

Long-Distance Agreement in Tsova-Tush: Fieldwork Sketch¹

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Long-distance agreement (LDA) arises when a matrix predicate reflects ϕ -features (typically of an embedded absolutive) across clause boundaries. The phenomenon is well-attested in Nakh-Daghestanian languages, beginning with descriptions of Godoberi [Haspelmath 1999], Tsez [Polinsky & Potsdam 2001], Dargwa varieties [Serdobolskaya 2019; Kalyakin 2025], Khwarshi [Khalilova 2008] — [Forker 2017; Foley 2020; Mursell 2019] for overview.

Prior work noted LDA in Tsova-Tush (Batsbi, a Nakh language spoken in eastern Georgia) only sparsely, limited to *d-ag-ar* 'see' [Hauk 2020]. This study verifies its conditions specifically with finite embedded clauses (as in (1)-(4)), confirming LDA for *d-ag-ar* 'see' (1) and *for d-ic-d-alar* 'forget' (2). The complementizer *me* is canonically present, though not strictly obligatory, as is typical for finite complement clauses in Tsova-Tush [Hauk 2020]. This is noteworthy, as overt complementizers normally block LDA in Nakh-Daghestanian languages [Mursell 2019].

Unlike most Nakh-Daghestanian languages, Tsova-Tush seems to restrict LDA to dative-subject matrix verbs (not ergative-subject; see (3)).

LDA predictably alternates with default agreement, a standard pattern across the family [Forker 2017; Lyutikova 2024].

- (1) Mari-n v/d-ag-iⁿ [me nana-s v-il-v-ieⁿ k'nat]
Mari[F]-DAT M/D-see-AOR [COMP mother[F]-ERG M-wash-M-AOR boy[M]]

'Mari saw that mother washed the boy.'

- (2) so-n daħ b/d-ic-b/d-al-iⁿ [me doⁿ aħ
1SG-DAT PV(away) Bd/D-forget-Bd/D-INTR-AOR [COMP horse[Bd] PV(down)

b-ož-eⁿ]
Bd-fall-AOR]

'I forgot that horse fall down.'

- (3) as lev-d/*j-ora-s [me Tato-s maħ-iⁿ šur]
1SG.ERG tell_story-D/*J-IMPF-1SG.ERG [COMP Tato-ERG drink-AOR milk[J]

'I was telling that Tato drank milk'

The interesting finding is, that unlike other Nakh-Dagestian languages [Bhatt & Keine 2017; Lyutikova 2024; Kalyakin 2025], Tsova-Tush LDA may extend to non-absolutive arguments — specifically 1SG/2SG ergative subjects of intransitive embedded clauses; see (4). This likely stems from “fluid” intransitive subject marking in Tsova-Tush [Holisky 1987; Kojima 2019]. 1SG/2SG subjects of intransitives optionally take ergative case, in this instance the verb agrees in person/gender with the ergative NP. When the embedded clause exhibits this pattern, LDA with the ergative NP is possible.

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(4)	Mari-n	v/d-ag-i ⁿ	[me	as	it'-as	avtobuse-ĥ]
	Mari[F]-DAT	M/D-see-AOR	[COMP	1SG.ERG	run-1SG.ERG	bus-LAT]

‘Mari saw that I’m running to [catch] the bus.’ (*male speaker*)

Abbreviations

1SG — 1st person singular

AOR – aorist

Bd, D, M, F, J — different class (gender) markers

COMP — complementizer

DAT — dative

ERG — ergative

IMPF — imperfective

INTR — intransitive

LAT — lative

PV — preverb

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