ERGATIVITY: AN OVERVIEW

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Outline of the lecture:

- Ergativity as a phenomenon
- Split ergativity
- Morphological ergativity
- Syntactic ergativity
- Deriving ergativity
- (Diachronic origins of ergativity; acquisition of ergativity)

1 *Phenomenon of ergativity*

1.1 Starting point

early work: Comrie 1978, Dixon 1979, 1994
basic primitives: S, A, P (O)
types of alignment in feature X

1.2 Case systems: some illustrations

(1) a. **arengke-le** aye-nhe ke-ke *Antekerrepenhe*
dog-**A** me-**obj** bite-PAST (Arandic;
'The dog bit me.' Central Australia)

b. athe **arengke-nhe** we-ke
me:**A** dog-**O** strike-PAST
'I hit the dog.'

c. **arengke-ø** nterre-ke
dog-**S** run-PAST
'The dog ran.'

(2) a. rex milit-em laudavit *Latin*
king.NOM soldier-ACC praised

b. milis reg-em laudavit
soldier.NOM king-ACC praised

c. milis/rex vincit
soldier.NOM/king.NOM won

(3) a. putn-s lidoja *Latvian*
bird-NOM fly.PAST.3
'The/A bird was flying.'

b. bērn-s zīmē putn-i
child-NOM draw.PRES.3 bird-ACC
'The/A child is drawing a bird.'

(4) a. ətlʔəg-ən ret-gʔe *Chukchi*
man-ABS arrive-AOR.3SG (Paleo-Siberian)

b. ətlʔəg-e keyŋ-ən təm-nen
man-ERG bear-ABS kill-AOR.3SG:3SG

c. ətlʔəg-ən keyŋ-e təm-nen
man-ABS bear-ERG kill-AOR.3SG:3SG

(5) a. pšaše-r $k_w$ewe-ʁ *Adyghe*
girl-ABS cry-PAST (NW Caucasian)
'The girl cried.'

b. he-m pšaše-r ə-λe$ʁ_w$e-ʁ
dog-ERG girl-ABS 3SG-see-PAST
'The dog saw the girl.'

the "unmarked" case?

- accusative system: NOM

but: Baltic languages, Diegueño, Aymara, Oromo, Igbo, Maricopa

- ergative system: ABS

but: Chukchi, NW Caucasian languages, Nias (absolutive formed by affixation on the ergative)

does the variation in case systems reflect deeper differences in grammatical structure?

are the surface cases observed here uniform or do they mask different abstract cases?

alignment in agreement

(6) Criteria:
  a. agreement triggers (subject/object, A, S, P; ergative/absolutive)
  b. agreement exponents (prefix, suffix, circumfix)

(7) Subtypes of ergative alignment in agreement
  a. agreement with the absolutive only
  b. agreement with the ergative only
  c. agreement with both

(8) a. Juma a-li-ik-a mapema *Swahili*
  Juma SUBJ.CLASSI-PAST-arrive-INDIC early (Niger-Congo)
  'Juma arrived early.'
  b. Juma a-na-m-pend-a Mariam
  J SUBJ.CLASSI-PRES-OBJ.CLASSI-like-INDIC M
  'Juma likes Mariam.'
  c. watoto wa-na-m-pend-a Mariam
  children SUBJ.CLASSII-PRES-OBJ.CLASSI-like-INDICM
  'The children like Mariam.'
  d. Juma a-na-wa-pend-a watoto
  Juma SUBJ.CLASSI-PRES-OBJ.CLASSII-like-INDIC children
  'Juma likes the children.'

(9) a. na-peppe'-i Amir asung-ku *Konjo*
  3SG-hit-3SG Amir dog-my (Austronesian)
  'Amir hit my dog.'
  b. alampa'-i Amir
  go-3SG Amir
  'Amir went.'
  c. alampa'-i asung-ku
  go-3SG dog-my
  'My dog went.'
  d. ku-peppe'-i *pro* Amir
  1SG-hit-3SG Amir
  'I hit Amir.'
  e. na-peppe'-ku Amir aku
  3SG-hit-1SG Amir 1SG
  'Amir hit me.'

(10) San Miguel Chimalapa Zoque; no number distinction (Johnson 2001)

	Trans. subject (A)	Intrans. subject (S)	Trans. Object (P)
1	-(ʔə)n	də-	də-
2	-(ʔə)m	-(ʔə)m	Ø
3	-(ʔə)y	Ø	Ø

(11) alignment in case-marking and agreement

Case marking	Agreement	Examples	Numbers (WALS, maps 98-100; N=190)
ergative	ergative	Avar, Tongan, Aleut, Siberian Yupik	3
ergative	accusative	Dargi, Kashmiri, Gujarati (past tense only), Chukchi, Itelmen, Warlpiri	12
accusative	accusative	Greek, Russian, Finnish	34
accusative	ergative	Unattested/impossible (Corbett 2006: 58)	0

Why is ACC case-marking/ERG agreement unattested?

(12) alignment in French causatives (see also Bobaljik and Branigan 2006)
  a. Luc a fait travailler les étudiants
  L has made work.INF [the students].ACC
  'Luc made the students work.'
  b. Luc a fait lire un livre aux étudiants
  L has made read.INF [a book].ACC [the students].DAT
  'Luc made the students read a book.'
  c. Luc les/*leur a fait travailler
  L them.ACC/*DAT has made work.INF
  'Luc made them work.'
  d. Luc leur/*les a fait lire un livre

L them.DAT/*ACC had made read.INF a book
'Luc made them read a book.'

