

Chechen Language Literature and Documentation

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This paper focuses upon certain aspects of the noun and verb morphology of Chechen, a language indigenous to the North Caucasus. In this paper I compiled, compared and analysed existing literature alongside speech data to assess the state of academia on the language, and to provide insight on what may be missing, and what may need more analysis. In several instances, I found discrepancies both between certain texts and between the texts and what I was observing in the data. The topics covered are the Chechen noun classes and gender marker pairs, the converb system, imperative constructions, and the morpheme *ma*.

First, I provide an explanation of both the linguistic structures being discussed and present what is stated by the literature. I then use the data I gathered for this project to verify what is stated by the literature, and to show how it does or does not match what I found in actual speech.

For the noun classes, I show that the classes are not strictly divided by humanness, and that the first two are exclusive to animate and human-like nouns, but not purely human nouns. I analysed the converb system as presented in Molochieva (2010) and provide further insights that were missed, argue that the ‘converb with a postposition’ is actually a participle, as well as propose that certain converbs are capable of combining to create more complicated meanings. I outline what the literature says on the imperative and fill in the plural polite imperative that was unmentioned in the literature. For the morpheme *ma*, I show that it is used both as an emphatic morpheme and a negating imperative morpheme in different contexts.

Throughout, I aim to provide context for the literature that I am sourcing as well as the situation of the Chechen speakers, and why it is so important to not only have an awareness of what has been done but to understand the context in which it was done.

1.1 Background Information

The Chechen language, also known as *Noxchi Mott* (lit. Chechen tongue), comprises the Vainakh subbranch of the Nakh branch of the Nakh-Dagestanian language family alongside Ingush (Komen, Molochieva, Nichols, 2021). The Nakh branch is described as “[consisting] of three languages, the severely endangered Bats and the vulnerable, closely related Chechen and Ingush” in the UNESCO Atlas of Endangered Languages (Salminen, 2010). This vulnerability is largely due to language shift to Russian for the Vainakh branch, while Bats (also called known as Batsbi and Tsova-Tush) has been more significantly influenced by language shift to Georgian (Hauk, 2020). Research on the Chechen language started in earnest in the 19th century during the Tsarist expansionist Caucasian War, and had been done almost exclusively under Russian influence, be that Tsarist or Soviet, until the late 20th century. A significant portion of the work produced on Chechen is done in the Russian Federation, as Chechnya is currently under Russian rule. Compilations and comparisons of existing literature have not been done, even between the English sources, which are less numerous. Though the academic situation on Chechen is not as dire as other endangered languages, both in the Caucasus and elsewhere, it does lack a reference grammar (Komen et al., 2021, p. 317).

The earliest works on the Chechen language were done largely by German researchers, such as Güldenstädt, Klaproth, Schiefner and Uslar, under Tsarist orders (Komen et al., 2021, p. 318). During the Soviet period, a Latin script was developed for Chechen to replace the Arabic, rapidly followed up by a Cyrillic script to replace the Latin script. Komen et al. (2021, p. 318) cover the more influential works produced both under the Soviet Union and beyond. Some of the names mentioned include A.G. Maciev, who wrote a self-study book (1932) and later created “the classic Chechen-Russian Dictionary” (1961); N.F. Jakovlev, who worked on many

languages in the Caucasus and produced numerous works, including a Chechen syntax (1940); there were also linguists of Chechen origin, such as Desheriev (1960, 1963, 1967) and his daughter Desherieva (1979, 1988) (Komen et al. 2021, p. 318). More work has been done in the later 20th century up to now, and Chechen linguistic literature as a whole is discussed in further detail in section 3.1.

1.2 Terminology

The term “Nakh” is used in relation to the Chechens, Ingush and Bats peoples, and “Vainakh” (also spelled as Veynakh, Vaynakh, etc) is used in relation to Chechens and Ingush specifically. The term “Nakh” translates literally to “people”, and “Vainakh” to “our people” in Chechen and in Ingush. Chechens refer to themselves as /noxtʃoj/ or /noxtʃi/, and Ingush as /ʁalʁaj/ or /ʁalʁi/ (with the first version being an older pronunciation, and the latter term being the more current pronunciation, though both versions are still used for each term).

1.3 Project Structure

This project comprises of two parts. The first component of the project is a literature review.

The second component of the project involves the collection, transcription, and analysis of six recordings of Chechen speakers narrating a folk tale, story or memory of their childhood and their elders. The focus on the folk tales/stories and childhood memories is due to their cultural value, the long tradition of oral history, and the expectation that these narratives will contain fewer loan words. Rather than eliciting certain forms, this method allows to identify any curious patterns in natural speech that may merit more investigation.

The objectives of this research were to document and study noun and verb morphology and morphosyntax, as well as compare the data to existing work done on the language and see if the data supports or disproves previous literature on Chechen. This work covers the Chechen noun classes and the gender marker pairs for noun morphology. For verb morphology, an analysis and comparison was done on the converb system by consulting a speaker. The imperative constructions were outlined, compiling information from both existing literature as well as observations made on the data gathered for this work. In addition, some observations were made about the morpheme *ma* and its various uses.

1.4 Positionality

Linguistic work on minority and/or endangered languages is often done by ‘outsider’ linguists individuals working on a language in a community they are not part of and often coming from significantly more influential backgrounds if not from the direct oppressive culture itself. Increasingly, work has been done on such minority languages by members of the communities that speak it. In the case of the Chechen language, while research has been conducted by outsiders, a considerable amount has been done by Chechen linguists and other members of the Chechen community. Both types of works must be viewed in the context they were made in to better understand why certain approaches were taken, and why certain conclusions were reached. Similarly, a language cannot be fully removed from its context and the context of its speakers; it reflects what and how its speakers need(ed) to communicate and changes based upon their contexts shifting. For Chechen, a more holistic approach could prove to be beneficial, in which both the language and its speakers would be considered during documentation and analysis.

My own background and experiences as both an ethnic Chechen and an immigrant who has spent the majority of my life outside of Chechnya are especially relevant to this work. Whilst I am technically an “insider”, my experience having grown up in ‘the West’ places me somewhere in-between an “outsider” and a true “insider”, who would be fully immersed in the culture and community. As such, despite Chechen being the first language I learned, I am not a fluent speaker of Chechen and would be better described as a heritage speaker (Polinsky, 2018, p. 3-4).

I frequently consulted with my father, Ruslan Arsanukayev, as both the primary speaker I refer to in throughout this work, as well as for his academic knowledge. In addition to being a fluent Chechen speaker who has Chechen as his first language, he is a historian and archeologist specialising on Chechen history. Due to the nature of Chechen academia, Arsanukayev had met and known several Chechen linguists personally, and was able to provide further insight and context on the academic situation in Chechnya in the 20th century. Of course, the insight provided is based upon his own memory and experiences, and that must be kept in mind. Nonetheless, consulting with my father further allowed me to incorporate the Chechen tradition of information and heritage being passed down from elders.

1.5 Methodology

1.5.1 Recordings Multiple methods of gathering language data were utilized for this paper. The first involved the recording of narratives from native speakers, for the analysis of spontaneous speech. In total, six narratives from five different speakers were gathered and transcribed for this study. Two of the narratives were traditional folk tales, three were recollections from the speakers’ childhood, and one narrative discussed a cultural practice. The recordings were done on a MacBook Air laptop, using an Apex555 USB condenser microphone

on the recording software Audacity. Recordings took place in person in the speakers' homes, in Toronto, Ontario.

The speakers' age range was 40s to 70s. They were mostly older Chechen immigrants living in Toronto. Most identified as speakers of standard Chechen, though one speaker was from the Pankisi Gorge in Georgia, and spoke the *Kisti* dialect. All were at least moderately fluent in Russian, though most spoke it as well as if not better than Chechen. None were particularly fluent in English.

There are currently no plans for archiving the data beyond keeping the recordings and the transcriptions on the same device they are currently stored upon (the aforementioned MacBook Air laptop) although the expectation is that the recordings will be archived at some repository of Chechen field data within a year after the completion of this work, provided the speakers agree to it once a concrete plan is formed. The rudimentary, unglossed and untranslated transcriptions are provided in the appendix of this work.

1.5.2 Conventions. This paper follows the standard British system for romanization Chechen, and the Scientific romanization scheme for Russian. Data is glossed using the Leipzig Glossing Rules and abbreviations standards.

1.5.3 Data Differentiation. As various sources of data are used within this paper, data will be further marked to more easily differentiate its source. Data gathered through recordings for this paper is annotated as shown in 1, with a number corresponding to the recording followed by the numbers of the line(s) in the transcription.

1. *so* *zhim* *j-ol-ch* *xeenahw* *txa*
 1SG.ABS little J-be-CVBtemp time.LOC 1PL.EXCL.GEN

 lulha-hw *chovgh* *dik* *dotgh-i* *b-er*
 neighbourhood-LOC very good friend-PL.ABS B-be.PST

 sa *jow-ri_j*
 1SG.GEN girl-PL.ABS

‘When I was young, there were girls in our neighbourhood that were very good friends of mine.’ (Recording 6, line 1 - 3)

Data that was elicited from Ruslan Arsanukayev for the purposes of further analysis after the recordings were completed are marked with his name followed by ‘Arsanukayev, E.D.’ for ‘elicited data’, as shown in 2 below.

2. *Tumish-as* *d-iesh-nach* *jeud* *so*
 Tumisha-GEN D-study-PTCP.PST J.go.IMPV.PRS 1SG.ABS

‘I’m going to where Tumisha studies.’ (Arsanukayev, E.D.)

Data that was taken from another source, the last name of the author and the year is included in the annotation, followed by the number used in the text to refer to the example and the page number, as shown in 3.

3. *hwa-d-ott-a* *hwa=’a-’eec-i.*
 here-D-pour-IMP here=and-take:PFV-CVBim.ant

‘Take it and pour (it) out!’ (Molochieva, 2010; 28, p. 20)

Data from written sources, such as written folktales, has been romanized per the Caucasianist script used throughout this paper and outlined in section 3.3, and will be marked in the same way as 3, with the absence of the number for examples.

4. *Geuzun* *zaw-nash* *a* *jaxa-sh* *ve-nachi*
 Copper chain-PL and carry-CVBsim V.come -PTCP.PAST
- kedal* *barg* *a* *bolu-sh,* *mars~mars-al*
 bowl.COMPV eye and B.have-CVBsim sickle-COMPV
- tserg-ash* *a* *jolu-sh* *vola-chi* *Wuzh-as_i*
 tooth-PL and J.have-CVBsim V.be-PTCP Wuzha-ERG
- dwa-vig-na* *Bash-Lam-an* *keurt-ie*
 away-V.take-CVBant molten-mountain-GEN peak-ALL
- dwa-virk-ira* *Pxari-nart*
 away-V.tie-Rem.WPST Pxari-nart.ABS

‘Having arrived carrying copper chains, having a bowl-like eye and sickle-like teeth, Wuzha took Pxari-nart away to the peak of Bash-Lam and tied him’ (Chokaev, 1991, p. 172)

Chapter 2: Sociolinguistic Information

2.1 Chechen and its Speakers

Chechen is the fifth most spoken language in the Caucasus. According to census data from 2009-2015, there are 1,284,271 L1 speakers. Of the top ten languages of the Caucasus, Chechen has the smallest number of L2 speakers (Dobrushina, Daniel, and Koryakov, 2021).

Whilst the census data shows a relatively high number of speakers, there is reason to believe that it does not accurately reflect the vitality of the language. Dobrushina et al. state that that for certain Nakh-Daghestanian languages, families who leave the more rural villages “tend to lose their ethnic language very quickly, sometimes within the 1st generation of resettlers, but may continue to indicate their ethnic language as their L1 (Rus. *rodnoj jazyk*, lit. “native

language’) as a way to express their identity” and that this “makes attempts at evaluations based on censuses unreliable” (Dobrushina et al., p. 30, 2021). Whilst this assessment was not made about Chechen, but in regards to the Andic, Tsezic, and Dargwa branches of the Nakh-Daghestanian language family, the case could be made that this sentiment also plays a role when considering the census data for many speakers of indigenous languages of the Caucasus, including Chechen.

In general, there are several difficulties with using census data when it comes to ascertaining the number of speakers. One issue is that it is difficult to gauge how well people speak a given language, as well as how often. People could also be misunderstanding the terms involved, presenting themselves as having a certain language as their L1, when it would be more accurately described as their heritage language.

Outside of Chechnya, the Chechen communities formed in Central Asian and the Near East have maintained the Chechen language. These communities formed primarily during two periods of strife; either during the Caucasian War in the 19th century, as is the case in Jordan and Turkey, or due to the 1944 *Aardakhar*, for the community in Kazakhstan. In both cases, the Chechen diasporas largely ended up in the same areas and were able to establish robust, tight-knit communities, though their grammars and any potential differences that have developed since have not been studied. Comparatively, the speech of the more recent diasporic Chechen populations in Europe have not been studied, so neither the language’s retention nor the particulars of their speech abroad are known (Komen et al, 2021, p. 318).

2.2 The History of the Vainakh

Between the 13th and 15th century the Vainakh established an egalitarian society that valued freedom, honour, preservation and defense; this is the society that the Vainakh often think of when referencing their tradition, history and culture (Arsanukayev, 2002; Jaimoukha, 2005). This society was established in the aftermath of the Tatar-Mongols' invasion, which led to the collapse of the previous civilization they were part of. History was primarily passed down through oral tradition, as even if the Vainakh had used a script before this collapse, it was not retained.

To understand why the situation of Chechens (and the Vainakh in general) as well as their language is more precarious than it may at first seem, one can consider the passing of knowledge through oral tradition as being a chain, each link representing a generation that received the cultural knowledge and could pass it down to the next link. Until the spread of Islam brought with it the Arabic script, no script was used by the Vainakh in any significant capacity, nor was the Arabic script itself used extensively, at least not in Chechen, either (Chentieva, 1958, p. 40-42). Thus, if the links in the chain were weakened, there was very little for people to refer back upon, and any written accounts that exist are written by others.

2.2.1 Beginning of Russian Expansion and the Spread of Islam. In the subsequent centuries since the establishment of the ‘Vainakh society’, several historical events stand out as having the greatest impact upon this ‘chain’. Primarily, these events explain the high number of Russian loanwords and why many Chechen speakers are more proficient in Russian than Chechen. They also explain why much of the literature on the Vainakh is done from an ‘outsider’ perspective.

