MORPHOLOGY AND SYNTAX

Gender in Abkhaz, though marked in the pronoun, which distinguishes masculine/feminine in the 2nd and 3rd singular, is not marked in the noun. The pronominal gender distinction is, of course, carried via the pronominal markers to the verbal complex. Further, the class of human referents is distinguished from the non-human. *See* **Pronoun**, below.

Noun

Nouns are definite or indefinite. In citation form, with an *a-* prefix they are definite: e.g. *a.çla* 'the tree'; *a.xaça* 'the man'. The indefinite marker is suffixed *-ķ*: e.g. *çla.ķ* 'a tree'; *xaça.ķ* 'some man or other'; *la.ķ* 'a dog'.

PLURAL MARKERS

Suffixed *-c°a* for human referents, *-k°a* for non-human: e.g. *apsa.c°a* 'Abkhazians'; *ačķun.c°a.ķ* 'some children'; *a.çla.k°a* 'the trees'; *çla.k°a.ķ* 'some trees'.

    -aa is a collective plural marker: e.g. *aps.w.aa* 'the Abkhaz people'.

    A numeral may be prefixed to a nominal with or without a plural marker: e.g. with *pš-* 4; *pš.la.(k°a).(ķ)* 'the four dogs/four dogs'.

    In the absence of any sort of case inflection, syntactic relationships are expressed by affixes, supported where necessary by adverbial postpositions.

POSSESSION

Possessor precedes possessed: X's Y is expressed as X *lk* Y, where *lk* is the possessive linking particle, agreeing in number and, partially, in gender with X. *See* **Pronoun**, below.

DIRECT AND INDIRECT OBJECT

While nominals are not themselves marked, their status as subject or object is signalled by the presence of pronominal markers in the verbal complex. These markers are set out in the section on the **Pronoun**, below. Here, the system may be illustrated by an example from Hewitt 1979:

    (sara) a.x°ə č.k°a a.š°q°.k°a Ø.rə.s.to.yṭ
    'I give the books to the children'

where *sara* denotes the independent 1st p. pronoun 'I'; *a.x°ə č.k°a* denotes 'children'; *a.š°q°.k°a* denotes 'books'; *to* is the root 'to give'; *yṭ* is the characteristic of the finite verb, used to express the present tense; *rə* is the 3rd p. pl. indirect object marker: 'to them'; *s* is the 1st p. pronominal copy of *sara* 'I', subject of the transitive verb; and Ø indicates the position where a 3rd p. non-human pronominal marker would be inserted if necessary, referring to 'books'; here it is not necessary.

Adjective

The adjective in Abkhaz does not differ formally from the noun. Predicate adjectives are stative verbs. The attributive adjective usually follows its noun, whose indefinite marker, if any, is transferred to the adjective, which may also take the plural marker: e.g. *la bzəya.ķ* 'a good dog', *a.la.(k°a) bzəya.k°a* 'the good dogs', *pš.la bzəya.ķ* or *a.la bzəya.k°a.pš.ba* 'four good dogs', *a.bzəya.k°a* 'the good ones'.

A comparative is made with the formants *-aasta, -eyħa,* or *-açķ'əs*: e.g. *a.ph°əs a.xaça y.aasta də.ħaraķ.ə.w.p* 'the woman is taller than the man', where *a.ph°əs* is 'woman', *y-* a pronominal marker for 3rd p. sing. masc., *də.ħaraķ* 'tall', and *-əwp* is the copula. Cf. *yara zeg' r.eyħa də.harak.ə.w.p* 'he is taller than all (*zeg'*) of them (*r-*)'.

Pronoun

Abkhaz has independent personal pronouns, possessive pronominal prefixes, and bound personal pronominal markers.

The independent series is:

		Singular	*Plural*			
1		sa(ra)	ħa(ra)	*incl.*		
			ħart	*excl.*		
2	human masc.	wa(ra)	š°a(ra)	*incl.*	š°art	*excl.*
	human fem.	ba(ra)				
3	human masc.	ya(ra)	da(ra)			
	human fem.	la(ra)				

-xata may be added to a reduplicated pronominal deixis for emphasis: e.g. *sa(ra)s.xata* 'I myself'.

The reflexive pronoun is *a.xə* 'head'.

