On the origin of a verb phrase template in Chechen and Ingush [1]

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0   Introduction

[1] Chechen and Ingush are both in the Nakh branch of the Nakh-Daghestani family. According to the 1989 census, there were 230,315 Ingush speakers and 944,600 Chechen speakers. (Source: SIL Ethnologue.)

[2] Both languages are head-final, suffixing, ergative, case-using, and dependent-marking. Basic sentence word order is SOV.

[3] The orthography in this presentation is that used by the University of California, Berkeley Ingush project. It is documented at: http://ingush.berkeley.edu:7012/orthography.html.

[4] The gloss abbreviations used in this presentation are as follows:

Gloss Abbreviations

CV	Converb
DX	Deictic proclitic
EMPH	Emphatic Marker
PRS	Present
WP	Witnessed Past
PTC	Particle
B,D,J,V	Gender prefixes (D is the default gender)
ABS	Absolutive
ERG	Ergative
DAT	Dative
REFL	Reflexive

[1] I would like to thank Johanna Nichols, Lisa Conathan, Andrew Garrett, and David Peterson for their comments on this presentation.

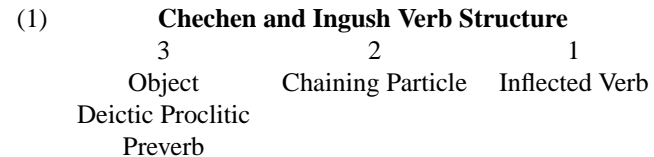[5] The goals of this presentation are as follows

[a] Describe the synchronic properties of a verb phrase template found in Chechen and Ingush clause chaining constructions.

[b] Provide an account as to how the general construction could have arisen in Chechen and Ingush.

[c] Suggest a source for an important difference between the Chechen and Ingush construction.

[6] Except for one important area, which will be discussed in section 2.4, Chechen and Ingush behave the same with respect to all the properties to be discussed here.

1   The verb phrase template in Chechen and Ingush

1.1   The structure of the verb phrase in Chechen and Ingush

[7] The basic structure of Chechen and Ingush verb phrases can be roughly schematized into a three-part structure as in (1).

(1)   **Chechen and Ingush Verb Structure**

3	2	1
Object	Chaining Particle	Inflected Verb
Deictic Proclitic		
Preverb		

[8] Only slot 1 is obligatory. However, many verbs are complex, intrinsically consisting of an auxiliary verb and a preceding deictic proclitic or preverb. Also, multiple items are allowed to occur in position 3.

[9] Examples of different types of possible verb phrases are given in (2).

(2) a. *Swo voelu.*
  1s V.laugh.PRS
  "I am laughing." CHECHEN

  b. *Malika dwa-jedira.*
  Malika DX-J.run.WP
  "Malika ran away."

  c. *Ahwmad oeghaz-vaghara.*
  Ahmed anger-V.go.WP
  "Ahmed got angry."

  d. *Ahwmadna Maliika gira.*
  Ahmed.DAT Malika see.WP
  "Ahmed saw Malika."

1.2 The enclitic particle *'a*

[10] Both Chechen and Ingush make extensive use of an enclitic particle with form *'a*. There are two primary uses of this particle: To focus the preceding constituent and to mark that a clause is in a chaining construction.

[11] Examples of *'a* as a focus marker are given in (3).

(3) a. *Aaz qa='a boaqq hwuoga.*
  1S.ERG news='a B.communicate 2S.ALL
  "And now I'll tell you the NEWS. INGUSH

  b. *Hwalxa='a fy oalar.*
  before='a what say.WP
  "What was it called BEFORE?" (Peterson 2001:146)

[12] Examples of *'a* in chaining constructions are given in (4).

(4) a. *Maliika, tykana 'a jaghna, zhejna 'a iecna, c'a je'ara.*
  Malika store 'a J.go.CV book 'a buy.CV home J.come.WP
  "Malika went to the store, bought a book, and came back home."

  b. *Cickuo, ch'aara 'a goj, 'i bu'u.*
  cat.ERG fish 'a see.CV 3S.ABS B.eat.PRS
  "The cat sees a fish and eats it." CHECHEN

[13] Whereas the position of the focus use of *'a*, as in (3), can basically be described as constituent final, the position of chaining *'a* is more accurately described as preverbal.

[14] Peterson (2001) claims that the positioning of the chaining use of *'a* is consistent with that of a type 5 clitic, which is typologically very rare.

