

Chapter 11

Relative clause and resumptive pronouns in Mehweb

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East Caucasian relative clause constructions (RCCs) are sometimes viewed as constructed mainly on the basis of semantic and pragmatic information. In this paper, we consider RCCs in Mehweb and argue that, despite the fact that the interpretation of some of them may rely exclusively on semantics, syntactic mechanisms may also come into play in their organization. We present evidence that Mehweb has grammaticalized the resumptive use of reflexive pronouns, which thus can be contrasted with other uses of reflexive pronouns due to the restrictions on animate antecedents observed only in RCCs.

Keywords: relative clause, relativization, resumptive pronoun.

1 Introduction

Relativization is usually thought of as a mechanism which operates on an argument or an adjunct of a subordinate clause (see, for example, De Vries 2002). For example, in *the paper we are writing* __ the relativized argument is the direct object of the verb, while *the person that* __ *wrote this sentence* presupposes that the relativized argument is the verb's subject.¹ Note that many scholars of relative clause constructions (RCCs) think of relativized arguments and adjuncts as syntactic positions and not as semantic roles. Indeed, studies of RCCs have revealed a number of restrictions on their formation which clearly have syntac-

¹In both examples a gap is shown in the place of the relativized argument.



tic nature. These restrictions include, for instance, the continuous distribution of relative constructions along the Noun Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy (NPAH) SUBJECT > DIRECT OBJECT > INDIRECT OBJECT > OBLIQUE OBJECT > POSSESSOR > OBJECT OF COMPARISON (Keenan & Comrie 1977)² and non-relativizability of nominals embedded in syntactic islands, like indirect questions and parts of coordinating constructions (Ross 1967).

The universality of this conception was called into question by Comrie (1996; 1998), who proposed, following Matsumoto (1988; 1997), that some languages may construct what is, in their descriptions, usually considered an RCC on a semantic rather than on a syntactic basis. As was shown in the above-mentioned works and the subsequent literature (see especially the volume Matsumoto et al. 2017), such languages only need to establish a plausible semantic link between the head of the noun phrase and the subordinate clause which would be sufficient for the characterization of this head. This link sometimes involves an argument or an adjunct of the subordinate clause but it need not necessarily. Hence a new term was coined for this phenomenon, namely *generalized noun modifying clause constructions*. Naturally, such constructions do not display the syntactic restrictions proposed for languages with “canonical” relative clauses.

As we will see below, the contrast between RCCs proper and generalized noun-modifying clause constructions is not a clear-cut one. That is why in this paper we will use the terms *relative clause* and *relative clause construction* irrespectively of our stance as to the mechanisms behind the attributive patterns we discuss.³ Nonetheless, we will distinguish between *syntactically-oriented RCCs* and *semantically-oriented RCCs* depending on whether or not, in a given case or set of cases, the syntactic information is relevant. If a construction contains a grammaticalized means intended for determining the relativized argument and displays clear syntactic constraints, it is considered a syntactically-oriented RCC. Otherwise, it may be considered semantically-oriented.

This paper presents a preliminary description of Mehweb RCCs in the perspective outlined above. At the clause level, Mehweb, as other Dargwa languages, is double-marking: it has case marking and verb agreement. Both kinds of marking display the ergative system, a remarkable exception being person marking, the

²This hierarchy was later extended and modified (for example, for ergative languages it was argued that the transitive undergoer has preference over the ergative argument); see Lehmann (1984: 211ff), Liao (2000), and specifically for Daghestanian languages, Lyutikova (1999; 2001).

³The terms *attributive clause* and *noun-modifying clause construction* used in literature are misleading, since cross-linguistically relatives do not always function as syntactic attributes/modifiers of nouns (cf. internally-headed RCCs or the amazingly wide use of RCCs without “head” nouns in some languages).

rules for which vary across Dargwa varieties (Sumbatova 2011; for discussion of the Mehweb system of personal agreement, see Ganenkov 2019 [this volume]). As for word order, Mehweb can be characterized as left-branching, although showing considerable freedom in independent clauses.

