

Bi-absolutives in Archi.

Updated version following comments and questions.

1. Introduction.

In Archi some verb forms license a bi-absolutive construction:

- (1) Butta buq' b-eᵛk'u-r-ši w-i
 Butta(I)[SG.ABS] grain(III)[SG.ABS] III.SG-ᵛIPFV>sort-IPFV-CVB I.SG-be.PRS
 'Butta is sorting grain.'

The auxiliary *wi* agrees in gender and number with the agent (*Butta*, a man's name), the main verb *berk'urši* 'sort' agrees in gender and number with *buq'* 'grain'. This is a morphosyntactic condition on agreement; the aspectual characteristics of the (lexical) verb allow the unusual case alignment which, in turn, requires unusual agreement.

Compare (1) to the ergative-absolutive alignment in (2):

- (2) Butta-mu buq' b-eᵛk'u-r-ši b-i
 Butta(I)-SG.ERG grain(III)[SG.ABS] III.SG-ᵛIPFV>sort-IPFV-CVB III.SG-be.PRS
 'Butta is sorting grain.'

In (2) the subject (*Butta*)¹ is in the ergative case and both parts of the periphrastic form agree with the absolutive *buq'* 'grain'. The bi-absolutive variant is available for periphrastic forms where the lexical verb is a converb produced by the suffix *-ši* from the imperfective stem (they roughly correspond to English progressives). My informant says the bi-absolutive is the preferred, more natural variant. The synthetic forms do not allow the bi-absolutive construction.

From Harvard: 1. All your examples involve the converb in -ši. Are the data with the other converb the same or not?

Another converb connected with bi-absolutive construction is the converb produced by the suffix *-mat*. When it attaches to the imperfective stem it requires the bi-absolutive; ergative-absolutive alignment is ungrammatical. The meaning of the converb is 'the action/state goes on longer than anticipated':

- (3) Pat'i gyzijt b-oᵛkᵛim-mat d-i
 Pati(II)[SG.ABS] newspaper(III)[SG.ABS] III.SG-ᵛIPFV>read-CVB II.SG-be.PRS
 'Pati is still reading the newspaper.'

When, however, *-mat* attaches to the perfective stem, the bi-absolutive construction is not possible. The speakers prefer to use this converb in a clause which does not contain the ergative (4a) but an overt ergative is grammatical (4b), though all such examples have to be elicited specifically (i.e. I have to present the speaker with the overt ergative and ask whether it's grammatical):

¹ In this document, I use term "subject" for the argument which in the Ergative-Absolutive alignment will be in the Ergative and "object" for the argument which in the Ergative-absolutive alignment will be in the Absolutive.

(4)a. aqaltekan χ:a-mat i
 shoes(IV)[SG.ABS] [IV.SG]take.PFV-CVB [IV.SG]be.PRS
 ‘These shoes are (still) bought.’

This can be understood as: “The shoes have not been worn at all, I can return them to the shop”.

b. zari inχ χ:a-mat i
 1SG.ERG butter(IV)[SG.ABS] [IV.SG]take.PFV-CVB [IV.SG]be.PRS
 ‘I have taken some butter but haven’t touched it.’

4b would be understood to imply that the speaker received the butter from somebody else and the comment was: “I haven’t used the butter at all, and can return it any time”. There are some examples of *-mat* further on, but I need to check more contexts in the village.

Kibrik’s account: in (1) there are two clauses *But:a wi* and *buq’ be<r>k’urši* each of which has its own absolutive and so the agreement is not problematic.

Most of the following examples are based on tests suggested by the Harvard team.

2. Noun incorporation tests.

2.1. Determiner on the object – allowed:

(5)a. Pat’i **ja-b** gyzijt b-o<r>kłin-ši d-i
 Pati(II)[SG.ABS] this-III.SG newspaper(III)[SG.ABS] III.SG-<IPFV>read-CVB II.SG-be.PRS
 ‘Pati is reading this newspaper.’

b. Pat’i **ja-b** gyzijt b-o<r>kłim-mat d-i
 Pati(II)[SG.ABS] this-III.SG newspaper(III)[SG.ABS] III.SG-<IPFV>read-CVB II.SG-be.PRS
 ‘Pati is still reading this newspaper.’

2.2. Dislocation of the object – allowed:

Right dislocation is always allowed but note that the rightmost position can also be the afterthought (pronounced after a pause in natural speech, but hard to assess in an elicited examples):

(6) Pat’i b-o<r>kłin-ši d-i **gyzijt**
 Pati(II)[SG.ABS] III.SG-<IPFV>read-CVB II.SG-be.PRS newspaper(III)[SG.ABS]
 ‘Pati is reading a newspaper.’

