

Grammaticalizing intersubjectivity The emergence of assertive agreement in Akhvakh

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Akhvakh is a Nakh-Daghestanian language belonging to the Andic branch of the Avar-Andic-Tsezic family, spoken in the western part of Daghestan and in the village of Axaxdərə near Zaqatala (Azerbaijan). Axaxdərə Akhvakh is very close to the variety of Akhvakh spoken in the Axvaxskij Rajon of Daghestan, presented in Magomedbekova 1967 and Magomedova & Abdullaeva In press. My analysis of Akhvakh is based on my field work in Axaxdərə.

Akhvakh case marking and gender-number agreement are consistently ergative. But in the perfective positive (and only in this tense), verbs also show variations expressing person distinctions, morphologically distinct from variations in gender-number and following a different alignment pattern. There are two possible endings for this tense, with basic allomorphs *-ada* and *-ari*. The following chart summarizes the rule governing the choice between *-ada* and *-ari*:

	declarative clauses	questions
1st person A / SA	<i>-ada</i>	<i>-ari</i>
2nd person A / SA	<i>-ari</i>	<i>-ada</i>
3rd person A / SA	<i>-ari</i>	<i>-ari</i>
no A / SA	<i>-ari</i>	<i>-ari</i>

The choice between *-ada* and *-ari* expresses a *1st p.* (*-ada*) vs. *2nd/3rd p.* (*-ari*) contrast in declarative clauses, but *2nd p.* (*-ada*) vs. *1st/3rd p.* (*-ari*) contrast in questions, and follows a split intransitive pattern: transitive verbs agree with A, whereas intransitive verbs divide into SA verbs agreeing with S in the same way as transitive verbs with A, and SP verbs invariably showing the ending *-ari*. This division of Akhvakh intransitive verbs into two classes transparently reflects the degree of control of the participant encoded as S. Consequently, the function of *-ada* is to encode coincidence between the controller of the event and the SAP responsible for the assertion (the speaker in declarative speech acts, the addressee in questions). This is the reason why I propose the term ‘assertive agreement’. This agreement pattern, which can therefore be viewed as a particular case of evidentiality marking, has not been identified in previous studies of Akhvakh (Magometbekova 1967, Kibrik 1985), which limit themselves to the mention of verb agreement with 1st person subjects, illustrated by declarative sentences only.

Assertive agreement, i.e., verb agreement patterns involving a binary choice with a 1 vs. 2/3 contrast in declarative clauses and a 2 vs. 1/3 contrast in questions, have been labeled *conjunct/disjunct systems* by Hale 1980, and have been first described for Tibetan, Newari, and a few other Tibeto-Burmese languages (Hale 1980, DeLancey 1986, DeLancey 1990, DeLancey 1992, Hargreaves 2005). Assertive agreement has also been found in Awa Pit, a Barbacoan language spoken in Colombia and Ecuador (Curnow 2002), and in the Papuan language Oksapmin (Loughnane 2007). Among Caucasian languages, assertive agreement has so far been recognized in Mehweb Dargwa only (Magometov 1982).

In my presentation, I will address the question of the emergence of assertive agreement in Akhvakh. Since person variations in verbal inflection have been signaled in no other Andic language, it is reasonable to assume that assertive agreement is an Akhvakh innovation. Starting from a comparison of the two endings of the perfective positive with identical or partially identical endings found in other verb forms that do not show person variations, I will

propose an internal reconstruction according to which assertive agreement resulted from the reanalysis of a former tense distinction.

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