This paper is based on our fieldwork in Mehweb in 2013, 2015 and 2016. Most data were obtained through elicitation sessions. The structure of the paper is as follows: in §2 we describe the context in which we discuss Mehweb RCCs; in §3 we provide background information on relative clauses in this language; §4 is devoted to certain aspects of Mehweb RCCs that point to their syntactic nature; and §5 discusses these data from a theoretical point of view. The last section presents conclusions.

2 East Caucasian relative clauses

As is typical for a left-branching language, the basic RCC in East Caucasian languages involves a relative clause preceding its head (if any).⁴ In grammars, the form of the verbal predicate of the subordinate clause is traditionally described as a participle, although its real place in the verb paradigm varies. The difficulties in the attribution of these forms are related primarily to the fact that in many languages they coincide with some finite forms.

At first glance, East Caucasian RCCs seem like good candidates to be considered semantically-oriented. Kibrik (1980: 33) noticed that the syntactic characteristics of the relativized argument are not crucial for these constructions. Indeed, the role of the relativized argument cannot be deduced from the form of the predicate of the relative clause, neither can it be unambiguously recovered on the basis of any other grammatical property of the construction. There are no dedicated relative pronouns that mark the relativized argument, and the absence of a corresponding NP cannot serve as a reliable clue, since East Caucasian languages easily omit argument NPs even in independent clauses. Hence Comrie & Polinsky (1999), who analyzed RCCs in Tsez, argued that they may be constructed on the basis of semantic frames, and Comrie et al. (2017) continued this line of analysis for Hinuq and Bezhta, the languages of the same Tsezic branch of East Caucasian as Tsez. Daniel & Lander (2008; 2010) also proposed that RCCs in East Caucasian languages are not based on syntactic information. In this section we will illustrate the argumentation concerning these points with examples from Tanti Dargwa, a language belonging to the same branch of the family as Mehweb (see Sumbatova & Lander 2014 for details).

⁴A survey of the data available for East Caucasian relatives can be found in Barylnikova (2015).

In general, Tanti Dargwa does not show any restrictions on what grammatical role is relativized. In this language, not only does the RCC relativize all roles in NPAH, but it is also not sensitive to syntactic islands. The following examples (both elicited) demonstrate what should presumably be described as relativization out of relative clauses and coordination constructions:⁵

- (1) *dam č-ib-se k:ata b-ibš:-ib x:unul simi*
 I.DAT bring:PFV-AOR-ATR cat N-run.away:PFV-AOR woman anger
r-ač'-ib.
 F-enter:PFV-AOR

‘The woman such that the cat that she brought to me ran away got angry.’

- (2) *aħmad-li=ra sun-ni=ra mura d-ert:-ib admi dila*
 Ahmad-ERG=ADD self-ERG=ADD hay NPL-mow:PFV-AOR man I.GEN
χ:ut:u=sa-j.
 father.in.law=COP-M

‘The man with whom Ahmad mowed the hay (lit., Ahmad and who mowed the hay) is my father-in-law.’

Therefore, it seems that Tanti Dargwa lacks syntactic constraints on relativization. Moreover, a relative clause can appear even if there is no argument in the subordinate part that could be relativized. Cf. (3):⁶

- (3) *ŷu^f dam muher-li-c:e-r r-iž-ib-se dila*
 you.sg I.DAT dream-OBL-INTER-F(ESS) F1-sit:PFV-AOR-ATR I.GEN
žamru alžana=ɸuna=sa-t:e.
 life heaven=like=COP-NPL+PST

‘My life when I dreamt about you (lit., when you were sitting in my dream) was heaven-like.’

It is impossible to describe (3) as a result of any syntactic operation which deals with an argument of the relative clause. Hence, this RCC is likely to be semantically-oriented.

