

### Subject Pseudo-incorporation in Laz

Laz, an endangered South Caucasian language, combines typologically rare or understudied patterns such as active-ergative case alignment, phi-agreement with objects (besides subjects), oblique subjects (Öztürk & Pöchtrager 2011). Based on novel data from the Pazar (Atina) dialect of Laz, this study reports yet another rare phenomenon to be available in the language: subject pseudo-incorporation. Documenting how this interacts with the case system, phi-agreement system, and oblique subjects in the language, we argue for a unified analysis which postulates a null expletive subject in case of incorporation. Our proposal also resolves a long-standing problem that Turkish posits for dependent case theories, which we discuss at the end.

**Evidence for subject pseudo-incorporation.** Case alignment in Laz (Pazar/Atina) is active-ergative in the sense of Woolford (2015), differentiating external vs. internal arguments, as shown in (1). Direct evidence that subject incorporation is available comes from its effect on ERG: it eliminates it, as shown (2). Caseless subjects also yield number neutrality (2) and narrow scope interpretation (3), reflecting the semantic hallmarks of incorporation (e.g., Bittner 1994, Chung & Ladusaw 2004, Dayal 2011). This contrasts with case-marked arguments, which yield a strictly singular and definite interpretation, as evidenced below.

- (1) a. laç'i-k ts'ari ş-um-s c. ts'ari kor-un  
 dog-ERG water.NOM drink.IMPF-PRS.3SG water.NOM get.cold-IMPF.PRES.3SG  
 'The dog is drinking water.' 'The water is cooling down.'
- b. bere-k k'i-am-s d. ts'ari-k şişil-am-s  
 child-ERG yell-IMPF-PRS.3SG water-ERG burble.IMPF-PRES.3SG  
 'The child is yelling.' 'The water is burbling.'
- (2) bere-s laç'i goyo-k'ap'-u (3) bere-s laç'i var goyo-k'ap'-u  
 child-DAT dog over-attack-PST.3SG child-DAT dog NEG over-attack-PST.3SG  
 'One or more dogs attacked the child.' 'No dogs attacked the child.' (#some dogs > not)

The incorporated NP has to be adjacent to the verb. An adverb cannot occur between the subject NP and the verb when the NP is incorporated and caseless (4a). However, a pronoun (presumably a clitic) or an additive particle can occur between the verb and the incorporated NP (4b), suggesting that the NP is not head-incorporated but pseudo-incorporated (PI) as it retains its phrasal status (Massam 2001, Öztürk 2009).

- (4) a. doktori-\*(k) ğoma mi-yox-u b. ğoma doktori ti mi-yox-u  
 doctor-ERG yesterday 1.OBJ-call-PST.3SG yesterday doctor TOO 1.OBJ-call-PST.3SG  
 ✓'The doctor called me in yesterday.' 'I also got doctor<sub>F</sub>-called yesterday.'
- X'I got doctor-called yesterday.'

**Puzzle.** Incorporating the subject bleeds passivization in Laz, as shown in (5). This is presumably because passivization cannot locate the underlying subject to demote it since incorporation occurs inside VP, as argued for Turkish in Öztürk (2009). Hence, clauses that feature subject PI may be genuinely subjectless.

- (5) \*ham oruba-s ma k'oncolozi v-i-ç'op-er  
 this river-loc 1.SG *koncolozi* 1.SBJ-PASS-catch-PASS.IMPF

Intended: 'In this river, I would be *koncolozi*-caught.' (*koncolozi*: witch-like creatures in Laz folklore)

However, agreement patterns suggest the opposite. We cannot fully describe the complex agreement system of Laz due to space reasons. But it should suffice to note here that prefixal agreement hosts m-set markers for 1st and 2nd person objects, if not: v-set markers for subjects, as shown in (6) (Atlamaz 2013, Demirok 2013). Accordingly, m-set markers (object agreement) never show up for the sole argument of intransitives, as in (7). [suffixal agreement, which always targets subjects, not glossed to keep the discussion accessible]

- (6) a. m-dzir-u b. v-i-dzir-er  
 1.OBJ-see-PST 1.SUBJ-PASS-see-PASS.IMPF  
 'He saw me.' TRANSITIVE 'I am seen.' PASSIVE
- (7) a. b-ğurur, \*m-ğurur b. v-igzal, \*m-igzal  
 1.SBJ-die.IMPF, 1.OBJ-die.IMPF 1.SBJ-walk.IMPF, 1.OBJ-walk.IMPF  
 'I am dying.' UNACCUSATIVE 'I am walking.' UNERGATIVE

If clauses with subject PI are subjectless, we expect the prefixal agreement to host v-set markers (subject agreement), particularly similar to (6b) and (7a), given that the direct object, i.e., the theme, would be the sole argument in the structure. However, agreement with the theme has to be regular object agreement (m-set) and cannot be subject agreement (8). That is, the theme is seen as an object when it comes to agreement, and this is only possible if the structure still has a genuine subject. Thus, agreement and passivization facts point in different directions regarding whether clauses with subject PI are subjectless or not.