Left dislocation is allowed but my informant added the determiner on the object and the particle *-wu* ‘and’ on the subject for naturalness:

(7) **ja-b** gyzijt Pat’i-**wu** b-o<r>kłin-ši d-i
 this-III.SG newspaper(III)[SG.ABS] Pati(II)[SG.ABS]-and III.SG-read<IPFV>-CVB II.SG-be.PRS
 ‘Pati is also reading this newspaper.’

2.3. Expression of the object by a pronoun – allowed:

(8)a. Pat'i **ja-b** b-o-r>kłin-ši d-i
 Pati(II)[SG.ABS] this-III.SG III.SG-<IPFV>read-CVB II.SG-be.PRS
 'Pati is reading it.'

b. Pat'i **ja-b** b-o-r>kłim-mat d-i
 Pati(II)[SG.ABS] this-III.SG III.SG-<IPFV>read-CVB II.SG-be.PRS
 'Pati is reading it.'

2.4. Object – Adverb – Verb or other intervening material between object and verb – allowed:

(9) Pat'i q^wib **o:kurši** b-o-r>kłin-ši² d-i
 Pati(II)[SG.ABS] potato(III)[SG.ABS] slowly III.SG-<IPFV>dig-CVB II.SG-be.PRS
 'Pati is digging potatoes slowly.'

3. (Multi)-clausality tests

3.1. Negation

In usual converbial clauses, the negation is on the converb:

(10)a. kummul **kunne:-t'u-ši** q'u<w>di-li w-i gudu
 food(IV)[SG.ABS] [IV.SG]eat.POT-NEG-CVB <I.SG>sit.PFV-CVB I.SG-be.PRS that(I)[SG.ABS]
 'He is sitting without eating the food.'

From Harvard: 2. You have a good minimal pair between ex 11 and 12. Is there a minimal pair to ex. 10? Can you have negation on both verbs there?

I need to check the following:

b. kummul **kunne:ši** q'u<w>di-li w-i-t'u gudu
 food(IV)[SG.ABS] [IV.SG]eat.POT-NEG-CVB <I.SG>sit.PFV-CVB I.SG-be.PRS-NEG that(I)[SG.ABS]

c. kummul **kunne:-t'u-ši** q'u<w>di-li w-i-t'u gudu
 food(IV)[SG.ABS] [IV.SG]eat.POT-NEG-CVB <I.SG>sit.PFV-CVB I.SG-be.PRS-NEG that(I)[SG.ABS]
 'He is sitting without eating the food.'

In the bi-absolutive construction, however, the negation is only allowed on the auxiliary:

(11) pat'i k'ob o-r>c'u-r-ši **d-i-t'u**
 Pati(II)[SG.ABS] clothes(IV)[SG.ABS] [IV.SG]<IPFV>wash-IPFV-CVB II.SG-be.PRS-NEG
 utu o-r>kłin-ši d-i
 iron(IV)[SG.ABS] [IV.SG]<IPFV>iron-CVB II.SG-be.PRS
 'Pati is not washing the clothes, she is ironing.'

² This verb can mean 'read', 'learn' or 'dig up', 'take out'

Compare:

- (12)*pat'i k'ob oꞤc'u-r-t'u-ši d-i
 Pati(II)[SG.ABS] clothes(IV)[SG.ABS] [IV.SG]<IPFV>wash-IPFV-NEG-CVB I.SG-be.PRS
 '*Pati is not washing the clothes.'

Following Kibrik's account, (12) should be possible with the structure 'Not washing the clothes Pati is'. The way the negation is formed indicates monoclausality.

3.2. Position and the agreement of the adverbs and pronouns.

- (13)a.tu-w q'onq' oꞤkħin-ši w-i dit:aꞤ'u
 that-I.SG.ABS book(IV)[SG.ABS] IV.SG.read<IPFV>-CVB I.SG-be.PRS early<IV.SG>
 'He is reading a book early.'

- b. tu-w q'onq' oꞤkħin-ši dit:aꞤ'u w-i
 that-I.SG.ABS book(IV)[SG.ABS] IV.SG.read<IPFV>-CVB early<IV.SG> I.SG-be.PRS
 'He is reading a book early.'

The adverb *dit:aꞤ'u* 'early' agrees with the object while its location is in the main clause if we take this construction to be biclausal. In other biclausal constructions the adverb can only agree within its clause, compare:

- (14)a.zon dit:aꞤ'u d-aq'a-šaw maršrutka oq'a
 I.SG.ABS early<II.SG> II.SG-come.PFV-CONC minibus(IV)[SG.ABS] [IV.SG]leave.PFV

- b. *zon dit:aꞤ'u d-aq'a-šaw maršrutka oq'a
 I.SG.ABS early<IV.SG> II.SG-come.PFV-CONC minibus(IV)[SG.ABS] [IV.SG]leave.PFV
 '*Although I came early, the minibus has gone.'

