

Unifying Anti-Agreement and Wh-Agreement

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Introduction. Many languages exhibit **anti-agreement** (AA), an effect in which φ -agreement with an argument is disrupted when that argument is \bar{A} -extracted (e.g. Ouhalla 1993). In this paper, I argue against the view that AA results from constraints against the extraction of certain arguments (Boeckx 2003; Schneider-Zioga 2007; Diercks 2010; Erlewine 2016). Instead, AA is a form of **wh-agreement** – dedicated agreement morphology that indexes extracted arguments (Chung and Georgopoulos 1988). The effect is the result of a φ -probe copying both φ - and WH-features from a goal. AA arises when partial or total impoverishment applies to the φ +WH feature bundle in the morphological component, blocking insertion of an otherwise appropriate, more highly specified agreement exponent.

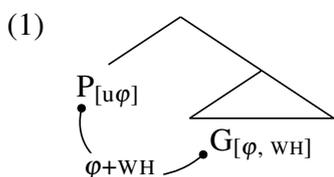
Wh-agreement in Abaza. Verbs in Abaza (NW Caucasian) agree with both arguments of a transitive clause in an absolutive-ergative pattern. \bar{A} -moved arguments control special agreement morphology (*‘wh-agreement’*): *y-* for absolutives and *z-* for ergatives. Following O’Herin (2002), I assume that these morphemes are part of the Abaza agreement paradigm, as shown in table 1. Also following O’Herin, I assume that each prefix corresponds to a dedicated Agr head in the clausal spine that hosts a φ -probe. There are two important observations regarding *wh-agreement* in Abaza. First, *wh-agreement* is highly syncretic: all person/gender/number

Table 1: Abaza agreement

	ABS		ERG	
	SG	PL	SG	PL
1	<i>s-</i>	<i>h-</i>	<i>s-</i>	<i>h-</i>
2F	<i>b-</i>	<i>f^w</i>	<i>b-</i>	<i>f^w</i>
2M	<i>w-</i>	<i>f^w</i>	<i>w-</i>	<i>f^w</i>
3F	<i>d-</i>	<i>y-</i>	<i>l-</i>	<i>r-</i>
3M	<i>d-</i>	<i>y-</i>	<i>y-</i>	<i>r-</i>
3I	<i>y-</i>	<i>y-</i>	<i>a-</i>	<i>r-</i>
WH	<i>y-</i>	<i>y-</i>	<i>z-</i>	<i>z-</i>

distinctions are leveled. From this I conclude that both prefixes are highly underspecified, spelling out a very small number of features. Second, *z-* and *y-* differ in a crucial way. Ergative *z-* does not occur elsewhere in the paradigm, while absolutive *y-* does. From this I conclude that the prefix *y-* is a **morphological default**. This explains its wide distribution across the paradigm, as shown by the shaded cells in table 1. Specifically, I argue that *y-* realizes only the categorical feature [Agr]. Thus, it spells out a φ -probe when there is no more highly specified exponent available. On the other hand, I argue that *z-* is overt *wh-agreement*. It spells out a WH-feature on the Agr head that agrees with the ergative argument.

The proposal. The core idea is that the Abaza *wh-agreement* pattern arises when a probe agrees with a goal bearing both $[\varphi]$ and [WH]. I assume following Deal (2015) that a probe may copy back supersets of the features that it searches for. When a probe finds a goal bearing both φ - and WH-features, it copies back both these features, (1). This results in the feature bundle on an



(2) **Form of Agr after Agree:**
[Agr, φ , WH]

Agr head in (2). However, without further manipulation, the bundle in (2) can never be spelled out by either *z-* or *y-*, the exponents that we find in *wh-agreement* contexts. This is because these prefixes are highly underspecified. The prefix *y-* spells out only [Agr] and *z-* spells out just [WH, Agr_{ERG}]. Given these feature specifications, other agreement prefixes will outcompete *y-* and *z-* for insertion, because they spell out a fuller set of φ -features. I

argue that the Abaza pattern arises because **impoverishment** (Bonet 1991; Halle and Marantz 1993; Noyer 1992, 1997) applies to the φ +WH feature bundle in the morphological component, deleting φ -features, (3).