The colonisation of the Caucasus was a small part of Imperial Russia's territory expansion, and they had to contend with the conquering of several Tatar Khanates before reaching the Caucasus. Attempts began in the 16th century under Ivan the Terrible, with Russia maintaining a regular interest in the region the Vainakh lived in ever since, with notable expansion attempts from Tsar Peter I and Empress Catherine II. While these could be viewed as more distant history, these instances are not forgotten in the wider consciousness of the community, and Chechens often mention '400 years' of resistance against Russia, likely referring to the time from the 16th century to the 20th (Williams, 2000).¹

At the same time, Islam's spread throughout the Vainakh increased and with it came an influx of Arabic loanwords and names. It is difficult to ascertain exactly when the influence of Islam began², but by the late 1800s, most Chechens identified as Muslim. Beyond that, Islam already had a long-standing presence in the region due to the Tatars, which bring up the possibility that Arabic, Turkic and Tatar loanwords spread even before the Vainakh converted en masse. The spread of Islam among the Ingush came later than that of Chechens.³ Pagan practices and traditions persisted, especially in the mountains, some likely having been adjusted to fit the new faith, and some aspects of the new faith likely having been adjusted to fit the Vainakh's own society.⁴

¹ It is the author's opinion that this perspective has shifted and been suppressed in the years since Williams' paper. At least within Chechnya itself, due to strict censorship and severe propaganda under Russian rule, such sentiments are generally expressed. Nonetheless, the author has experienced Chechens reference anywhere from 200 to 400 years of resistance against Russia, typically coming from community members in the older generations.

² Arsanukayev (p.c.) states that the earliest documented influences of Islam found on Chechen territory go back to the 15th century, with bodies buried in ways characteristic to Islamic burial practices. However, he states that the spread was likely slow, until around the 18th century. Starting with Tsar Peter I, and particularly under Empress Catherine II, as Russian aggression increased, the spread of Islam accelerated in response.

³ The Ingush live to the west of the Chechens and converted later. Thus, the Ingush are considered to have better preserved the pagan practices and traditions than the Chechens.

⁴ For example, there are several Adam and Eve folktales that do not seem to fit the Abrahamic traditions and are not known about elsewhere.

2.2.2 The Caucasian War. The last 200 years are viewed by Chechens as a time of near constant conflict and suffering, starting with the 19th century Russian conquest of the Caucasus (1800-1864), specifically the Caucasian War (1817-1864), when Russia met significant resistance from the North Caucasian peoples who lived on the lands they were attempting to conquer. The Vainakh, like many peoples of the Caucasus and especially of the North Caucasus, suffered immense losses during the war. Chechen communities in Georgia, Jordan and Turkey were established because of this conflict by Chechens fleeing it. After the end of the Caucasian War, accounts state that rebellions, uprisings and resistance movements persisted, often met with punishment and violence, and the Vainakh are often characterized by Russians as being particularly stubborn and thus, particularly deserving of punishment (Anchebadze, 2009).

The Caucasian War had a significant impact on the Chechen language and its current situation. These several decades of war, in which people were repeatedly displaced by Russian aggression, their villages, homes and belongings destroyed or stolen by the Imperial Russian Army, would have caused a significant break in the chain. Additionally, the spread of Islam among the Vainakh, already fueled by the previous history of Russian aggression, was further accelerated.

Following the war, the language policy in the Russian Empire “in the period 1864–1917 was to undermine local languages by excluding them from education and literary usage, with Russification of the various ethnic groups as the ultimate goal ... Russian was the only official language in the North Caucasus and the sole medium of instruction in secular schools” (Jaimoukha, 2005, p. 205).

2.2.3 The Soviet Era And Beyond. In the wake of the Caucasian War, many of those affected, particularly Chechens, supported the Red Army during the Russian Civil War (Wood, 2004). The Bolsheviks had said they would return the land taken during the Caucasian War, and give ethnic minorities freedom and autonomy. Though the immediate aftermath of the Russian Civil War had some promising improvements, the full promises were not fulfilled, and the few positive changes did not last.

In 1921, some years after the revolution, “national schools were established offering a curriculum with national content and instruction in Chechen” (Jaimoukha, 2005, p. 205). However, Arsanukayev (p.c.) adds some important context, explaining that only the first four years of instruction were in Chechen, and that subsequent years of schooling were in Russian, with one subject in the local language. This was the case for other minority ethnicities. Though Arsanukayev (p.c.) also adds that in Chechnya, like in many parts of the Soviet Union, this was the first time people were getting any kind of official instruction. These first four years were all that most people, especially in rural areas, would have completed at the time. More populous areas offered seven to ten years of instruction.

As was remarked upon earlier from Komen et al., “The early period of the Soviet Union saw an increased interest in minority languages. It was in this period that a Latin alphabet was constructed, and several publications appeared, such as a self-study book by Maciev (1932). This period was rapidly succeeded by a transition to Cyrillic-based alphabets” (p. 318). This transition from Arabic to Latin to Cyrillic was not unique; several Muslim-majority communities within the USSR experienced the same rapid change in scripts (Sebba, 2006).

Possibly the most influential recent event for the Vainakh was the *Aardakhar* (forced exile) Genocide. On the 23rd of February 1944, under the orders of Lavrentiy Beria, Operation

Lentil was executed; across the entire Chechen-Ingush ASSR the Vainakh were deported to Central Asia. Some villages were deemed too troublesome to clear out; “the inhabitants of a number of auls (villages) that were virtually inaccessible were simply burned alive in their homes” (Ro’i, 2009). The number of casualties is disputed, ranging anywhere from 20% to 50% of the total population, though several sources state that it was at least 25% (Cornell, 1999; Florin, 2001). The loss and displacement of tight-knit communities, forcibly expelled from their ancestral land and homes, is yet another break in the chain. At best, people were permitted to take only what they could carry on their back, with very little time to pack. Anything left behind was stolen or destroyed. The districts of the Chechen-Ingush SSR were split up and given to the neighbouring SSRs; most of the territory of Ingushetia was given to Ossetia, the mountainous part of the Chechen-Ingush SSR was given to Georgia, the eastern part of Chechnya became part of the Daghestan SSR, and what was left became the Grozny Oblast. In each territory, the people of the SSR were moved into the homes and land the Vainakh were forced to leave behind, apart from the Georgian SSR, where Georgians largely refused to move into the homes of the deported Chechens. The Grozny Oblast was resettled by Russians.⁵ Those who survived the deportation itself arrived in communities unprepared and at times, unwilling, to sustain them. Many were sent into work camps. Most Vainakh children could not get an education, and those that could, did so in an environment where the local language was different, and the main language of instruction was Russian.

⁵ Whilst most of the districts and homes were returned with the restoration of the Chechen-Ingush SSR, there are parts to this day that have never been returned. To this day, Ossetia and Daghestan refuse to return districts given to them in the aftermath of the deportation. Even before the deportation, when the borders of the SSRs were established, the territory currently known as Novolaksky district – historically part of the Aukh region - was inhabited by Chechens, but was given to the Daghestan SSR. After the deportation, the homes were taken by Laks and Daghestanians. These were not returned, and conflicts persist to this day.

Though the Vainakh were officially allowed to return a few years after Stalin's death, the narratives of "betrayal" were never rectified, and are perpetuated to this day. The Vainakh continued to be discriminated against, with strict laws forbidding any public discussion or acknowledgement of their ordeal. This repression continued well into the 1980s, when *glasnost*, Gorbachev's policy of increased transparency, came into effect (Williams, 2000).

Glasnost opened the floodgates, allowing people to speak more freely about what they had experienced, and the full irony of the discrimination they had been subject to as 'traitorous people'. As independence movements in the Soviet republics gained momentum, they inspired the people in Chechnya. Amongst the many motivations for independence, there was the desire to focus on both preserving and encouraging the Vainakh culture and language to contrast with the previous discrimination experienced under the Soviet Union.

When the USSR collapsed in 1991, Dzhokhar Dudayev seized power and declared independence from Russia, establishing the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria. In 1994, Russia invaded, beginning the first Chechen War, lasting until 1996. After facing a surprising defeat, Russia made a peace agreement with Chechnya, though it had not given up on the land. In 1999, the second Chechen War began, lasting until 2004. Russia regained control of Chechnya, after having decimated its cities, villages, and people, once more. These conflicts in the 1990s led to many refugees fleeing to join other established diaspora communities like those in Georgia, as well as establishing newer communities in Europe and other parts of the West. This is the most recent major event that weakened the chain.

2.3 The State of Academia on the Vainakh

Research relating to the Vainakh can be difficult, as sites of historical and cultural significance, as well as archives, have been repeatedly targeted and systematically destroyed.

According to Williams (2000):

Perhaps one of the greatest insults to the Chechens during the war was the systematic destruction of much of their cultural and national heritage during the Russian siege of Grozny. In February 1995, the Russian army destroyed the Central State Archive of the Chechen Republic in Grozny, home to over two hundred years of documents, folk costumes, archaeological material, archival collections, manuscripts and other material on the Chechens and Ingush people. This cultural site had no military value to the Russian army, and President Dudaev had actively lobbied with historians, anthropologists, archaeologists, ethnologists and others in Russia to preserve it.

In addition to the Central Archives, the Scientific Research Institute of the Humanities of the Chechen Republic, established in 1907—whose library contained a rich collection of all the important works of the Caucasian world, including original works by medieval writers, along with field material on research into the language of the Chechen and Ingush people and their ethnography—was totally destroyed by Russian forces in 1995 (p. 126-127).

The loss of the field material on research into the Vainakh languages is especially relevant to the topic at hand, and to the larger point being made here. Many topics regarding the Vainakh, from the origin and age of their culture, as well as many aspects of their history, are difficult to speak on with any amount of certainty. For one, the Vainakh lacked a script: the Arabic script was not used for very long nor very widely before the Caucasian War and subsequent Russian involvement. Additionally, the Arabic script was mainly used to write in Arabic by those who

were literate, thus its usage as a script for Chechen was limited. While this is understandable for a people who had no widely used script nor any robust system of governance for the majority of the last millennia, it has been exacerbated by the long, complicated geo- and ethno-political history of the Caucasus, and the biases and prejudices that come with it. Whatever was written was then subject to the repeated destruction mentioned earlier. The destruction of vital historical sources and sites has made it far more difficult for accurate research to be done, as what has survived comes largely from foreign, and at times, outright hostile, perspectives. This is not to say that foreign or even hostile perspectives are inherently without use or value. The issue is that the Chechen perception of their own history and on events that affected them are heavily controlled and censored, if not indistinguishable from Russian perspectives as Chechen academics try to conform due to said control and censorship. There is no doubt that the Chechen perspective would be biased, just as any perspective is biased. Surely, it would be no less biased than the perspectives made either by those that repeatedly tried (and often succeeded) to destroy any accounts but their own, nor the perspectives that were based upon them. Language is not immune from this bias. It is inextricably tied to the people that speak it and their culture.

Chapter 3: Basic Linguistic Information, Previous Literature

This section is a literary review providing the context needed for the analysis in section 4. It provides basic information about Chechen phonetics and orthography needed to have some basis for the pronunciation of the transcriptions. There will be more in-depth presentations of the existing literature on some aspects of the noun and verb morphology. The literature on the Chechen noun declension system is outlined as are some of the different ways it has been categorized and explained. This section covers converbs and provides two different perspectives

of Chechen converbs. Further, the imperative morphology is covered, as is the morpheme *ma*. Everything presented in this section will build the foundations of what is discussed in section 4, where data gathered for the project will be discussed in conjunction with other literature to create a proper analysis of the works discussed.

Two works have been used as major sources for this project. The first is Komen et al. (2021), in which a sketch grammar on Chechen and Ingush is provided, though they focus more on Chechen as Chechen lacks a reference grammar. It additionally functions as a summary of the field. The second is Molochieva's 2010 doctoral dissertation "Tense, aspect and mood in Chechen". The vast majority of what is brought up in this chapter references these two works, as they were the focus for the comparison with the data gathered for this project.

3.1 Literature

Most of the literature on the Chechen language is in Russian. The earliest works mentioning the Chechen language were done in the 1800s, though very few were focused on language itself, and addressed it, at most, tangentially. The earliest work referenced on Glottolog is Julius Klaproth's 1814 work "Travels in the Caucasus and Georgia, performed in the years 1807 and 1808, by command of the Russian government," which includes "Caucasian Languages: Appendix to the Travel Guide to the Caucasus and Georgia"⁶. The 1888 work "*Čečenskij jazyk*" (Chechen Language) by Petr K. Uslar is referred to as "(t)he first description of Chechen grammar" by Molochieva (2011, p. 27). Uslar had no formal linguistic education, was a Major General in the Russian Army, and developed his interest in the languages of the

⁶ Translated from German "Reise in den Kaukasus und nach Georgien: Unternommen in den Jahren 1807 und 1808, auf Veranstaltung der Kaiserlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu St. Petersburg. Enthaltend eine vollständige Beschreibung der kaukasischen Länder und ihrer Bewohner" and "Kaukasische Sprachen : Anhang zur Reise in den Kaukasus und nach Georgien".

Caucasus under orders to compile information for the use of the Tsarist Government. His work was done during and in the direct aftermath of the Caucasian War.⁷ The first Chechen primer was published in 1862, written by Kedi Dosov, a man of Chechen origin who worked closely with Uslar (Ibragimov et al., 2022).

There are several Russian-Chechen dictionaries, such as “*Russko - Čečenskij slovar' Örsijn-Noxçijn slovar*” by Ibragim Aliroev (2005), “*Russko-Čečenskij slovar*” by A. T. Karasaev and A. G. Maciev (1978), and “*Noxçijn - Örsijn slovar*” by A. G. Maciev (1961).⁸

There are far fewer Chechen-English dictionaries and so far only one that could be viewed as being a legitimate dictionary: “*Chechen-English and English-Chechen dictionary / Noxchiin-ingals, ingals-noxchiin deshnizhaina*” by Johanna Nichols and Arbi D. Vagapov, who are both linguists specializing in the field of Chechen linguistics (2004).

Several comparative works exist, such as Aliroev’s (1975) book titled “*Sravnitel'no-sopostavitel'nyj slovar' otraslevoj leksiki Čečenskogo i Inguškogo jazykov i dialektov*” (Comparative Dictionary on ‘Industry’ Lexicology of Chechen and Ingush Dialects) and Desheriev’s (1963) book “*Sravnitel'no-istoričeskaja grammatika naxskix jazykov i problemy proisxoždenija i istoričeskogo razvitija gorskix kavkazskix narodov*” (Comparative historical

⁷ To further make the point about how academia in Chechnya has been affected by Russian bias, an article on OC media states the following; “The Russification of Chechnya began almost immediately following its annexation into the Russian Empire during the 19th Century. Peter Uslar, often described as the father of Caucasus studies, was a vocal supporter of these efforts, and remains an extremely controversial figure in Chechen history. He spoke of the ‘pernicious’ influence of Arabic and insisted on enforcing Cyrillic-based alphabets to make North Caucasian peoples ‘more manageable’. It was Uslar who created the Chechen alphabet based on the Russian one.” No source is provided about this aspect of Uslar’s attitude, but considering Uslar’s role in the aftermath of the Caucasian War and his position in the Russian military, it would not be unexpected.