- (15)a. tu-w q'onq' oꞤkħin-ši w-i ez
 that-I.SG.ABS book(IV)[SG.ABS] IV.SG.read<IPFV>-CVB I.SG-be.PRS [IV.SG]1SG.DAT
 'He is reading a book for me.'

- b. tu-w q'onq' oꞤkħin-ši ez w-i
 that-I.SG.ABS book(IV)[SG.ABS] IV.SG.read<IPFV>-CVB [IV.SG]1SG.DAT I.SG-be.PRS
 'He is reading a book for me.'

The pronoun *ez* 'for me' agrees with the object while its location is in the main clause if we take this construction to be biclausal. Also, semantically *ez* seems to be the argument of the verb 'reading' rather than the verb 'to be'.

3.3. Emphatic particle – only allowed to agree in a "small clause":

- (16)lo χilibχ'i-jꞤ'u bu-kan-ši eꞤdi
 child(II)[SG.ABS] porridge(III)[SG.ABS]-EMPH <III.SG> III.SG-eat.IPFV-CVB <II.SG>be.PST
 akł' kummu-s kilaw
 meat(IV).[SG.ABS] [IV.SG]eat.IPFV-FIN than
 'The girl was eating the porridge, she likes it better than eating meat.'

(17) *lo χilibχⁱ-j<r>u bu-kan-ši e<r>di
 child(II)[SG.ABS] porridge(III)[SG.ABS]-EMPH<II.SG> III.SG-eat.IPFV-CVB <II.SG>be.PST
 akɫ' kummu-s kilaw
 meat(IV).[SG.ABS] [IV.SG]eat.IPFV-FIN than
 'The girl was eating the porridge, she likes it better than eating meat.'

In (17) the agreement with the subject is ungrammatical. This can be an argument for biclausality as the emphatic particle does not agree across the clause border in other cases, compare:

(18) lo jamu-t bank:a-j<t'>u oχ:a-li uq^ʰa
 lad(I)[SG.ABS] this-IV.SG jar(IV)[SG.ABS]-EMPH<IV.SG> [IV.SG]take.PFV-CVB I.SG.leave.PFV
 'Having taken this jar, the lad left' (*lo* here means 'lad' (I) rather than 'child' (IV) since the agreement with it is *uq^ʰa* left.I.SG).

(19) *lo jamu-t bank:a-j<w>u oχ:a-li uq^ʰa
 lad(I)[SG.ABS] this-IV.SG jar(IV)[SG.ABS]-EMPH<I.SG> [IV.SG]take.PFV-CVB I.SG.leave.PFV
 '*Having taken this jar, the lad left.'

Here the clause structure is as follows: the main clause is *lo uq^ʰa* 'lad left' ('leave' is an intransitive verb which takes absolutive), the dependent clause is *jamut bankaj t'u oχ:ali* 'having taken that jar' (the verb 'take' is transitive and takes ergative-absolutive, the ergative here is omitted and coreferential to the argument of the main clause). The emphatic particle belongs to the dependent clause and cannot agree with the absolutive of the main clause (16). Another example of the same phenomenon:

(20) gudu kummul-ij<t'>u kunne:-t'u-mat q'u<w>di bec'u-qi
 that(I)[SG.ABS] food(IV)[SG.ABS]-EMPH<IV.SG> [IV.SG]eat.POT-NEG-CVB <IV.SG>sit.PFV be.able-POT
 'He can sit without eating food (=he can spend long time hungry).'

(21) *gudu kummul-ij<w>u kunne-t'u-mat q'u<w>di bec'u-qi
 that(I)[SG.ABS] food(IV)[SG.ABS]-EMPH<I.SG> [IV.SG]eat.PFV-NEG-CVB <IV.SG>sit.PFV be.able-POT
 '*He can sit without eating food' (=he can spend long time hungry).

From Harvard: 3. Do you get the bi-absolutive construction with affective verbs (where DAT --> ABS)

MC: No, but I cannot find a good example, I will continue looking. What I do know is that the imperfective converb in *-mat* can be used with the dative:

(22) tu-w-mi-s to-r d-oko-r-mat d-i
 that-I.SG-SG.OBL-DAT that-II.SG.AB II.SG-hear-IPFV-CVB II.SG-be.PRS
 'He does hear her.'

Bulbul's comment: this can be said when he hears her (for example, on the phone), but does not answer.

Note that here both parts of the periphrastic construction agree with the absolutive (*tor* 'she').