POSSESSIVE PREFIXES

These are provided by the short forms of the independent series: *sa, wa,* etc. in certain cases with vocalic reduction: e.g. *sə.çla* 'my tree', *ħa.çla* 'their tree'.

BOUND PRONOMINAL MARKERS

These can be grouped in three series, each with specific functions:

Series 1

		Singular	Plural
1		s(ə)	ħ(a)
2		w(ə)	š°(ə)
		b(ə)	
3		d(ə)	y(ə)
non-human		y(ə)	

Markers in this series occupy first slot in the pre-radical verbal complex. Note that 2nd sing. distinguishes masc. (*w*) from fem. (*b*) while 3rd sing. has generic distinction between human (*d*) and non-human (*y*). These markers provide the subject pronouns of intrans. verbs, and the direct objects of trans. verbs.

Series 2

		Singular	Plural
1		s(ə)	ħ(a)/aħ
2		w(ə)	š°(ə)
		b(ə)	
3		y(ə)	r/d(ə)
		l(ə)	
non-human		a(ə)	

Series 2 provides indirect-object markers, following directly on Series 1. Note that 3rd sing. makes both gender and class distinction.

Series 3

		Singular	
1		s/z(ə)	
2		w(ə)	
		b(ə)	
3		y(ə)	
		lə)	
non-human		(n)a	

Plural forms as in Series 2

Series 3, occupying third place in the pre-radical complex, provides the pronominal subject markers of transitive verbs. Again, 3rd sing. makes both gender and class distinction.

E.g. *də.r.* *beyṭ* 'they (*r.*) saw him (*də*)'; *y.bə.r.toyṭ* 'they (*r.*) give that (*y*) to you (fem.) (*bə*)'.

DEMONSTRATIVE PRONOUN

There are three degrees of distancing: the proximate form, suggesting nearness to 1st person, is sing. *a(b)rəy*, pl. *(ab)art*; distal but within purview of 1st and 2nd p. is sing. *a(b)nəy*, pl. *(ab)ant*; the second distal set, sing. *wəy/wəbrəy*, pl. *wərt/wəbart*, is used for referents beyond the purview of either 1st or 2nd person.

INTERROGATIVE PRONOUN

d.arban 'who?', where *d-* can be replaced by other 1st slot pronominal markers; *zaḵ°əy* 'what?'; *yanba* 'when?'; *yaba* 'where?'

> There is no relative pronoun in Abkhaz. A slot 1 marker + -*an(ə)* can be used for a temporal relative clause; a slot 1 marker + -*ax (ə)* for a locative. An example of the latter from Hewitt (1979: 166):

> > sara **yə.z.**boyṭ Merab **d.**ax'ə.n.xo a.y°nə
> > 'I see the house where Merab lives'

> where *sara* denotes 'I'; *yə* 'it'; *z.* is the pronominal subject marker 'I'; *bo.yṭ* 'see' (finite); *d.* is the pronominal subject marker 'he'; *axə* 'where'; *n* is the preverb; *xo* 'to live'; and *a.y°nə* 'the house'.

Verb

Abkhaz verbs are stative (resultative) or dynamic, transitive or intransitive, mono- or polypersonal. Monopersonal verbs are intransitive: e.g. *d.ceyṭ* 'he went', *s.ceyṭ* 'I went'. Polypersonal verbs may be either transitive or intransitive, depending on the sense of the root and the valencies assigned to it in Abkhaz. There is no passive voice in Abkhaz. A dynamic base can, however, be converted to a stative by means of the stative marker -*wp* and concomitant realignment involving the use of postpositional forms denoting agency.

A causative is made by inserting pre-radical -*r*-: e.g. *yə.b.sə.r.qa.ceyṭ* 'I made you do it'; where *yə* denotes 'it', *b* 'you' (fem.), *sə* 'I', *r* causative formant, *qa* is a preverb, and *ceyṭ* 'make/do' the finite form.

