The origin and use of quotative markers in Agul

1. Complementation and reported speech in Agul

- The profile of Agul

  AGUL (also spelled AĞHUL, native name [aʁuˈl čˈal]) is a language of the Lezgic branch within the Nakh-Daghestanian, or East Caucasian, family. Its close relatives are Tabassaran and Lezgian; other Lezgic languages are Tsakhur, Rutul, Budugh, Kryz, Archi and Udi.

  There are more than 25,000 first-language speakers of Agul in Russia, mainly in rural areas of South Daghestan. This study is based on the dialect spoken in the village of Huppuq.

  Agul is an ergative language with (predominantly) agglutinative morphology and a rich case system (about 30 cases, including numerous locatives). The basic word order is SOV, dependents as a rule precede heads.

- Complementation strategies

  Complement clauses are headed by converbs, participles, infinitive or “masdar” (verbal noun), largely depending on the semantics of the matrix verb, cf.:

  - **INFINITIVE**
    
    (1) ruş.a-s uč.i-n jeryɛ č’ar-ar q’at’-q’a-s k:ande-a.
    
    girl-DAT [self-GEN long hair-PL piece-do.IPF-INF] want-PRS
    
    *The girl wants to cut off her long hair.*

  - **PERFECTIVE CONVERB**
    
    (2) wun ita-a, duy:tir.di-s un-aq’.u-na k:and-e.
    
    you(SG) be.ill-PRS [doctor-DAT sound-do.PF-CONV] need-COP
    
    *You are ill and (you) should call a doctor.*

  - **PERFECTIVE PARTICIPLE (substantivized)**
    
    (3) za-s ha-a ge qaj.i-f.
    
    I-DAT know-PRS [DEMГ RE:come.PF-S]
    
    *I know that s/he came.*

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1 The Agul Documentation Project is currently supported by a grant from the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology. A comprehensive grammar of the language is being prepared by the authors of the present paper.
- **Quotative strategies**
  Verbs introducing reported speech are different in that they have other strategies for encoding of their complements, i.e. for introducing the reported speech, cf.:
  
  - **“UNMARKED” STRATEGY**: just a speech verb, no marking on the quote

(4)  
  \[
  \begin{align*}
  \text{dad.a} & \quad \text{p.u-na-a.} & \text{naj-č} & \text{š.u-ne} & \text{gada?} \\
  \text{father(ERG)} & \quad \text{say.PF-RES-PRS} & \text{[which-LAT go.PF-PFT son]}
  \end{align*}
  \]

  *Father said*: “Where did the son go?”

  \[
  \begin{align*}
  \text{gada} & \quad \text{q-uš.u-f-e} & \text{wa-qaj,} & \quad \text{p.u-na-a.} \\
  \text{[son RE-go.PF-S-COP you(SG)-COMIT]} & \quad \text{say.PF-RES-PRS}
  \end{align*}
  \]

  “The son went with you”, *said* (the others).

- **COMPLEMENTIZER STRATEGY**: speech verb and quotative marker *puna*, adjacent to the head of the embedded clause

(5)  
  \[
  \begin{align*}
  \text{rahman.a-s} & \quad \text{aš.a-a} & \text{zun,} & \text{me ŵiga ze-f e puna.} \\
  \text{Rakhman-DAT} & \quad \text{say.IPF-PRS I} & \text{[DEMM place my-S COP]} & \text{QUOT}
  \end{align*}
  \]

  *(Then) I say to Rakhman: “This is my place!”*

- **Speech verb *aša***
  The generic speech verb *aša* ‘say, tell’ is suppletive\(^2\) and has two stems (standard verbs use one stem in all forms), cf.:

  **PERFECTIVE STEM**: \textit{up.u-} (first vowel can be dropped)
  
  > Perfective Past \textit{upune}, Resultative \textit{upunaa}, Experiential \textit{upufe}, etc.

  **IMPERFECTIVE STEM**: \textit{aš.a-} (first vowel can be dropped)
  

  **IMPERATIVE**: \textit{up} ‘say!’ ~ **PROHIBITIVE** \textit{maša} ‘don’t say!’

2. **Quotative marker / complementizer *puna***

2.1. **puna as a converb**

\textit{p.u-na} [say.PF-CONV] is a perfective converb of the verb ‘say’, literally meaning ‘having said’, cf. the prototypical use of converb in adverbial clause describing precedence in a sequence of actions:

(6)  
  \[
  \begin{align*}
  \text{gada.ji-s} & \quad \text{wačṭuna} & \text{qi-šaw} & \quad \text{p.u-na,} & \text{dad q-uš.u-ne.} \\
  \text{son-DAT} & \quad \text{[in.time RE-come(IMP)]} & \quad \text{say.PF-CONV} & \text{father RE-go.PF-PFT}
  \end{align*}
  \]