⁵For the reasons discussed in the paper, glossing occasionally follows rules that are different from other papers of the volume.

⁶The presence of the attributive suffix on the predicate of the relative clause in (3), which at first glance makes it different from the previous examples, is not related to any difference in the mechanisms of constructing the relation between the head and the relative clause. For a discussion of the distribution of the attributive suffix in Tanti Dargwa, see Lander (2014).

Still, it is doubtful that East Caucasian relatives never rely on syntactic information. As Daniel & Lander (2013) argued, the frequency of relativization of a syntactic position may depend on whether a language displays ergative features or not, even within this family. It may be that syntax is still engaged, even though, sometimes, these relatives only rely on semantics and pragmatics.

In addition, constraints on relativization have been reported for some East Caucasian languages. For example, according to Tatevosov (1996: 215), Godoberi does not relativize possessors, objects of comparison and objects of postpositions. Mutalov & Sumbatova (2003) note that in Itsari Dargwa “[r]elativization is impossible only for constituents of coordinate clauses and at least doubtful for constituents of adverbial clauses”. Lyutikova (1999; 2001) reports that Tsakhur and Bagwalal prohibit relativization for the positions mentioned for Itsari as well. Moreover, although the syntactic limits of relativization are always quite loose, it is worth noting that informants do not always accept relativization of all syntactically peripheral participants without an appropriate context, even in languages whose RCCs are commonly believed to be semantically-oriented.

Another problem for a purely semantic treatment is posed by the fact that in many East Caucasian languages the relativized argument can be expressed within a relative clause by a reflexive pronoun, as in (4). Such pronouns look like resumptive pronouns, which directly point to the *syntactic* position that is relativized.

- (4) *du (sun-ni-š:u) q^w-a^šn-se qali*
 I self-OBL-AD(LAT) go:IPFV-PRS-ATR house
 ‘the house where I am going’

Still, these pronouns differ from typical resumptives in various significant ways.

First, to refer to relativized arguments, East Caucasian languages use reflexive pronouns, while typical resumptives cited in the typological literature are non-reflexive.⁷ Yet the appearance of reflexive pronouns in RCCs may be related to the fact that reflexive pronouns in this family have very wide distribution: for example, they are used as logophoric pronouns or in independent clauses both as intensifiers and as pronominals (Testelet & Toldova 1998). This suggests that reflexive pronouns in East Caucasian languages are much more neutral means

⁷Note, however, that reflexives used as resumptives are found outside the East Caucasian family as well. For example, Lee (2004) provides a detailed discussion of the resumptive use of a reflexive pronoun in Korean, Csató & Uchturpani (2010) describe reflexive resumptives in Uyghur, and Johanson & Csató (1998: 219) report the resumptive function of reflexives in Turkish.

of pronominal reference than their counterparts in Standard Average European languages.

Second, East Caucasian languages sometimes allow resumptive reflexive pronouns in the most privileged syntactic positions occupying the top of NPAH, such as those of the intransitive subject (5), transitive actor (6) and transitive undergoer (7). Cf. the following Tanti Dargwa examples:

- (5) (sa<r>i) *dam-š:u* *r-ač'-ib* *rurs:i*
 self<F> I.OBL-AD(LAT) F-come:PFV-AOR girl
 'the girl that came to me'
- (6) (*sun-ni*) *čut:u* *b-erk:-un* *umra*
 self-ERG chudu N-eat:PFV-AOR neighbour
 'the neighbour who ate chudu'
- (7) (*sai*) *umra-li* *b-erk:-un* *čut:u*
 self<N> neighbour-ERG N-eat:PFV-AOR chudu
 'the chudu (a kind of pie) that the neighbor ate'

Typical resumptive pronouns in relative clauses prefer the positions that occur lower in syntactic hierarchies (Keenan & Comrie 1977; Maxwell 1979: 92). Hence, East Caucasian resumptives are different from typical resumptives.⁸

Daniel & Lander (2008) suggested that reflexives in relatives do not serve to mark the relativized position, i.e. they are only anaphoric devices, independent of relativization (cf. also Comrie et al. 2017: 133). If so, their existence does not contradict the idea that East Caucasian RCCs do not apply to syntactic information. The data from Mehweb we proceed to present make the issue of the use of reflexives more intriguing and return us to the idea that, after all, these can be treated as resumptives.

