

A Grammar of Chechen

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1 Background Information and Introduction

1.1 Speakers and Official Status

Chechen is one of the co-official languages of the Republic of Chechnya, which is a federal subject of the Russian Federation. According to the most recent census data in 2010 there are approximately 1.4 million speakers of Chechen, making it one of the largest minority languages in the Russian Federation after Ukrainian and Tatar. Speakers of Chechen belong mostly to the Chechen ethnicity and are located primarily in Chechnya. Chechen is also spoken in countries with sizable Chechen minorities, namely Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Austria, Germany, Jordan, Turkey, Georgia, and urban centers in European Russia (particularly Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Rostov-na-Donu).

1.2 Distribution of Speakers

Chechnya is located on the northern slopes of the Greater Caucasus Mountains. The Republic of Chechnya is a subnational, semi-autonomous republic of the Russian Federation, and the independence of Chechnya has been at the center of the region's history for much of the 20th and early 21st century. It shares political borders with the Republic of Ingushetia to the east, the Republic of Dagestan to the west, Stavropol Krai to the north, and an international border with the Republic of Georgia to the south.

Outside of their ancestral homeland in the Caucasus, Chechen speakers are found in the Pankisi Gorge of neighboring Georgia and in the provinces of Tusheti and Kakheti. The Kisti and Chechen community in Georgia has grown dramatically in the recent decades due to the influx of refugees after the First and Second Chechen Wars as well as the replacement of the Ossetian community following the Georgian-Ossetian conflict in 2008.

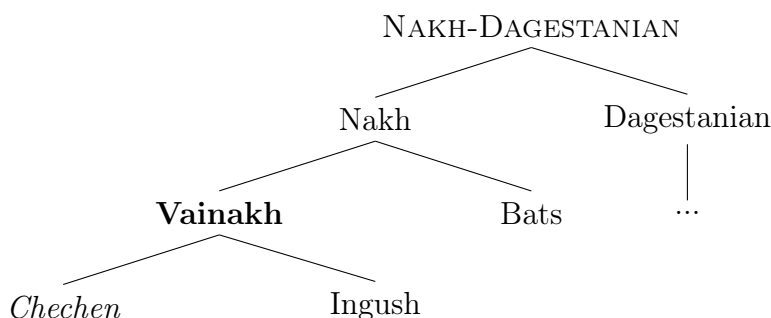
Chechen is spoken in many pockets of Kazakhstan, mostly in the Southern Kazakhstan province, due to the deportation of the Vainakh people (Chechen and Ingush) in 1944 by decree of Joseph Stalin. While many Chechens did return to Chechnya in the 1960s under the Krushchev government, a significant number of Chechens remain in Kazakhstan. The largest Chechen communities are found in Shymkent, Karaghandu, and Almaty, but speakers and Chechens can be found all over the country.

Chechens have lived in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan since the era of the Ottoman Empire in 1850s following the Caucasian Wars from 1817 - 1860. Further communities are found throughout the Republic of Turkey, concentrated in Adana, Yozgat, Sivas, Kayseri, and Kahramanmaraş provinces. Continuing this trend, modern communities of Chechen are found in Austria, Germany, and elsewhere in Western Europe due to refugees following the First and Second Chechen wars. Retention of language and language use among Chechens is particularly strong in communities descending from families in the former Soviet Union compared to that of communities in modern day Turkey, Jordan, and Western Europe.

1.3 Linguistic Profile and Genealogical Data

Chechen, *Noxchiin mott*, is a Vainakh language of the Nakh branch of the Northeastern Caucasian/Nakh-Dagestanian language family. Chechen and its closest genealogical sister

language, Ingush, comprise the *Vainakh* languages within the Nakh branch of the family (*vainakh* meaning ‘our people’ in both Chechen and Ingush). Ingush (*Ghalghaj mott*) shares a considerable degree of mutual intelligibility with Chechen and numerous cultural and linguistic similarities. In addition to Chechen and Ingush, a third Nakh language exists: Bats (alternatively *Batsbi* or *Tsova-Tush*), which is spoken in the Zemno-Alvani province of Georgia and is mutually intelligible with neither Chechen nor Ingush.



As expected based on the genealogical structure, Chechen is not mutually intelligible with any of the Dagestanian languages but does share a few common features with other North Caucasian languages: Chechen is an ergative-absolutive language, it displays noun-class agreement using 4 variables, and it has a large phonemic inventory with ejective consonants. Despite these trends, Chechen is a typological anomaly in the Caucasus region due to its extremely large vowel inventory when compared to both other Northeast Caucasian languages as well as to the Kartvelian (South Caucasian) languages and the Abkhazo-Adyghean (Northwest Caucasian languages).

The history of the Chechen literary language is short, beginning in the 1920’s after Chechnya becoming a part of the Russian Federative Soviet Socialist Republic. As the Checheno-Ingush Autonomous Soviet Republic, the written Chechen language was first developed using a Latin alphabet in 1922 following the example of Tatar and other minority languages for Muslim ethnicities. In the 1930s, following legislation requiring minority languages to use Cyrillic, written Chechen switched to an adapted Cyrillic orthography. This literary standard is used in education, administration, and publications in Chechen within Chechnya. Despite the amount of time this literary standard as been used, the Chechen alphabet is remarkably poor at conveying the actual sounds of the Chechen language, in particular the vowels. The alphabet fails to capture the multitude of different vowel sounds, does not mark phonemic vowel length, retains the writing of word-final vowels that have most fallen out in the modern language, and, perhaps most significantly, the literary standard does not account for the huge variation in pronunciation across the many dialects of the language.

1.4 Dialects, Teips, and Tukkhums

There is a large number of dialects of Chechen. While most, if not all Chechen speakers are conversant or familiar with the nuance of standardized Chechen, speech communities in the Caucasus as well as in diaspora communities are often defined by very specific dialects to a given speech community. Diversification of Chechen dialects among speakers is driven

by the ancestral cultural unit of the *taipa* (Ch. тайпа), ‘clan’ or ‘tribe’. In pre-modern Chechnya, membership to a *taipa* was synonymous with participation in the political and social hierarchy in the region, as only *teips* could unify with other *taipash* to form *tukkhums* (Ch. тухум). *Tukkhums* were tasked with tackling larger political and social problems, for example stock-piling resources and crops, rallying defenses from invading armies, as well as mounting attacks during wartime. The *teip* system was particularly inclusive for its incorporation of non-Chechen, non-Muslim, and non-Caucasian ethnicities, providing a venue for early and sustained language contact in the Caucasus. In addition to Turkic and Mongolic-speaking ethnicities in the Caucasus (i.e. Kalmyks, Balkars, and Azeris), there were also *taipash* for Germans, Jews (*taipa Dzhugoj*, Russians and Ukrainian Cossacks, which would unify into *tukkhums* and participate in wider Chechen political and social life. In addition to ethnic identity, language and dialect remained a strong indicator of *teip* membership. Some influential and major *teips* in Chechnya include: Sharoj, Martanxoj, Narshoj, Shatoj, Chintoj, Benoj, Chinkhoj, Hwanlqmadaj, Nizhaloj, Itum-Qalle, Vedenxoj, Noxchimaxqalaj, and Himoj. The precise number of *teips* and *tukkhums* found in Chechnya and Chechen diaspora communities is difficult to ascertain, however, Makaev 1973 estimates that somewhere to 140-245 distinct clans exist, each with varying degrees of identity and many major clans having their own dialect of Chechen.

Despite the large number of clans and dialectical differences based on regions, most all Chechen dialects fall into either the Lowland *Oehwaroj mott* (lit. ‘lowlander’s speech’) or Highland *Laamaroj mott* (lit. ‘mountaineer’s speech’) groups. Lowland dialects, *Oehwaroj*, or ‘Plains Chechen’ is spoken in the northern flatlands of the country and the political and cultural capital of Chechnya, Grozny, is located in this dialect region. For this reason, Lowland/Plains/Oehwaroj Chechen dialects constitute the basis for the literary standard, referred to and described in this grammar as Standard Chechen. Major dialects of this group, that are not under the umbrella of Standard Chechen, include: the Nashxoj, Melxin, Terxoj, Vedjenxoj, Argun, Gudermes, and Khasavyurt varieties of Chechen. The Highland dialects of Chechen, referred also to as the *Laamaroj* dialects (derived from the Chechen word ‘laam’/лам for ‘mountain’), are concentrated in the south of the country in the peaks of the Greater Caucasus Mountains. Standard and Lowland Chechen dialects present a higher concentration of Turkic and Mongolic borrowings than the Highland dialects, most likely due to prolonged interaction with Balkar and Kalmyk tribes in the economic arenas located in the north. Standard Chechen and Lowland dialects, also, for this reason, display a large number of Russian loanwords, with a significant number of schools, universities, and businesses located in the capital conducting day to day activity in the Russian language during the Soviet Union.

Highland dialects are marked by their smaller vowel inventory and lack of these same borrowings. Highland dialect speakers claim that their version of Chechen is more pure, having remained relatively untouched by the Russian and Turkic/Mongolic loan words from the north.

2 Phonology

2.1 Orthographies and Writing System

Chechen is written currently using an adapted form of the Cyrillic alphabet. In addition to Cyrillic, there have also been orthographies for Chechen based on Arabic and Latin.

Below we present the modern Chechen Cyrillic alphabet with the Latin correspondences according to the 1925 version of the Chechen Latin alphabet as well as the most common Latin-based transcription system used for Chechen linguistics developed by Drs. Johanna Nichols and Arbi Vagapov in their seminal Chechen-English dictionary. IPA transcriptions and examples are additionally provided. For those interested in the pre-Soviet Chechen alphabets in Arabic, we have provided this in Appendix 1 of this grammar.

Examples in this grammar will be presented in Chechen Cyrillic, the Nichols-Vagapov Latin, interlinear gloss following the conventions of the Leipzig Glossing Rules, and, finally, an approximate English translation.

| CYRILLIC | IPA | LATIN | EXAMPLES |
|----------|--|---|---|
| А а | [ɑ:], [a], or [ʌ]/[ə] short [a]/[ə] rarely pronounced word- finally in uninflected forms | A, a and Aa, aa | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • нана - naana [nɑ:n] - 'mother' • андо - anduo [an.duo] - 'strength' • далла - dalla [dʌl.lə] - 'gave' |
| Аь аь | [æ] | Ae ae | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • аьтто - aetto [æt.to] - 'fortune', 'luck' |
| Б б | [b] | B b | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • борз - borz [bʷorz] - 'wolf' |
| В в | [v]/[w] | V v | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ворх1 - vorh [vor] - 'seven' • ву - vu [vu] or [wu] (dialectical variation) |
| Г г | [g] | G g | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • галнаш - galnash [galnəʃ] - 'noodles' |
| Г1 г1 | [ɣ] | Gh gh | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • г1ала - ghaala [ɣɑ:l] - 'city' |
| Д д | [d] | D d | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • дала - daala [dɑ:l] - 'God' |
| Е е | [e], [jɛ], [jiə], or [jiɛ] | Je je, Jee jee, Jia jia, Jie jie | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ехк - jexk [jɛxk] - 'comb' • ешап - jieshap [jiɛʃəp] - 'wit' • есапе - jieesarie [jɛ:sa:riɛ] |
| Ев ев | | Eu eu | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • евзина - jeuzina [jezin] - 'recognized' |
| Ё ё | [jo] | Jo jo | Only in Russian loan words |

