

# The ABA pattern in Nakh-Daghestanian pronominal inflection

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A recent line of research in Distributed Morphology seeks to restrict contextual allomorphy, including suppletion, by appealing to the notion of *structural containment*. Based on his extensive survey of adjectival degrees of comparison, Bobaljik (2012) observes that the ABA pattern, where the comparative form is suppletive but the superlative form uses the same stem as the positive form, seems to be absent altogether. Bobaljik accounts for this gap in structural terms by suggesting that the structural representation of the superlative contains that of the comparative, as in (1).

- (1) [[[positive] comparative] superlative]

Building on previous work on structural containment in case morphology (Caha 2009), Smith et al. (to appear) consider triples of *unmarked case*, *dependent case*, and *lexical case* in a sample of languages and show that the ABA pattern is unattested in case-driven suppletion of pronouns, concluding that this gap can also be accounted for by structural containment, as in (2).

- (2) [[[unmarked case] dependent case] lexical case]

Exploring patterns of pronominal allomorphy, Smith et al. make extensive use of data from Nakh-Daghestanian and find no instance of the ABA pattern there (see also McFadden 2018). This snippet documents potential counterexamples to this claim attested in Nakh-Daghestanian, shown in Table 1 (OBL refers to the stem used in lexical cases; the ergative suffix within the ergative form is separated from the stem by a hyphen).

		ABS	ERG	OBL	ReAdj	No ReAdj	Source
Ingush	1SG	so	aa-z	suo-/so-	ABA	ABA	Nichols 2011
	1EXCL	txo	oax-a	txuo-/txo-	AAA	ABA	
	2SG	hwo	w-a	hwuo-/hwo-	AAA	ABA	
	2PL	sho/shu	oash-a	shuo-/sho-	AAA	ABA	
Botlikh	1SG	den	iškur	di-	ABA	ABC	Saidova and Abusov 2012
Lezgian	2SG	wun	wun-a	wa-	AAA	AAB	Haspelmath 1993
			n-a		ABA?	ABC?	

**Table 1:** The ABA pattern in Nakh-Daghestanian pronominal inflection.

Which pattern a particular paradigm represents depends very much on whether all irregular allomorphy counts as suppletion or only strong suppletion counts, whereas weak suppletion and other irregularities are dealt with by Readjustment Rules. Table 1 identifies the examples in terms of

Smith et al.'s approach, which handles minor irregularities in terms of Readjustment, and a more permissive approach that takes any non-phonologically conditioned variation in roots to represent suppletion (Haugen and Siddiqi 2013, Haugen 2017).

The most robust ABA pattern is observed in the Ingush 1SG pronoun, which has the stem *so-/suo-* in all cases except the ergative, where the stem *aa-* is used. According to Nichols (2011: 173), the ergative form was originally formed by metathesis (this pattern is still preserved in the closely related Chechen). The situation is thus similar to the 2PL pronoun in Archi, as analyzed by Smith et al. Unlike in Archi, however, the metathetic formation of the ergative has been obscured in Ingush by irregular consonant changes and the reanalysis of the stem-final consonant in the ergative form as the ergative suffix. The stem of the 1SG pronoun used in the ergative thus is synchronically completely irregular and bears no relation to the absolutive or oblique stem.

Whether there are additional examples of the ABA pattern in Ingush will differ depending on whether or not we allow Readjustment. If we do not allow Readjustment Rules, the ergative forms of the 1PL.EXCL, 2SG, and 2PL pronouns also represent instances of the ABA pattern.

If Readjustment is allowed, the 1SG pronoun in Botlikh provides another clear example of ABA, having the ergative stem completely unrelated to either the absolutive or the oblique stem, due to the loss of the original pronominal stem and replacement. By the logic of case containment, this irregular change should have affected the stem used with lexical cases, contrary to fact.

Another potential example of ABA is the 2SG pronoun in Lezgian, which has two variants of the ergative. Historically, the variant *na-* is the regular output of a phonological rule applied to *wuna*, where [n] in *na* corresponds to the stem-final consonant in the absolutive and original ergative form. Under the Case Containment Hypothesis, the existence of the *na-* variant of the ergative implies the existence of parallel variants in lexical cases, again, contrary to fact.

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