(3) **Impoverishment deletes $[\varphi]$**
[φ] \rightarrow \emptyset / [_, WH]

Impoverishment blocks insertion of an otherwise appropriate, more highly specified agreement exponent, leading to an apparent lack of agreement. In Abaza, an absolutive Agr head with no remaining φ -features is spelled out *y-*, the morphological default; an ergative Agr head is spelled out *z-* because there is a specific morpheme which spells out the remaining [WH] feature. The same fundamental sequence of operations underlies both *wh*-agreement and φ -agreement: (i) Agree in the syntax and (ii) vocabulary insertion in the morphology.

Extension to AA. This account extends naturally to cases of AA. I exemplify this with Berber. In Berber, \bar{A} -moved subjects cannot control person/number/gender subject agreement, (4). Instead, the verb appears in the non-agreeing ‘participle’ form (Ouhalla 1993).

- (4) man tamghart ay yzrin/*t-zra Mohand
 which woman C_{FOC} see.PART/*3SG.F-see Mohand
 ‘Which woman saw Mohand?’

Like Abaza *wh*-agreement, Berber AA is highly syncretic: the verb cannot index the φ -features of the \bar{A} -moved subject. This is the case in other AA languages as well. For example, in Fiorentino, the verb surfaces with default 3SG agreement (Brandi and Cordin 1989).

As we have seen, the Abaza absolutive *wh*-agreement prefix *y-* is in fact a morphological default, i.e. it does not express any φ -features. This makes it *identical* to Berber AA. Therefore, I propose that AA in Berber is derived by the same process. In all both languages, impoverishment triggered by the presence of [WH] deletes all φ -features from a φ -probe. In Berber (and Abaza absolutive *wh*-agreement), this leads to an apparent lack of φ -agreement. In Abaza ergative *wh*-agreement, impoverishment allows for an exponent realizing [WH] to be inserted.

Extraction asymmetries. It is largely assumed in the literature that AA is a subject/non-subject asymmetry akin to the *that-t* effect (Boeckx 2003; Ouhalla 1993; Pesetsky 2016), that is, only subjects can trigger AA. This has led to a preference for syntactic accounts in AA derives from a constraint on the \bar{A} -movement certain arguments. This include accounts based on **anti-locality** (Cheng 2006; Schneider-Zioga 2007; Erlewine 2016) and **Criterial Freezing** (Diercks 2010; Shlonsky 2014).

I argue that this asymmetry does not hold up to closer scrutiny. A crosslinguistic study of 40 languages with AA reveals that any agreeing argument has the potential to trigger AA. In languages with an ERG-ABS agreement pattern, AA can be triggered by only ABS arguments (Karitana; Selayarese); only ERG arguments (Kaqchikel); or both ergative and ABS arguments (Abaza). Likewise, in NOM-ACC agreement languages, AA can be triggered by only NOM arguments (Berber, Palauan); only ACC arguments (Ndebele); or both NOM and ACC arguments (Zulu). If AA arises because constraint on the extraction of certain arguments, we do not expect languages like Abaza or Zulu, where *all* arguments trigger AA.

Asymmetries arguments can trigger AA in a single language do exist. For example, in Berber, subject extraction induces AA but non-subject extraction does not. The needed generalization seems to (5):

- (5) Anti-agreement on a probe P can only be caused by a DP that has agreed with P.

The current account immediately derives this: only an argument that can be targeted for Agree by a φ -probe is capable of inducing AA (i.e., impoverishment), because only these probes will find [WH]. Thus, the traditional subject/non-subject asymmetry thought to be at the core of AA is recast as an agreeing/non-agreeing asymmetry. In Berber, subjects are able to trigger AA on the verb because they interact in the syntax with the probe that is affected by AA. Non-subjects do not interact with this probe, and therefore will never trigger AA when they are extracted.

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