| | | | |
|---------|---------------|-------|---|
| Ж ж | [dʒ] or [ʒ] | Zh zh | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • жеро - zhieruo [dʒiɛ.rʷo] - ‘divorced woman’ • жижиг - zhizhig [dʒɪdʒɪg] - ‘meat’ • маж - mazh [mʌʒ] - ‘knife’ • журнал - zhurnal [ʒur.ˈnal] - ‘newspaper’ |
| З з | [z] or [dz] | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • забар - zabar [ˈdza.bər] - • зезаг - ziezag [ˈdziɛ.dzəg] - ‘flower’ • зуд-борз - zud-borz [zud.bʷorz] - ‘she-wolf’ |
| И и | [i], [ji] | I i | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • иза - iza [iz] - ‘he/she’ (abs) • илли - illi [jil.li] - ‘song’ |
| Й й | [j] | J j | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • йо1 - jow [jɔʃ] - ‘girl’ |
| К к | [k] | K k | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ка - ka [ka] - ‘ram’ |
| Кк кк | [k:] | Kk kk | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • дикка - dikka [dik:] - ‘better’ |
| К1 к1 | [kʰ] | Kʰ kʰ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • к1ант - kʰant [kʰʌnt] - ‘boy, male’ |
| Кх кх | [q] | Q q | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • кхаллар - qallar [qal.lər] - ‘snack’ • дукха - duqa [duq] - ‘many’, ‘a lot’ |
| Ккх ккх | [q:] | Qq qq | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • даккха - daqqa [daq:] - ‘to take’ |
| Къ къ | [qʰ] or [qχʰ] | Qʰ qʰ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • къу - qʰu [qχʰu] - ‘thief’ |
| Л л | [l] | L l | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • лам - laam [la:m] - ‘mountain’ |

| | | | |
|---------|---|--------------------------|---|
| М м | [m] | M m | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • малх - maalx [ma:lɣ] - ‘sun’ |
| Н н | [n] | N n | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • нийс - nijs [ni:s] - ‘correct’ |
| О о | [o], [o:], [^w o], [^w o:], or [ɔ], [^w ɔ] | О о Uo uo or Oa oa | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • охъархой - ohwaroj [oħaroj] - ‘lowlander’ • гота - guota [g^wo:.tə] - ‘narrow’ • олхазар - oalxazar [^wɔl.xə.zər] - ‘bird’ |
| Оь оь | [ø], [ø:], [çø], [çø:], or [yø], [yø:] | Oe oe | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • оьрсийн - oersiin [ø.r.sĩ:] - ‘Russian’ • оьша - oesha [yøʃ] - ‘need’ • чоь - choe [tʃø:] - ‘inside’ • чоьхь - choehw [tʃøħw] - ‘interior’ |
| Ов ов | [ou] | Ou ou | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ов - ou [ow] - ‘skewer’ |
| П п | [p] | P p | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • пачхьалкх - pachhwalq [patʃ.ħəlq] - ‘emperor’ |
| П1 п1 | [pʰ] | Pʰ pʰ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • п1елг - pʰelg [pʰ.ɛlk] - ‘finger’ |
| Пп пп | [p:] | Pp pp | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • пхиппа - pxippa [pxip:] - ‘group of 5’ |
| Рх1 рх1 | [ɾ] (only word-final) | Rh rh | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • барх1 - barh [baɾ] - ‘eight’ |
| Р р | [r] | R r | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • реза - rieza [riɛz] - ‘glory’ |
| С с | [s] | S s | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • со - so [s^wo] - ‘I’ (1.sg, absolutive) |
| Т т | [t] | T t | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • тоха - tuoxa [t^wox] - ‘to hit’ |
| Тт тт | [t:] | Tt tt | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • мотт - mott [m^wot:] - ‘language’ |

| | | | |
|-------|-----------|-----------|--|
| Т1 т1 | [tʰ] | Tʰ tʰ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • т1аьхь - tʰaehw [tʰæhw] - ‘on top’ |
| У у | [u], [u:] | U u | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • урам - uuram [u:rəm] - ‘street’ • ду - du [du] - ‘is’ (cop) |
| Уь уь | [y], [y:] | Y y | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • уьш - uysh [y:ʃ] - ‘they’ (abs.) • цуьнга - cynga [tsyŋg] - ‘he/she’ (all.) |
| Ф ф | [f] | F f | Only in Russian loans |
| Х х | [x] | X x | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • нах - naх [naх] - ‘people’ |
| Х1 х1 | [h] | H h | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • х1ара - hara [hʌr] - ‘this’ |
| Хь хь | [ħ] | Hw hw | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • хьо - hwo [ħʷo] - ‘you’ (2.sing, absolute) |
| Ц ц | [ts] | C c | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • цаца - саца [tsats] - ‘swifter’ |
| Цц цц | [ts:] | Cc cc | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • баьццар - baeccara [bæts.tsər] - ‘green’ |
| Ц1 ц1 | [tsʰ] | Cʰ cʰ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ц1а - cʰa [tsʰa] - ‘house’ |
| Ч ч | [tʃ] | Ch ch | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ча - cha [tʃa] - ‘bear’ |
| Чч чч | [tʃ:] | Chch chch | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • шаьрччана - shaerchchana [ʃæɾ.tʃ:an] - ‘slipped’ |
| Ч1 ч1 | [tʃʰ] | Chʰ chʰ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ч1арий - chʰarij [tʃʰa.ri:] - fish (pl) |
| Ш ш | [ʃ] | Sh sh | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • кораш - kuorash [kʷo:rəʃ] - ‘windows’ |
| Щ щ | [ʂ] | Shch Shch | Only in Russian loans |
| Ъ ъ | [ʔ] | ‘ | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • хаъа - хаʰa [xaʔ] - ‘know (pres.)’ |

| | | | |
|-------|----------------------------|---------------------|---|
| Ы ы | [ɨ] | - | Only in Russian loans |
| Ь | [ʲ] | | Only in Russian loans |
| Э э | [iɛ], [iɛ:] [jɛ], [jɛ:] | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> эца - iɛca [iɛts] - 'to buy' |
| Ю ю | [ju], [ju:] | Ju ju or Juu juu | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> юрта - jurta [jurt] - 'village' |
| ЮЬ юЬ | [jy] | Jy jy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> юьр - jyr [jyr] - 'hometown' |
| Я я | [ja] | Ja ja or Jaa jaa | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> яздан - jiazdan [jiaz.də] - 'to write' |
| ЯЬ яЬ | [jæ] | Jia jia | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ьясса - jaessa [jæs:] - 'empty' |
| 1 | [ʔ], [ʕ] | W w | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1амаp - waamar [ʕɑ:.mər] - 'learning' |

2.2 Consonants

Typologically, the Caucasus region is home to some of the largest consonant inventories in the world outside of Sub-Saharan Africa. Chechen, while less expansive than other Dagestanian and Abkhazo-Adyghean languages in terms of consonants, still boasts an impressively large consonant system with at least 40.

Таблица 1: Consonant System of Standard Chechen

| | Noncontinuent Obstruents | | | | Continuants | | Resonants | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|---------|----------|----------|-------------|---------|-----------|---------|---------|-------|
| | - voice | + voice | ejective | geminate | Obstruent | | Nasal | Liquid | | Glide |
| | | | | | - voice | + voice | | - voice | + voice | |
| Labial | p | b | pʼ | p: | f | v | m | | | w |
| Dental | t | d | tʼ | t: | | | | | | |
| Alveolar | ts | dʒ | tsʼ | ts: | s | z | n | ɾ | r | j |
| Palatal | tʃ | dʒ | tʃʼ | tʃ: | ʃ | ʒ | | | | |
| Velar | k | g | kʼ | k: | x | ɣ | | | | |
| Uvular | q | | qʼ(qʰ) | q: | | | | | | |
| Pharyngeal | | ʕ / ʕʰ | | | ħ | | | | | |
| Glottal | | ʔ | | | h | | | | | |

Chechen consonants have seven places of articulation: labial, alveolar, postalveolar, velar, uvular, epiglottal, and glottal, as well as 6 manners of articulation: nasal, plosive, affricate, fricative, rhotic, and approximate. Only fricatives are found in all places of articulation. Plosives and affricates often appear contrasting in four features of articulation: voiceless, voiced, ejective, and geminate. Only stops and affricates have a phonemic contrast in Chechen, unlike in other Caucasian languages. Similarly, labialization and pharyngealization is not a phonemically contrastive feature in Chechen; rather, it is a secondary point of articulation determined by adjacent vowels (in the case of labialized consonants) or consonants (in the case of pharyngealization).

2.2.1 Aspects of Consonant Realization in Chechen

Stops are not heavily aspirated in Chechen. In the case of word-initial ejective consonants, there is some slight aspiration.

- (1) Example of Aspiration for ejective consonants

/pʼɛlg/ > [p^hʼɛlk]

/tʼaj/ > [t^hʼaj]

/kʼɛzig/ > [k^xʼiɛzik]

/tsʼa/ > [ts^hʼa]

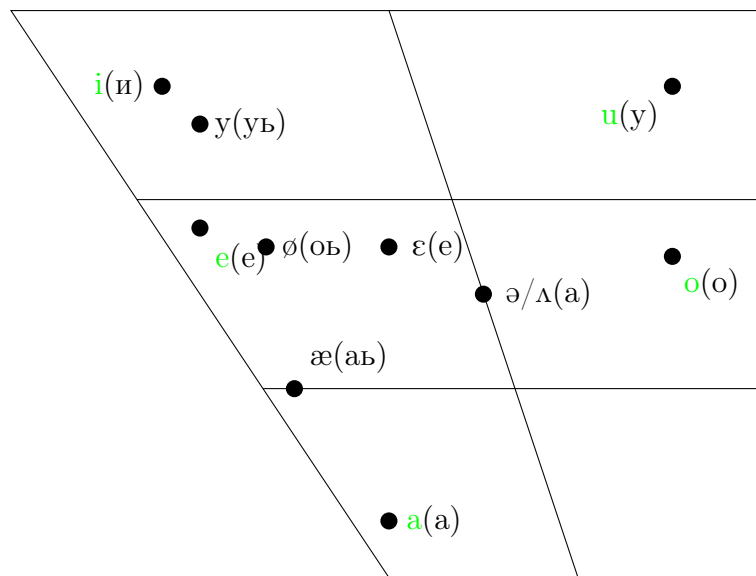
/tʃʼa:.ra/ > [tʃ^hʼa:.rə]

In the case of word-initial and word-final uvular ejectives /qʼ/, aspiration is quite strong to the point that the segment sounds more like an affricate. For this reason we transcribe these sounds as [qʰ] in IPA.

- (2) Example of q' realized [qχ']
 /q'u/ > [qχ'u]

2.3 Vowels

Chechen is unique in the Caucasus region due to its large vowel inventory. Unlike Georgian (having only 5 vowels), Ubykh (having only 2), or many other languages in the area, Chechen has 26 contrastive vowel sounds. 8 vowel sounds form the core of the system: /i/, /u/, /o/, /e/, /a/, /æ/, /y/, and /ø/. Nichols 1997 (945) claims that that of these 8 vowels, 5 of them are the underlying most-crucial vowels, from which the many different contrastive vowel sounds in the Chechen language developed via an Umlaut-like process (we expand more on this in the section on morphophonemic alternations and historical/dialectical developments). These vowels, designated as ‘dialect diphthongs’ in Nichols 1997, consist of : /i/, /o/, /a/, /e/, and /u/, resembling the more typical 5-point contrast systems found in other Caucasian languages. Below we have provided the 8 core vowels of Chechen in a vowel space, and marked the seminal ‘dialect diphthong’ vowels in green the Cyrillic character is provided in parentheses.



All vowels of Chechen are able to be contrastively lengthened. A common frustration with the learning of the Chechen orthography, for both native and non-native speakers, is the lack of diacritics to indicate long vowels in the standard Cyrillic orthography. Later we provide examples that indicate the phonemic vowel length found in many of the core Chechen vowels.

2.3.1 Diphthongs

Chechen diphthongs are composed of a main vowel with the addition of a secondary palatal [j] or labial [w] segment.

- (3) Diphthongs with examples

- ie [iɛ]
эца - jec
'to buy'
- o - wo [ʷo]
found only in closed syllables or in monosyllables
тоха - tuoха [tʷox]
'to hit' or 'to strike'
ло - луo [lʷo]
'gives/give'
- оь - woe [ʉø]
long form of оь - oe, found in open syllables
чоь - choe [tʃʉø]
'interior' (cf чоьхь - choehw [tʃøħ] 'within (locative form)' with CVC syllable)
- ай - aj [aj]
occurs in both open and closed syllables
дайтa - dajta [dajt] (CVC syllable)
'to give (causative)'
даймохк - dajмохк [daj.мохк] (CV syllable)
'homeland'
- ев - eu [ɛw]
occurs only in open and closed syllables
евла - eula [ɛwl] (VC syllable)
'village'
девина - deuna [dɛw.nə] (CV syllable)
'became acquainted'
- ов - ou [ow]
occurs in open and closed syllables
говр - gour [gowr] (CVC syllable)
'horse' or 'steed'
дов - dou [dow] (CV syllable)
'quarrel'

2.3.2 Nasalization

Nasal-oral vowels are contrastive in Chechen. In fact, for vowel-final words, the nasalization of a word-final vowel is the marker of the genitive case. Orthographically, this nasalization is represented with the character -н/-н.