  *After telling his son to come back in time, father went away.*

  *(or: Father said his son to come back in time, and went away.)*

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\(^2\) Suppletion is rather rare in Huppuq’ Agul, the two other suppletive verbs being ‘go’/‘come’ (with the derived pair ‘take’/‘bring’) and ‘give’.
2.2. *puna* as an indirect speech marker

The reported speech construction using a speech verb and the quotative marker *puna* is close to the prototypical **indirect speech**, with most of features associated with it in other languages (cf. Aikhenvald 2008: 410-417 for a typological overview).

- **Shift in personal deixis**
  1st and 2nd persons in the quote are interpreted from the perspective of the Current Speaker (not the Original Speaker).

  (7) *dad.a p.u-ne, zun mask:aw.di-s ʕ˳.a-s-e puna.*
  
  father(ERG) say.PF-PFT [I Moscow-DAT go.IPF-INF-COP] QUOT
  
  *Father said that I (*he*) would go to Moscow.*

  If the 3rd person participant of the situation described in the quote is coreferential with the Original Speaker, logophoric/reflexive pronoun *uč* is obligatorily used; the use of demonstrative[^3] can only have non-coreferential interpretation.

  (8) *dad.a₁ p.u-ne, uč (ge) mask:aw.di-s ʕ˳.a-s-e puna.*
  
  father(ERG) say.PF-PFT [self DEMG Moscow-DAT go.IPF-INF-COP] QUOT
  
  *Father said that he (s/he) would go to Moscow.*

- **Shift in spatial and temporal deixis**
  Demonstratives, spatial and temporal adverbs in the quote are interpreted from the perspective of the Current Speaker.

  (9) *dad.a p.u-ne, baw jaʃa mi-č qu-ʕ˳.a-s-e puna.*
  
  father(ERG) say.PF-PFT [mother today DEMM-LAT RE:go.IPF-INF-COP] QUOT
  
  *Father said, that mother is coming here <PROXIMAL> today.*

  (The original father’s words could be, e.g., “Mother will come to you tomorrow”; father’s location does not have to be the same as that of the speaker.)

  (10) *te insan.di p.u-ne, ge gada uč.i-n-fi e puna.*
  
  DEMT man(ERG) say.PF-PFT [DEMG boy self-GEN-S COP] QUOT
  
  *The man said, that that <DISTAL> boy was his (son).*

  (The original man’s words could be, e.g., “This <PROXIMAL> boy is mine”.)

- **Back-shifting of verbal tenses**
  Does not happen! All tenses used in the quote are interpreted from the perspective of the Original Speaker.

- **Reported commands possible**

  (11) *dad.a p.u-ne za-s, jaʃa qi-ʃaw puna.*
  
  father(ERG) say.PF-PFT I-DAT [today RE:come(IMP)] QUOT
  
  *Father told me to come back today. <IMPERATIVE>*

  (12) *dad.a p.u-ne, wun jaʃa qaj-raj puna.*
  
  father(ERG) say.PF-PFT [you(SG) today RE:come.PF-JUSS] QUOT
  
  *Father said that you should come back today. <JUSSIVE>*

[^3]: There is a 4-term demonstrative system in Agul, the values are (roughly): *me* ‘close to the speaker’, *le* ‘close to the addressee’, *te* ‘far from the speaker’, *ge* ‘neutral’.
Reported vocatives and exclamatives impossible
(Without *puna*, possible with the direct speech interpretation.)

(13) dad.a p.u-ne za-s, ſan k’irk’, ja’ga qi-šaw (*puna).
father(ERG) say.PF-PFT I-DAT [dear boy today RE-come (IMP)] QUOT
Father said to me, dear boy, come back today.

(14) dad.a p.u-ne, wun fidahan iʔe ruš e (*puna).
father(ERG) say.PF-PFT [you( SG) how.much good girl COP] QUOT
Father said, what a good girl you are!

Reported questions
Reporting of questions is possible as a direct quotation, with a corresponding interrogative intonation. If *puna* is used, it is interpreted as an additional (dependent) utterance predicate introducing a direct quote, not as the indirect speech marker.

(15) dad.a hurχ.a-ji, wun mus qu-ʔa-a-a?
father(ERG) ask.IPF-PST [you( SG) when RE-go.IPF-PRS]
Father asked: “When do you come back?”