3 Relatives in Mehweb: first glance

The basic RCC in Mehweb Dargwa involves a relative clause which precedes the head of the noun phrase, if there is one. The predicate of the relative clause is marked with an attributive suffix, which has allomorphs *-il*, *-i*, and *-l*. The same suffix is found with some other attributes, such as adjectival attributes. Some examples of RCCs are given in (8–9):

⁸ Again, there do exist languages which allow resumptives in the subject position, but these uses are usually considered exceptional. We do not have information on the degree of markedness of such uses as (5–7) in East Caucasian languages.

- (8) *naʕB iz-u-l insan*
 hand hurt:IPFV-PRS-ATR person
 ‘a person whose hand hurts’
- (9) *nu qʼ-oʕwe d-uʔ-ub-i huni*
 I go:IPFV-CVB.IPFV F1-be:PFV-AOR-ATR road
 ‘the road I was going with’

According to Magometov (1982: 112–115) and Khajdakov (1985: 105–107), Mehweb distinguishes between three types of participle with respect to the stem they are formed with and the variant of the attributive suffix they adjoin; cf. Table 1.

Table 1: Participles in Mehweb Dargwa

participle	base	marker
Past	aorist	-i
Present	bare verbal stem + epenthetic vowel	-i- -u-l
Future	infinitive	-i

While the past and future participles are morphologically transparent and include just the corresponding base and the attributive suffix, the present participle contains the former marker of the present tense *-u*, which is found in present converbs.⁹ While it is glossed as PRS in this paper,¹⁰ one should bear in mind that its distribution is limited to few non-finite forms and it can be used as a marker of a relative tense rather than as an absolute tense.¹¹

We take the participles listed above as the canonical predicates of relative clauses. However, it should be noted that the predicates of relative clauses are not confined to these participles. For example, we have RCCs where the attributive suffix is added to the copula/existential verb, as in (10–11):

⁹Michael Daniel (pers. com.) noted that it is most likely that imperfective converbs are actually derived from imperfective participles.

¹⁰Note that in using this gloss for *-u*, our paper differs from other papers of this volume.

¹¹The finite present tense is expressed periphrastically by a combination of the present converb with a copula.

- (10) *k^wiha b-erh-u-we le-w-i adami-li-ze nu*
 ram N-slaughter:PFV-PRS-CVB AUX-M-ATR man-OBL-INTER(LAT) I
g-ub.
 see:PFV-AOR
 ‘The man who had slaughtered a ram saw me.’¹²
- (11) *qali le-b-i dursi d-ak’-ib.*
 house be-N-ATR girl F1-come:PFV-AOR
 ‘The girl who has her own house came.’

As shown by examples, the relativized argument need not be expressed overtly within the relative clause. As in Tanti Dargwa, it is not difficult to construct an example where the relation between the relative clause and the head must be established by the context:

- (12) *nu-ni b-erk-un-na itti b-urb-es*
 I-ERG N-eat:PFV-AOR-EGO that HPL-fight:IPFV-INF
b-aq-ib-i t’ult’.
 HPL-let:PFV-AOR-ATR bread
 ‘I ate the bread which served as the reason for them to fight.’