[15] Type 5 positioning refers to clitics which are (i) enclitic, (ii) positioned at the right edge of their phrase, and (iii) positioned before the final word of the phrase.

1.3 The templatic restrictions of chaining *'a*

[16] In addition to its preverbal positioning, there is another positional restriction on *'a*. Its host must be within the verb phrase of the verb it precedes.

[17] In the sentences in (4), this was fulfilled by virtue of the fact that the verb phrases contained objects.

[18] In order to satisfy this positional restriction, *'a* will intervene between a preverb or a deictic proclitic and a regular verb.

(5) a. *Muusaaz, shii kinashjka **wa**='a lakhaa, diishar.*
  Musa.ERG REFL.GEN book **DX**='a find.CV D.read.WP
  "Musa found his book and read it." INGUSH

b. *Dulx **doxka**='a danna,　　dwa-quessar.*
meat **spoil**='a　D.AUX.CV　DX-throw.WP
"The meat spoiled and someone threw it away."　(Peterson 2001:147)

[19] Strikingly, however,when a clause with a simplex intransitive verb is part of the chaining construction, a copy verb must appear in the position before *'a*.

[20] In Chechen, this copy verb is formally the same as the infinitive.

(6) *Kiexat, **daat'a**='a **deatt'a**, telxara*
paper　**rip.**INF='a **rip.**CV　spoil.WP
"The paper ripped and was spoiled."　　　　　　　CHECHEN

[21] In Ingush, this verb is based on the stem of the chained verb.

(7) *Muusaa, **viila**='a　　**viilaa**,　　vaxar.*
Musa　　V.**laugh**='a V.**laugh**.CV V.go.WP
"Musa laughed and left."　　　　　　　　　　　INGUSH

[22] This templatic restriction is not restricted to chained clauses, but can be found in a related construction involving the coordination of finite verb phrases—this is the only other construction which uses preverbal *'a*.

(8)　a. *Maliika loomax　　hwal='a jeelara　　oahwa='a joessara.*
Malika　mountain.LAT up='a　J.ascend.WP down='a J.descend.WP
"Malika climbed up and down the mountain."

b. *Maalik viela='a　　viilara　　vialxa='a　vilxara.*
Malik　V.laugh.INF='a V.laugh.WP V.cry.INF='a V.cry.WP
"Malik laughed and cried."　　　　　　　　　CHECHEN

[23] The positional restrictions on *'a* can be schematized as in (9).

(9) $$\left[\begin{array}{c}[\quad]\end{array}='a\begin{array}{c}[\quad]\end{array}_{V}\right]_{VP}$$

[24] The existence of this template raises two diachronic questions:

[a]　How did this particular template arise in the first place?

[b]　Why is a copy verb used to fill it out when no other appropriate element is present in the verb phrase?

2　The origin of the template

2.1　Focus use of the copy verb

[25] Today, in both Chechen and Ingush, a copy verb can be used with *'a* to mark focus on the verb phrase in a chaining construction, when not required by the template in (9) (cf. (5a)).

(10) *Muusaaz, shii　　kinizhka hwa-**lakha**='a **lakhaa**, diishar.*
Musa.ERG REFL.GEN book　　DX-find='a　　find.CV D.read.WP
"Musa FOUND his book and read it."　　　　　　　INGUSH

[26] Importantly, when the copy verb is obligatory, as in chained clause like (6) and (7), the clause is actually ambiguous between having no special focus semantics and having focus semantics.

2.2　The information structure of chained clauses

[27] The overwhelming majority of chained clauses in Chechen and Ingush involve a series of predications made about a common, shared subject.

[28] The sentence in (11), from a text, is a good example of this.

(11) *Shaa　　micha=m　juedash chu　borsham='a hwoqii*
3S.REFL where=PTC J.go.CV inside whitewash='a wipe.CV

k'iegarniehwaa, aara='a joolie, c'ianna doogha='a tuuxii,
back-to-front   DX='a   J.go.CV house.DAT key='a   strike.CV

dwa-juedash xilla   'i.
DX-J.go.CV   be.NW 3S.ABS

"When she went anywhere, she whitewashed the inside (i.e. floor) from back to front, went out, locked the house, and left."

Literally: "When she went anywhere, having whitewashed the inside from back to front, having gone out, having locked the door, she left."
CHECHEN

[29] The narrative nature of these constructions sets up a default information structure where the topic is the shared subject and each predicate is in focus.