(16) dad.a hurχ.a-ji, wun mus qu-ʔa-a-a, p.u-na.
father(ERG) ask.IPF-PST [you( SG) when RE-go.IPF-PRS] say.PF-CONV
Father asked, (saying:) “When do you come back?”

For indirect questions, there exists a special strategy with the conditional mood forms, that has the properties of indirect speech:

(17) dad.a hurχ.a-ji, wun mus qu-ʔa-a-a-j-či.
father(ERG) ask.IPF-PST [you( SG) when RE-go.IPF-CONV-COND]
Father asked, when do you <ADDRESSEE OF THE CURRENT SPEAKER> come back.

2.3. *puna* in complement clauses
Apart from the indirect speech marker, *puna* has grammaticalized into a complementizer used with a wider range of matrix verbs, such as:

- manipulative predicates: *burmiš aq’as* ‘order’, *extijar ic’as* ‘permit’, *minet aq’as* ‘ask for, request’, *t’alab aq’as* ‘ask for, request’
- propositional attitude predicates: *quχas* ‘believe’, *χijal xas* ‘think’
- predicates of knowledge: *χabar xas* ‘learn, realize’, *harxas* ‘understand’
- commentative predicates: *ʔalamattja* ‘be amazed’, *nečtja* ‘be ashamed’

(18) ḥabaw.a=ra minet aq’.u-f-ij za-s, uč faq.αχ ρuna.
granny(ERG)=ADD request do.PF-S-COP:PST I-DAT [self RE:take(IMP)] QUOT
Grandmother also asked me to take her here.

While request presupposes a speech act, this is already not true for cases like:

(19) zun quχ.u-ne, gi uč.i duq’.u-f-e puna berhem.
I believe.PF-PFT [DEMG(ERG) self(ERG) sew.PF-S-COP QUOT dress]
I believed her, that she sewed the dress herself.
And he (= a clairvoyant) understands, that such-and-such person is coming.

...And Isak, uncle learns that sister got divorced.

They (the parents) thought that they (children) were still looking for the lost oxen.

2.4. *puna* in adverbial (reason/purpose) clauses

One of conventional ways of encoding adverbial clauses with reason and purpose meaning is the use of a finite clause with *puna* as a subordinator, cf.:

Because his son returned home, father slaughtered a ram (for him).

I went, in order to graze the calves, towards the upper graveyard.

There are several ways of reason and purpose encoding; the use of *puna* strategy underlines the subjective motivation of the agent (having “internal awareness” value, in Tom Güldemann’s terms), cf.:

We did not go to the shop, because it was closed (i.e. we thought it was closed; it could be that in reality it was open).

Father went to the wedding, so that his son did not get drunk (i.e. wanting to control his son).

The “internal awareness” nuance is also supported by that *asas* ‘say, tell’ as a lexical verb can sometimes refer to thought and reflection, without presupposing any speech production, cf.:
Thinking that it would rain, I took an umbrella.

3. The unmarked strategy: full and reduced speech verb

3.1. Use of full speech verb: an ambiguous strategy

The unmarked strategy is the main means of expressing direct speech; at the same time, this strategy is not confined to that function, as the direct vs. indirect interpretation of the embedded clause (quote) is not stable and can depend on discourse factors (at least, on word order).

- **Unmarked strategy expressing direct speech**
  - no shift in personal, spatial and temporal deixis
  - no back-shifting of verbal tenses
  - possibility of reporting questions, commands, vocatives and exclamatives

(28) dad.a, p.u-ne, zun_{i} (*uč.i_{}) hik.a-s-e mašin.
father(ERG) say.PF-PFT [I self(ERG) drive.IPF-INF-COP car]

(29) zun_{i} hik.a-s-e mašin, p.u-ne dad.a,
[I drive.IPF-INF-COP car] say.PF-PFT father(ERG)

(30) dad.a, zun_{i} hik.a-s-e mašin, p.u-ne.
father(ERG) [I drive.IPF-INF-COP car] say.PF-PFT

*Father said, “I shall drive the car”.*
(The direct interpretation, irrespective of the word order.)

**BUT:**

- **Unmarked strategy expressing indirect speech**
  - shift in spatial and temporal deixis

(31) dad.a p.u-ne, baw jaʃa mi-č qu-ʃ.a-s-e.
father(ERG) say.PF-PFT [mother today DEMM-LAT RE-come.IPF-INF-COP]
*Father said, “Mother will come here today”.*

(32) baw jaʃa mi-č qu-ʃ.a-s-e, p.u-ne dad.a.
[mother today DEMM-LAT RE-come.IPF-INF-COP] say.PF-PFT father(ERG)
*Father said, “Mother will come here today”.*
or: *Father said, that mother would come here today.*
(Both direct and indirect interpretation available.)