- (4) сан - san
сã - 'my'

2.4 Phonotactics and Syllable Structure

The syllabic structure of Chechen allows for maximally CCVC, while CV and CVC syllables are quite common. Consonant clusters are numerous in Chechen in word-internal, as well as

in word-final positions, but consonant clusters as onsets are limited to a select few types. Most commonly sC- is found as a consonant cluster on the onset, t'C- is also regularly observed.

Таблица 2: Onset Phonotactics in Chechen

| C* = 0 | C* = 1 | C* = 2 |
|--------------|-----------------|----------------|
| [.urs.] | [.bje.zam.] | [.t'q'ε.] |
| .VCC. | .CVV.CVC. | .CCV. |
| 'knife' | 'love' | 'twenty' |
| [.o.ħa.roj.] | [.nox.tʃi.tʃø.] | [.ʃħa.va:l.] |
| .V.CV.CVC. | .CVC.CV.CV. | .CCV.CV:C. |
| 'lowlander' | 'Chechnya' | 'come towards' |
| [.i.tum.] | [.mot:]. | [.pxiʔ.] |
| .V.CVC. | CVC:. | .CCVC. |
| 'fortress' | 'language' | 'person' |

Таблица 3: Coda Phonotactics in Chechen

| C* = 0 | C* = 1 | C* = 2 |
|------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| [æɾ.zu] | [kotʃ] | [.borz.] |
| .VC.CV. | .CVC. | .CVCC. |
| 'eagle' | 'shirt' or 'dress' | 'wolf' |
| [bɒl.xar.xo:] | [.ya:l.] | [.moxk.] |
| .CVC.CVC.CV:. | .CV:C. | .CVCC. |
| 'worker' | 'city' | 'earth' or 'land' |
| [.sa.mu.q'a.ni.] | [ʃε.far.] | [.bʲie.darf.] |
| .CV.CV.CV.CV. | .CV.CVC. | .CVV.CVCC. |
| 'interesting' | 'song' or 'poem' | 'joking' |

2.4.1 Vowel Realization in Open vs Closed Syllables

Chechen vowels are realized differently depending on the open or closed status of a syllable and the position of a vowel in a given word (namely word-final or elsewhere). Open syllables in Chechen include CV(:) and V type syllables. In this position, the following vowels and diphthongs are realized:

/i/, /æ/, /e/, /^wo/, /ø/, /u/, /y/, /iε/, /εw/, and /ow/

Closed syllables in Chechen include the CVC and CVCC types. In these syllables, the following vowels and diphthongs are attested:

/i/, /ε/, /o/, /u/, /y/, /ɥø/

2.5 Stress and Prosody

Chechen stress is primarily fixed on the first syllable of a phonological word. Stress in Chechen is also often realized by a raising of the tone on a stressed syllable rather than an increase in the intensity (cf English and Russian stress-timed systems).

2.5.1 Vowel Reduction

Word-final vowels in standard Chechen are completely reduced to the point of deletion. This is true for most all dialects, with the major exceptions being highland dialects, which also show post-tonic vowels surfacing as schwa or schwa-like reduced vowels. The exact nature of vowel reduction is covered later, as there is considerable variation with respect to both dialects as well as word-form.

2.6 Morphophonemic Alternations

2.6.1 Rounding Assimilation

The most common type of morphophonemic alternations in Chechen are found in the verbal system, principally in the derivation of the present tense forms from the infinitives. In general, these alternations can be classified as a type of anticipatory assimilation of the rounded feature of the historical -u vowel, that acts as the marker of the present tense. This coda vowel is not pronounced in speech in the standard dialect, however, it is still preserved in the orthography. The pattern applies to vowel groups regardless of vowel length and vowel stems with rounded vowels show no such alternation.

(5) Present-tense vowel alternations

- э/е - ie > оь - ое
эца - ieca [iɛɕ]
'to buy'
оьцу - оес-и - [øɕ]
'buy/buys'
- аь - ае > оь - ое
хьяьжа - hwaezha [ħɬæɟ] 'to see' or 'to look' хьоьжу - hwoezhu [ħøɟ]
'see/sees' or 'look/looks'
- а - а(а) > о - о(о)
ала - aala [a:l]
'to say'
олу - оол-и [o:l]
'say/says'
- и/ий - i(i) > уь/уьй - у(y)
дижа - dizha [diɟ]
'to sleep'
дуьжу - dyzhu [dyɟ]
'sleep/sleeps'

- у - u > y -u
дула - dula [dul]
'to inflate'
дулу - dulu [dul]
'inflate/inflates' (identical pronunciations)

2.6.2 Vowel Epenthesis and Deletion

In uninflected forms, Chechen preserves word-final vowels, with the exception of the vowel [ə] (an allophone of post-tonic /a/).

- (6) къу - q'u
/q'u/ > [qɣ'u] 'thief'
- (7) к1а - k'a
/k'a/ > [k'a] 'wheat'
- (8) реза - rieza
/rieza/ > /'riɛ.zə/ > [.riɛz.] 'glory'

The word-final schwas are represented in the orthography with the grapheme 'a', however, they are generally not pronounced. This is seen most commonly with the word-final vowels /a/ and /u/, when the latter acts as a marker of the inflected form of the present tense. In this case of these vowels are deleted in word-final position, as they are preserved in other verb forms that are derived from the present tense (i.e present participles and future participles).

- (9) ала aala - to say, IPA: [a:l]
олу oolu - say.pres, IPA: [o:l]
олуш oolush - say.pres.part, IPA: [o:lʉ]

An exception to this pattern is the case of word-final -a in the past tenses. These vowels are pronounced as a schwa [ə].

- (10) хилла - xilla [xil.lə]
'was/happened/became'

2.6.3 Nasal-Sonorant Gemination

In the past tense formation, /-n/, when next to an /-l/ or /-r/ sound in the root, is replaced with the same sound:

- (11) хила - 'to be'
/xil-na/ > xil-la [xil.lə]

2.6.4 Word-Final Devoicing

Standard Chechen dialects display word-final devoicing for voiced stops, when this voiced stop is a historically voiced stop (i.e there is no deleted [ə] in the inflected forms).

- (12) /p'elg/ - [p^h'ɛlk]
'finger'

(13) /k'ε.zig/ - [k^x'ε.zik]

Word-final devoicing and syllable structure is highly irregular due to historical developments re: vowels. These issues are covered in a subsequent section.

3 Morphology

3.1 Overview

Chechen morphology can be categorized as a mostly agglutinative, suffix preferred/left-branching type. Chechen has agreement with 6 noun-classes and 4 variables for agreement, the nominal inflection system is complex, displaying at least 8 unique case forms, however, declensions are regular regardless of noun-class. The verbal system inflects for mood, tense, aspect, evidentiality, and pluriactionality, however there is no direct agreement with person/number (number is relevant when determining the noun class and this is discussed in our section on agreement and noun class). Much like in the case of the phonemic inventory vis-a-vis its size and its display of ejective consonants, Chechen is a typical Caucasian language in its ergative-absolutive morphosyntactic alignment. Unlike other Caucasian languages, however, Chechen is quite uniform with respect to ergativity, displaying only split-ergative behavior in a single tense, the present progressive, which gives rise to the bi-absolutive construction (discussed further afield). In this section we detail the nominal, verbal, and adjectival/modifier morphology of Chechen.

3.2 Nominal Morphology

3.2.1 Gender/Noun-class

All Chechen nouns belong to one of six ‘noun-classes’, wherein one of four possible phonetic exponents are used when agreement between certain ‘classed’ predicates is triggered. The status of a predicate (adjective or inflected verb) as ‘classed’ is lexically determined and hence idiosyncratic. The noun-class system for Chechen may be described as a *crossed system* per Kramer’s (to appear) typology of gender/noun-class systems. Below, we provide examples of each noun-class with the copular verb д-у d-u¹².

¹Note on transcription conventions: In this grammar we adopt Nichols (1997, 2001) convention for marking classed verbs and their exponents, in which the onset exponent of agreement is off-set with a ‘-’. In standard Chechen orthography, both Latin and Cyrillic, this convention is not used, and the copular verb forms are *ды/du*, *ву/vu*, *бу/bu*, *ю/ju*.

²This is the present tense form of the verb хила/xila when it is acting as a copular verb. There is another conjugation for хила/xila, in which the present tense is хуьлу/xuлу, however, in this paradigm the meaning is ‘to become’ or ‘to occur’.

| Class Name | Singular | Plural | Example Tokens | |
|----------------------------------|----------|--------|---|---|
| v.class | v- | d-/b- | к1ант в-у k'ant v-u <i>the boy</i> | к1ентий д-у k'entij d-u <i>the boys</i> |
| j.class | j- | d-/b- | й01 ю(й-у) jow j-u <i>the girl</i> | мехкарий б-у mekkarij b-u <i>the girls</i> |
| j.classII | j- | j- | пхъагал ю phwagal j-u <i>the rabbit</i> | пхъагал-ш ю phwagal-sh j-u <i>the rabbits</i> |
| d.class | d- | d- | наж д-у nazh d-u <i>the oak</i> | нежнаш д-у nezhnash d-u <i>the oaks</i> |
| b.class | b- | b- | мангал б-у mangal b-u <i>the scythe</i> | мангал-ш б-у mangal-sh b-u <i>the scythes</i> |
| b.classII | b- | d- | 1аж б-у wazh b-u <i>the apple</i> | 1ежаш д-у |
| wezhash d-u <i>the apples</i> | | | | |

The semantic correlation of biological gender and noun-class/gender does exist to a certain extent in Chechen. Masculine and feminine gender are present in the system, with *v-* being the exponent reserved exclusively for nouns pertaining to animate subjects that are of the biologically masculine gender. All biologically masculine nouns are *v.class*, and all *v.class* nouns are masculine. Biologically feminine, animate nouns belong to *j.class*, however, not all *j.class* nouns are biologically feminine, animate nouns. This is to say that all biologically feminine, animate nouns are *j.class* nouns, but not all *j.class* nouns are biologically feminine, animate nouns.

D.class nouns are the most common noun in the system and are used for the citation form of classed adjectives and classed verbs in Chechen dictionaries. Additionally, *d.class* is the default class for noun-agreement and is the citation form for classed predicates. Additionally, all masdar verb forms are *d.class*.

B.class, *J.classII*, and *B.classII* are idiosyncratic. There exists some lexical pattern for *b.class* stemming from historical Nakh words beginning in a labial sound (i.e. ‘й01 ю/ jow j-u’, ‘мехкарий бу/mekkarii b-u’), which will discuss in a further section discussing historical developments in Chechen.