If the relativized argument can be reconstructed, it usually can be expressed with a pronoun *sa<CL>i* (here CL is a gender marker), which has several suppletive forms and whose partial paradigm is given in Table 2. This pronoun also serves

Table 2: Case-number-gender forms of the pronoun *sa<CL>i*

	NOM	ERG	GEN	DAT	INTER-LAT
3SG	M	<i>sa<w>i</i>	<i>sune-jni</i>	<i>sune-la</i>	<i>sune-s</i>
	F/F1	<i>sa<r>i</i>			
	N	<i>sai</i>			
3PL	HPL	<i>sai</i>	<i>ču-ni</i>	<i>ču-la</i>	<i>ču-s</i>
	NPL	<i>sa<r>i</i>			

¹²The example is additionally interesting because it relativizes one of the arguments of the so-called biabsolutive construction. Cf. the original independent construction:

- (i) *adami k^wiha b-erh-u-we le-w*
 man ram N-slaughter:PFV-PRS-CVB AUX-M
 ‘The man slaughtered a ram.’

as a reflexive pronoun (both local and long-distance), as a logophoric pronoun, and as an intensifier (see Kozhukhar 2019 [this volume]).

Some examples of the use of *sa<CL>i* as a resumptive are given below. In (13) it appears in the indirect object position, in (14) it serves as the possessor of the intransitive subject, and in (15) it refers to the experiencer with the experiential verb:

- (13) *nu-ni ču-s kung gib-i ule b-a^q'-un*
 I-ERG self.PL.OBL-DAT book give:PFV-ATR child.PL HPL-go:PFV-AOR
uškuj-ħe.
 school.OBL-IN(LAT)
 'The children to whom I gave a book went to school.'
- (14) *sune-la k^wač' b-o^r?-aq-ib-i gatu.*
 self.OBL-GEN leg N-break:PFV-CAUS-AOR-ATR cat
 'the cat whose leg broke'
- (15) *šejtan ču-ze g-ub-i buk'unu-me uruχ*
 demon self.PL.OBL-INTER(LAT) see:PFV-AOR-ATR shepherd-PL be.afraid
b-a^q-ib.
 HPL-LV:PFV-AOR
 'The shepherds who saw a demon were scared.'

4 Syntactic orientedness

Even though Mehweb data show considerable resemblance to Tanti Dargwa, there are important differences between the two Dargwa varieties which suggest that relativization in Mehweb may be syntactically-oriented.

4.1 Resumptives at the top of NPAH

Unlike in Tanti Dargwa, the Mehweb pronoun *sa<CL>i* is sometimes considered infelicitous at the top of NPAH. Cf. the following example where the position relativized into is the actor of a transitive clause:

- (16) (**sune-jni*) *k^wiha b-erh-un-i adami-li-ze nu*
 self.OBL-ERG ram N-slaughter:PFV-AOR-ATR man-OBL-INTER(LAT) I
g-ub.
 see:PFV-AOR
 'The man who slaughtered the ram saw me.'

When used as intensifier, *sa<CL>i* is normally accompanied by the emphatic clitic *=al* (with an allomorph *=jal* after vowels). Crucially, the same speaker who found the use of the resumptive in (16) infelicitous allows the pronoun followed by *=al* in the same position:

- (17) *sune-jni=jal k^wiha b-erh-un-i*
 self.OBL-ERG=EMPH ram N-slaughter:PFV-AOR-ATR
adami-li-ze nu g-ub.
 man-OBL-INTER(LAT) I see:PFV-AOR
 ‘The man who himself slaughtered the ram saw me.’

This example demonstrates that the impossibility of using *sa<CL>i* in this position cannot be attributed to any morphological rule that prohibits this pronoun in this position in general: after all, it occurs there as an intensifier.