⁸ According to Arsanukayev (p.c.), a coworker of Maciev’s told him that Maciev’s second dictionary had reported being given a quota of Russian words that had to be included to the detriment of Chechen words. Maciev had requested either to make a larger work or to be permitted to limit the Russian words, and was refused, thus having to exclude many Chechen words from the dictionary. Words that existed for the same meaning in Chechen were excluded in favour of Russian loanwords. Russian loanwords were also expected to be spelt the same way as in Russian, unchanged, despite phonological differences in the languages. This was also reported in Sebba (2006) as happening to Turkic languages, showing that this treatment was not unique to Chechen, but rather a pattern of Russification for all minority ethnic groups and their languages under the USSR.

grammar of Nakh languages and the problem of the origin and historical development of Caucasian mountain people).

Dialectology work includes Arsakhanov's "*Akkinskij dialekt v sisteme Čečeno - Inguškogo jazyka*" (The Aeqqi dialect in the system of the Chechen-Ingush language) and "*Čečenskaja Dialektologija*" (Chechen Dialectology) (1959)(1969).

Various works focusing on grammar and specific features exist both in Russian and English. One of the earliest is Jakovlev's "*Sintaksis Čečenskogo literaturnogo jazyka*" (syntax of the Chechen literary language); he also produced "*Morfologija Čečenskogo jazyka*" (morphology of the Chechen literary language) (1940; 1960). Special focus has been paid to Chechen's biabsolutive constructions (Molochieva et al., 2022; Forker, 2012). Beyond that, several influential works were produced by linguists specializing in Chechen and Nakh linguistics, Joanna Nichols (1994, 1997, 2011) (Nichols & Vagapov, 2004) being most notable among them for work produced in English.

3.2 Basic Information

The Oxford Handbook of Languages of the Caucasus presents Chechen as having "seven recognized dialects", though it does not list them (Komen et al. 2021). The book "Chechen dialectology" covers six dialects; Galanchoj, Sharoi, Cheberloi, Itum-Kale, Aeqqi and Kisti (Arsakhanov, 1969). The seventh that Komen et al. are referring to may possibly be the literary (standard) dialect, or perhaps the 'lowland' dialect, from which the literary/standard is said to be derived.

In line with other languages from the Caucasus, Chechen is an ergative-absolutive language with a large consonant inventory, although unlike other Caucasian languages, it also has a large vowel inventory with a contrastive length distinction. Chechen has agglutinating

morphology, with a rich inflection system. The three major lexical classes are noun, verb and adjective/adverb (Komen et al, 2021).

3.3 Phonetics and Transcription

The present paper does not focus upon the phonetics or phonology of the Chechen language, but due to the nature of the work, a basic sound inventory to understand the transcription method is provided. What is commonly used in linguistic works on Chechen and Ingush in English is what is referred to in Good (2003) as the UCB Ingush Orthography, created by Joanna Nichols. This script is also used in Molochieva (2010). Table 3.1 below outlines the different non-IPA symbols used in various sources and their IPA equivalent. This table shows that the more recent Komen et al. work has changed the conventions significantly from the previous works. For cohesion, the data gathered for this project largely uses the older script presented in Nichols (2011) as it is used in most of the data that was taken from sources for this work. A more in-depth look at that script and an explanation about the choices made regarding it are provided in Nichols (2011), where the author of the script describes it in further detail (p. 16-20).

Table 3.1 Non-IPA symbols used in various texts

IPA	Good (2003)	Molochieva (2010)	Komen et al. (2021)	This work
ʔ	w	w	Ɔ	w
ʔ	w	w	w	w
ts	c	c	c	c
ts'	c'	c'	c'	c'
tʃ	ch	ch	č	ch
tʃ'	ch'	ch'	č'	ch'
dz	-	-	ž	dz
dʒ	-	-	ž	dzh
ɣ/ɣ	gh	gh	ɣ	gh
ħ	hw	hw	ħ	hw
ʃ	sh	sh	š	sh
ʒ	zh	zh	ž	zh
w ⁹	-	v	v	v

Table 3.2 provides the consonant system of Chechen in IPA based upon table 3.1 and table 3.1 and the explanation of Nichols' script provided in "Ingush Grammar", as well as observations made from the data gathered for this project (2011, p. 16-20). It also provides the equivalent symbols used in the script by Molochieva (2010) and of this paper, where applicable.

⁹ In Nichols (2011), she states that Ingush does not have a 'w' sound thus making the symbol free for use in the Caucasianist script for pharyngealization and the pharyngealized consonants (p. 17). It is unclear if this is something that she had since found to be wrong, or if the inclusion of the 'w' symbol in this version of the Caucasianist script is due to this work also being on Chechen, which does have /w/ sounds. Nevertheless, it seems that the /w/ sound is still symbolised by 'v', and as the phonetics and phonology are not the focus of the work, 'v' shall be used for both where applicable.

Table 3.2 Consonant Sounds in Chechen

	bilabial	Labio-dental	Inter-dental	Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal
Plosive	p b p'		t d t'			k g k'	q q'	ʔ	ʔ
Affricate				ts dz ts'	tʃ dʒ tʃʰ				
Fricative		v		s z			x ɣ	ħ	h
Nasal	m			n					
Trill				r					
Approx.	w				ʃ ʒ				
Lateral Approx.			l		j				

In table 3.3, the equivalent IPA symbols for the vowels is presented (p. 65). Due to the constraints of the project, the vowel system was less focused upon, but the transcriptions use the symbols shown in tables 3.3 and 3.4.

Table 3.3 IPA equivalent of UCB Ingush Orthography for vowels in Good (2003)

Vowels			
ii	[i:]	yy	[y:]
uu	[u:]		
i	[ɪ]	y	[y]
u	[ʊ]		
ie	[i:ɛ]	ue	[y:ʌ]
uo	[u:ʌ]		
ia	[iɛ]	oe	[yʌ]
e	[ɛ]	a	[ʌ]
o	[wʌ]		
ea	[ɛæ:]	aa	[a:]
oa	[ɔ]		
ei	[ej]		
ai	[ʌj]	oi	[oj]
ou	[ʌw]		
~ nasalization on the preceding vowel			

Table 3.4 Vowel Inventory for Lowland Chechen from Komen et al. (2021, p. 320)

		Front				Back				
		-RND		+RND		-RND		+RND		Falling diphthong
Close	Plain	i	ii	ü	ü:			u	uu	ui
	Diphthong	ie [je]	ie	üe [üe]	üe [üö]			uo	uo	ou
Mid	Plain	e	ee	oe [ö]	oe [ö:]			o	oo	oi
Open	Plain					a	aa			ai

3.4 Noun Morphology – Noun declension

Literature on Chechen has featured varied presentations of its grammatical gender. All nouns have a grammatical gender, though the noun itself inflects only for case and number. The gender is inflected on a portion of verbs and adjectives, with four prefixes that alter the stem of the verb/adjective; j-, v-, b- and d-. These four markers coincide with the grammatical gender of the noun the verb/adjective agrees with. In Komen et al. (2021), grammatical gender is defined as a pair composed of one of the four prefixes used for the singular and one of the four prefixes used for the plural (p. 324). For verbs, intransitive verbs take their agreement from the subject and transitive verbs take their agreement from the direct object (Molochieva, 2010, p. 10).

In 5, it is clear the speaker is female as the verb *jolch* that agrees with the first-person singular pronoun *so* has the prefix j-, which is the marker in the singular for the noun class that is used for feminine humans. In the same sentence, the noun *jowri* ‘girls’ agrees with the verb *ber* ‘be’ which uses the b- prefix: the plural marker for the noun class that is used for both feminine and masculine humans in third person.

5. <i>so</i> _i	<i>zhim</i>	<i>j-ol-ch</i> _i	<i>xeenahw</i>	<i>txa</i>
1SG.ABS	little	J-be-CVBtemp	time.LOC	1PL.EXCL.GEN
<i>lulha-hw</i> neighbourhood-LOC		<i>chowgh</i> very	<i>dik</i> good	<i>dotgh-i</i> friend-PL.ABS
				<i>b-er</i> _j B-be.PST
<i>sa</i> 1SG.GEN	<i>jow-ri</i> _j girl-PL.ABS			

‘When I was young, there were girls in our neighbourhood that were very good friends of mine.’ (Recording 6, lines 1 - 3).

Table 3.5 Gender in Komen et al. (2021)

Gender	Singular	Plural	Notes
1 st /2 nd person	V/J	D	Pronouns only
Human	V/J	B	V/J for M/F sex
Various	B	B	Minority of B gender
Various	D	D	Minority of D gender
Various	J	J	

Table 3.5 above is found in Komen et al. (2021) and presents the gender marker pairs categories. Each letter represents the prefixes that make up the first letter for the verbs and adjectives that inflect for gender, such as D for d- like in *dovxa* ‘warm’, which would become *jovxa* when agreeing with a noun using J, *vovxa* for a noun using V, and so on and so forth.

Komen et al. (2021) state the following; “The gender marker pairs define three larger animacy-based classes: nominals with human referents, for which gender is predictable based on sex (V-gender for masculine, J for feminine); within human nominals, those with third versus first/second person reference, for which the plural gender markers differ; and non-human nouns,

with arbitrary gender”¹⁰ (p. 325). This is one of several types of categorizations used for Chechen grammatical gender classes, though the table above is missing one relatively common pair; B marker in singular and D marker in plural. The use of the B/D class is shown in table 3.6, from Arsakhanov (1959). This shows that the B/D gender marker exists in both a dialect and in standard Chechen, though as the table is meant to illustrate how gender markers can vary for the same word across dialects, none of the words below are B/D in both. This table additionally provides evidence that gender marker pairs vary dialectically from the marker pairs in standard Chechen, at least in the Aeqqi dialect. Such variances, though not necessarily for the same words, has been observed between standard Chechen and the Cheberloi dialect as well (Maciev, 1965, p. 49).

¹⁰ The arrow symbol was used in the original text this quote is citing. It is not clear what it is meant to be referring to, nor if it may be a mistake.

Table 3.6 Comparison of gender markers (Arsakhanov, 1959, p. 93-94)¹¹

Aeqqi Dialect		Standard Chechen		Meaning
орам	d/d	урам	b/d	street
к1одар	d/d	к1алд	j/j	farmer's cheese
з1у́га	d/d	з1у́га	j/j	wasp
сурга	b/d	воттана	d/d	handplane
г1умг1а	d/d	г1умг1а	j/j	jug
гол	j/j	гола	b(b) j//j	knee
истака	b/d	стака	d/d	glass
ко́ка	j/j	ко́ка	d/d	blackthorn
химолх1ама	j/j	зока	d/d	mug
бурч	b/b	бурч	j/j	pepper
хъа́ст	b/d	хъаст/шовда	d/d	spring (water)
кепак	d/d	кепек	j/j	coin
ко́ьллак	d/d	полла	b/d	butterfly
гадарг	d/d	га́раг	j/j	tile
оччам	b/b	оччам	d/d	dill
ц1ока	d/d	ц1ока	j/j	skin (animal)
мелќа	j/j	мелќа	b/b	lizard
нарс	d/d	на́рс	j/j	cucumber
сигал	d/d	стигал	j/j	sky ¹²
мерга	j/j	ми́ра	b/b	kick
чета	j/j	бал	d/d	cherry

Komen et al. (2021) go on to say, “It could also be said that non-human nouns have lexical gender and human nouns and pronouns do not but take their agreement from the person and sex of the referent,” (p. 325). This statement is somewhat ambiguous. It could be interpreted as meaning that only the first two classes are for human nominals, and only non-human nouns have lexical gender, thus meaning that no human nouns have gender outside of the J/D&B and V/D&B. It could also be interpreted as meaning that the V-gender and J-gender are used solely

¹¹ Some of the examples from the original table have been removed as the words in Aeqqi do not actually match in meaning to the standard Chechen equivalents provided. If the correct standard equivalent had been used for those words, the class marker pairs would be the same in both.

¹² The original source has this listed as ‘knee’, but as that has already come up in the table and as the Russian translation is inaccurate, this has been changed to fit the actual translation of the Chechen words.

for human nouns, and no non-human nouns can have those genders. In the next chapter, it is shown that while both interpretations are generally true, both have several exceptions.

The following table outlining the grammatical gender system is found in Molochieva (2010):

Table 3.7 Gender in Molochieva (2010)

Singular Plural	v- / -v- b- / -b-	j- / -j- j- / b- -j- / -b-	d- / -d- d- / -d-	b- / -b- b- / d- -b- / -d-
Gender Assignment	Only male humans	Female humans, animals, inanimate objects	Animals, inanimate objects	Animals, inanimate objects

Molochieva's approach to format grammatical gender is unlike table 3.5 featured in Komen et al, with each class composed of the singular marker and all the possible markers that can be paired with that singular marker in plural. The difference between the two approaches can be illustrated using 5 above. In 5, *so* 'I' refers to the female speaker, and so the converb *jolch* that agrees with it is prefixed with a /j-/. This is the singular marker used for female humans, as well as animals and inanimate objects. The word *jowri* is plural, and so the verb that agrees with it, *ber* 'is', is marked with /b-/. Under Komen et al.'s categorization of grammatical gender, *so* 'I' in example 5, has the marker pairing J/B and would fit under the first category, though their method does mean that both the masculine and feminine in 1st and 2nd person are within the same gender class. In Molochieva's categorization, the same word would be in the second category, in which the marker pair J/B used for human women is grouped alongside the marker pairing of J/J, which is used for animals and inanimate objects.

3.5 *Verb Morphology*

Chechen is stated in Good (2003) to be “typologically ... head-final, suffixing, ergative, case-using, and dependent-marking” (p.1). While SOV is the basic word order, others are commonly used, as Chechen’s relatively extensive case system allows for loose word order. Good (2003) states that “[t]he placement of wh-words is syntactically free” (p. 1).

Molochieva’s 2012 dissertation, “Tense, aspect and mood in Chechen”, takes an in-depth look at TAM in Chechen and goes against previous literature when it comes to the aspectual system of Chechen. Molochieva provides “a description of the aspectual and temporal system of Chechen, breaking with the traditional view that Chechen does not have perfective and imperfective categories” (p. 7).

Providing context for her work, Molochieva describes the history of research on this subject as follows:

Chechen has both perfective and imperfective as well as Aktionsart distinctions, and no previous work has distinguished or described them all. Most authors use the term aspect (Russ. vid) to label the semelfactive and iterative oppositions. Extensive analysis of the Chechen tense and aspect system has never been carried out. The only work dedicated to the tense and aspect system in Nakh languages was published by Dešerieva (1979). Previous research is based on the generalization that the Nakh languages do not differentiate perfective and imperfective aspect, and the iterative vs. semelfactive opposition is viewed as the only possible aspectual distinction in these languages (Jakovlev 1940, Dolakova 1961, Dešeriev [1963] 2006, Movtaev 1974, Dešerieva 1979, 1988). (p. 27)

As Molochieva elaborates, “The reason why the previous research on Chechen tense-aspect-mood has failed is that the researchers compared it with the Russian aspectual system and analyzed it from a Russian aspectual point of view,” (Molochieva, 2010, p. 30). This ties back to the history of the Chechen speakers; the attitude towards the Chechen people under Russian rule extended to every part of them, including their language. Even in the absence of malicious intent, the presence and dominance of the Russian culture and language lead to tangible oversights in academia on the Chechen language, even from academics who themselves are Chechens.