3.2.2 Absolutive and Augment Bases

Chechen is a highly inflected and mostly agglutinative type language with a robust case system in its nominal morphology. Nouns in Chechen often undergo morphophonological alternations and display the addition of additional phonological material when case suffixes are added. Typically, all cases forms use a base form that differs from the absolutive. We

refer to this form of the noun as the *augment base* (glossed as AUG). An example of this is shown below:

Таблица 4: My caption

| | <i>Class I - Ablaut</i> | <i>Class VI - 'chu' extension</i> |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|---|
| Absolutive | лом lom lion | нохчи noxchi Chechen |
| Genitive | лоьм-ан loem-an lion.AUG-GEN | нохчи-чуь-н noxchi-chy-n Chechen-AUG-GEN |
| Dative | лоьм-ана loem-ana lion.AUG-DAT | нохчи-ч{̄у}-на noxchi-chuu-na Chechen-AUG-DAT |
| Ergative | лоьм-о loeman-uo lion.AUG-ERG | нохчи-ч{̄о} noxchi-ch-uo Chechen-AUG-ERG |
| Allative | лоьм-е loem-ie lion.AUG-ALL | нохчи-чуь-нга noxchi-chy-nga Chechen-AUG-ALL |
| Instrumental | лоьм-аца loem-aca lion.AUG-INST | нохчи-чуь-нца noxchi-chy-ncsa Chechen-AUG-ALL |
| Locative | лоьм-ах loem-ax lion.AUG-LOC | нохчи-чу-х noxchi-chu-x Chechen-AUG-LOC |
| Comparative | лоьм-ал loem-al lion.AUG-COMP | нохчи-чу-л noxchi-chu-l Chechen-AUG-COMP |

3.2.3 Number

Chechen displays two categories for grammatical number: **singular** and **plural**. The plural morphemes include $-(a)ш/-(a)sh$, $-(и)й/-(i)j$, as well as cases where the plural form is ideosyncratic/lexically determined. The plural form is attached to the augmented base of the noun:

- (14) кор к̄ораш
kor koor-ash
window window.AUG-PL
'window', 'windows'

- (15) маха м̄хий
 мааха miexij
 needle needle.AUG-PL
 ‘needle’, ‘needles’

Chechen also displays *pluralia tantu*:

- (16) мачий
 маач-ii
 shoe.AUG-PL
 ‘shoes’

The ending ‘-ий/-ij’ is frequently used for nouns referring to animals, plants, insects, and groups of people or kinship terms:

- (17) хъаша хъеший
 hwaasha hwiesh-ij
 guest.ABS.SG guest.AUG-ABS.PL
 ‘guest’, ‘guests’
- (18) ч1ара ч1ейрий
 чаара cheir-ii
 fish.ABS.SG fish.AUG-ABS.PL
 ‘(a single) fish’, ‘(many) fish’
- (19) моз мозий
 муоз муоз-ii
 fly.ABS.SG fly.AUG-ABS.PL
 ‘fly’, ‘flies’ (i.e the insect)

An allomorph of the -ий/-ij ending, -й/-j, is always added to nouns ending in the substantivizing suffixes -ло/-lo, -чо/-cho, and -о/-o. These suffixes are always found on nouns referring to groups of people based on their origin, location, or professions.

- (20) ламаро ламарой
 лаам-аруо лаам-аро-ј
 mountain-SUBSTAN-ABS.SG mountain-SUBSTAN.AUG-ABS.PL
 ‘mountainer (i.e from the highlands)’ ‘mountainers’
- (21) дехо дехой
 дее-хо дее-хо-ј
 father.AUG-SUBSTAN-ABS.SG father.AUG-SUBSTANT-ABS.PL
 ‘father’s relative’ ‘father’s relatives’
- (22) белхало белхалой
 белхалуо белхало-ј
 labourer.ABS.SG labourer-ABS.PL
 ‘labourer’, ‘labourers’

Proper nouns may also be pluralized with the morpheme -г1ар/*-ghar*. This morpheme refers to a collective group of people or family. Both a family name or a family member may take this ending

- (23) Сатуев Сатуевг1ар
 Satujev Satujevghar-ghar
 Satujev.ABS.SG Satujev-ABS.PL
 Satujevs
- (24) гала галнаш
 gala gal-na-sh
 noodle.ABS.SG noodle-AUG-ABS.PL
 ‘noodle’, ‘noodles’
- (25) куьзга куьзганаш
 kyzga kyzga-na-sh
 glass.ABS.SG glass-AUG-ABS.PL
 ‘(a pane of) glass’, ‘(panes of) glass’

In the case of nouns ending in a historical -l or -r (represented in the orthography as a lack of a final, unpronounced -a), addition of the -ash suffix triggers gemination of the final -l or -r sound.

- (26) кол коьллаш
 kol koel-lash
 bush.ABS.SG bush.AUG-ABS.PL
 ‘bush’, ‘bushes’
- (27) тур таппаш
 tur tar-rash
 sword.ABS.SG sword.AUG-ABS.PL
 ‘sword’, ‘swords’

The -(a)ш/-(a)sh suffix is regularly added to most all nouns ending in -p/-r, to nouns whose augmented bases end in -p/-r, the substantivized adjectives using the -ap/-ar suffix, as well as to gerund verb forms (masdars). In the standard dialect, the vowel on the suffix -a/-a is generally reduced to the point of deletion.

- (28) патар патарш
 patar patar-sh
 leaf.ABS.SG leaf.AUG-ABS.PL
 ‘leaf’, ‘leaves’

In addition to regularly formed plurals, Chechen also has irregular plurals:

- (29) йо1 мехкарий
 jow mexkarij
 girl.ABS.SG girl.ABS.PL
 ‘girl’, ‘girls’

- (30) стар нах
 stag нах
 person.ABS.SG person.ABS.PL
 ‘person’, ‘people’

3.2.4 Case

Chechen is an ergative-absolutive type system with at least 10 morphologically distinct cases. The precise number of Chechen cases differs depending on using a strictly morphological versus semantic criteria for determining the number of cases. Additionally, Chechen is a left-branching type language and has postpositions rather than prepositions. Postpositional adjuncts/modifiers, therefore, appear in the same position, relatively, to a case morpheme, as case is marked via the addition of suffixes to the oblique or augmented base (referred to in our glosses as AUG). Here we detail the typical case morphemes, their formation, and their semantic and syntactic role in a given sentence. The typical case endings in the singular and the plural around illustrated in the following table:

Таблица 5: Generalized Chechen Case Forms

| Case | Gloss | Singular | Plural | Question Forms |
|---------------------|--------|-------------------|-----------------------------|---|
| <i>Absolutive</i> | {ABS} | -∅ | -(а)ш/- (a)sh, -и/i, -ий/ij | мила/mila - ‘who(m)’ хлун/hun - ‘what’ |
| <i>Ergative</i> | {ERG} | -о/-уо, -(а)с/-ас | -(а)ш-а/-ash-a | хъан/hwan - ‘who’ стен/stien - ‘what’ |
| <i>Genitive</i> | {GEN} | -н/-н | -ийн/-iin, -ин/-in | хъенан/hwienan - ‘whose’ стенан/stienan - ‘of what’ |
| <i>Dative</i> | {DAT} | -на | (а)ша-на | хъанна/hwanna - ‘to whom’ стенна/stienna - ‘to what’ |
| <i>Allative</i> | {ALL} | -е/-ие, -га/-га | -(а)ш-ка/- (a)sh-ka | хъаьнга/hwaenga - ‘to who(’s ho стенга/stienga - ‘(up) to what’ |
| <i>Instrumental</i> | {INST} | -ца/-ца | -(а)ш-ца/- (a)sh-ca | хъанца/hwanca - ‘with whom’ стенца/stienca - ‘with what’ |
| <i>Lative</i> | {LAT} | -х/-х | -ях/-iax, -их/-ix | хъанак/hwanax - ‘about whom’ стенак/stienax - ‘from/about wh |
| <i>Comparative</i> | {COMP} | -л/-л | -ял/-ial, -ил/-il | хъанал/hwanal - ‘than who’ стенал/stienal - ‘than what’ |
| <i>Inessive</i> | {INES} | -ахь/-ahw | -(а)ш-ка-хь/- (a)sh-ka-hw | хъаьнгахь/ hwangahw- ‘at whom’ стенгахь/stiengahw - ‘at what’ |
| <i>Ablative</i> | {ABL} | -ара/-ара | -(а)ш-ка-ра/- (a)sh-ka-ra | хъангара/hwangara - ‘from whom’ стенгара/stiengara - ‘from what’ |

The Absolutive Case The absolutive case (ABS) is the citation or uninflected form of the noun. Semantically, it is the form of a noun that denotes either 1) the subject of an intransitive/copular sentence, 2) the object of a transitive verb, 3) a noun being called in the

vocative, or 4) the subject and object of a sentence wherein the verb is found in the present progressive tense (the ‘biabsolutive construction’).

- (31) сан ц1е Иван ю
 san c'e Ivan j-u
 1SG.GEN name.*j-class*.ABS.SG Ivan.*v-class*.ABS.SG *j-COP*
 ‘My name is Ivan’

In the above example, we see the copular verb *ju* is marked with agreement to *j.class*, which is also marked as the noun-class/gender for the noun ‘ц1е/c’e’. The absolutive case is used for both arguments of the copular sentences in the form ‘X is Y’, however, only the noun-class on argument ‘X’ acts as the probe for agreement on classed predicates. In the case of the subject of an intransitive sentence, the absolutive argument, or ‘subject’/‘agent’ of the sentence, is also the probe for agreement.

- (32) со базара воьду
 So bazar-a v-oedu
 1SG.ABS.*v-class* bazar-ALL *v-go*.PRES
 ‘I(a man) go to the bazaar (habitually).’

Absolutive arguments always trigger agreement in Chechen sentences. This is true in most all cases, particularly in the case of transitive sentences or sentences where the verb demands a subject appear in a different case. There does exist a construction, however, in which both the subject and the object of a transitive verb appear in the absolutive case. In this case, the predicate verb is in the present progressive tense.

- (33) со бепиг деш ву
 so bepig d-ie-sh v-u
 1SG.ABS.*v-class* bread.*d-class*.ABS.SG *d-do-PROG*.PTCP *v-COP*
 ‘I (a man) am making bread (right now).’

In (33), both the subject/agent and object/theme appear in the absolutive case with a type of split agreement, where the *v-class* features of the subject ‘*co/so*’ appears on the copular verb *vy/v-u* and the *d-class* feature of the object ‘*benuz/bepig*’ appear on the present progressive participial form of the verb ‘*дан/dan*’ (‘to do’ or ‘to make’). We discuss the specifics of this construction, named ‘the biabsolutive construction’ in the section regarding syntax and constituent order in sentences using participles.

The Ergative Case The Ergative Case (ERG) is mainly used to mark the subject of a transitive verb. It corresponds to the thematic role of AGENT. The ergative case is formed with the suffixes *-aca/-asa*, *-ac/-as*, *-o/-uo*.³ Of these suffixes, *-o/-uo* is more productive than *-aca/-asa* and *-c/-s*. When *-o/-uo* is added to a noun that ends in a vowel, it generally appears with a buffer consonant *-н/-n-* in between the final vowel and the case ending. In the case of word-final *-a/-a* that is generally unpronounced, the case ending *-o/-uo* replaces this vowel in the written language.

³For many highland dialects, it is also possible to have null realization of the ergative. In these dialects, the only indicator of which noun is the subject and which one is the agent is agreement or context.

- (34) котамо хлуъа до
 kuot-am-uo hu'a d-o
 chicken-AUG-ERG.SG egg. *d-class*.ABS.SG *d-do*.PRES
 'A chicken lays an egg.'

The ergative case can not control agreement. In transitive sentences, the noun-class features of the object, rendered in the absolutive case, are found on the inflected verb, provided that the inflected verb belongs to the group of 'classed verbs'.

- (35) Ас бепиг дина
 as bepig d-ina
 1SG.ERG bread. *d-class*.ABS.SG *d-do*.PST.PERF
 'I made bread.'

- (36) Ахьмада машина эцна
 ahwmad-a mashina iec-na
 Ahwmad-ERG car.ABS.SG buy-PST.PERF
 'Ahmad bought a car.'

In the above examples, we see that (35) displays agreement between the absolutive argument and the predicate *дина/d-ina*. This is due to 2 factors, 1) the noun-class of the absolutive argument (in (35) - the noun *бениз/bepig*) is *d.class*, and 2) the predicate *дина/d-ina* is the past tense of the 'classed verb' *дан/dan* ('to do' or 'to make'). In the case of sentence (36), the predicate *эцна/ieсна* is the past tense form of the verb *эца/ieca*, which is not a 'classed verb' and, therefore, no agreement is shown. Despite the lack of overt agreement, (36) shows the object of the transitive verb in the absolutive and the agent/subject of the verb in the ergative.

In addition to the function mentioned above, the ergative case can also express obligation or necessity when used with the classed verb '*деза/dieza*'. In this use, it also retains agreement with the noun-class of the absolutive argument.

- (37) нанас бепиг дан деза
 naan-as bepig d-an d-ieza
 mother.AUG-ERG.SG bread. *d-class*.ABS.SG *d-do*.INF *d-must*.PRES
 'Mother has to make bread.'