As noted by an anonymous reviewer, it could be that the emphatic clitic changes the distribution of the pronoun. Yet there are also speakers who have no problems with the use of the resumptive (lacking the emphatic particle) in all core syntactic positions, including the positions of the intransitive subject (18) and transitive actor (19):

- (18) *sai dupi-če-b b-urh-u-we*
 self<HPL> ball-SUPER-HPL(ESS) HPL-play:IPFV-PRS-CVB
b-uʔ-ub-i ule quli ʔaʔr-b-aʔqʔ-un.
 HPL-be:PFV-AOR-ATR child.PL home.IN(LAT) away-HPL-go:PFV-AOR
 ‘The children who played with the ball went home.’
- (19) *Haʔnči ču-ni b-aqʔ-ib-i xuhe*
 work self.OBL.PL-ERG N-do:PFV-AOR-ATR woman.PL
ʔaʔr-b-aʔqʔ-un quli.
 away-HPL-go:PFV-AOR house.IN(LAT)
 ‘The women who did all their work went home.’

Our data concerning the possibility of the use of a resumptive at the top of NPAH are not definitive. The fact that some speakers are more restrictive in the use of *sa<CL>i* in the resumptive function suggests, however, that this function may be governed by syntactic rather than semantic rules.

4.2 Coordinate structure constraint

Mehweb does not allow relativization out of a conjunct in the coordination construction and hence follows one of the island constraints, namely the coordinate

structure constraint. (20a) illustrates the coordination construction marked with the additive clitic *=ra*. (20b) demonstrates an unsuccessful attempt at relativizing one of the conjuncts.

- (20) a. *musa-ni=ra di-la uzi-li-ni=ra heš kung*
 Musa-ERG=ADD I.OBL-GEN brother-OBL-ERG=ADD this book
b-elč'-un.
 N-read:PFV-AOR
 'Musa and my brother read this book.'
- b. **nu-ni=ra sune-jni=ra heš kung b-elč'-un-i*
 I-ERG=ADD self.OBL-ERG=ADD this book N-read:PFV-AOR-ATR
adami w-ak'-ib.
 man M-COME:PFV-AOR
 (Expected: 'The man who read this book together with me (lit., I and who read this book) came.')

This contrasts Mehweb with Tanti Dargwa, where the coordinate structure constraint does not apply (cf. (2) above), and again suggests that syntactic rules might be at work here.

4.3 An argument for resumptive function

In general, reflexives in Dargwa languages and in Mehweb in particular are insensitive to the animacy or humanness of their antecedent. This is shown in (21–22), where in the first example *sunes* has an animate (human) antecedent and in the second example *sunela* has an inanimate antecedent:

- (21) *it-ini sune-s kung as-ib.*
 this-ERG self.OBL-DAT book take:PFV-AOR
 'He bought a book for himself.'
- (22) *nu-ni g-i-ra mažar sune-la weʔi-ze.*
 I-ERG give:PFV-AOR-EGO gun self.OBL-GEN master-INTER(LAT)
 'I returned the gun to its owner.'

However, some consultants claim that the appearance of *sa<CL>i* in the resumptive function is only possible if the head of the relative clause is animate. Examples (23–24) show the possibility of the use of the pronoun in RCCs with human and non-human animate antecedents:

- (23) *nu-ni sune-s di? g-ib-i ħanq'aka-jni...*
 I-ERG self.OBL-DAT meat give:PFV-AOR-ATR shepherd-ERG
 'the shepherd to whom I gave the meat'
- (24) *sune-la k^wač' b-o^rrʔ-aq-ib-i gatu*
 self.OBL-GEN leg N-break:PFV-CAUS-AOR-ATR cat
 'the cat whose leg broke' (= (14))

On the contrary, (25) demonstrates that a resumptive reflexive with an inanimate antecedent is infelicitous:

- (25) (^{???}*sune-la*) *ba^ʰH ark-ib-i qali*
 self.OBL-GEN wall turn.into.ruin:PFV-AOR-ATR house
 'the house whose wall crashed down'

Interestingly, this restriction is independent from the gender system of Mehweb which contrasts humans and non-humans rather than animates and inanimates (see Footnote 13).

