb Dargwa.

4.1.2. Agreement in present progressive

[Ganenkov 2019] reports a curious contrast regarding ergative present progressive sentences in Mehweb, which have been earlier referred to as ergative counterparts to biabsolutive sentences. Recall that the argument in this paper hinges on the lack of egophoric marking in those sentences, as in (41).

- (41) *nu-ni kung luč'-uwe le-b-(*ra).*
 I-ERG book read:IPF-CVB.IPFV AUX-N-EGO
 ‘I am reading the book.’ [Daniel et al. 2019: 208]

Importantly, this is not the whole picture. [Ganenkov 2019] reports that egophoric marking becomes obligatory in ergative progressive sentences like (41) when the absolutive object is a second person pronoun *ħu* ‘you (sg)’ or *ħuša* ‘you (pl)’, as in (42) and (43), respectively.

- (42) *nu-ni ħu ulc-uwe le-w-*(ra).*
 I-ERG you.ABS (M)catch:IPF-CVB.IPFV AUX-M-EGO
 ‘I am catching you (male).’ [Daniel et al. 2019: 208]

- (43) *nu-ni ħuša b-ulc-uwe le-b-*(ra).*
 I-ERG you.PL.ABS HPL-catch:IPF-CVB.IPFV AUX-HPL-EGO
 ‘I am catching you all.’ [Daniel et al. 2019: 209]

I suggest that this phenomenon arises due to there being two separate probes for person features and indices. I argue that the following takes place.

(44) What happens in (42):

- a. The person probe finds the AuxP which bears the φ -features of the object *ħu* 'you'.
- b. The operation in (a) makes the insides of AuxP available for probing (cf. [Preminger 2011; van Urk, Richards 2015])
- c. The index probe finds the ergative subject *nuni* 'I' and gets its referential index.
- d. The EGO head ends up with a second person feature set [PART] and the index of the speaker.
- e. EGO[PART] gets spelled out as the egophoric marker.
- f. The speaker is interpreted as bearing epistemic authority, since the index present on index EGO probe is mapped onto the speaker.

Contrast that with (41), which still involves self-ascription (thus we expect the EGO head to appear).

(45) What happens in (41):

- a. The person probe finds the AuxP which bears the φ -features of the object *ħu* 'you'.
- b. The operation in (a) makes the insides of AuxP available for probing (cf. [Preminger 2011; van Urk, Richards 2015])
- c. The index probe finds the ergative subject *nuni* 'I' and gets its referential index.
- d. The EGO head ends up with a third person feature set and the index of the speaker.
- e. The third person feature set on EGO **does not** get spelled out as the egophoric marker.
- f. The speaker is interpreted as bearing epistemic authority, since the index present on index EGO probe is mapped onto the speaker.

Thus, I propose that the egophoric presupposition is still introduced in sentences like (41), which lack the egophoric marking, while satisfying the conditions on the subject and the illocutionary type of the sentence, the lack of egophoric marking in those sentences is purely morphological.

4.1.3. Full proposal

Since I have defended the view that the index and person features are copied onto EGO independently, I am now in position to give a full analysis for egophoricity in Mehweb Dargwa.

(46) Egophoricity in Mehweb Dargwa:

- a. Egophoricity is an independent head in the syntactic structure.
- b. It is positioned in the place of the Cinquean ModEvid head.
- c. The EGO head has a person and an index probe. (egophoric syntax)
- d. [IDX: *i*] on EGO presupposes that $g(i) = \text{SELF}$. (egophoric interpretation)
- e. EGO[PART] \leftrightarrow /ra/. (egophoric morphology)

As has been argued above, the proposal in (46) predicts every property of egophoricity in Mehweb Dargwa discussed earlier.

It is far from obvious, however, how exactly does (46) couple with the egophoric behavior in attitude reports. In the next subsection I will argue that this property of egophoricity should not be covered in (46), since it is a question of a theory of shifted agreement, an independent phenomenon attested in languages without egophoricity.

4.2. Egophoricity and shifted agreement

Recall the behavior of egophoricity in attitude reports. Unlike independent sentences, egophoric marking in attitude reports requires the subject to be coreferent to the attitude holder. Under the proposal in (46) it is unclear why does a third person DP coreferent to an attitude holder, which is not necessarily the speaker of the utterance, trigger the egophoric morphology.

To shed more light at this puzzle, consider the phenomenon of shifted agreement [Messick 2016; Sundaresan 2011]. Shifted agreement is a phenomenon of a grammatically third person element triggering first/second person agreement morphology on the verb in an attitude report. For example, in (47) an anaphor *taan* controls⁵ the first person agreement marker *-een* on the verb. Likewise, in (48) a third person pronoun *tanu* controls the first person agreement marker *-nu* on the verb.

⁵ [Sundaresan 2011, 2020] argues that the agreement marker is controlled, in fact, by a silent first person nominal in the structure. For current purposes I have summed up what happens in examples with shifted agreement without appealing to silent elements in the syntactic structure. Moreover, see [Messick 2016, 2020] for syntactic arguments against Sundaresan's view.

(47) Tamil [Sundaresan 2020: 7]

Ramani taan Sudha-væ virũmb-ir-een-nũ so-nn-aan.
 Raman SELF Sudha-ACC love-PRS-1SG-COMP say-PST-3MSG
 ‘Raman_i said that he_i loves Sudha.’