The Genitive Case The Genitive Case links two noun phrases together, with the modifying noun phrase preceding the head noun phrase. It is similar in function to the genitive cases found in Latin, German, Russian, and (particularly in the case of syntax) Turkic languages. The suffixes for the genitive case are:

- (38) Ахмадан машина керла ю
 Ahwmad-an mashina kerla j-u
 Ahwmad.AUG-GEN.SG car. *j-class*.ABS.SG new *j-COP*
 'Ahwmad's car is new.'

The genitive case also acts as the case that governs most all post positions.

The Dative Case The Dative Case takes a number of functions in Chechen. Principally, it marks the recipient of an action or indirect object. The dative case is formed with the suffix *-ана/-ana* added to the noun/augment base. The buffer vowel *-a-* is present when the noun/augment base ends in a consonant.

- (39) Ас ХIасанна буьрка яьлла
 as Hasan-na burka j-ael-la
 1SG.ERG Hasan.AUG-DAT.SG ball.*j-class*.ABS.SG *j-give*.PST
 ‘I gave Hasan a ball.’

- (40) нанас шен берана хьехар дина.
 nana-s шен ber-ana хьехар d-i-na
 mother.ERG.SG child.DAT.SG advice.*d*.ABS.SG *d-do*-PST.PERF
 ‘The mother gave her child an advice.’

Sentences (39) and (40) illustrate the indirect object being marked with the dative case.

Additionally, the dative case is used extensively in Chechen to mark the subject of a number of verbs that describe emotion, though, feeling, or physical sense. We group these verbs under the term ‘*psych-verbs*’. These verbs include verbs such as ‘*хаза/xa’a*’ (to know), ‘*деза/d-ieza*’ (to like, to love, to need), ‘*хаза/xaza*’ (to hear), and ‘*ган/gan*’ (to see).

- (41) суна ламнаш деза
 suna laem-na-sh d-ieza
 1SG.DAT mountain.*bII*-AUG-ABS.PL *d-like*.PRES
 ‘I like mountains.’

- (42) Асланна стигал го
 Aslan-na stigal go
 Aslan-DAT sky.ABS.SG see.PRES

‘Aslan sees the sky’

We may summarize this function of the dative case as marking the thematic EXPERIENCER of a given verb. It is important to note that in the case of (41) that the dative subject can not control for agreement. Like in examples for the ergative case, classed predicates adopt the noun class of the absolutive argument of the verb.

The dative case is also used with time expressions to indicate the extent or total frame of time that an action has or will take place.

- (43) Имран шина баттана Москох вахара
 Imran shi-na batt-ana Mosko-x v-axa-ra
 Imran.*v*.ABS two-DAT month.AUG-DAT Moscow-LAT *v-go*-RPST
 ‘Imran went to Moscow for two weeks’

- (44) со цига шина кIирана бен ца яхара
 suo ci-ga shi-na k’ira-na bien ca j-axa-ra
 1SG.ABS.*j* there-ALL two-DAT week-DAT only NEG *j-go*-RPST
 ‘I (a woman) went there for only two weeks.’

Dative is also used to express the reason for certain predicates.

- (45) Баркалла кехат яздарна
 barkalla kexat jaz-d-a-r-na
 thank.you letter.*d*.ABS.SG write-*d*-do-MSDR-DAT
 ‘Thank you for writing the letter’

The Instrumental Case The instrumental case (INST) marks the instrument of a given action and corresponds closely to prepositional phrases in English that use the preposition ‘with’. It is used to denote also the means by which a given action takes place. The case is formed by adding *-ца/-ca* to the noun/augment base, with a buffer vowel *-a-* for nouns/augment bases ending in a consonant.

- (46) Руслана бепиг уърсаца дохадо
 Ruslan-a berig ursa-ca d-ox-a-do
 Ruslan.ERG.ABS bread.*d*.ABS.SG knife-INST.SG *d*-cut-PRES
 ‘Ruslan cuts bread with a knife.’

The case is also used to describe accompaniment, again, similar to the use of English ‘with’.

- (47) Аслан ресторане соьца глур ву
 Aslan restoran-e soeca ghur v-u
 Aslan.*v*.ABS.SG restaurant-ALL.SG 1SG.INST go.FUT.PTCP *v*-COP
 ‘Aslan will go to the restaurant with you’

The Lative Case The lative case (LAT) is used to denote the source or origin of actions and other nouns. It is formed by adding the suffix *-x* to the noun/augment base, and also may take a buffer vowel *-a-*. Specifically, it can be used to denote the partitive (a function that is handled in many European languages by the genitive).

- (48) ас шурах кърд бира
 as shur-ax q’urd b-i-ra
 1SG.ERG milk-LAT.SG sip.*b*.ABS.SG *b*-do-RPST
 ‘I took a sip of the milk (lit. I did a sip)’

The lative can also be used to show the source material of another noun.

- (49) цо дечигах лайг бира
 cuo dechig-a-x waig b-i-ra
 3SG.ERG wood-LAT.SG spoon.*b*.ABS.SG *b*-make-RPST
 ‘He made a spoon out of wood’

The lative case is therefore also used to describe the topic or themes of certain verbs. In this meaning it closely corresponds to the English preposition ‘about’ (i.e ‘talk about’, ‘write about’). The lative also governs the over postposition *лаьцна/лаесна*, which is a formal version of ‘about’.

- (50) Муса Заремах лоь
 Musa Zarema-x loe
 Musa-ABS.SG Zarema-LAT.SG talk-PRES
 ‘Musa talks about Zarema’

The lative may also be used in this family of meaning to describe the cause or reason of an event.

- (51) Цунан нускал вончу лазарах келхана
 Cunan nuskal von-chu lazar-ax kelxa-na
 3SG.ERG bride.ABS.SG bad-OBL illness-LAT die-PST.PERF
 ‘His fiancée died of cancer.’

Finally, the lative case may also arbitrarily mark the arguments of certain verbs. The verb ‘*кхета/qieta*’ (‘to touch’/‘to understand’) is one such verb.

- (52) со ахь боху(н)чох ца кхета
 suo ahw boxu-(n)-ch-uox ca qieta
 1SG.ABS 2SG.ERG say-PRS.RCP-OBL-LAT NEG understand.PRES
 ‘I don’t understand what you have said.’

The Comparative Case The comparative case (COM) is used exclusively to frame a comparative statement. In the construction ‘A is Xer than B’, the noun B is marked with the comparative case. The case is formed by adding -л/-l to a noun/augment base, and may also have a buffer vowel.

- (53) сан машина хьан машинал хазах ю
 san mashina hwan mashina xaza-x j-u
 1SG.GEN car.j.ABS.SG 2SG.GEN car-COM.SG beautiful-COMP j-COP
 ‘My car is prettier than your car’

The comparative case may also be used with masdar-form verbs.

- (54) кехат яздар книга ешарал диках дац
 kiexat jaz-d-a-r kniga j-esha-r dikax d-ac
 letter.d.ABS.SG write-d-do-MSDR.d book.j.ABS.SG j-read-MSDR.d good d-COP.NEG
 ‘Writing a letter is not better than reading a book’

The Allative Case The allative case (ALL) is also referred to as a locative case by some grammarians. It is a case that describes the goal or destination of a given action. It is formed by adding -за/-ga to a noun/augment base, with the possibility of a buffer vowel. It also has the form -е/ie, mainly for Russian loan words, masdar verb forms, and some idiosyncratically determined nouns.

- (55) Аслан школе воьду
 Aslan shkol-ie v-oed-u
 Aslan.v.ABS.SG school-ALL v-go-PRES
 ‘Aslan goes to(wards) school’

The case is also used two important Chechen moods. In causative constructions, the allative marks the argument that is being made to perform the action. In other words, in the formula for transitive causative verbs, ‘X makes Y to Z’, X is marked in the ergative, Z in the absolutive, and Y in allative.

- (56) 1умара Исламага куьзга оьхьадожадийтира
 Wumar-a Islam-aga kyzga oehwa-dozha-dii-ira
 Wumar-ERG.SG Islam-ALL.SG mirror.ABS.SG PVERB-fall-CAUS-RPST
 ‘Wumar made Islam drop the mirror.’

The allative case also marks the subject of a verb in the potential mood.

- (57) 1умарага нохчийн мотт бийцало
 Wumar-aga nohchiin muott b-iica-lo
 Wumar-ALL.SG Chechen language.b.ABS.SG b-speak-POT.PRES
 ‘Wumar is able to speak Chechen’

There is significant variation with the allative case and dative case with respect to marking indirect objects.

The Inessive Case The inessive case is a derivative of the allative case and, like the allative case, it also describes a location. Unlike the allative case, the inessive case describes static location. It is formed with the suffix *-хь/-hw*, which attaches to the noun/augment base, and also may take a buffer *-a-* when attaching to a form that ends in a consonant. The plural suffix for the inessive case is ‘*-ash-ka-hw*’, wherein the ending attaches to the allative plural ending of ‘*-ash-ka*’.

- (58) со универистете вьодуш ву
 suo universitet-e v-oed-u-sh v-u
 1SG.SG.v university-ALL v-go-PRES-PTCP v-COP
 ‘I am going to the university (right now)’
- (59) со универистетахь доьшуш ву
 suo universitet-ahw d-oesh-u-sh v-u
 1SG.ABS.v university-INES d-read-PRES-PTCP v-COP
 ‘I am studying at the university’

The Ablative Case The ablative case (ABL) is used to denote the physical source of an action. It is governed exclusively intransitive verbs and expresses either the source or direction. The case defines the benchmark of an action in a certain place or time frame. It is formed by adding the suffix *-pa/-ra* to the noun/augment base and may also have a buffer vowel. In pronouns and in the plural, the ablative is layered with the allative case, much like the inessive case.

- (60) ас сайна машина эцира базарара
 as saina mashina ies-ira baazar-ra
 1SG.ERG 1SG.REFLX.GEN car.ABS.SG take-RPST market.AUG-ABL
 ‘I bought my own car at the market.’

- (61) co цаьргара схъавеара
suo carga-ra sxhwa-v-ea-ra
1SG.ABS.v 3SG.ALL-ABL DEC.PREV-v-come-RPST
‘I came from their’s (their place).’

3.2.5 Articles

Chechen does not have overt definite articles like in English, Arabic or German. Indefinite articles may be represented using the numeral tshwa/цхъа

3.2.6 Pronouns

The pronominal system of Chechen expresses person and number with a 1st, 2nd, 3rd person and singular and plural number, typical of other European languages. In addition to these pronouns, Chechen also has a inclusive/exclusive distinction in 1st person plural.