3.5.1 Converbs. Molochieva’s dissertation also covers the converbs present in Chechen, as shown in table 3.7 below, which Molochieva based on Good (2003). Both Molochieva (2010) and Good (2003) use Haspelmath (1995) for their definition of converb. Haspelmath defines the converb as “a verb form that is part of the inflectional paradigm of verbs” and more specifically, “a nonfinite verb form whose main function is to mark adverbial subordination” (1995, p. 3). He rejects the notion of defining the converb as “a verb plus a complementizer or subordinator”; the verb part of the converb is itself fully subordinate (p. 3). In short, a converb is a verb functioning as an adverb, which Haspelmath contrasts with particles, verbs functioning as adjectives. In his work, Haspelmath brings up how Russian linguists have paid far more attention to converbs than Western linguists, in part due to their presence in the Russian language, and in part due to “the converb-rich languages of the Russian colonial areas of the Caucasus and northern and Central Asia” (p. 3).

According to Good (2003), only some of the Chechen verbal suffixes he covers fit Haspelmath’s idea of a ‘true converb’. While amongst the verbal suffixes are verbal nouns, (or *masdar*, as it is referred to in both Good and Molochieva) and participles, Good also clarifies that

some of the suffixes he labels as converbs do not fit the ‘true converb’ definition of ‘verbal adverb’. Some can function as both converbs and ‘medial verbs’, a verb form that is dependent on another “controlling verb” that typically determines the medial verb’s subject and with which the medial verb shares (at least) the mood and tense (Haspelmath, 1995, p. 20). For example, Good (2003) states that what he refers to as the progressive anterior fits the definition of a medial verb rather than being a true converb, as it is used uniquely for clause chaining (pg. 4).

Molochieva, based off the works of Good and Haspelmath, defines a converb as “a nonfinite verb form which marks adverbial subordination”. In Chechen, converbs convey “time, location, manner, and extent” (p. 17). In Good (2003), Chechen is said to make extensive use of converbs for clause combining (p. 1).

Of the 49 synthetic and periphrastic TAM forms discussed in Molochieva (2010), the periphrastic TAM forms, which make up the majority of the 49, are composed of “a combination of a converb and auxiliary,” (p. 37). In those constructions, the converb functions as the lexical verb.

Table 3.7 Chechen Converbs (Molochieva, 2010, p. 18)

Converbs	Abbreviations	Suffix	Stem	Chaining	Subordination	Coordination
Simultaneous verb	CVBsim	-(u)sh	IPFV	+		+
Anterior verb	CVBant	-na	PFV	+		+
Immediate anterior verb	CVBimm.ant	-i	IPFV	+		+
Temporal verb	CVBtemp	-cha	PFV		+	
Temporal verb with postposition	CVBtemp xienahw	-nach	PFV		+	
Posterior verb	CVBpost	-lie	INF		+	
Converb 'until'	CVBuntil	-alc	INF		+	
Converb 'as soon as/when'	CVBas soon as/when	- (n)iahw ¹³	PPV		+	
Converb of potential	CVBirrpot	-ahw	IPFV		+	
Concessive verb	CVBeven though	-shiahw	IPFV		+	
Converb of manner	CVBman	-chox	PFV/ IPFV		+	
Comparative Converb	CVBcomp	-chol/ -chul	PFV/ IPFV		+	
Converb of extent	CVBextent	-al	INF		+	
Locative Converb	CVBloc	-chiahw/ -chahw	PST		+	

¹³ In the table itself, Molochieva has the suffix as *-(n)ie*, but when she discusses it in further detail and presents examples, the verb is presented as *-(n)iahw*. I assume that *-(n)iahw* is the correct form intended to have been put in the table, and that *-(n)ie* was simply a mistake.

Table 3.8 Chechen Non-finite Verbal Suffixes (Good, 2003, p. 4)

Suffix	Gloss	Form	Stem	Translation
Immediate Anterior	CVuntil	-(l)alc	Inf.	‘Until ...’
Posterior	CVpost	-lie	Inf.	‘Before ...’
Temporal	CVtemp	-cha	Inf.	‘When/If...’
Participle	PART	-~/ -chu	Pres./Past	Participle
Nominalizer	NZ	-rg/-chu + CASE	Pres./Past	Nominalizer
Masdar (Verbal Noun)	MAS	-r	Inf.	Nominalizer
Irrealis	CVirr	-ahw	Pres/Inf./Past	‘If ... be ...’
Anterior	CVant	-na	Inf.	‘Having V-ed’
Progressive Anterior	CVpan	-i	Pres.	‘Having V-ed’
Simultaneous	CVsim	-ush	Pres.	‘V-ing’

Table 3.9 Chechen Verbal Suffix Uses (Good, 2003, p. 6)

Converb	Gloss	Chaining	Subordinate
Immediate Anterior	CVuntil	No	Yes
Posterior	CVpost	No	Yes
Temporal	CVtemp	No	Yes
Participle	PART	No	Limited
Nominalizer	NZ	No	Limited
Masdar	MAS	No	Limited
Anterior	CVant	Yes	Yes
Progressive Anterior	CVpan	Yes	No
Simultaneous	CVsim	Yes	Yes

3.5.2 Imperative. In her dissertation, Molochieva (2010) covers the imperative mood and the six imperative forms found in Chechen. While Chechen verbs do not show person agreement, two of the imperative forms do agree with the second person singular and plural. These suffixes are said to be derived from the second person singular pronouns *hwo/ahw* and second person plural pronouns *shu/ash* (p. 251).

Table 3.10 *Imperative forms* (Molochieva, 2010, pg. 251)

Imperative forms	Stem	Suffixes	Gloss
Simple imperative	INF	<i>-a</i>	<i>chai mala</i> 'Drink tea!'
Future imperative		<i>-lahw</i>	<i>chai malalahw</i> 'Drink tea (later not now)!'
Strict imperative		<i>-al</i>	<i>chai malal</i> 'Drink tea!'
Imperative 2SG		<i>-ahw</i>	<i>chai malahw</i> 'Drink tea!' (only for 2SG)
Imperative 2PL		<i>-ash</i>	<i>chai malash</i> 'Drink tea!' (only for 2PL)

Komen et al. (2021) bring up what they refer to as the “two mild, or polite, imperatives”:

-al/l and *-alahw/lahw*¹⁴

6. *biexk* *ma=b.illa-lahw.* (Chechen)
 offense NEG=B.put/take-IMP

‘**Excuse me.**’ (Komen et al, 2021; 14, p. 336)

The second form is stated to be perceived by speakers of “at least” Ingush as a future imperative in addition to a polite imperative. It is somewhat strange that this qualifier was included, as Molochieva, who worked on this chapter alongside Komen and Nichols, outlined that *-lahw* was a future imperative for Chechen in her 2012 dissertation, as seen in table 3.10. Molochieva, in turn, did not address the polite interpretations of the forms brought up in Komen et al. in her dissertation, though as the Komen et al. work was written later, that is more understandable.

¹⁴ For the imperative suffixes *-al/-l* and *-alahw/-lahw*, it seems to be there is a split on where the suffix begins properly. It is listed as *-al* and *-alah* in Komen et al. (2021), but they do qualify that it can be “analysed differently” as “*-l* and *-lah* added to the plain imperative” (p. 336).

Chapter 4: Analysis of Literature in Comparison to Data

4.1 Grammatical Gender

Provided below is a table outlining Chechen's grammatical gender classes based on the previous descriptions outlined in Section 3.4, featuring simple examples elicited from Arsanukayev that demonstrates the gender marker pairs in both singular and plural for each combination.

Table 4.1 Gender Markers in Chechen

Class	Singular	Plural	Semantics
Fem	J <i>Jow j-u</i> girl J-be.PRS '(The) girl is _' (Arsanukayev, E.D.) <i>So j-u</i> 1SG.ABS J-be 'I (feminine) am _' (Arsanukayev, E.D.)	B <i>Jow-ri b-u</i> girl-PL.ABS B-be.PRS 'Girls are _' (Arsanukayev, E.D.) D in 1st/2nd person pronouns <i>txo d-u</i> 1SG.PL.EXCL.ABS D-be 'We (exclusive) are _' (Arsanukayev, E.D.)	Person(ified) feminine
Masc	V <i>Kant v-u</i> Boy-SG.ABS V-be '(the) boy is _' (Arsanukayev, E.D.) <i>So v-u</i> 1SG.ABS V-be 'I (masculine) am _' (Arsanukayev, E.D.)	B <i>Kenti b-u</i> boy-PL.ABS B-be 'Boys are _' (Arsanukayev, E.D.) D in 1st/2nd person pronouns <i>txo d-u</i> 1SG.PL.EXCL.ABS D-be 'We (exclusive) are _' (Arsanukayev, E.D.)	Person(ified) masculine
JJ	J <i>Kuotam j-u</i> Chicken J-be 'The chicken is _' (Arsanukayev, E.D.)	J <i>Kuotmish j-u</i> Chicken.PL J-be 'Chickens are _' (Arsanukayev, E.D.)	Arbitrary
BB	B <i>wazh b-u</i> apple B-be 'The apple is _' (Arsanukayev, E.D.)	B <i>waezhash b-u</i> apple.PL B-be 'Apples are _' (Arsanukayev, E.D.)	Arbitrary
DD	D <i>ber d-u</i> child D-is 'The child is _' (Arsanukayev, E.D.)	D <i>ber-ash d-u</i> child-PL D-is 'Children are _' (Arsanukayev, E.D.)	Arbitrary (includes human)
BD	B <i>pol b-u</i> butterfly B-is 'The butterfly is _' (Arsanukayev, E.D.)	D <i>pol-archi d-u</i> butterfly-PL D-is 'Butterflies are _' (Arsanukayev, E.D.)	Arbitrary

This table is more like the one from Komen et al. brought up previously but splits the ‘human’ class based upon gender instead of person. It also adds the BD class which was missing from their table. As seen here feminine and masculine are the same in plural, and are differentiated only in the singular. Every other class is arbitrary when it comes to what nouns belong to them. The D/D class is considered the default; verbs and adjectives that decline for noun class are presented in the literature with the *d-* prefix.

Referring back to the statement from Komen et al. brought up in the previous section, that “it could also be said that non-human nouns have lexical gender and human nouns and pronouns do not but take their agreement from the person and sex of the referent,” below are some examples in the data and from other sources that go against this.

In 6, it is shown that the word *adam* ‘person’ is in the DD class. This is in contrast with 7 in which the word *sag* which also means ‘person’ but must take on either the feminine or masculine class.

6. *maso* *adam* *cwa* *ter* *d-ac*
 all person one same D-be.neg
 ‘Every person is not the same’ (Recording 5, line 64)
7. *jux* *cwan* *ch’inxo-chuo* *v-oq* *sag* *aella* *aj*
 back one.OBL Chinxo-ERG v-old person say.PRF hey
- sobar* *d-el-ish* *vai* *hinc* *vowsh-ax* *let-ahw*
 patience D-make-IMP.2PL 1PL.INCL now to.both-LAT fight-CVBirr
- jer* *shi* *c’ii* *shal* *d-el* *lii-r* *b-u*
 DEM two blood cold D-be die-FUT B-be.AUX

‘Then, one Chinho elder said ‘Hey, wait, while we fight each other here, their blood will cool and they will die.’ (Recording 1, line 13)

Granted, the word *adam* in Chechen is a loanword from Arabic (Vagapov, 2011, p. 82). This could potentially factor into why it is in the DD class, instead of requiring the feminine or

masculine classes like /sag/. In 8, the same sentence as 6 is presented, with *adam* replaced with *ber* ‘child’ which is not a loanword, and is also in the DD class.

8. *maso* *ber* *cwa* *ter* *d-ac*
 all child one same D-be.neg

‘Every child is not the same’ (Recording 5, line 64, altered)

In 9 below, the same construction as 6 is used but the word *adam* ‘person’ is replaced with the word *sag* ‘person’. There is no specific referent in 9 just as there is no specific referent in 6, but unlike *adam*, the word *sag* must be in either the JB or VB class.

9. *maso* *sag* *cwa* *ter* *j-ac*
 all person one same J-be.neg

‘Every woman is not the same’ (Recording 5, line 64, altered)

The resulting construction cannot retain the same meaning; *sag* must agree with either JB or VB, and so cannot be referring to a non-specific person, only to a non-specific woman or man. This contrasts with *ber* in 10, which, even when having a specific referent, cannot take its agreement from their sex/gender.

10. *hwo* *vo* *ber* *d-u*
 2SG.ABS bad child D-is

‘You are a bad kid.’

As such, while human nouns mostly take their agreement from the sex of the referent, there are human nouns that do not, and have lexical gender. Due to the largely arbitrary nature of the

‘grammatical gender’ system in Chechen, it would be better to describe it in terms of noun classes.

Addressing the other interpretation of the statement that non-human nouns do not take agreement from the sex of the referent but have lexical gender, there are a few examples that go against this. In 11, *del* ‘God’ agrees with the ‘human’, masculine gender. This is despite ‘God’ being non-human and referring specifically to the Islamic understanding of God, which is genderless.^{15 16}

11. *Del_i q'in t'er=v-aq_i v-ez_i*
 God soul over=V-move V-must
 ‘One must get God’s forgiveness.’ (Recording 5, line 60)

Whilst they are generally very rarely spoken of these days, the Gods of the Vainakh pantheon from the pre-Islamic polytheistic Vainakh religion also fit into either the J/B or V/B class. This is not that surprising as these Gods, like in most polytheistic religions, were humanoid in appearance. In comparison, in 12, in the Vainakh myth Phkarmat (the Vainakh equivalent to Prometheus) a being called Wuzha is referred to using the masculine class, despite being described as a monster with one eye the size of a plate, and very large teeth (Chokaev, 1991, p. 172).

¹⁵ Regardless of the faith attributing human gender to the concept of ‘God’, the word has the masculine case in other languages, including the original Arabic. Arabic has only two gender classes, and most words default to masculine. Chechen, on the other hand, has several and most words default to D/D, whilst some have observed most loanwords taking J/J.

¹⁶ The word *del* predates Chechens adopting Islam, and while the word is currently understood as ‘God’, it did refer to a specific masculine deity within the Vainakh pagan religion, who was viewed as the ‘head’ of the pantheon.