Choice of marker here depends on (a) whether the verb is stative or dynamic, and on (b) whether a finite or a non-finite form is required:

Stative finite present:	*s.ṭ°o.wp*	'I stand', 'am standing'
Stative finite past:	*s.ṭ°a.n*	'I was standing'
Dynamic finite present:	*yə.z.bo.yṭ*	'I see it'
	s.co.yṭ	'I go'
Dynamic finite past:	*yə.z.be.yṭ*	'I saw it'
	s.ce.yṭ	'I went'
Dynamic future (two forms are made):	*s.ca.p*	'I'll go' (inaugurative)
	s.ca.ṣṭ	'I'll probably go'
A stative future is made with the characteristic *zaa*:	*də.ṭ°a.zaa.weyṭ*	'He will be sitting'
The characteristic of the dynamic perfective finite is *x'a/x'e*:	*s.ca.x'e.yṭ*	'I've gone' (my going is over and done with)

Five dynamic imperfective forms (three past, two conditional) have an *-n* suffix in place of the perfective *p/ṭ*: e.g. *s.co.n* 'I was going'; *s.ca.rə.n* 'I would go', where *rə* is the conditional characteristic; cf. *wəy də.z.ba.r* 'that one, if I see her'.

The non-finite correlatives of these ten finite forms take the format: pronominal marker + root (+ characteristic or aspect marker); cf. *yə.co* 'he who goes', *yə.ca* 'he who went', *yə.ca.ra* 'he who will go', *yə.co.z* 'he who was going'.

IMPERATIVE

The stem is used with the 2nd p., sing. or pl., subject marker if the verb is intransitive; 2nd p. pl. only if it is transitive, i.e. the marker for singular transitive imperative is zero.

The negating format *-m-/-m* is added to the complex to provide a prohibitive, and *-n* (associated with the imperfective aspect) is added: e.g. *š°ə.m.ṭ°a.n* 'don't you (pl.) sit'. For the negative marker, cf. *s.co.m* 'I'm not going', *s.co.mə.z.ṭ* 'I was not going'.

SUBJUNCTIVE MOOD

A subjunctive mood is made with the formant *-aa.yṭ*: e.g. *yə.l.g.aa.yṭ* 'let her (*l*) take it', and an inferential with *-zaa.p*: e.g. *də.šta.zaa.p* 'it seems he's lying down'.

POTENTIAL

The verb *a.l.ṣa.ra* 'to be able' is used: e.g. *a.ca.ra Ø.sə.l.ṣo.yṭ* 'I can go', where *a.ca.ra* is a verbal noun 'the going', Ø marks the position of the unexpressed 3rd p. subject ('it'), *sə* is 'to me', and *l* is a preverb; *ṣa.wa.yṭ > ṣo.yṭ* 'is possible'.

DIRECTIONAL PRE-VERBS

For example, *-aa-* 'hither', *-na-* 'thither', *-y°a-* 'upwards', *-la-* 'downwards'. These are inserted in the verbal complex: e.g. *yə.b.z.aa.z.ge.yṭ* 'I bring it for you (fem.)', where *yə* denotes 'it', *b* 'you' (fem.), *z(ə)* 'for' (postposition), *z*. 'I', *ge* 'bring', and *yṭ* the finite marker.

Postpositions

There is a wide inventory of spatio-temporal postpositions, which are often combined with directional preverbs in the verbal complex. Where required, pronominal markers belonging to the second series are prefixed to post-positions: e.g. *s.qənṭ°* 'from me', *yə.qənṭ°* 'from him'.

Some examples:

> at: *a.ṭṣ;ə* 'at it (*a*)'; *a.vokzal a.ṭṣə* 'at the station' (Russian loanword)
> inside: *a.y°nə çqa*; *a.y°nə a.y°n çqa* 'inside the house'
> behind: *a.šta.x'*; *a.y°nə a.šta.x' də.qo.wp* 'he is behind the house'
> above: *a.xəx'*; *a.y°nə a.xəx'* 'above the house'
> on: *a.k°c°a*; *a.çla a.k°c°a* 'on top of the tree'
> among: *rə.y°nə çqa*; *a.çla.k°a rə.y°nə çqa* 'among the trees'

Adverbs

Several affixes produce adverbs from nouns or adjectives, e.g. *-nə*, which requires the root to be marked either by the neutral (non-human) pronominal prefix *yə-*, or by the Series 1. pronominal marker in concord with the verbal subject. Hewitt gives the following example:

> sara yə.las.nə s.nəq°o.yṭ 'I walk quickly'
>   s .las.nə s.nəq°o.yṭ

Word order

SOV is normal. For pronominal subject/indirect and direct object order in the verbal complex, *see* **Pronoun** and **Verb**, above.