Таблица 6: Chechen pronouns declined for case

| | Absolutive | Genitive | Dative | Ergative | Lative | Comparative | Allative | Locative | Instrumental |
|-----------------------|------------|-----------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| I | co so | сан san | суна suna | ac as | сох sox | сол sol | соьга soeg | соьхь soehw | соьца soec |
| you | хьо hwo | хьан hwan | хьуна hwun | ахь ahw | хьох hwox | хьол hwol | хьоьга hwoeg | хьоьхь hwoehw | хьоьца hwoec |
| he/she/it | иза iz | цуьнан супа | цуьна суп | цо co | цунах cupax | цул cul | цуьнга cung | цуьнахь cupahw | цуьца cuc |
| we (exclusive) | вай vaj | вайн vajn | вайна vajna | вай vaj | вайх vajx | вайл vajl | вайга vajg | вайхь vajhw | вайца vajc |
| we (inclusive) | тхо txo | тхан txan | тхуна txun | ох ooh | тхох txox | тхол txol | тхоьга txoeg | тхоьхь txoehw | тхоьца txoec |
| you (pl) | шу shu | шун shun | шуна shun | аш ash | шух shux | шул shul | шуьга shyg | шуьхьа shyhwh | шуьца shyc |
| they | уьш ysh | церап ceeran | царна caarn | цара caar | царах carax | царал caral | цаьрга caerg | цаьрахь caerahw | цаьрца caerc |

4 Verbal Morphology

4.1 Tenses

Chechen has a rich system of tenses, complete with present, past, and future. In addition to tense, the Chechen verb is also sensitive to aspect and evidentiality. Here we detail the core tenses (present, past, and future), the progressive constructions (present progressive,

4.1.1 Present Tenses

The Present Indefinite/ Simple Present Tense The simple present tense is used to describe and action that occurs on a regular basis in the present. Based on the semantics, these actions can also be interpreted to be habitual, repeated, or planned events that occur on a regular basis. Ergo, the simple present tense is also the from that communications

imperfective aspect. The present tense is formed in Chechen by means of vowel alternations stemming from the rounding assimilation from the marker -y/-u on to the vowel of the verbal root. In general, we see the following pattern with respect to these vowel alternations

Таблица 7: Simple present vowel alternations

| Alternation | Example | Translation |
|----------------------|--------------|-------------------|
| а - о / а - о | дада/dada | 'to run' |
| | доду/dodu | 'run/runs' |
| | мала/mala | 'to drink' |
| | молу/molu | 'drink/drinks' |
| | кхарза/qarza | 'to fry' |
| | кхорзу/qorzu | 'fry/fries' |
| е - оь / ie - ое | зен/zien | 'to examine' |
| | зоь/zoe | 'examine/examine' |
| | лен/lien | 'to talk |
| | лоь/loe | 'talk/talks' |
| о - у / (у)о - у(у) | тоса/tosa | 'to feel' |
| | тусу/tusu | 'feel/feels' |
| | дохка/duoxka | 'to sell' |
| | духка/duuxka | 'sell/sells' |
| и - уь / i(i) - у(у) | дижа/diizha | 'to sleep' |
| | дуьжу/dyuzhu | 'sleep/sleeps' |
| | хила/xila | 'to happen' |
| | хуьлу/xulu | 'happen/happens' |

It is one of the most common Chechen verb forms and it is most commonly refer to when speaking about present events. Below we offer further examples:

(62) **деша - доьшу / diesha - doeshu** 'read'

цо газет доьшу массо дийнахь
 цоо gaziet d-oesh-u massuo dii-na-hw
 3SG.ERG newspaper.*d-class* *d-read-PRES* each day-AUG-LOC

'He reads the newspaper everyday'

(63) **хьеха - хьоьху / hwiexa - hwoexu** 'teach'

Маликас нохчийн мотт хьоьху школехь
 Malik-as noxchiin mott hwoex-u shkol-e-hw
 Malik-ERG Chechen language.*b.ABS.SG* teach-PRES school-AUG-INES

'Malik teaches Chechen at school.'

(64) **дохка - духку / doxka - duxku** 'sell'

Салмана бежанаш духку базараъхъ хлора
 Salman-a bezha-n-ash duxk-u bazar-aeHW hora
 Salman-ABS.SG cattle.*bII*-AUG-ABS.PL *bII*-sell-PRES market-LOC every
 кИрандийнахъ
 k'irandii-n-ahw
 sunday-AUG-LOC

‘Salman sells the cattle at the market every Sunday.’

Present Progressive Tense The present progressive tense is formed by using an analytic construction with the present participle and the copular verb ‘*dy/d-u*’. The suffix *-u/-sh* is attached to the simple present form. As mentioned in the section regarding absolutive case, in the present progressive, both object and subject of the predicate verb are found in the absolutive case and the sources of agreement for the auxiliary and participle verbs are divided between subject (auxiliary) and object (participle). The present progressive tense differs from the simple present tense in that it denotes only actions occurring in the present, rather than habitual or continually planned events.

(65) цигиг шура молуш ду
 cigig shura mol-ush d-u
 cat.*d-class*.ABS.SG milk.ABS.SG drink-PRES-PTCP *d*-COP
 ‘The cat is drinking milk.’

(66) Салман бежанаш духкуш ву базарехъ
 Salman biezha-n-ash duxk-u-sh v-u bazar-e-hw
 Salman.*v*.ABS.SG cattle.*d*-AUG-ABS.PL *d*-sell-PRES-PTCP *v*-COP bazar-AUG-LOC
 ‘Salman is selling cattle at the bazar’

The Present Perfect Tense This tense is mostly used to refer to actions completed in the past but without giving an idea about the time of its occurrence. It is formed by alternations of the stem vowel and the addition of the suffix *-na/-na*.

Таблица 8: Alternations for Present Perfect

| Alternation | Example | Lemma |
|-------------|--------------------|-----------|
| a - e | мала/mala | 'drink' |
| | /mel-na/ | |
| a - ae | мелла/mella | 'recieve' |
| | даккха/daqqa | |
| | /daeqq-ina/ | |
| ie - ie | даьккхина/daeqqina | 'read' |
| | деша/diesha | |
| | /diesh-na/ | |
| e - ii | дешна/dieshna | 'hit' |
| | детта/detta | |
| | /dett-na/ | |
| o - oe | деттина/dettina | 'pour' |
| | догта/dotta | |
| | /doett-na/ | |
| i - i | доьгтина/doettina | 'lead' |
| | дига/diga | |
| | /dig-na/ | |
| | дигна/digna | |

Stems that already end in a geminate consonant have a buffer vowel -и/-i inserted between the alternated stem and the -на/-na suffix. Stems that end in -л/-l, -т/-t -д/-d -ж/-zh, -х/-x have geminated stems instead of the addition of -на/-na.

(67) Geminated Stems for Present Perfect

- хада/xada [a-ae] > /xaed-na/ > хаьдда/xaedda 'break, stop'
- дата/data [a-ae] > /daet-na/ > даьгта/daetta 'to show'
- дожа/dozha [o-oe] > /doezh-na/ > доьжжа/doezhzha 'to drop'
- лаха/laxa [a-e] > /lex-na/ > лехха/lexxa 'to find'

4.1.2 Past Tenses

Chechen has 5 past tenses: recent witnessed past, remote witnessed past, the past imperfective, the past perfective, and the past progressive. Here we detail the formation and example sentences of the past tenses, however, past witnessed vs past non-witnessed enters into the domain of mood with evidentiality. The more precise semantic nuances of these forms will be discussed that section, further afield.

Recent Past Tense - Witnessed The recent past tense (PST) is a common Chechen past tense that requires 3 conditions to be used: 1) the action has occurred in the past, 2) the event has continued to the time of speaking, and 3) the speaker has directly witnessed the event. It is formed with the suffix -u/-i and, like many of the other tenses, this tense is also formed by a series of vowel alternations:

Таблица 9: Recent Past Tense - Witnessed

| Alternation | Examples | Translation |
|------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| a - e / aa - e | мала / mala мел-и / mel-i | ‘drink’ |
| a - аь / a - ae | даккха / daqqa даьккх-и / daeqq-i | ‘get’ |
| e - e / ie - ie | деша / diesha деш-и / dieshi | ‘read’ |
| e - ий / ie - ii | детта / dietta дийтт-и / diitt-i | ‘throw’ |
| o - уь / uo - уу | тоха / tuoxa туьхи / туух-i | ‘hit’ |
| o - оь / o - oe | дотта / dotta доьтт-и / doett-i | ‘pour’ |
| i - и / i - i | дига / diga диг-и / dig-i | ‘lead’ |

Remote Past Tense - Witnessed The remote past tense (RPST) - witnessed fulfils all the requirements of the recent present tense witnessed on a semantic level. It is formed by the same alternations described above for the recent present tense witnessed, only this time the suffix added is *-upa/ira*. The below two sentences illustrate the semantic difference between the recent and remote past tense witnessed forms.

- (68) Заремас суна чай доьтти
 Zarema-s suna chaj d-oett-i
 Zarema-ERG.SG 1SG.DAT tea.*d*.-ABS.SG *d*-pour-PST
 ‘Zarema (just) poured me (some) tea.’
- (69) Заремас суна чай доьттира
 Zarema-s suna chaj d-oett-ira
 Zarema-ERG.SG 1SG.DAT tea.*d*.ABS.SG *d*-pour-RPST
 ‘Zarema pour me (some) tea (a while ago)’

The Past Imperfective Tense The past imperfective tense (PST.IMPF) is used to describe an event that is in the past, however, it is not clear in this tense if the action has been completed. This tense is formed by adding the suffix *-pa/-ra* to the simple present tense form. Therefore, we analyze this is another type of compounded tense, wherein the inflection for present tense indicates imperfective aspect, and the *-pa/-ra* carries past tense meaning.

Таблица 10: Past Imperfective Formation

| Alternation | Simple Present | Past Imperfective | Lemma |
|-------------|-------------------------------|--------------------|-----------|
| a - o | дада/dada доду/dod-u | додура/dod-u-ra | ‘run’ |
| e - oe | деша/diesha дощу/doesh-u | дощура/doesh-u-ra | ‘read’ |
| o - u | тоса/tosa тусу/tus-u | тусура/tus-u-ra | ‘sense’ |
| i - y | дийжа/diizha дуйжу/dyuzh-u | дуйжура/dyuzh-u-ra | ‘sleep’ |
| u - u | дула/dula дулу/dulu | дулура/dul-u-ra | ‘inflate’ |

Past Perfect Tense The past perfect tense (PST.PERF) denotes an action that has occurred in the past and is completed in the present, and this action was not witnessed by the speaker. It is formed by adding *-ra* to the present perfect (PRES.PERF) form, in which *-na-* becomes *-ne-*

Таблица 11: Past Perfect Tense Formation

| Alternation | Present Perfect | Past Perfect | Lemma |
|-------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|---------|
| a - e | мелла mella | мел-не+ра mel-ne-ra | ‘drink’ |
| a - ae | даьккхина daeqqina | даьккх-не+ра daeqq-ne-ra | ‘get’ |
| ie - ie | дешна dieshna | деш-не+ра diesh-ne-ra | ‘read’ |
| e - ii | деттина dettina | детти-не+ра detti-ne-ra | ‘hit’ |
| o - oe | дощтина doettina | дощти-не+ра doetti-ne-ra | ‘pour’ |
| i - i | дигна digna | диг-не+ра dig-ne-ra | ‘lead’ |

Past Progressive Tense The past progressive tense (PST.PROG) is nearly identical to the present progressive in its formation - the major difference being the tense of the copular verb. The form of the copula used in the past progressive tense is *дара/d-ara*, which is the same as the past tense of the copular verb in copular sentences. The past progressive tense is still a construction with a present participle verb form and also still displays biabsolutive arguments and split agreement.

- (70)

| | | | |
|---|------|----------|-------|
| цициг | шур | молуш | дара |
| cicig | shur | mol-u-sh | d-ara |
| cat. <i>d</i> .ABS.SG milk. <i>d</i> .ABS.SG drink-PRES-PTCP <i>d</i> -COP.PST.IMPF | | | |
| ‘The cat was drinking milk.’ | | | |
- (71)

| | | | |
|---|------------|-------------|-------|
| Салман | бежанаш | духкуш | вара |
| Salman | bezhana-sh | d-ouxk-u-sh | v-ara |
| Salman. <i>v</i> .ABS.SG cattle. <i>jII</i> -AUG-ABS.PL <i>jII</i> -sell-PRES-PTCP <i>v</i> -COP.PST.IMPF | | | |
| ‘Salman was selling cattle.’ | | | |

4.1.3 Future Tenses

Chechen has 3 different future tenses. These tenses describe events that will occur in the future

Potential Future The potential future (POT.FUT) describes a possible future or speculation of events that will come to pass. It denotes an action that is bound to happen, and may have a shade of meaning of making a strong recommendation. It is formed by adding the suffix *-p/-r* to the simple present base.

Таблица 12: Potential Future Formation

| Alternation | Present Simple | Potential Future | Lemma |
|-------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|---------|
| a - o | дада >доду dada >dod-u | додур dodu-r | ‘run’ |
| e - oe | эца >оьцу iesca >oec-u | оьцур oecu-r | ‘buy’ |
| o - u | тоса >тусу tosa >tus-u | тусур tusur-r | ‘feel’ |
| i - y | дийжа >дуйьжу diizha >dyyzh-u | дуйьжур dyyzhu-r | ‘sleep’ |

Compound Future The compound future is the widely used future tense in Chechen. It describes events that will occur in the future and, unlike the potential future, it is used without additional shades of meaning. It is formed by using the potential future form as a participle and the copular verb *ды/d-u*. Agreement with *ды/d-u* is taken by the absolutive argument when the sentence is transitive.