12. *Geuzun* *zaw-nash* *a* *jaxa-sh* *ve-nach_i*
 Copper chain-PL and carry-CVBsim V.come -PTCP.PAST
- kedal* *barg* *a* *bolu-sh,* *mars~mars-al*
 bowl.COMPV eye and B.have-CVBsim sickle-COMPV
- tserg-ash* *a* *jolu-sh* *vola-ch_i* *Wuzh-as_i*
 tooth-PL and J.have-CVBsim V.be-PTCP Wuzha-ERG
- dwa-vig-na* *Bash-Lam-an* *keurt-ie*
 away-V.take-CVBant molten-mountain-GEN peak-ALL
- dwa-virk-ira* *Pxari-nart*
 away-V.tie-Rem.WPST Pxari-nart.ABS

‘Having arrived carrying copper chains, having a bowl-like eye and sickle-like teeth, Wuzha took Pxari-nart away to the peak of Bash-Lam and tied him’ (Chokaev, 1991, p. 172)

A myth recorded for this project features a *Ch’inxo*’s interaction with a *Shait* ‘demon’; the noun *Shait* agrees with the D/D class, as seen in 13, even though in the story the beings are similar enough to a human that their heads are accidentally swapped and nobody notices until the demons come to the village to ask for their head back. The word *Ch’inxo*, meanwhile, agrees with the V/B case, signalling that this specific *Ch’inxo* is a man. It does not seem that humanness alone determines which non-human nouns fit into with what Komen et al. considered the human classes. Or it may be that humanlike appearance is not enough and that there are other qualities that did not come up in the myth that exclude *Shaitnish* from the class. Furthermore, as brought up previously, not all human nouns fit into these two classes, so it may be a different requirement entirely, if there is any.

13. ... *duhwol* *d-ogh-sh-dol* *shait-i* ...
 In_front D-come-CVBsim-D.be demon-COORD

‘... and the on-coming demon ...’ (Recording 1, line 4)

As such, one can say that whilst generally the first two classes are reserved for ‘human’ nouns, these classes are neither exclusively human, nor are they the only ‘human’ classes, despite exceptions being few and far between.

4.2 *Converbs*

The explanations and examples in Molochieva’s work have been compared with the data gathered for this project, with additional insight from Arsanukayev to see if his perception matched the description of each converb, and to check the grammaticality of what was presented. For the converbs that are not discussed here, it can be assumed that the data and his perception matched the literature, and that any differences were not significant nor relevant enough to bring up.

There are some discrepancies between what is presented in table 3.7 and what Molochieva discusses later in the thesis when she elaborates on the converbs. Some of these discrepancies are addressed below for the specific converbs they come up for. Beyond that, not every converb Molochieva discusses may be a distinct converb, or even a converb at all. As mentioned in the previous section, Good (2003) discusses the verbal suffixes that he has labeled as converbs and how not all are proper “converbs”. Among them, he states that “the most clearly converbal suffixes are the immediate anterior, the posterior, and the temporal” while stating that “the irrealis could also be considered a converb, though its semantics make it a less central example of this morphosyntactic type” (pg. 4).¹⁷

¹⁷ As seen in table 3.7, 3.8 and 3.9, Molochieva (2010) and Good (2003) use different names for some of the same converb suffixes. The suffixes mentioned here are *-(l)alc*, *-lie*, *-cha*, and *-ahw* which in Molochieva (2010) are referred to as the converb ‘until’, the posterior converb, the temporal converb and the converb potential. The immediate anterior in Molochieva (2010) is *-i*, which is called the progressive anterior in Good (2003), though Molochieva also refers to the same suffix as the progressive anterior.

What is additionally brought up in this section is the idea that what Molochieva identifies as distinct converbs are actually several ‘converbs’ (or suffixes in general) tacked onto one another which create a meaning that is distinct to the sum of its parts.

4.2.1 Anterior Converb.

PFVstem – na

The anterior converb can be used to chain clauses that have a sequential and narrative relationship to each other. It has perfective semantics and is added to the perfective stem of the verb (pg. 19).

Examples from collected data:

14. *vowshi* *d-ist* *xil* *mogsh* *parghat*
 To.both D-speak be.PST health free
- xaeti-na* *shie* *q'amel* *d-e-sh*
 ask-CVBant 3PL.RFL.GEN conversation D-do-CVBsim
- lae-chahw* *can* *human=te=ghol* *k'owsom*
 stand-CVBloc one.OBL thing=on=over argument
- bael-a* *tsier*
 occur-PRF DEM.PL.GEN

‘They spoke to each other, and having asked after the other’s health, while they were standing making conversation, an argument broke out between them.’ (Recording 1, line 5)

15. ... *v-ogha* *vogha-n* *buk* *oc* *berd-ax*
 V-go V-goCVBant back DEM.OBL cliff-LAT
- ghorti-na* *da=xenti-n* *ch'inxo*
 prop.up-CVBant away=stand-PRF Ch.ABS(V)

'... having gone and propped up the cliff with his back, the Chinho positioned himself.'

(Recording 2, line 8)

Discussing the data presented in Molochieva (2010), it must be pointed out that the free translation in 16 does not match the interlinear gloss, nor the meaning of the Chechen sentence itself; it is missing the mention of the scarf entirely, and the verb with the simultaneous converb *liestosh* is translated in the free translation in a way that does not match the way *joedsh*, which has the same simultaneous converb, is translated. The proper free translation would be “having put on a red dress and a scarf, Zara was going to a store, shaking her bag (as she went)”. Though this comes across a bit clunky in English, it is clear in the original Chechen and in the gloss that Zara is ‘going’ and ‘shaking her bag’ simultaneously.

The speaker did interpret the anterior converb as having a sequential meaning, though he clarified that the sequential meaning does not apply when it comes to the verbs with the anterior converb themselves. The verbs with the anterior converb could be happening in either order, it is just that they all take place sequentially before verbs without the anterior converb. For example 17, Arsanukayev said that Zara could have put on the scarf first or the dress first and that nothing in the syntax would discount either meaning. Due to the semantics of the sentence, and due to the order in which they are stated, Arsanukayev said they would assume the dress came first, but the other interpretation is still valid. However, the verbs that have the simultaneous converb *-(u)sh* can only be interpreted as taking place after those with the anterior converb.

16. *so* *ghaala=a* *j-ax-na* *c'a-j-oed-u.*
 1SG.NOM(J) town.NOM=and J-go-CVBant home-J-go-PRS
'I am, having gone to the city, going home.' (Molochieva, 2010; 24, p. 19)
17. *Zaara* *c'ie* *kuoch* *j-oex-na* *joulaq*
 Z.NOM(J) red dress.NOM(J) J-dress:PFV-CVBant scarf.NOM
- tilli-na* *toermag* *liesto-sh* *tykana*
 put.on-CVBant bag.NOM shake-CVBsim store.ADV
- j-oed-sh* *j-ara.*
 J-go:IPFV-CVBsim J-be.PST
'Having put on a red dress and having shaken a bag, Zara was going to a store.'
 (Molochieva, 2010; 25, p. 19)

4.2.2 Immediate anterior converb.

IPFVstem – i

PFVstem – i

Example from collected data:

18. *tahk* *juha=w* *i* *v-ogh-sh*
 then again=and DEM.Nominal V-go-CVBsim
- gi-ch* *d-owd-i* *d-owd-i*
 see-CVBtemp D-run-CVBim.ant D-run-CVBim.ant
- chu=d-eulh-i* *howsa-r* *six* *tas* *duzan*
 in=D-go-CVBim.ant look-PST quickly container full
- d-el-ah* *d-as-d-oa-r* *ghumah* *chu* *hi*
 D-be-CVBirr D-empty-D-make:IPFV-PST bucket into water
- d-ut-i* *da=hot-j-oa-r* *oox*
 D-pour-CVBim.ant away=place-J-make -PST 1PL.EXCL.ERG

‘Then when we would see him coming again, we would rush inside to check; if the container was full, we would empty it, then we would replace the bucket after filling it.’
 (Recording 4, lines 9-11)

Molochieva discusses the immediate anterior converb as well as the ‘progressive anterior converb’. The description only includes the immediate anterior converb’s form, nothing is said about how it is used. Instead, it is contrasted with the ‘progressive anterior converb’ that “can only be used in chained clauses and in chained imperative constructions” (p. 20). The difference between their uses is not made clear, but a pattern can be identified in the examples provided. As shown in 20 below, the two do differ in the way they are formed since the ‘progressive anterior converb’ seems to only attach to the perfective stem, while the immediate anterior converb attaches to the imperfective stem. As shown in the examples, the ‘progressive anterior converb’ does not have to be used in chained clauses, as every instance of the *-i* converb is glossed as the immediate anterior converb in 19. In 21, both the immediate anterior and progressive anterior are shown in the gloss, though it is not made clear what stem (perfective or imperfective) is used.

19. *Muusa* *hwa='a-v-oogh-i* *niaw*
M.NOM(V) here=and-V-come:IPFV-CVBim.ant door.NOM(J)
- hwa='a-j-ool-i* *axcha*
here=and-J-open:IPFV-CVBim.ant money.NOM
- hwa='a-oec-i* *dwa-v-oed-u*
here=and-take-CVBim.ant here-V-go:IPFV-PRS

‘Musa is coming and opening the door and taking the money and going away.’
(Molochieva, 2010; 27, p. 20)

20. *hwa-d-ott-a* *hwa='a-'eec-i.*
here-D-pour-IMP here=and-take:PFV-CVBim.ant

‘Take it and pour (it) out!’ (Molochieva, 2010; 28, p. 20)

21. *hwa='a-v-ool-i* *p'ialg* *toox-i*
here=and-V-come-CVBim.ant finger.NOM hit-CVBp.ant
- niaw* *hwa='a-j-ell-i* *chu-v-ool-a*
door.NOM here=and-J-open.CVBp.ant into-V-come:IPFV-IMP

‘Come, knock, open the door, and come in (for a male person).’ (Molochieva, 2010; 29, p. 20)

The speaker does agree with Molochieva’s statement that the immediate anterior converb is used in chained clauses and chained imperative constructions.

4.2.3 Temporal converb with Postposition.

PFVstem - nach

Molochieva describes this converb as being used in conjunction with either the ‘postposition’ *xeenahw* (‘at the time’) or with *diinahw* (‘on that day’) (p. 21). The example found in the collected data will be presented later, as some issues arose in the analysis of this ‘converb’.

22. *so* *ghaala* *j-ax-nach* *xien-ahw*
 1SG.NOM(J) town.NOM J-go-CVBtemp time-LOC
- j-e'a-na* *xilla* *Zaara*
 J-come-CVBant be.PST Z.NOM(J)

‘When I was in the city, Zara came.’ (Molochieva, 2010; 32, p. 21)

23. *so* *ca-tiishi-ra* *cunax* *soega*
 1SG.NOM NEG-believe:PFV-WPST 3SG.LAT 3SG.ALL
- Zaara-s* *i* *d-iic-nach* *xeenahw*
 Z.ERG 3SG.NOM(D) D-tell-CVBtemp time.LOC

‘When Zara told me about that, I didn’t believe her.’ (Molochieva, 2010; 33, p. 22)

The speaker had a few points of contention with the description of this converb. First, they disagreed with the idea that “[t]he postposition must immediately follow the converb” (p. 21). The speaker stated that some constructions can come between the converb and the ‘postposition’, but only those that would describe the ‘postposition’ itself. In 24, a modified version of 22 is presented where an adjective has been added between the converb and ‘postposition’. The speaker acknowledges it is uncommon, but states that he perceives it as grammatical.¹⁸ According to Arsanukayev, one can also use *sarahw* ‘on that evening’ and *busahw* ‘on that night’ in addition to *xienahw* and *diinahw*.

¹⁸ The speaker did add that the resulting sentence would be strange. After further inquiry, they said they still perceived it as grammatical, simply unusual in conversation because it would come off as being ‘too literary’. They ultimately described such a construction as ‘rare, but one could not say it was not grammatical’ and that the sentence would fit contextually if read in something like a novel.

24. *so* *ghaala* *j-ax-nach* *sa*
 1SG.NOM(J) town.NOM J-go-CVBtemp light
- dowsh* *xien-ahw* *j-e'a-na* *xilla*
 lose.CVBsim time-LOC J-come-CVBant be.PST
- Zaara*
 Z.NOM(J)

‘When I was in the city, at twilight, Zara came.’ (Arsanukayev, E.D.)

The second issue Arsanukayev had with the temporal converb *-nach* was that he did not perceive it as a separate converb. According to Arsanukayev, this is simply the suffix *-ch(a)* added to verbs that are in ‘the past’. Here, while *-na-* could be marking the perfect, it could also be the anterior converb, as both could semantically be interpreted as marking ‘the past’. As Molochieva shows that the anterior converb specifically can have a converb added after it when outlining the concessive converb, it may be more likely that this is the anterior converb (p. 25). This would make the converb construction used in each example as follows:

25. *j-ax-na-ch*
 J-go-CVBant-CVBtemp
26. *d-iic-na-ch*
 D-tell-CVBant-CVBtemp

Adjusting 22 to change the tense by removing *-na* (as well as adjusting the stem) results in 27 below, in which Arsanukayev found that the only difference between the two construction was that 27 was referring to ‘the time Zara told me’ in the present tense while 23 was in the past tense, though the free translation does not accurately convey the difference in tense. A more accurate translation to fit the Chechen constructions would be ‘At Zara-telling-me time, I didn’t believe her’ for 27 and ‘At Zara-having-told-me time, I didn’t believe her’ for 23.

27. *so* *ca-tiishi-ra* *cunax* *soega*
 1SG.NOM NEG-believe:PFV-WPST 3SG.LAT 3SG.ALL
- Zaara-s* *i* *d-yycu-ch* *xeenahw*
 Z.ERG 3 SG.NOM(D) D-tell-CVBtemp time.LOC

‘When Zara told me about that, I didn’t believe her.’ (Arsanukayev, E.D.)

The use of the anterior converb with the temporal converb here could make semantic sense, as they could be describing an event taking place at a specific time (thus the use of the ‘postposition’ *xeenahw*) and having a sequential or narrative relationship with the other clauses. In 28 a construction found from the data is presented that could be another example of the ‘temporal converb with postposition’ with the temporal converb presenting as *-ch(a)* and not as *-nach*, being used in the present tense and thus not needing the anterior converb.