- (8) ham oruba-s ma k'oncoloz **m'**-ç'op-um-s / \***p'**-ç'op-um-∅  
 this river-LOC 1.SG *koncoloz* 1.OBJ-catch-IMPF-PRS.3SG / 1.SBJ-catch-IMPF-PRS.1SG  
 'In this river, I'd get *koncoloz*-caught.' NO PASSIVIZATION, OBJ AGR

**Analysis.** These facts can be reconciled if subject PI requires a null expletive subject that cannot be demoted but still licenses object agreement. We follow Sağ (2022) in that incorporation occurs VP-internally via an incorporating (Inc) head that merges with a thematic head (Agent, when the agent is incorporated) and a verb to create an incorporating verbal complex, which then takes the incorporated (PI-ed) NP as its argument. In this view, the theme (the direct object and the subject of an unaccusative) is introduced via a little v ( $v_1$ ) projecting above VP, and a canonical agent subject is introduced in spec of a higher v ( $v_2$ ). We argue that when subject PI occurs, the little v projection still exists and hosts an expletive in its specifier position.

- (9) [ $v_2P$  **Expletive** [ $v_2'$  [ $v_1P$  Obj-NP [ $v_1'$  [ $VP$  PI-ed NP [ $V$  [ $AgINC$  [Inc] [Agent]] V ] ]  $v_1$  ] ]  $v_2$  ]]

**PI of oblique subjects.** Oblique subject construction (OSC), where there is an applicative (APPL) head that licenses a dative-marked agent NP, provides further evidence for null expletive arguments. In OSC (10a), suffixal subject agreement is always default 3rd person while the prefixal agreement tracks the dative-marked argument, realized as object agreement (m-set), unlike regular transitives where the prefixal slot agrees with the direct object (6a). The oblique subject then seems to block agreement with the theme argument. It also determines the form of the APPL prefix, e.g., the 1st/2nd person form of the APPL in (10a): *i-*. When subject PI occurs, as in (10b), the agent loses the dative and occurs adjacent to the verb but the APPL is still there, as detected by the 3rd person form of the prefix, *u-*, and the meaning it normally licenses. Given that the agent is PI-ed inside the VP and arguably is not accessible to the agreeing Probe due to being lower than the direct object, we may expect some form of agreement with the direct object, *şk'u iri* (nominative), to be available, contrasting with the canonical OSC. Intriguingly though, we observe neither prefixal nor suffixal agreement with the theme argument. We argue that this fact, too, will follow if spec-AppIP hosts a null expletive argument in case of subject PI. That is, the presence of the expletive prevents agreement with the direct object, also resulting in the 3rd person form of the APPL prefix.

- (10) a. şk'u iri-s ham çitabi **m-i-k'**itx-ap-ur-an  
 we all-DAT this book.NOM 1.OBJ-1/2.APPL-read-CAUS-IMPF-3PL  
 'We all have read this book before.'  
 b. şk'u iri mzurzi n-**u-**mtsx-ap-un  
 we all.NOM bee PV-3.APPL-sting-CAUS-IMPF.3SG  
 'We all have got bee-stung before.'

- (11) [ $AppIP$  **Expletive** [ $AppI'$  [ $v_1P$  Obj-NP [ $v_1'$  [ $VP$  PI-ed NP [ $V$  [ $AgINC$  [Inc] [Agent]] V ] ]  $v_1$  ] ] AppI]]

**Implications.** This study not only contributes to our understanding of Laz argument structure but also has implications for the cross-linguistic architecture of PI. In particular, when subject PI occurs in Turkish, the direct object is accusative-marked, challenging Dependent Case Theory, which takes accusative to be dependent on another c-commanding NP (e.g., Baker & Vinokurova 2010). This is predicted in our analysis if extended to Turkish, without the need to stipulate movement-based accounts. Even when the subject is PI-ed, the direct object is expected to receive accusative case due to the covert expletive that c-commands it.

- (12) a. Ali-yi köpek ısır-dı. b. Köpek Ali-yi ısır-dı.  
 Ali-ACC dog bite-PST dog Ali-ACC bite-PST  
 'Ali got dog-bitten.' SUBJECT PI 'The dog bit Ali.' NO PI

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