Future Continuous Future continuous tense is structurally quite complicated, but transparent. It is derived using the progressive present participle for other progressive tenses, the potential future/future participle form of the verb *ды/d-u*, which is the form *xup/xir*, and then another iteration of the copular verb *ды/d-u*.

- (72)

| | | |
|----------------------------------|-------|--------|
| Ас | бепиг | оьцур |
| as | bepig | oec-ur |
| 1SG.ERG bread.ABS.SG buy-POT.FUT | | |

- ‘I will (most definitely) buy bread./I really should buy bread.’
- (73) Ас бепиг оьцур ду
as bepig oec-ur d-u
1SG.ERG bread.*d*.ABS.SG buy-FUT.PTCP *d*-COP
‘I will buy bread (it’s what I’m going to do tomorrow).’
- (74) со бепиг оьцуш хир ву
suo bepig oec-u-sh xir v-u
1SG.ABS.*v* bread.*d*.ABS.SG buy-PRES-PTCP be.FUT.PTCP *v*-COP
‘I will be buying bread (tomorrow, when you call)’

4.2 Negation

Negation in Chechen is realized in three main ways: 1) The use of the negative particle *ца/са* before a tensed verb, 2) the use of the proclitic *ма/та* in negative commands, and 3) in unique negative forms of verbs (witnessed mainly with the copula). We discuss the proclitic *та* in our section on mood regarding the imperative. In addition to negation with particles, Chechen also may use negative pronouns with varying layers, including double and also triple negation.

4.2.1 Negative particle *ца/са*

Ца/Ca (NEG) is placed before the verb that it negates.

- (75) Со школе ца воьду
So shkol-e са v-oed-u
1SG.ABS.*v* school-AUG-ALL NEG *v*-goPRES
‘I don’t go to school.’
- (76) Ахьмада бежанаш ца духку
Ahwmad-a bezhana-sh са d-uxk-u
Ahwmad.*v*-ERG.SG cattle.*jII*.AUG-ABS.PL NEG *jII*-sell-PRES
‘Ahwmad does not sell cattle.’

Most all negation of tensed verbs are handled with this pattern in Chechen. The major exception is the copular verb *ды/d-u* and other verb forms (such as the progressive or compound future tenses) that make use of *ды/d-u* as an auxiliary verb. The negative form of *ды/d-u* is *дау/d-ac* in the present, and *дацара/d-acara* in the past.

- (77) нанас дина бепиг мерза ду
naana-s d-i-na bepig merza d-u
mother-ERG.SG *d*-make-PST.RCP bread.*d*.ABS.SG *d*-COP
‘The bread that mother made is tasty.’
- (78) нанас дина бепиг мерза дац
naana-s d-i-na bepig merza d-a-c
mother-ERG.SG *d*-do-PST.RCP bread.*d*.ABS.SG tasty *d*-COP-NEG
‘The bread that mother made is not tasty.’

The same distribution of the negative copular forms can also be found in tenses that use *dy/d-u* as an auxiliary verb, i.e the compound future.

- (79) ас цуьнга кехат яздийр ду
 as cunga kiexat jaz-d-iir d-u
 1SG.ERG 3SG.ALL letter. *d*.ABS.SG write-*d*-do.FUT.PTCP *d*-COP
 ‘I will write him a letter.’
- (80) ас цуьнга кехат яздийр дац
 as cunga kiexat jaz-d-iir d-a-c
 1SG.ERG 3SG.ALL letter. *d*.ABS.SG *d*-COP-NEG
 ‘I will not write him a letter.’

4.2.2 Negative Imperatives

For negative imperatives or prohibition, the proclitic ‘*ma/ma*’ is used before the verb.

- (81) ма гло школе кхана
 ma ghuo shkole qana
 NEG go.IMP school-ALL tomorrow
 ‘Do not go to school tomorrow.’

The polite negative form is built by adding the suffix -ахь(а)/аhw(а). This form is a grammaticalization of the 2nd person singular in the ergative case.

- (82) сих ма лолахь
 six ma luo-lahw
 fast NEG give-POL.IMP
 ‘Don’t rush’ (lit. ‘don’t give fast’)

The proclitic ‘*ma/ma*’ can intercede between a deictic prefix and the inflected verb root.

- (83) схьа-ма-эцалахь цуьнгара ахча
 shwa-ma-ies-al-ahw cunga axcha
 DEC.PREV-NEG-take-IMP-POL.IMP 3SG.ALL money.*j*.ABS.SG
 ‘(Please) don’t take money from him.’
- (84) схьа-ма-йелла неъ
 shwa-ma-j-el-la nie’
 DEC.PREV-NEG-*j*-give-PST.PRF door.*j*.ABS.SG
 ‘Don’t open the door!’

4.2.3 Double Negation

Like Russian, Chechen requires the negative particles ‘*ya/ca*’ or ‘*ma/ma*’ when additional generalized pronouns or adverbs (NPIs) are used:

- (85) цхьаа стаг вацара клубехь
 chwa’a stag v-a-ca-ra klub-ehw
 someone man. *v*.ABS.SG *v*-COP-NEG-PST club-INES.SG

‘No one (not a single person) was at the club’

This reading of the negative pronoun is dependent entirely on the presence of double negation. Compare:

- (86) цхьаммо аьлира соьга тахана ло дог1ур
 chwa-m-uo ael-ira soega taxan lo d-o-ghur
 someone-AUG-ERG.SG say-RPST 1SG.ALL today snow.d.ABS.SG d-fall-FUT.PTCP
 ду
 d-u
 d-COP
 ‘Someone told me that it is going to snow today.’

- (87) цхьаммо ца аьлира соьга тахана ло
 chwa-m-uo са ael-ira soega taxan lo
 someone-AUG-ERG.SG NEG say-RPST 1SG.ALL today snow.d.ABS.SG
 дог1ур ду
 d-o-ghur d-u
 d-fall-FUT.PTCP d-COP
 ‘Someone told me that it is going to snow today.’

4.2.4 Reduplication

Negated predicates in Chechen can also appear in a reduplicated form. Negated predicates that use reduplication are more emphatic than negated predicates that simply use *ca* or *ma*.

- (88) ас х1ийнца а сайна книжка эца ца эчна
 as hiinca a saina knizhka ieca са iec-na
 1SG.ERG always 1SG.DAT.RFLX EMPH book.ABS.SG buy.INF NEG buy-PST.PRF
 ‘I still haven’t (even) bought a book for myself.’
- (89) Гумсет яха ца яхара цига
 Gumset j-аха са j-аха-ра ciga
 Gumset.j j-go.INF COP j-go-RPST
 ‘Gumset didn’t go there (at all!)’

In the reduplication pattern, the lexical verb appears in the infinitive before the negative particle. The tensed form of the same verb appears after the negative particle.

4.3 Participles and Masdars

Two Chechen verb forms, the Masdar and participles that correspond to English gerunds and that form relative clauses. Masdars are verbs that act as nouns and, as such, may act as the arguments of other verbs. Participles are used to modify noun phrases with additional clauses, hence, they are referred to here are ‘relative clausal participles’ as these types of participles are different from other verb forms designated as participles in other tenses (i.e. the present participle used in the present progressive, or the future participle used in the compound future tense).

4.3.1 Masdar

Masdar (MSDR), or verbal denominal, is formed by adding the suffix *-(a)p/-(a)r* to the infinitive. Masdar as a verbal denominal declines in cases and can have arguments.

- (90) цунна ядар де́за
 цунна jiadar dieza
 3SG.DAT run-MSDR.d.ABS.SG *d*-like.PRES
 ‘S/he likes running.’

Masdars decline for case and number identically. Also, all masdars are of noun-class type *d*-class.

Таблица 13: Declension of Masdar form of the verb ‘ле́ла/liela’ (‘behave’/‘wander’)

| Case | Singular | Plural |
|---------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Absolutive | ле́лар/ liela-r | ле́лараш/ liela-r-ash |
| Genitive | ле́ларан/ liela-r-an | ле́ларшан/ liela-r-shan |
| Dative | ле́ларна/ liela-r-na | ле́ларашана/ liela-r-ash-ana |
| Ergative | ле́ларо/ liela-r-uo | ле́ларша/ liela-r-sha |
| Instrumental | ле́ларца/ liela-r-ca | ле́ларшца/ liela-r-sh-ca |
| Allative | ле́ларе/ liela-r-ie | ле́ларийх/ liela-r-iix |
| Lative | ле́ларах/ liela-r-ax | ле́ларшка/ liela-r-sh-ka |
| Comparative | ле́ларал/ liela-r-al | ле́ларийл/ liela-r-iil |
| Inessive | ле́ларехь/ liela-r-ehw | ле́ларшкахь/ liela-r-sh-kahw |
| Ablative | ле́ларера/ liela-r-era | ле́ларшкара/ liela-r-sh-kara |

4.3.2 Relative clausal participles

Clausal participles (RCP) are verb forms that are used to modify a noun, a noun phrase, or other verbs in similar ways to relative pronouns trigger a relative clause in other European languages (cf. Russian *который*, French *que/qui*, German *der/die/das*, etc.). It plays a role similar to an adjective. There are three types of relative clausal participles in Chechen: present (RCP.PRES), past (RCP.PST), and future. The present tense participle is formed by using *-ун/-un* and it is added to the simple present tense alternated base.

- (91) Етт оьцун стаг
 Jett оес-ун stag
 cow.j.ABS.SG buy-PRES.RCP
 ‘the man who buys cows’

The past tense participle is formed by using the suffix -на. This form is identical to the perfect past tense, however, we gloss it here as ‘RCP.PST’ for clarity.

- (92) Етт эцна стаг
 Jett иес-на stag
 cow.j.ABS.SG buy-PST.RCP person
 ‘the man who bought a cow’

In addition to other forms, the copular verb *ды/d-u* has the participial forms of ‘*долун/d-olun*’ (present) and ‘*дина/d-ina*’. The future participle is therefore formed with this form of the auxiliary verb *ды/d-u*.

- (93) Етт оьцур болун стаг
 Jett оес-ур b-olun stag
 cow.b.ABS.SG buy-fut.ptcp b-COP-PRES.RCP man

 ‘the man who will buy a/the cow’

4.4 Light Verbs and Auxiliary Verbs

A number of Chechen predicates can be characterized as ‘light verb constructions’ or ‘complex predicates’ due to surface similarities with other light verb constructions in languages such as Persian, Turkish, or Japanese. In Chechen, light verb constructions are used to 1) turn an adjective into a verb, 2) in noun-verb combinations to express a certain predicate, 3) express the causative, 4) express the potential,

4.4.1 Adjective + дан/dan

Classed adjectives may be made into transitive predicates with ‘дан/dan’:

- (94) хи довха ду
 xi dowxa d-u
 water.ABS.SG hot COP
 ‘The water is hot.’
- (95) нанас хи довхдина
 naan-as xi dowxd-i-na
 mother.AUG-ERG water hot
 ‘Mother heated (up) the water.’

4.5 Mood

Chechen has numerous moods in addition to tenses. These include the imperative mood, the causative mood, and evidentiality, which is already detailed in the verbal system.

4.5.1 Imperative

Chechen has 5 types of imperatives, each ranging with different degrees of politeness and intent. These forms include: the simple imperative, the interrogative imperative, the immediate imperative, the tasked-imperative, and the absolute imperative (categorical).

- Simple Imperative (IMP)- formed with slight nasalization added to the final vowel on the infinitive

(96) дийца(н)
diica-(n)
say.INF-IMP
'speak' or 'tell'

- Polite Imperative (POL.IMP) - formed by adding the suffix *'-(a)xъa/-(a)hwa'* (for 2nd person singular) or *'-(a)ша/-(a)sha'* (for 2nd person plural) to the simple imperative.

(97) дийца(н)хъа
diica-(n)-hwa
speak-IMP-POL.IMP
'Please, (you) speak' or 'Please, (you) tell'

(98) дийций(н)ша
diic-ii(n)-sha
speak-IMP-POL.IMP
'Please, (you all) speak' or 'Please, (you all) tell'

- Immediate Imperative (IMD.IMP) - formed by adding the suffix *'-л/-l'* to the infinitive. This form is used to emphasize immediate action requested on the part of the speaker.

(99) дийцал
diica-l
speak.INF-IMD.IMP
'Speak, (now!)