28. *sa* *zhim* *j-ol-ch* *xienahw* *txa*
 1SG.ABS little J-be-CVBtemp time.LOC 1PL.EXCL.GEN
- lulha* *chowgh* *dik* *dotgh-i* *b-er* *sa*
 neighbourhood very good friend-PL B-be.PST 1SG.GEN

‘When I was young, I had very good friends in our neighbourhood.’ (Recording 6, lines 1 - 3)

However, the same type of construction as 28 from the gathered data is not presented as a converb in Molochieva (2010), but rather as a participle:

29. *shiila* *j-ol-chu* *xeenahw* *chai* *molu-ra*
 cold J-be.PTCP time.LOC tea.NOM drink:IPFV-IPRF
- ooxa*
 3PL/excl.ERG

‘We used to drink tea when it was cold.’ (Molochieva, 2010; 139, p. 73)

In 29 above, the same construction is glossed and referred to as a participle. In Haspelmath (1995), a participle is described as a verbal adjective, contrasting with converbs which are verbal adverbs (p. 3). This could mean that what was perceived to be the temporal converb with the postposition in *jolch* in 28 is simply the verb *ju* ‘be’ inflected as a participle, with the final /u/ from the participle *-chu* having been deleted in spoken speech, leading to the misunderstanding. There is an added layer with this perspective, however. As shown in table 4.2, the past tense oblique attributive participle suffix form is *-nachu*. The /u/ sound on the end, like several other word final sounds in Chechen (and especially word final vowels), is often deleted. As mentioned earlier, it is similarly absent in 28 for the present attributive oblique form, which led me to identify it as a version of the ‘temporal converb with postposition’ that Molochieva presents. In actual speech, *-chu* and *-nachu* generally sound like *-ch* and *-nach*. When consulting with a native speaker, they perceived the temporal converb with the postposition to function more similarly to a participle than to a converb, with *xeenahw* (locative form of ‘time’) just being a noun that the participle was modifying. This would make sense as in both 23 and 27, the verb phrase is modifying the noun ‘time’, making the constructions fit the definition of a participle better than a converb.

Table 4.2 *Participles* (Molochieva, 2010, p. 17)

	Attributive Form		Nominalized Form	
	Nominative	Oblique	Nominative	Dative
Present	<i>doeshu(n)</i>	<i>doeshuchu</i>	<i>doeshurg</i>	<i>doeshuchunna</i>
Past	<i>dieshna</i>	<i>dieshnachu</i>	<i>dieshnarg</i>	<i>dieshnachunna</i>
Future	<i>doeshu dolu(n)</i>	<i>doeshur dolchu(n)</i>	<i>doeshudierg</i>	<i>doeshur dolchunna</i>

While Molochieva brings up that the past participle is identical to the anterior converb (2010, pg. 15), she does not mention the similarity between the attributive past oblique form and the temporal converb with the postposition, nor the attributive present oblique form and the temporal converb.

To test whether the word final *-u* is necessary in certain constructions or if the proposed converb forms and the participle forms could be perceived as interchangeable, Arsanukayev was consulted on what kind of sentences the word final *-u* would be realized in and then provided a sentence in which the participle has a very clear noun it modifies, and one where the noun is missing. The theory was that the word final *-u* would not be perceived as necessary nor more correct to pronounce than to not pronounce it, even when there is no ambiguity that it is functioning as a particle. The purpose of this was to prove that the particle suffix does not actually require a realized word final *-u*, thus making it indistinguishable from the temporal converb, and allowing the particle to be mistaken for the ‘temporal converb with postposition’. If the word final *-u* is not necessary in constructions that are inarguably participle constructions, then it could have been mistaken for a converb when the word-final *-u* was deleted. If the inclusion of *-u* is more grammatical when there is a direct noun to modify than when there is not, it could imply that it is deleted in contexts where the suffix’s function is ambiguous.

The speaker did perceive a difference and stated that the word final *-u* could be used in 31 where the object noun *ishkol* follows the verb and in 30 where the object noun is absent. The

speaker perceived the word final *-u* as optional in both cases, though he perceived the forms presented in 30 and 31 as more correct.¹⁹

30. *Tumish-as* *d-iesh-nach* *j-eud* *so*
Tumisha-GEN D-study-PTCP.PST J-go.IMPV.PRS 1SG.ABS

‘I’m going to where Tumisha studies.’ (Arsanukayev, E.D.)

31. *Tumish-as* *d-iesh-nachu* *ishkol-ie* *j-eud* *so*
Tumisha-GEN D-study-PTCP.PST school-ALL J-go.IMPV.PRS 1SG.ABS

‘I’m going to the school Tumisha studies at.’ (Arsanukayev, E.D.)

This supports the theory that the particle and the converb could be confused for each other due to the deleted word final *-u* in the past tense particle form, though the *-u* seemed less optional than originally thought in the presence of the noun the particle modified. However, after further conversation with Arsanukayev, it was found that there may have been an issue with the sentence chosen to test this specific feature. The speaker stated that one of the reasons they perceived the word final *-u* as needing to be pronounced in 31 is because it was part of the suffix *-chu*, which he perceives as meaning ‘in’. Upon changing the sentence so that the noun modified by the participle was not a location, pronouncing the word final *-u* was no longer perceived as being more correct than not pronouncing it.

32. *Tumisha-s* *j-iesh-nach* *kenig-te* *xi* *d-oett-ir*
Tumisha-GEN J-read.PTCP.PST book-on water D-pour-IMPV.PAST

as
1SG.ERG

¹⁹ The speaker finding the word final *-u* as optional may have to do with Arsanukayev being exposed to both the ‘standard’ Valley Chechen dialect, and also the Itum-Kalinski mountain dialect. The speaker stated that in dialectal Chechen, the word final *-u* would not be realized.

‘I poured water on the book Tumisha was reading.’ (Arsanukayev, E.D.)

As such, it is entirely possible that there is no temporal converb with postposition, simply a participle to a noun that was mistaken for a postposition. Though there may be finer syntactic distinctions that have been missed, the word final *-u* in participle suffixes does not have to be pronounced, and so the past oblique form and the ‘temporal converb with the postposition’ can be, and often would be, identical. It would make a lot more sense that this is just one form, and that it was misunderstood as a converb when it is simply a participle in the past tense.

4.2.4 Concessive converb.

PFVstem – CVBant – shiahw

PRSstem - iehw

The concessive converb is presented as having two forms with two distinct meanings in Molochieva (2010). The first, as represented in table 3.7, adds the suffix *-shiahw* after the anterior converb is already added to the verb stem. It conveys an action that has unexpected results (p. 25).

- | | | | | |
|-----|---|----------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 33. | <i>shie-na_i</i>
3SG.REF-DAT | <i>as</i>
1SG.ERG | <i>ghazh</i>
stick.NOM | |
| | <i>toex-na-sh-iahw</i>
hit-CVBant-CVBsim-CVBconc | | <i>ca-socu-ra</i>
NEG-stop-IPF | <i>i_i</i>
3SG.NOM |

‘He/she did not stop being naughty even though I hit her/him with a stick.’

(Molochieva, 2010; 46, p. 25)

The second form is, according to Molochieva, the suffix *-iehw* added to the present stem and has the meaning of ‘during’. It is used to mark that the action is coinciding with another event/action (p. 25).

34. *k'ant* *v-oed-sh-iehw* *wazh* *b-u'u-sh*
 boy.NOM(V) V-go-CVBsim-CVBconc apple.NOM B-eat-CVBsim

v-a-ra
 V-be-PST

‘A boy was eating an apple while walking/going.’ (Molochieva, 2010; 47, p. 25)

The issue is that in 34, the example provided to demonstrate this form of the concessive converb *-iehw* is not simply added to the present stem; it is added to the simultaneous converb, as shown in the interlinear gloss. Additionally, the interlinear gloss for 33 similarly has the concessive converb broken into two parts; the simultaneous converb and the concessive.

In table 3.7 the concessive is listed as CVBeventhough and presented only as *-shiahw* and not *-iehw*. Perhaps the interlinear gloss was not updated to reflect the analysis Molochieva had done to conclude that this was one converb instead of several converbs tacked onto each other. Nonetheless, it must be brought up that this converb (and potentially several others) may not be one distinct converb, but several converbs combined to express a new meaning. In 34, it could be the simultaneous and the converb of potential (CVBirrpot in table 3.7, *-ahw*) creating this concessive meaning when used in conjunction.

4.3 Imperative

What is missed in both Komen et al. and in Molochieva (2010) is the plural form of the polite imperative. The plural form is brought up in Molochieva (2010), and the polite imperative forms in Komen et al. but both only address parts of this construction.

As previously mentioned, Komen et al. (2021) mention the polite imperative suffix *-al/-l* and *-alahw/-lahw*, but leave out the suffix shown in table 3.10. Example 35 below is found in Molochieva (2010) and denotes the same suffix noted as the polite imperative *-alahw/-lahw* in Komen et al., presented as the future imperative. Molochieva states that the future imperative is marked differently depending on whether it marks second person singular or second person plural, a distinction which is missed in Komen et al. but exemplified in 36 (Molochieva, 2010, p. 253).

35. *ghuo-lahw* *tykana*
 go-IMPfut.2SG store.DAT
 ‘Go to the store (later/tomorrow, but not now)!’ (Molochieva, 2010; 513, p. 253)

36. *qaana* *ghuo-lash* *tykana*
 tomorrow go-IMPfut.2PL store.DAT
 ‘Go to the store tomorrow!’ (Molochieva, 2010; 514, p. 253)

In turn, Molochieva also misses that what she refers to as the future imperative is not used solely for future imperative constructions, but is used in present constructions as a polite imperative, which, as previously mentioned in section 3.5.2, is remarked upon in Komen et al. (2021). In the gathered data, the same phrase demonstrated in 6 from Komen et al. is used, but using the plural form outlined by Molochieva. Semantically and pragmatically, it would be difficult to argue that this form is in the future imperative rather than the polite imperative that is commonly used for *biexk ma bil* ‘pardon me’ or ‘excuse me’. In the context of 37 below, it is used by the *shaitnish*

‘demons’ to get the attention of the *ch’inx* villagers so that they may explain that the two factions had taken the wrong heads when they parted after their quarrel, and then request for the head of their fellow demon to be returned to them. This construction could be argued as being used quite similarly in English, where one might get someone’s attention with ‘pardon’ before making a request.

37.	<i>biexk</i> Blame	<i>ma=bil-lish</i> NEG=B.place-IMP.PL	<i>vai-sh</i> 1PL.INCL	<i>six</i> quick	<i>d-el</i> D-be	<i>das</i> away
	<i>d-oel</i> D-gone	<i>das</i> away	<i>qash</i> spread	<i>xeen.ahw-a</i> time.LOC=and		

‘Pardon, when we quickly dispersed, at the time we went our separate ways ...’
(Recording 1, lines 24-25)

Admittedly, the above plural imperative suffix is not the exact same as the future imperative suffix that Molochieva presents. Upon consultation with a speaker, they stated that *-lish/-lish* is the correct suffix for both contexts, and is what is used in standard Chechen as well as most dialects. However, they stated that *-lash/-lash* is used in certain dialects, and from their experience specifically the Cheberloi dialect, which Molochieva does mention working on in her thesis’ acknowledgements section. It is possible that her examples with the imperative came from speakers of the Cheberloi dialect specifically.

4.2.6 Negative proclitic *ma=* and emphatic *ma*. Also demonstrated by the *biexk ma bil* ‘pardon me’ constructions is what Molochieva dubs the prohibitive. She describes it as the “negative counterpart of the Imperative”, in which “negation is marked by the clitic *ma=*” (2012, p. 254).

Molochieva (2010) states that “If the verb has a preverbal element, the clitic *ma=* is placed between the preverbal element and the verb stem”, as shown in 38 below.

38. *dwa=ma=luo* *cunna* *i*
 away=PROH=give:INF-IMPsimp 3SG.DAT DEM

‘Don’t give him/her this book!’ (Molochieva, 2010; 519, pg. 255)

This is followed by the statement that “The clitic *ma=* causes all preverbal elements to move to postverbal position”, depicted in 39 below.

39. *ma=dyyl-a* *hwa* *aella* *mohw*
 PROH-D-come:PL-IMPsimp away say.PRF cry.NOM
- tyyxi-ra* *cuo* *beer-ash-ga*
 hit:PFV-Rem.WPST 3SG.ERG child-PL-ALL

‘He shouted to the children “Don’t come here!”’ (Molochieva, 2010; 520, p. 255)

These two statements in conjunction, alongside their respective examples, caused considerable confusion. The latter directly contradicts the former; if all preverbal elements move to a postverbal position, then why does *dwa=* from 38 not do so? How would the *ma=* clitic be placed between the preverbal element and the verb stem, if the element is meant to move like it has in 39? When consulting with Arsanukayev, he perceived both sentences as correct, and additionally perceived the ‘preverbal’ elements as able to come before the prohibitive clitic *ma=* or after the verb the clitic *ma=* was attached to. The preverbal elements could not move to a postverbal position without the presence of the prohibitive clitic *ma=*, nor did they necessarily have to move with it. Its presence simply made it grammatical for them to move to a postverbal position.

Komen et al. state that desideratives use *ma*= for negation in addition to imperatives (2021, p. 340). Desideratives are not described, but 40 is used to demonstrate the construction.

40. *daaxariehw* *irs* *aettuo* *a,* *c'ient'iehw*
 life.LOC happiness luck and house.LOC
- iiman-bierkat* *a* *ma-iešadojla.*
 Faith-abundance and NEG-lack.D.DESID

‘May you not lack happiness and luck in your life and faith and abundance at your home!’ (Komen et al., 2011; 36, p. 340)

Based on 40, desideratives in Chechen seem to be a subtype of imperative constructions that are semantically distinct, used to communicate a wish or ‘desire’ the speaker bestows upon the addressee.

An additional curiosity is that outside imperative (or ‘prohibitive’) constructions, *ma* is used to add emphasis, as shown in 41, in which the verb *der* ‘make’ is emphasized by *ma* to convey how much the speaker would appreciate the offer of help they had just been given.

41. *der* *ahw* *gho-d-iir* ***ma*** *d-er*
 For.God.EMPH 2SG.ERG help-D-make.PST EMPH D-make-FUT.COND
- ‘God, you would really be helping.’**(Recording 2, line 19)

Whilst this is observed in both Molochieva and in Komen et al. neither explicitly bring up the fact that *ma* has one meaning in imperative constructions and a very different, arguably contradictory, meaning outside of them. It could be argued that negation is being used as emphasis in 41, in a way akin to a tag question, as *gho-d-iir* ‘help-made’ is followed by *ma* attached to *der* ‘make’, like ‘wouldn’t it?’ in English, perhaps making the free translation closer to ‘God, you would really be helping, wouldn’t you?’. This is brought up as a possibility because a construction that functioned as a tag question was identified in the data. However, after

checking with Arsanukayev, not only does this sentence not fit that construction but it cannot even be adjusted to add a tag question without significant changes to its structure. Perhaps the prohibitive *ma* and the emphatic *ma* are at least two separate morphemes. Other examples of the emphatic *ma* show that the emphatic *ma* does not simultaneously function as negation, but that it does have further functions. In Molochieva (2010), when outlining the converb ‘the very minute, as soon as, when’ *-niahw*, it is stated that it is only grammatical when used with “the emphatic clitic *ma*”, as shown in 42.

42. *Muusa-s* *ghazh* *ma=toex-niahw* *j-ilxi-ra* *Zaara*
M.ERG stick.NOM EMPH=hit-CVBtemp J-cry-WPST Z.NOM(J)

‘In the very same moment that Musa hit Zara, she cried.’ (Molochieva, 2010; 39, p.