The restriction of *sa<CL>i* to animates is crucial exactly because it is not observed in non-resumptive uses. As such, it separates the resumptive function from the other functions of the pronoun and goes against Daniel & Lander's (2008) hypothesis that reflexive pronouns in Daghestanian RCCs are not used as resumptives *per se*. If, according to some consultants' intuition, Mehweb has developed a dedicated resumptive use of pronouns characterized by specific restrictions, the RCCs involving such pronouns should be recognized as syntactically oriented. Again, no constraint of this kind is observed in Tanti Dargwa, where the reflexive pronoun easily occurs in the place of a relativized argument with an inanimate antecedent (4).

4.4 Realizations of functions of *sa<CL>i*

In theory, when referring to a relativized argument within a relative clause, *sa<CL>i* may fulfill not only the resumptive function but also the intensifier function and the reflexive proper function. These functions could in theory be distinguished on the basis of (i) the restriction to animates in the resumptive function, and (ii) the presence of the clitic *=al* in the intensifier function. In reality, however, the picture is more complex.

The intensifier function of *sa<CL>i* is indeed observed, for example, in the following example:

- (26) *varvu-be ar-d-ik-ib sa<r>i*(=jal) d-u?-ub-i*
 stone-PL PV-NPL-fall:PFV-AOR self<CL>(*=EMPH) NPL-be-AOR-ATR
mer?-ani-če-la
 place-PL-SUPER-EL
 ‘The stones rolled from their own places.’ (Lit., ‘The stones rolled from the place they themselves occupied.’)

In (26) *sari* refers to the intransitive subject and requires the emphatic clitic. Its inability to function as a resumptive (without the clitic) may be explained either by its high position in NPAH or by its inanimate reference. Importantly, the inanimate reference does not block its appearance in the intensifier function.

The realization of the reflexive function within a relative clause, on the other hand, turns out to be impossible, as (27) shows:

- (27) *nu-ni (*sune-la) weʔi-ze g-ib-i mažar*
 I-ERG self.OBL-GEN master-INTER(LAT) give:PFV-AOR-ATR gun
b-oʔrʔ-oʔb
 N-break:PFV-AOR
 ‘The gun that I returned to its owner broke.’

In this example, *sunela* could be expected to mark the coreference of the possessor with the undergoer argument (which is then relativized), yet it does not. Since the reflexive is possible in the same position in the independent clause (22), we suspect that the effect observed in (27) is due to the fact that the pronoun is interpreted as a resumptive, in which case it violates the animacy restriction.

Thus the resumptive function blocks the reflexive interpretation. This rule is not likely to be based on any semantic principle independent of the grammar, so we take it to be another piece of evidence for grammaticalization of the resumptive function in this language.

5 Towards an explanation of the Mehweb pattern

To sum up, even though RCCs in Mehweb can be built on a semantic basis, in many cases their functioning relies upon strict syntactic mechanisms and constraints. At least when the relativized argument is animate, the construction resembles RCCs described for better known languages in a traditional fashion much more closely, since this argument can be expressed with a resumptive pronoun proper. These data support the conclusion made by Daniel & Lander (2013)

that the borderline between RCCs involving syntactic mechanisms and RCCs which are based on the semantic information is not strict.

We have no obvious explanation for the Mehweb pattern we observed above. Nonetheless, below we present some speculations.

First, note that there are a number of languages where resumptive pronouns are found in RCCs mostly or even only when the relativized argument is animate; cf. Bošković (2009) on Serbo-Croatian and Bulgarian (Slavic), Csató & Uchurpani (2010) for Uyghur (Turkic), Erteschik-Shir (1992: 104–105) for Hebrew (Semitic), Kawachi (2007) for Sidaama (Cushitic). It may be that the Mehweb system results from grammaticalization of a similar tendency. Still, there are languages where at least in some contexts resumptives tend to be used for inanimates rather than animates, such as Arabic (Al-Zaghir 2014). Sometimes this can be grammaticalized. Lyutikova (1999: 474–475) reports that in another East Caucasian language, Tsakhur, the construction relativizing the object of a postposition only requires a resumptive pronoun if the relativized argument is inanimate.