- Tasked-Imperative (TSK.IMP)- formed by adding the polite imperative suffix to the immediate imperative base. It is used to do something during your absence.

(100) дийцалахъ
diica-lahw
speak-TSK.IMP

'Tell/Speak (in my absence/for me)'

(101) дийцалаш

- Absolutive/Categorical Imperative (CAT.IMP) - formed by adding the suffix *'-уъла/-iila'* to the simple present alternated base of the verb.

- (102) дуьцийла
 dyc-iila
 speak.PRES-CAT.IMP
 ‘One must speak!’

4.5.2 Causative

The causative form (CAUS) in Chechen increases the valency of a transitive verb by one, with the new extra argument in the allative case. The causative in Chechen is formed by adding the verb дийта/*d-iita* to the verb, directly. In causative constructions, the lexical verb is left in the infinitive and the auxiliary/light verb *дуьма/d-iita* inflects for tense and noun-class agreement.

- (103) жижиг даттийта цуьнга
 zhizhig datt-iita cunga
 meat grill-CAUS 3SG.ALL
 ‘Make him grill the meat’

Scholars tend to interpret the suffix ‘*uьm/iit*’ as being a phonetic infusion of the verb ‘*дума (ьума/вума)/ дита (жита/вита)*’ meaning ‘to leave’ or ‘to abandon’. In Highland/*Laamaroj* dialects, *дуьма/d-iita* has the form *даьма/d-aita* and behaves exactly the same, syntactically. Lexically, however, it may be related to the verb ‘*дан/d-an*’ which also is able to transitivize adjectivable predicates in both dialects.

- (104) нанас кехат оьхьадешийтира соьга
 naana-s kiexat oehwa-diesh-iit-ira soega
 mother.AUG.ERG.SG letter. *d*.ABS.SG DEC.PREV-read.INF-CAUS-RPST 1SG.ALL
 ‘Mother made me read the letter.’

4.6 Evidentiality

Evidentiality in Chechen is expressed by using the witnessed and unwitnessed past tense forms.

- The recent witnessed past tense - (PST) this tense is formed by adding the suffix ‘*-u/-i*’ and alternating the vowel of the verb stem to express an even that just recently occurred and was witnessed by the speaker.

- (105) Ахьмада стол кечди
 Ahwamd-a stol kiech-d-i
 Ahwamd-ERG.SG table read-*d*-do.PST
 ‘Ahmad set the table (I saw him do it)’

The time frame of the witnessed event can be specified further into the past with the remote witnessed past (RPST), using the suffix ‘*-pa/-ra*’

- (106) Ахьмада стол кечдира
 Ahwmad-a stol kiech-d-i-ra
 Ahwmad-ERG.SG table read-*d*-do-RPST
 ‘Ahwmad set the table (a while ago, I saw him do it)’

- The unwitnessed past tense - (PST.PRF) is used to express an event which the speaker was not present to witness. This form clearly provides a sense that the speaker did not witness the event. The unwitnessed past tense is formed by using a combination of the past perfect tense and the auxiliary verb ‘*хила/хила*’ (‘to happen’/‘to occur’).

- (107) Ахьмада стол кечдина хила
 Ahwmad-a stol kiech-d-i-na xil-la
 Ahwmad-ERG.SG table ready-*d*-do-PST.PRF happen-PST.PRF
 ‘Ahwmad set the table (allegedly, I didn’t see it)’

This form may be used when the outcome of a given action is witnessed by the speaker, but the physical action was not (i.e. the speaker sees a set table and heard that it was Ahwmad to set it, but the speaker did not see Ahwmad himself set the table).

- The unwitnessed remote tense - (UNW.REM) this form is used when referring to an event that has occurred a very long time ago. Furthermore, the speaker has not witnessed the event. It is formed by using, again, the past perfective form of the verb, plus the auxiliary verb ‘*хила/хила*’ in the perfective:

- (108) Ахьмада стол кечдина хиллера
 Ahwmad-a stol kiech-d-i-na xil-lera
 Ahwmad-ERG.SG table ready-*d*-do-PST.PRF happen-PERF
 ‘Ahwmad set the table (a long time ago).’

This form is found often in narrative texts and in storytelling.

- The unwitnessed past progressive - this form refers to events that occurred simultaneously and were not witnessed by the speaker.

- (109) Ахьмад стол кечдеш хиллера
 Ahwmad stol kiech-d-ies xil-lera
 Ahwmad.v.ABS.SG table.d.ABS.SG ready-*d*-do-PRES.PTCP happen-PERF
 ‘Ahwmad was setting the table (but I didn’t see)’

- (110) Малика цла йоглунчан хьенахь
 Malika c’a j-oghun-cha-n hwien-ahw
 Malika.j.ABS.SG home.ADVb j-go.PRES.RCP-OBL-GEN time.AUG-INES
 Ахьмад стол кечдеш хиллера
 Ahwmad stol kiech-d-iesh xil-lera
 Ahwmad.v.ABS.SG table.d.ABS.SG read-*d*-do-PRES.PTCP happen-PERF
 ‘When Malika came home, Ahwmad was setting the table (Malika told me he was setting the table, but I did not witness that he was setting the table)’

5 Adjective Morphology

5.1 Qualitative Adjectives

Adjectives in Chechen can be qualitative (standard), relative, or possessive. Adjectives have a distinct morphological structure. Standard (normal) adjectives, end in a short nasalized vowel. The nasal vowel can be heard, but it is not recorded orthographically.

(111) Adjectives with short nasal vowel

- дика(н)/dika(n) ‘good’
- хаза(н)/xaza(n) ‘beautiful’

The major exception to this rule is adjectives that end in a long nasalized vowel in the stem.

(112) Adjectives with long nasal vowel

- воӀ/vuon ‘bad’
- цӀен/c’iien ‘red’
- вайн/vain ‘our (exclusive)’

Adjectives generally appear before the head noun that they modify.

- (113)
- дика кӀант/dika k’ant ‘good boy’
 - хаза коч/xaza koch ‘beautiful dress’
 - цӀен машина/ts’iien mashina ‘red car’

5.2 Possessive adjectives

Possessive adjectives have the same morphological form as nouns in the genitive case

5.3 Class adjectives

There is only a limited number of classed adjectives in Chechen. They agree in noun-class to the head noun they modify.

(114) **List of class adjectives**

- деза/d-eza ‘heavy’
- даъха/d-aexa ‘hot’
- деха/d-iexa ‘long’
- дуькъа/d-yq’a ‘thick’
- дораха/d-oraxa ‘cheap’
- дерстана/d-erstana ‘fat’
- дуьткъа/d-ytq’a ‘thin’
- доца/d-oca ‘short’
- дайн/d-ain ‘light’
- дуьзна/d-yzna ‘full’
- даържана/d-aerzhana ‘spread’
- доккха/d-oqqa ‘large/big/old’

5.4 Degrees of Comparison

There are two ways of forming comparative forms in Chechen: (1) standard adjectives do not change their morphological structure; (2) adding suffixes *-(a)x/(a)x* or *-xo/-xuo*. The comparative is formed using the suffix *-(a)x*, with *-a-* acting as a buffer vowel to adjectives ending in a consonant. In addition to the comparative and superlative, Chechen has an additional layer of comparative, named here ‘the extended comparative’ (EXTCOMP), which corresponds to the construction of ‘much more X’ in English. The superlative degree of comparison is formed by using ‘*уггар/uggar*’ (‘the most’), ‘*къаъсттана/q’aesttana*’ (‘especially’), ‘*м1ех/т’ех*’ (‘more’), or ‘*дукха/дуqa*’ (‘more’).

Таблица 14: Chechen comparative, extended comparative, and superlative

| Standard Adjective | Comparative | Extended Comparative | Superlative |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|--|---|
| хаза/xaza ‘beautiful’ | хаза-х/xaza-х ‘more beautiful’ | хаза-хо/xaza-xuo ‘much more beautiful’ | уггар хаза/uggar xaza ‘the most beautiful’ |
| дика/dika ‘good’ | дика-х/dika-х ‘better’ | дика-хо/dika-xuo ‘much better’ | уггар дика/uggar dika ‘the best’ |
| жима/zhima ‘small’ | жима-х/zhima-х ‘smaller’ | жима-хо/zhima-xuo ‘much smaller’ | уггар жима/uggar zhima ‘the smallest’ |
| даърстан/daestan ‘fat’ | даърстан-ах/daestan-ах ‘fatter’ | даърстан-ахо/daestan-ахуо ‘much fatter’ | уггар даърстан/uggar daestan ‘the fattest’ |

5.5 Substantivized Adjectives

Chechen permits the use of substantivized adjectives. According to Zokayev’s 1960 classification, the declension of both qualitative and relative substantivized adjectives are divided into two groups: independent and dependent. Independent substantivized adjectives decline in the same way and behave identical to nouns. They are able to take all case endings and they are formed by adding the suffix *-ниг/-nig* to an adjective in the absolutive. For all other case forms, the augment base of this substantivized adjective is *-чу/-chu*. Some cases trigger vowel alternations.

(115) Declension of Independent Substantivized Adjective ‘к1айн/k’ain’(‘white’)

| Case | Singular | Plural |
|---------------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Absolutive | клай-ниг | клай-ниг-аш |
| | k'ai-nig | k'ai-nig-ash |
| Genitive | клай-чу-н | клай-черан |
| | k'ai-chu-n | k'ai-charan |
| Dative | клай-чу-на | клай-чар-на |
| | k'ai-chu-na | k'ai-char-na |
| Ergative | клай-ч-о | клай-чар-а |
| | k'ai-ch-uo | k'ai-char-a |
| Instrumental | клай-чуьн-ца | клай-чаьр-ца |
| | k'ai-chyn-ca | k'ai-char-ca |
| Lative | клай-чу-х | клай-чар-ах |
| | k'ai-chu-x | k'ai-char-ax |
| Inessive | клай-чуьн-га-хь | клай-чаьрга-хь |
| | k'ai-chyn-ga-hw | k'ai-charga-hw |
| Ablative | клай-чуьн-га-ра | клай-чаьрга-ра |
| | k'ai-cyn-ga-ra | |
| Allative | клай-чуьн-га | клай-чаьр-ге |
| | k'ai-chyn-ga | |
| Comparative | клай-чу-л | клай-чар-ал |
| | k'ai-chu-l | |

The dependent declension of adjectives refers to adjectives that are modifying some other head noun. In this declension type, adjectives take a *-чу/-chu* suffix when modifying nouns that are in the *oblique cases*. The *oblique cases* are all cases other than the absolutive. For examples in this grammar, we gloss this suffix as 'OBL'.

(116) Sample declension with клайн котам/k'ain kotam 'white chicken'

Таблица 15: Dependent adjective declension

| Case | Singular | Plural |
|---------------------|--|--|
| Abosolutive | к1айн котам k'ain kotam | к1айн котамаш k'ain kuotam-ash |
| Genitive | к1айнчу котаман k'ain-chu kuotam-an | к1айчу котмай k'ai-chu kuotam-ii |
| Dative | к1айнчу котамна k'ain-chu kuotam-na | к1айчу котамашна k'ai-chu kuotam-ash-na |
| Ergative | к1айнчу котамо k'ain-chu kuotam-uo | к1айнчу котамаша k'ain-chu kuotam-ash-a |
| Instrumental | к1айнчу котамаци k'ain-chu kuotam-aca | к1айнчу котамашаца k'ain-chu kuotam-ash-aca |
| Lative | к1айнчу котамых k'ain-chu kuotam-ax | к1айнчу котамийх k'ain-chu kuotam-iix |
| Locative | к1айнчу котамехь k'ain-chu kuotam-e-hw | к1айнчу котамашкаехь k'ain-chu kuotam-aesh-kae-hw |
| Allative | к1айнчу котаме k'ain-chu kuotam-e | к1айнчу котамашке k'ain-chu kuotam-ash-ke |
| Ablative | к1айнчу котамара k'ain-chu kuotam-ae-ra | к1айнчу котамашагара k'ain-chu kuotam-ash-aga-ra |
| Comparative | к1айнчу котамал k'ain-chu kuotam-al | к1айнчу котамашал k'ain-chu kuotam-ash-al |