23)

Here, it is clear that *ma=* is functioning emphatically rather than as negation in conjunction with the converb to convey ‘the very minute, as soon as, when’ (as well as ‘just as X happened ...’), emphasizing how close in time the clause subordinated by the converb occurred to the main clause it is subordinate to. It is notable that for constructions similar to 41, Molochieva does not gloss *ma* as a clitic. In 43 *ma* is not marked as a clitic attached to *bara* ‘was’, unlike how it is treated in imperative constructions.

43. *ahw* *koerta-x* *huma* *toex-na* *xillie-hwara*
2SG.ERG head-LAT thing.NOM hit:IPFV-CVBant be:PFV-CVBirr
- lii-r* *ma* *b-ara* *i* *liahwa*
die-FUT EMPH B-be:PST DEM snake.NOM(B)

‘If you had hit (it) on (its) head, it would have died.’ (Molochieva, 2010; 470, p. 231)

Most sources do not directly address the dual nature of *ma*. In Vagapov (2011), it is treated as two different morphemes, with *-m(a)* being used for emphasis and *Ma** for negation (p. 442). Here, emphatic *ma* is treated as the same morpheme as the suffix *-m*, which makes semantic sense, if not necessarily syntactic. Both mean the same thing and the suffix is likely due to *ma* becoming assimilated or phonetically reduced to the word that precedes it. In 44-46, 46 is closer in meaning to 45 than 44. In both cases, they seem to be emphasizing what follows them, which is *ju* ‘be’, creating a contrastive interpretation.

44. *Ma* *xaza* *j-u* *i*
 EMPH beautiful J-be 3SG.ABS
 ‘She is very beautiful’ (Arsanukayev, E.D.)

45. *Xaza* *ma* *j-u* *i*
 beautiful EMPH J-be 3SG.ABS
 ‘But she is beautiful’ (Arsanukayev, E.D.)

46. *Xaza-m* *j-u* *i*
 Beautiful-EMPH J-be 3SG.ABS
 ‘She is beautiful’ (Arsanukayev, E.D.)

Meanwhile, in Dzamalxanov & Aliroev (1991) the use of *ma* as both negation and emphasis is brought up, but it is never stated that the negative meaning is unique to the imperative. This is despite the fact that there are several examples for both uses in the text, in which negative *ma* is only used in imperative constructions, and emphatic *ma* is used only in non-imperative constructions.

This is not the only morpheme (if it is truly one morpheme at all) which seems to have an emphatic/negation function depending on certain contexts. In Komen (2007), the use of what is called a vowel lengthened in certain contexts (but which might be the ‘*a* clitic, used for emphasis, chaining, and potentially more) is illustrated: “Word-final vowels are lengthened when particular words are following. Sometimes this is intensification, e.g. /duqa/ ‘much’ followed by

/a/ becomes [duqqaa-ʔa]. Sometimes the meaning changes radically, e.g. /ts'q'a/ 'once' followed by /a/ becomes [ts'q'aa-ʔa] 'never'" (2007, p. 2). Perhaps there are more examples of similar morphemes having somewhat opposite meanings in Chechen to be identified, and it would be particularly interesting to see if the connection between them is purposeful and not simply a case of accidental homonymy (which may very well be the case with the two types of *ma*). There may also be a further pattern of negation turning into emphasis or vice versa, which whilst not exactly unique or unusual, would nonetheless be interesting. More investigation would have to be done on the matter.

Chapter 5: Final Thoughts

What is done here is a small-scale attempt at compiling and comparing the existing information on the Chechen language. Many works that exist are hard to access and track down, and require literacy in Russian (and for some, German). Thus, a proper, in-depth analysis could not be completed. Instead, a few of the more recent English sources were focused upon, with some reference and comparisons made to other works, including some of the older Russian ones, as well as to gathered data. Further analysis involved consultations with a native speaker to gather informal data on their perception of various constructions and their grammaticality. This work focused largely on the topic of noun and verb morphology, particularly converbs, for the analysis and comparison.

In the case of noun morphology, comparisons were made between several sources and with the data when it came to the Chechen grammatical class declension. It was shown that whilst two of the classes are largely human, they are not exclusively human, nor are all the other classes exclusively non-human. The first two are exclusively animate, and all nouns that agree

with them are ‘humanoid’ or ‘human-like’. These exceptions encourage further analysis of the gender system, especially considering sources that show that there is variance between dialects when it comes to gender classes. Some sources purported certain patterns when it came to the gender classes, though it was not covered here as it was outside the scope of this work.

Significantly more time was dedicated to verb morphology, in which several discrepancies between the literature and the data were identified. When it came to the imperative, simply putting the findings of a few sources together was needed to give a more complete overview of how it is used.

The work done with the converbs involved more in-depth analysis as well as assistance from a native speaker. Whilst many of the converbs in Molochieva (2010) were perceived to have been an accurate description of how those constructions worked, several resulted in the identification of either further nuances or issues that merited further analysis and discussion. The theory that the converbs combine with other converbs or suffixes to create distinct meanings that are beyond the sum of their parts is worth further analysis, as there may be fewer distinct converbal suffixes than presented by Molochieva (2010). Instead, what was presented as a single suffix is the combination of two suffixes.

Whilst this initial effort provides a good basis for further elaboration and directions on which to focus upon, over the course of this project, further points of interest have come up both in the literature and in the data that would require more inquiry and data for proper analysis or could not be addressed in-depth for other reasons.

5.1 Sociolinguistics and attitude

Beyond the observations made on the language itself, further observations were made over the course of this work and discussions with speakers regarding the attitude and sentiments of Chechens towards their own language. Sociolinguistic works on the Nakh languages are especially few, particularly those that focus on the political and historical context of the Nakh people. Academic literature assessing the sentiments of Nakh speakers towards their own language and its future, even more than other literature done on the Chechen language, is done by largely academics within the Russian Federation, which has obvious incentives to present a very specific situation. A huge incentive for wanting independence for Chechens was the preservation and survival of their cultural identity, especially their language. Works like “Functional Distribution of Chechen Language in Chechen Republic: Findings from Field Research (2022–2023)” by Bitkeeva et al. thus doubtlessly comes to the conclusion that “the Chechen language currently exhibits a relatively stable level of vitality, particularly in familial and ethnocultural contexts, bolstered by its high symbolic value and a persistent need for identity expression among Chechen speakers,” (p. 30). Throughout the paper, it maintains a very optimistic view of the situation, stating that the language is studied extensively and even that its use is dominant over Russian in several contexts. It remarks upon the ‘tragedies’ experienced by the Chechen people over the centuries with a detached tone, with not a single sentence stating Russia’s role in these tragedies. The closest it comes is by stating that “relations between Russia and Chechnya were not always stable due to geopolitical factors” (translated) (p. 34). The one paragraph addressing Chechnya’s history states that Chechnya joined Russia after the Caucasian War, that Chechens and Ingush were repressed and deported in 1944, that Chechnya’s infrastructure was destroyed in the two wars in the 1990s (p. 34). There are no details, no numbers of casualties, no analysis of how this could have impacted the transmission of language

and cultural practices, and absolutely no mention of the nation responsible for every single one of these ‘tragedies’. This article reflects the attitude of Russian academia in regard to Chechnya and its other minority groups and is in stark contrast to accounts found among the community itself. A 2017 article titled “Chechen language: on life support” published by OC media, an independent English-language news outlet that focuses upon the Caucasus, provides a very different perspective. It remarks that “all teaching is conducted in Russian”, even though Chechen children in Daghestan “study exclusively in Chechen up to the third year”. It brings up the history of language policy in Chechnya and attitudes towards the language, stating that “In Soviet times, autonomous republics were forbidden from teaching their native languages in cities, but not in villages ... Chechens were frequently harassed for speaking their native language, for example on public transport,” an experience that some members of the community consulted during this study also described. These perspectives are not represented in academia, certainly not to the same extent as works like (Bitkeeva et al., 2024). Even in cases of Chechen linguists working on their own language, it has typically been done under the restrictions of Russian authority. While these works still have value, they should be looked upon with an understanding of the contexts they were produced in and treated critically. A language does not exist in a vacuum; it is intrinsically intertwined with the people who speak it. The Chechen language has only ever been studied while Chechens have been ruled by the people who have spent the past few centuries oppressing them. Whether conscious or not, the work done upon the language has not been free from bias, and it is important to review the work produced and check the conclusions they have come to, as well as analyse the origin of conventions that have been maintained.

5.2 *Writing Conventions*

A point that came up repeatedly throughout the analysis of the literature and comparison of the data is the way Chechen is written in data and presented in the literature itself. While much can be said about how ill-suited the Cyrillic orthography is for representing Chechen, it seems that some established standards from literary Chechen persist even when using different alphabets and when describing speech. This is not necessarily unusual; if phonetics and phonology is not the focus of the work, it is easier to not worry about pronunciation and use standard language. The issue arises, as it did here, when the difference between what are presented as two morphologically distinct forms is a phoneme that is deleted in actual speech, if it even exists in the underlying form at all. This caused problems from the start of the analysis of the gathered data, as the data had been transcribed based upon the realized speech and the forms were not always matching up to what was stated in the literature. Beyond that, it caused trouble in identifying what forms the literature was referring to, as most of the forms are known by speech (both by the author and the consulted speaker). There are already several forms that are identical in Chechen, but for several others the only difference presented was a word final vowel that is rarely pronounced in speech, or /n/, which is also often deleted in word final position. Komen (2007) states that “in some cases the sound seems to have been completely deleted” and “that vowel deletion optionally occurs for final unstressed short vowels” (p. 1). When discussing the issue with Arsanukayev, he stated that the writing conventions include superfluous letters that are unpronounced. In their opinion, this was done purposefully by those who established the 'Chechen literary standard'. He also anecdotally relayed that the pronunciation of these word-final vowels (and some consonants) was more common amongst those living in the city than those who spoke dialectal Chechen who lived in the mountains. This may have been this

speaker's personal experience, and biased due to the specific dialect he was most exposed to, but further research would be required to say. For some of the cases, there does seem to be evidence that the underlying forms include the deleted word-final vowels. However, there does seem to be basis for viewing many of these word-final vowels as superfluous, as Komen elaborates that “since the deletion of short vowels occurs quite often in Chechen, it is sometimes not completely clear whether underlying forms of a word actually contain a short vowel or not” (2007, p. 2). As this work focused more on the morphological aspect of Chechen language literature, little attention was paid to this phenomenon beyond when it came up during analysis.

Dedicated analysis of work already done, like that by Komen (2007), and Nichols’ “Chechen Phonology” (1997), combined with further studies on the phonology could shed more light about the underlying forms. It may prove beneficial for literature on the Chechen language not to include ‘deleted’ sounds in the data, as it would make it easier for linguists to use the data to discern any patterns of the deletion.

5.3 Case

While the grammatical gender system was touched upon, another aspect of noun morphology that arose during the analysis of this work is the Chechen case system. Due to the constraints of the project, attention could not be devoted to it as it would require additional research and data, but sources provided different accounts of the Chechen case system that would merit further investigation. Arsakhanov (1959) lists 16 cases, though as Arsanukayev (p.c.) reported that there are further cases which are used only in certain dialects and Arsakhanov (1959) focuses on the Aeqqi dialect, this may not be representative of Chechen in general (p. 38-49). Molochieva outlines "ten basic cases", as do Komen et al (2011, p. 10) (2021, p.326). A

proper analysis of the Chechen case system would bring up the debate of what is considered a case and what is not and analyse further suffixes that could potentially qualify as further cases. It would also be beneficial to investigate the dialects and analyse how the case systems vary between them and the standard.

5.4 Suggestions Going Forward

The aim with the analysis of the converbs found in Molochieva (2010) was to see if what was observed and reported by linguists matches what speakers perceive. Though this effort was by no means a proper perception test, even this informal approach had its merits. For several converbs, Arsanukayev found that the description accurately described the function of the suffix, validating the observations made. Some discrepancies were also identified, allowing for the possibility that there could be other explanations to describe the observed patterns, as is the case for the ‘temporal converb with the postposition’.

A similar endeavour was considered for the 49 TAM forms listed in Molochieva (2010), though it was dismissed in favour of the converbs due to the project’s constraints. Nonetheless, an in-depth grammaticality study regarding these 49 TAM forms could prove beneficial, as from some brief discussion with Arsanukayev, some of the constructions listed did not correlate to the meaning or usage described and the discussion hinted at further nuances that may have been missed in the paper. Though this approach was even less formal and garnered nothing concrete, it would be worth following up on the 49 forms presented and seeing how well the descriptions match the language in the minds’ of speakers, simply to confirm the validity of the work.

Proper grammaticality tests involving multiple speakers would be able to better identify if the discrepancies found here are consistent and not based on one speaker’s judgement. There

would also be the possibility that further inconsistencies could be found. Due to the constraints of the current study the consultation with Arsanukayev involved direct questions about their perception for the constructions in question, and discussions about their meaning and grammaticality. Ideal circumstances would include a more formal approach, with at least 10 monolingual Chechen speakers. Unfortunately, due to the sociopolitical reality of Chechen speakers, as well as factors like globalisation, the population of monolingual Chechen speakers is decreasing rather quickly. Nonetheless, including at least some monolingual speakers in these studies would be useful, if only to identify if multilingual speakers might perceive things differently due to their exposure to other languages. Perception tests would have to be done in such a way that no response is seen as being favoured, and so that the speakers cannot identify what is being tested. Some options for tests could be providing situations and then seeing which sentences are perceived as grammatical for those situations or asking which situations a given sentence would suit more. This could work well for testing the perception converbs and the 49 TAM forms.

A complete analysis of all the work done on Chechen that keeps in mind both context the works were produced in and how they compare to each other would be greatly beneficial to the field. In Komen et al. (2021) it is stated that there is no sketch grammar of Chechen.²⁰ This does not seem to have changed in the years since. There are, however, several works outlining and detailing various parts of the Chechen language. From the earliest works done in the 1800s to papers coming out now, a complete assessment of what has been done so far, of how the works compare and contradict, and an analysis of their scope and quality would be beneficial in

²⁰ This is despite Dotton and Wagner's "A Grammar of Chechen" having come out in 2018, but perhaps it went unrecognized for similar reasons as to why there was hesitation to use it as a significant source for this work; the grammar lacked any references and did not present where or how the data used within it was gathered.

identifying what needs to be verified, what needs more investigation, and what still needs to be done. It would certainly provide a good basis for an in-depth sketch grammar, in which whatever is missing can then be studied and filled in. It would also inspire studies to investigate what has been already studied and verify how accurate the observations made by previous linguists were by comparing them to new data and speakers' perceptions. Ultimately, that is what has been attempted here: the beginnings of a deeper compilation and analysis for a fascinating language that merits both.