(33) dad.a, baw jaʃa mi-č qu-ʃ.a-s-e, p.u-ne.
father(ERG) [mother today DEMM-LAT RE-come.IPF-INF-COP] say.PF-PFT
*Father said, that mother would come here today.*
(Only indirect interpretation available.)
3.2. Use of morphologized speech verb ʁaj (ʁaj)

In the present tense, not a standard finite form, but an enclitic morphologized form ʁaj (ʁaj) of the speech verb can be used:

(34) qunši-jar.i hul-ar qu-ʕə.a-s-e = ʁaj.
neighbour-PL(ERG) [guest-PL RE-go.IPF-INF-COP] = ʁaj
As neighbours say, guests will come.

This form is definitely related to the forms derived from the Imperfective stem of the verb ‘say’, cf. the finite Present ʁaa / ʁaja ‘is saying, says’ or Habitual ʁaje ‘(usually) says’.

Like a finite verb, ʁaj functions as a syntactic head governing its own argument — the speaker, coded by the Ergative case (this NP can also host the clitic, like in (35)). Still, other dependents like the addressee NP, or temporal adverbials, are hardly acceptable, which point to the lack of syntactic autonomy compared to a finite form.

(35) qunši-jar.i = ʁaj hul-ar qu-ʕə.a-s-e.
neighbour-PL(ERG) = ʁaj [guest-PL RE-go.IPF-INF-COP]
As neighbours say, guests will come.

Functionally, ʁaj “defocuses” the situation of saying: using the clitic, the speaker underlines the content of the statement, and not the fact that such-and-such person said that; the source of information is indicated, but backgrounded. On the contrary, when the “normal” finite form is used, the fact of saying (and the person who said that) and the content of the statement are of equal communicative importance.

(36) qunši-jar.i x.a-a, hul-ar qu-ʕə.a-s-e.
neighbour-PL(ERG) say.IPF-PRS [guest-PL RE-go.IPF-INF-COP]
Neighbours say, that guests will come.

This “defocusing” function has lead to a further grammaticalization of ʁaj as a hearsay marker (‘they say’). This use is very frequent in narratives, where ʁaj as a hearsay marker modifies finite forms and often occurs in a superfluous manner (almost after each narrative clause), cf. some examples from Agul fairy-tales:

(37) x.u-ne, x.u-ndawa = ʁaj lemert = na ʒumart ʁə.a
become.PF-PFT become.PF-PFT:NEG = ʁaj Lemert = and Dzhumart say.IPF
ʔu ču.
two brother
There lived (= there were, there weren’t), they say, two brothers called Lemert and Dzhumart.

(38) sa ɛ’uq’ dewlet qa-je-t-ar ij = ʁaj hür.i-n ʔan.a-ʔ,
one a.little wealth {POST}be-PART-S-PL COP:PST = ʁaj village-GEN inside-IN
gə-wur.i-q qa-ji = ʁaj jac-ar, ʔu jac…
DEMG-PL-POST {POST}be-PST = ʁaj ox-PL two ox
(These people) were more or less rich, they say, in the village; they had oxen, they say, two oxen.
(39)  söyle qaj-ne = kaj,  χab fajqaj-ne = kaj ha-ge χalbizak,  
then RE:come:PF-PFT= kaj again RE:bring.PF-PFT=kaj ha-DEMG water-melon  
le χalbizak waʔ,  p.u-ne = kaj šuw.a,  saje χalbizak,  
DEML water-melon no say.PF-PFT=kaj husband(ERG) other water-melon  
p.u-ne = kaj,  say.PF-PFT=kaj  

Then (the wife) came back, they say, and she brought back that water-melon, they say. “Not this water-melon! — said her husband, they say, — (Bring) another water-melon!” — he said, they say.

4. Summary

As Tom Güldemann notes, “quotative indexes across languages tend to assume properties of routinized grammatical structures” (2008: 49). In Agul, we see at least two examples of this tendency:

- the perfective participle puna of the verb ‘say, tell’ became a quotative marker in the indirect speech construction, and further evolved into a more general complementizer (with a wider range of verbs) and a subordinator in reason and purpose adverbial clauses (with a subjective modal nuance);
- a morphologized present tense form kaj of the same verb is used as a semi-autonomous finite predicate (defocusing the situation of saying), and as an evidential hearsay marker.

Abbreviations

ADD – additive particle; COMIT – comitative; COND – conditional;  CONV – converb;  
COP – copula; DAT – dative; DEMM/DEML/DEMT/DEMG – demonstratives (M, L, T, G-series);  

References