2.3   The diachronic analysis

[30] Three claims underlie the diachronic analysis

[a] The particle *'a* originally was exclusively a focus marker.

[b] Because of the basic information structure of chained clauses, preverbal *'a* could be used naturally in each chained clause, and it came to be used obligatorily in chaining constructions.

[c] The verb-copy focus construction, of the sort seen in (10), redundantly marked focus in chained clauses since such clauses were inherently focused due to the nature of the chaining construction and formally focused due to the presence of *'a*.

[31] What triggered the creation of the template were sentences like the ones in (12) ((12a) repeated from (7)).

(12) a. *Muusaa, viila='a   viilaa,   vaxar.*
    Musa   V.**laugh**='a V.**laugh**.CV V.go.WP
    "Musa laughed and left."

b. *Muusaa, balxa   ga='a   gejna,   avtobusaa t'ehwa-vysar*
   Musa   work.ADV **delay**='a delay.CV bus.DAT   miss.WP
   "Musa was hung up at work and missed the bus."   INGUSH

[32] The sentences in (12) are examples of the obligatory copy verb.

[33] When the copy verb was used to mark for focus, in an earlier state of the languages, the fact that chained clauses were already inherently focused meant that chained clauses like those in (12) were redundantly marked for focus.

[34] This redundant focus marking allowed the copy verb to be reanalyzed as resulting from a templatic restriction on possible hosts for *'a*.

[35] Two facts support this analysis:

[a] It is consistent with the fact that sentence like those in (12) are ambiguous between having focus semantics and no special semantics—the focus semantics reading is a relic from the origin of the construction.

[b] It explains why the filler for the template is a copy verb—the independent existence of the copy verb focus construction was crucial for the development of the template in the first place.

2.4   The form of the copy verb

[36] As mentioned above, Chechen and Ingush differ in the form of their copy verb.

[37] In Chechen, the copy verb has the form of the infinitive, while, in Ingush, the copy verb is a form based on the stem of the verb.

[38] The sentences in (13) and (14) illustrate the distinction.

(13) *Maliikina$_i$ Ahwmad$_j$ 'a gina, cunna$_j$ tuoxa='a*
    Malika.DAT$_i$ Ahmed$_j$ 'a see.CV 3S.DAT$_j$ hit.INF='a

***toexna**, cynga_j   shiena_i   'a tuoxiitira.*
hit.CV   3S.LOC_j   3S.REFL.DAT_i 'a hit.CAUS.WP

"Malika saw Ahmed, she hit him, and then he hit her."   CHECHEN

(14) *C'aa, ax   **deaga**='a   **deagaa,**   xearcaad.*
home halfway D.burn_down='a D.burn_down.CV collapse.CV.D
"The house halfway burned down and collapsed." (Peterson 2001:150)
INGUSH

[39] I propose that the Ingush pattern is innovative and has resulted from a cognate infinitive construction being reinterpeted as a true "copy verb" construction.

[40] The first piece of evidence supporting this fact is, quite simply, that infinitive forms are found in both languages whereas the copied verb form seen in the Ingush constructions presented here is limited to the templatic and the verbal focus construcion seen in (10).

[41] The second piece of evidence is that infinitives can otherwise be complements in the two languages—making their historic use in the extra complement slot of the focus construction more plausible.

(15) *Kibarchk **jotta**   ca xia'a   suuna.*
brick   J.stack.INF not know.PRS 1S.DAT
"I don't know how to lay bricks."   CHECHEN

3   Conclusion

[42] The fact that this templatic verb phrase construction arose and the fact that *'a* is a typologically marked clitic may not be unrelated.

[43] In particular, the fact that *'a* "leans" in the opposite direction of the head of its clause may have aided in the development of the template.

[44] Particularly striking is the fact that this template ensures that preverbal *'a* will always have a host which is in the same phrase as the verb it is positioned with respect to.

[45] The Chechen and Ingush verb phrase template offers a possible intermediate stage in the development of endoclitics (infixing clitics) which have been document in Udi (Harris 2000), a language related to both Chechen and Ingush.

References

Harris, Alice. 2000. Where in the word is the Udi clitic? *Language* 76:593–616.

Peterson, David. 2001. Ingush *'a*: The elusive type 5 clitic? *Language* 77: 144–55.