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Appendix 1: Transcriptions from recordings

1. Chinxo fights demon

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| 01 transcription | cana |
| 02 transcription | dinahw-a |
| 03 transcription | voghsh-vol ch'inxo |
| 04 transcription | duohwol doghsh-dol shaiti te-vowshax qet |
| 05 transcription | vowshi dist-xil mogsh-paryat xætina shie q'amel desh laechahw can human-te-hol k'owsom baela cier |
| 06 transcription | k'osom balchul taex juxa dow-daela |
| 07 transcription | ca bos: shimow |
| 08 transcription | shaltnish hwaw-jaxina |
| 09 transcription | tuoxan ca:ra |
| 10 transcription | kortosh uahw-tesin |
| 11 transcription | hoqer dow gina can aghor ch'inxo chu-hwada vukch aghora shaitnish |
| 12 transcription | hwa-hwaeda |
| 13 transcription | jux can ch'inxocho voq sag aela aj sobar delish vai hinc vowshax letax jer shiw |
| 14 transcription | shi: ci shal del li:r bu |
| 15 transcription | ci dowx dolchar kortesh lato te-lato bez vai ael |
| 16 transcription | ka-tuox cara |
| 17 transcription | ch'inxo |
| 18 transcription | daqi cun korti ec chinxoj da-hwaeda jux shie shaiti korti ec shaitnish da-duoda |
| 19 transcription | jux haw-valin ch'inxochun kort te-latina |

- 20 transcription den-vela ch'inxo den-vel iza:
- 21 transcription ca tamshin xi:c-vel bargsh kerzosh masaerga da-hwuo:shi
- 22 transcription ca-ca-ca (filler sound)
- 23 transcription vuoxch san hwesh-xilla ch'inxo oc xenahw shaitnish hwa'qacha
- 24 transcription bexk-mabilish vaish six del
- 25 transcription das-duol das-qash xenahwa
- 26 transcription o:xa ch'inxochun kort baehwan xilla
- 27 transcription i kort te-latinchul tahwaw
- 28 transcription oc ch'inxochu kortno txo oc zhuozhxatar dodchu kachina
- 29 transcription txa i shaitan kort hwalohwar ash mel xir-bar shun ael
- 30 transcription jux cigahw jux kortosh xi:cin bax car
- 31 transcription isht xilla boxsh duoch-du baqich nax

2. Chinxo tricks Chanti

- 01 Transcription can dovch dinahwa
- 02 Transcription chantar auh val voghsh can ghulkan chanti xilla bah
- 03 Transcription juh chinhaha shie da hum dowch sa gatesh lelsh vol chinhochun auh-voghsh
genar
- 04 Transcription chanti gaw gina
- 05 Transcription aeho vez sha iz alla
- 06 Transcription vaghan iza
- 07 Transcription (ab) lek berd xilla cig
- 08 Transcription vogha voghan buk oc berdah hortina daheutin chinho
- 09 Transcription juh genar tekachvalaw

- 10 Transcription chanticho
- 11 Transcription mogsh parghat hatin tahk juha ho hu desh lach vu ala co
- 12 Transcription oc berdah buk ghortin
- 13 Transcription del deuha at cheuh ma vac sha ala co
- 14 Transcription jer berd chu harc gherch bu
- 15 Transcription tahk nahan zulum hir du
- 16 Transcription shunaw chantar auh boghch charna zulum hir du
- 17 Transcription tahk hinc hu dir du ca howsh isht lach vu sha mel ghel valah hawi hun sha
- 18 Transcription vai as da gho doj ala
- 19 Transcription der ah gho dir ma der ala co
- 20 Transcription ah jer berd ha lochari sha ved voghan ca dik
- 21 Comments *mistake when speaking, meant to be 'jer berd ca ha lochari'*
- 22 Transcription dechk dac hokun ghorto iz dahar der jer bert chu ca harcit
- 23 Transcription del deuh iz dam hal dac aela
- 24 Transcription chanti berdaha buk ghortin da hotin chinho da vaghan
- 25 Transcription ca saht dala shi saht chinho havoghsh ca xilla
- 26 Transcription ghel vela chanti shi nostagh ghel jela buk laz baela
- 27 Transcription juh ha bohsh nah xilla
- 28 Transcription car aela
- 29 Transcription ho hu desh lach vu kuz ael del deuh shama sha hinc dechk dahsh ha voghar vu ael
- 30 Transcription chinho ved da vaghner jer berch chu haerch bu ael
- 31 Transcription kuz ghorto dechk ja voghan vol chinho chun heush lach vu sha

32 Transcription tahk nah aela da val ho hiz - aeh vina hun co

33 Transcription

34 Transcription da hec megar bu hun i chu harch bac hun ael

35 Transcription isht aehina bah

36 Transcription chinhotchu chanti

37 Transcription tahk cultaha juha

38 Transcription olsh duk

39 Transcription berd lac lach chanti san olsh duj vai neh edlah isht olsh duk

3. Lesson from my grandfather

01 Comments *technical issues*

02 Transcription can xeenahwa

03 Transcription so zhim volsh

04 Transcription txa ne:n da

05 Transcription dik desh stag vuj cu xeenahw

06 Transcription elm a:minaw

07 Transcription va: <uh> hu ol cunah

08 Transcription de-deshar <uh> ghalah ghalah deshar deshna <uh> i-i

09 Transcription epsarsh ol cu xeenahw epsarsh ceri-cer-cer dohal thom besh

10 Transcription epsosh buk ush <uh> sun cun ce ca haw isht nees al

11 Transcription tahk <uh> *nu* oc est par bolh kera birzin cu bahnah

12 Transcription kel har volsh vai cer dahchi <uh>

13 Transcription cah dolsh cu tah ric duk ric cu tah dohksh chak val vu iza

14 Transcription tahk can xaz de du <uh> jowh han ju iza baistah

- 15 Transcription so oc bech jukah melknosh du tahk ocan kigi so-dol-humsh ju ocarc lowza lowsh ash vuk so
- 16 Transcription sun mux nes dela ca haw sun iz
- 17 Transcription i meulk <uh> ca: sun - sun co dow dina dac cu heni kachulca
- 18 Transcription us i meulk cogan ter haloc
- 19 Transcription i kosawloj i dabod i
- 20 Transcription i dabodi - cog sugah dus - i dabod
- 21 Transcription sun michael dela ca howsh vortanchu tar qeti
- 22 Transcription tajk <ah> i te heutan xilla
- 23 Transcription hun noq der i cun cog al txa nain das dow din hince dik dag dol sun
- 24 Transcription <uh> i cog bujna(h) disin shie choh sa dolsha i kislusha
- 25 Transcription i cho(gh) deuhai a tahar a dow dina co sun
- 26 Transcription isht dac isht hum dag dogh(k) sun delah (uhm)
- 27 Transcription megarg ca xilla jincam hawar sun cu xeenahw bash dikar ca hawar
- 28 Transcription *nu* dic ca doloch aghor co amir so

4. Family Friend

- 01 Transcription <um> txa de dotah var Vah (v)olsh (possibl) /voghsh/
- 02 Transcription tahk kest-kest voghar i txeug
- 03 Transcription txo duk dar
- 04 Transcription kertah short bersh dar
- 05 Transcription jux <uh> sha vewchi txun isht heharsh dor(g) co
- 06 Transcription mux xil dez jow mux xil jez owli
- 07 Transcription tahk genar vohshah "ah lowsh lelsh du zudbersh lowsh lelsh du"

- 08 Transcription <uh> tas duzan laech hir du ghumah jes hir ju olar co
- 09 Transcription <uh> tahk juhaw i voghsh gichi dowdi dowdi chu deulhi
- 10 Transcription howsar sih tas duzan de(l/r)a das doar
- 11 Transcription ghumah chu hi duti da hot jor owh
- 12 Transcription <uh> hinc ket so co txo a:mosh xili isht ca
- 13 Transcription ael jowi <uh> xaz nisi olsh kic du vai noxchi
- 14 Transcription <uh> isht - cun isht caw xaz owlar co isht xaz - xaz ducar co txun humsh isht
- 15 Transcription jowa isht xil jez jow euzd xil jez
- 16 Transcription <uh> vohknag voghsh hal ghat jez chu vaiwc sih chai dag dot dez owli <uh> isht sha:
- 17 Transcription <um> burshtag volshaha txo keginash chogh owh laduhol cun xaz haetar txun i vaich
- 18 Transcription isht cun i kic humaw hinc xaz <uh> cunah halham isht dek tagha ca kuir jinc keta ke:ch ca isht vai bahkich nah xaz deuch
- 19 Transcription cung isht i dag euhsh waw so i
- 20 Transcription dal gesh deujl carn isht
- 21 Transcription dac eush jinc

5. The meaning of *Sagh*

- 01 Transcription sagh dahkar
- 02 Transcription veulch stagan ter sagh dahkar
- 03 Transcription i **ne obizatilna**
- 04 Comments *Russian in italics*
- 05 Transcription ca jew humsh iza - izaw du shen - shen luwcho do ishta

- 06 Transcription i nees du dac sun ca haw sun
- 07 Transcription **nu** ca(n) xaz
- 08 Transcription han huwag deznag koran tagh deg
- 09 Transcription aejet (deg) (unintelligible) bismal deg desha deush
- 10 Transcription hor perskhan dinah
- 11 Transcription hor perskhan surin xaz
- 12 Transcription sagh
- 13 Transcription ha daini nani ter delah veshi (jishi) delah
- 14 Transcription i delch da khowch owl can cer sinosh da khowch owl
- 15 Transcription cer
- 16 Transcription i shie sagh ha ec dogh bah i
- 17 Transcription sa naewri hut bah
- 18 Comments (*crying*)
- 19 Transcription
- 20 Transcription tahka
- 21 Transcription cino koch loci dogh bah i sa
- 22 Transcription shien ca kaech shien ca delch shien ter sagh ca delcha
- 23 Transcription da deud bah
- 24 Transcription i sagh delar vai tah du i sagh daw dez
- 25 Transcription ugar chogh ugar dik dal dezag du i hunt alch
- 26 Transcription vai belash vai bic bich
- 27 Comments
- 28 Transcription i choghaw

- 29 Transcription kilah duk i sun ha hetrah sun
- 30 Transcription sa - as sa xekalc sun ca haw
- 31 Transcription valah nagh dic lo sunaw sainaw bak dig dich
- 32 Transcription saghal doq hum daw dac calig ca hum
- 33 Transcription ec saghno latosh du owl jer dune
- 34 Transcription keti ho
- 35 Transcription iw sagha
- 36 Transcription (uh) i sin-sinagh iz - ec sini dakach
- 37 Transcription (e) i shien da delch e shie da kach
- 38 Transcription i sa
- 39 Transcription gutar xaz haech masan get gherch
- 40 Transcription hul bah i sa
- 41 Transcription vain ca haw cu bak dinadeg delah
- 42 Transcription (uh) ducha xaz du iz
- 43 Transcription (uh eh) lu-lerch gutar xaz du i
- 44 Transcription (uh) cun der
- 45 Transcription ah vohk mel xilen bem hun i dagah ca ket
- 46 Transcription i (uh) i dik
- 47 Transcription **sabludat** daw ki i sagh daw
- 48 Transcription hekal sha deg
- 49 Transcription kacha ca koch delah
- 50 Transcription dich bakah du iz dich
- 51 Transcription bohk mel buk hun hein

- 52 Transcription oc saghno duk hum - duk human
- 53 Transcription dukch voch human halh vohkar vu ha dal
- 54 Transcription oc saghno
- 55 Transcription de- del shie deuh do as jer owli da dez sagh
- 56 Transcription del shie deuh dir du as owli
- 57 Transcription (uh) izaw bohk mel bu hor tagan shien nahna bac i cani bac shien
- 58 Transcription shie - shien da- del duk vesh (s)tag
- 59 Transcription maso xeenahw del shie deuh duk iz al dez diknag
- 60 Transcription (uh) del kinter vahk vez
- 61 Transcription maso xeenahw shegah daelch von
- 62 Transcription (uh) delir (uh)
- 63 Transcription kinter vala(r) deh dez
- 64 Transcription (uh) maso adam ca ter dac **kaneshna**
- 65 Transcription delah (uh) diknag ha laech diknag dich diknag alch
- 66 Transcription camukan dalocar du iz ca tag mukan niso
- 67 Transcription nis hir vuk ca- ca tag mukan
- 68 Transcription dal nis dojl vai vizen dail maso human tah alah dal alch tah eulag vai
- 69 Transcription i shadesh bic lolk vain vezan del
- 70 Transcription hinchul tah aw
- 71 Transcription tahk te bohch hana (*possibly bohchana*) masana
- 72 Transcription dal sha sobar lojl iman lojl
- 73 Transcription islam lojl vezan dela(h)
- 74 Transcription vai biw te kuwsh bol deuzanaw

- 75 Transcription ca aw dal vonig ca hum kulin dac dikneg be
 76 Transcription dikneg be dalaw dac dal sha ((juk dehkna dac))
 77 Transcription vai admo desh du sha del vonish
 78 Transcription izaw ush dic da dez ush da dah dez juker
 79 Transcription calig ca hum
 80 Transcription vain karor dac vai bak dunain dahch dik (tag) be vain din diki vaigar dal diki
 vaigar xil saghi docal
 81 Transcription dal sha nis dojl vai vezan del

6. Back in my day

- 01 transcription sa zhim jolch xeenahw tha
 02 transcription lulxa chowgh dik
 03 transcription dotghi ber sa jowri chowgh
 04 transcription ca - mux owl as - jizhri san khin du tho cigahw
 05 transcription xaz
 06 transcription dinah xaz aur dolsh ((unintelligible, possiby 'tha'))
 lowzash xaz
 07 transcription cig da ish bolsh da jeudar eush ha boghar xaz ju(w) huma ca
 khast(jor) (lulxar) ca khast jor
 08 transcription chowgh xaz xeensh jer
 09 transcription euz del ghulk dolsh ber cu xeenahwa
 10 transcription lulhaw
 11 transcription surin aur dowlar maso vowshahw khetar vohknig zhimnega
 12 transcription isht xaz xabarsh dich xaz vowshi chu te ((dolhash)) chai molsh
 xaz
 13 transcription can cinah san chowgh xaz ar

- 14 transcription juh jeghol ule
- 15 transcription veud voghsh stag teh bolch hena genar voghsh gush lachah
- 16 transcription cun hal-ghat vezar
- 17 transcription jazdel ghulksh dush ocal chogh
- 18 transcription jazdel huwsh ber cu xeenahwa
- 19 transcription ishtaw
- 20 transcription i sa shi jish san jer sa lulh shi jow
- 21 transcription **pastajana** cer chu jodash ishta(w)
- 22 transcription jizhush ghutush
- 23 transcription gho eushachi gho noqustar desha
- 24 transcription isht canu ca (unintelligible) hal kiwsh der tho
- 25 transcription jinc lernish isht bac ish
- 26 transcription co xeenahw ush kech bes ber