(48) Telugu [Messick 2016: 2]

Raju tanu pariget-tææ-nu ani cepp-ææ-Du.
 Raju 3SG run-PST-1SG COMP say-PST-M.SG
 ‘Raju_i said that he_i ran.’

I argue that this is exactly what happens in Mehweb egophoricity: we observe a third person nominal triggering a first/second person morphology on the syntactic element, which agrees with this nominal. Additional support for unifying egophoricity in Mehweb with a broader phenomenon of shifted agreement comes from the fact that other Dargwa lects exhibit shifted agreement as reported by [Ganekov 2021].

(49) Aqusha Dargwa [Ganekov 2021: 10]

ʔalis hanbik-ib sa-j q’an iub-ra ili.
 Ali thought.3 self-M.SG late (M.SG)became-1 COMP
 ‘Ali_i thought that he_i was late.’

Thus, I suggest that the proposal in (46) may be left as is, if we assume a theory of shifted agreement that considers the first person morphology on the verb to be first person morphology, while the interpretation is handled by something else. An example of such theory is given in [Messick 2020].

Moreover, considering the availability of shifted agreement in Dargwa [Sumbatova 2019], it is possible to make a conjecture that Mehweb egophoricity has evolved from the shifted agreement.⁶ Since shifted agreement is essentially a way to mark embedded self-ascription it is only natural to expect that Mehweb egophoric marking was derived via extending this strategy to independent sentences. This consideration is additionally supported by the common historical source of Mehweb egophoric markers and person agreement markers in other Dargwa lects (as in Aqusha). See [Lum 2020] for a similar conclusion with respect to egophoricity in Dhivehi, an Indo-Aryan language.

⁶ Interestingly, [Coppock, Wechsler 2018] mention that egophoricity in Kathmandu Newari is likely to have evolved from a marking strategy for control constructions (which is another way to mark embedded self-ascription).

The goal of this subsection was not to give an analysis of agreement shift, but to show that an agreement-based theory of egophoric marking (such as one presented here) may ignore the attitude reports data due to it being handled by other mechanisms.

Furthermore, the similarity in semantics of shifted agreement and egophoricity, coupled with availability of shifted agreement in languages related to Mehweb Dargwa, allows to speculate that Mehweb egophoricity has evolved from shifted agreement via extending a strategy of self-ascription marking for subordinate clauses to independent ones.

5. Conclusion

In this paper I have attempted to give an agreement-based analysis of egophoric marking in Mehweb Dargwa, an East Caucasian language. Let me repeat my main proposal. Points (50a–c) concern syntax of egophoricity, the point (50d) concerns semantics-pragmatics of egophoricity (along the lines of [Coppock, Wechsler 2018]), and the point (50e) concerns morphological realization of egophoricity.

- (50) a. Egophoricity is an independent head in the syntactic structure.
 b. It is positioned in the place of the Cinquean ModEvid head.
 c. The EGO head has a person and an index probe.
 d. [IDX: *i*] on EGO presupposes that $g(i) = \text{SELF}$.
 e. EGO[PART] \leftrightarrow /ra/.

The core idea of my analysis is that egophoricity is dependent on syntactic agreement processes, as argued in section 3.2 based on the lack of egophoric marking in contexts where there are reasons to suppose that the ergative subject is inaccessible for syntactic operations.

These processes are initiated by two probes: a person probe and an index probe. The person probe is responsible for the morphology (50c) and the index probe is responsible for the self-ascription presupposition of egophoricity [Coppock, Wechsler 2018]. The dissociation of these probes has been argued for in section 4.1.2, the main point being that it allows to capture strange patterns of egophoric marking in present progressive straightforwardly.

Under the approach pursued in this paper, the curious behavior of egophoricity in attitude reports is reduced to agreement shift, uniting two strategies of self-ascription observed in human languages, and also supporting the

view expressed in [Lum 2020] that egophoric marking may arise as a result of “functional reanalysis of [the person agreement] marker in semi-direct speech”.

To conclude, egophoricity in Mehweb Dargwa is syntactic. Maybe this is true for other languages as well.

Abbreviations

1, 2, 3 — 1st, 2nd, 3rd person; ABS — absolutive case; ACC — accusative; AOR — aorist; AUX — auxiliary verb; CAUS — causative; CL — gender agreement slot; COMP — complementizer; CVB — converb; DAT — dative case; EGO — egophoric marker; EMPH — emphatic clitic; ERG — ergative case; EVID — evidential marker; F — feminine gender; F1 — special Mehweb feminine gender (for girls and unmarried women); FUT — future tense; GEN — genitive case; HPL — animate + plural; IDX — index; INTER(LAT) — interlative case; IPF — imperfective stem; IPFV — imperfective aspect; LOC — locative case; LV — light verb; M — masculine gender; N — neuter gender; NOM — nominative case; NPL — neuter + plural; OBL — oblique case affix; PF — perfective stem; PFV — perfective aspect; PL — plural number; PRS — present tense; PST — past tense; SELF — reflexive pronoun (also the SELF primitive of [Coppock, Wechsler 2018]); SG — singular number; SUPER(LAT) — superlative case; Q — interrogative marker.

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