Second, we may suspect that the most typical uses of relatives are associated with high accessibility of the relativized argument. This is partly reflected in NPAH but can also manifest itself in other parameters such as animacy, which is said to correlate with conceptual accessibility (see some discussion in van Nice & Dietrich 2003). Since more typical uses are more likely to be grammaticalized (see Lander 2015 for discussion), it is expected that relativization based on syntactic (i.e. grammatical) information is found for more accessible arguments. Note, however, that the construction with resumptives retains considerable semantic transparency (Keenan 1975) and therefore is in a sense less grammaticalized than constructions with the most accessible arguments. In other words, the absence of resumptives at the top of NPAH may be explained by the fact that this top is not primarily based on semantics, but the absence of resumptives for less accessible arguments may be explained by the fact that these constructions do not elaborate on syntactic information.

Still, this approach has a notable shortcoming. The evidence that relativization prefers animate arguments is somewhat scarce,¹³ since most studies of the interaction between animacy and relativization are devoted to the way in which animacy affects the predictability of what is relativized. Moreover, things may be turned the other way round. The most accessible arguments are not normally described with a complex noun phrase with a modifier, since their accessibility

¹³For example, in Tsakhur, during elicitation the choice of what is relativized is sometimes influenced by animacy (Lyutikova 1999: 476–477), and for Turkish it is reported that headless RCCs by default have animate reference (Kerslake 1998). The latter, of course, may be just the property of headless relatives.

allows them to be more economically expressed (such as by means of pronouns, proper names, simple noun phrases, etc.), cf. Ariel (1990). Since the inherent accessibility features of the antecedent and the relativized argument are (normally) identical, the very fact that the speaker has to use a highly complex phrase based on a RCC would imply that the target of relativization need not necessarily be accessible, at least as far as animacy is concerned. In any case, more research is needed on the issue of the interaction between animacy and relativization.

6 Conclusion

In this paper, we provided a sketch of relativization in Mehweb against the background of the remarkable freedom of relativization in (at least some) other East Caucasian languages. In particular, we gave preliminary evidence for the idea that this language has grammaticalized resumptives and relies on syntactic information during relativization.

To be sure, these conclusions should not be taken for granted. In fact, even for resumptives, which we specifically addressed above, it is not clear whether all their uses should be considered alike; as argued by Erteschik-Shir (1992) among others, different types of resumptives may even occur in one language. A deeper investigation of the functioning of relatives in Mehweb and other East Caucasian languages, including both corpus analysis and psycholinguistic experiments, certainly may help to refine the conclusions presented here.

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List of abbreviations

3PL	third person plural
3SG	third person singular
AD	spatial domain near the landmark
ADD	additive particle
AOR	aorist
ATR	attributivizer

AUX	auxiliary
CAUS	causative
CL	gender (class) agreement slot
COP	copula
CVB	converb
DAT	dative
EGO	egophoric
EL	motion from a spatial domain
EMPH	emphasis (particle)
ERG	ergative
ESS	static location in a spatial domain
F	feminine (gender agreement)
F1	feminine (unmarried and young women gender prefix)
GEN	genitive
HPL	human plural (gender agreement)
IN	spatial domain inside a (hollow) landmark
INF	infinitive
INTER	spatial domain between multiple landmarks
IPFV	imperfective (derivational base)
LAT	motion into a spatial domain
LV	light verb
M	masculine (gender agreement)
N	neuter (gender agreement)
NOM	nominative
NPL	non-human plural (gender agreement)
OBL	oblique (nominal stem suffix)
PFV	perfective (derivational base)
PL	plural
PRS	present
PST	past
PV	preverb (verbal prefix)
SUPER	spatial domain on the horizontal surface of the landmark
1PL	first person plural

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