☞ established alignment patterns can be found in different grammatical phenomena and are not exclusive to morphological case marking

2 Split ergativity

main types of splits: person, TMA, split intransitivity

2.1 Person split

Main generalization: no split systems with the ergative alignment on pronouns *vs*. accusative alignment on nominals

Dyaabugay (Pama-Nyungan family, Australia); *mang-* 'ridicule, laugh at'; no agreement (Hale 1976; Patz 1991)

(13) yaburu-nggu warruwarru mangarril
girl-ERG boy.ABS laugh
'The girl ridicules the boy.'

(14) yaburu warruwarru-nggu mangarril
girl.ABS boy-ERG laugh
'The boy ridicules the girl.'

(15) nyurra nganydji-ny mangarril
2SG.?? 1PL -?? laugh
'You ridicule us.'

(16) nganydji nyurra-ny mangarril
1PL 2SG laugh
'We ridicule you.'

so far, standard person-based split:
pronouns:
nominals:

(17) nyurra warruwarru mangarril
2SG boy laugh
'You ridicule the boy.'

(18) a. yaburu nganydji-*nda* manggang
girl we laughs
'The girl ridicules us.'
b. *yaburu-nggu nganydji(-ny) mangarril
c. *yaburu-nggu nganydji(-ny) manggang

(19) warruwarru nyurra*nda* manggang
boy 2sg laugh
'The boy ridicules you.'

(20) yaburu manggang
girl laughs
'The girl laughs.'

(21) nganydji manggang
we laugh
'We laugh.'

(22) Dyaabugay case alignment (referentially distinct arguments)

	P = NP	P = pronoun
A =NP	ergative	×
A = pronoun	neutral	Accusative

(23) Generalized animacy hierarchy:

1/2 > 3sg > 3 pl > proper names > human names > animates > natural forces > inanimates

2.2 TMA split

Main generalization: no split systems with the ergative alignment on non-past/imperfective/irrealis *vs*. accusative alignment on past/perfective/indicative

Hindi: contrastive/ergative in perfective/aorist, accusative otherwise

(24) a. laRkaa kal aay-aa *Hindi*
boy yesterday come.AOR-SG.M
b. laRke ne larkii ko dekh-aa
boy ERG girl ACC/DAT see.AOR-SG.M 'The boy saw the girl.'

How common is this split?

(25) a. morphologically ergative languages without TMA split: Araona, Burushaski, Chukchi, Dani (Lower Grand Valley), Gooniyandi, Itelmen, West Greenlandic, most NE Caucasian; all NW Caucasian, Ngiyambaa, Sanuma, Suena, Tukang Besi

b. morphologically ergative with the opposite split (imperfective ~ ergative): **UNATTESTED**

can person and TMA splits be predicted?

can splits receive a principled synchronic explanation? (see Kiparsky 2004, Anderson 2004, for diachronic explanations); how can (22b) be ruled out?

2.3 Split intransitivity (narrowly defined)

(26) a. as wit'a-s *Batsbi*
1SG.ERG go-1SG
'I am going.' UNERGATIVE?
b. so dožal
1SG.ABS fall
'I am falling.' UNACCUSATIVE?

(27) a. as kottla-s
1SG.ERG worry-1SG
'I am worrying.' UNERGATIVE?
b. so kottol
1SG.ABS worry
'I am worried.' UNACCUSATIVE?

Holisky (1987): about 30 one-place verbs that require an absolutive DP, and about 70 that require an ergative DP

3 Morphological ergativity

Why is it morphological?

3.1 Ergativity and phrase structure

- Binding, complex reflexive (different from *se stesso*)

(28) a. kid-bā nełā že žek'-si *Tsez*
girl-ERG self.ABS hit-PAST.EVIDENTIAL (NE Caucasian)
'The girl hit herself.'
b. nełā že kid-bā žek'-si
self.ABS girl-ERG hit-PAST.EVIDENTIAL
c. *kid nełā že/nełā nełā žek'si
girl.ABS self.ABS/ERG hit
d. *nełā že/nełā nełā kid žek'si
self.ABS/ERG girl.ABS hit

(29) a. kid-ber nełā že yeti-xosi yoł
girl-DAT self.ABS like-PRES.PART be.PRES
'The girl likes herself.'
b. kid nełā neł-er yeti-xosi yoł
girl.ABS self.DAT like-PRES.PART be.PRES
'The girl likes herself.'

Binding, simple reflexive

(30) a. šuru uč° ʁurč°nu *Tabassaran*
daughter.ERG self.ABS beat
'The daughter beat herself up.'
b. uč° šuru ʁurč°nu
self.ABS daughter.ERG beat
'The daughter beat herself up.'
c. *čav riš ʁurč°nu
self.ERG daughter.ABS beat
d. *riš čav ʁurč°nu
daughter.ABS self.ERG beat

(31) a. Na'e tafitafi'i pē 'e Mele$_i$ ('a) ia$_i$ *Tongan*
PAST groom REFL ERG Mary ABS 3SG (Austronesian)
'Mary groomed herself.'
b. Na'e tafitafi'i pē 'a ia$_i$ 'e Mele$_i$
PAST groom REFL ABS 3SG ERG Mary
'Mary groomed herself.'

c. *Na'e tafitafi'i pē 'e ia_i ('a) $Mele_i$
d. *Na'e tafitafi'i pē ('a) $Mele_i$ 'e ia_i

- Control

(32) a. miiqqat-up Juuna ikiu-p-a-a *West Greenlandic*
children-ERG J.ABS help-INDIC-TRANS-3SG
'The children helped Juuna.'
b. miiqqat [~~miiqqat up~~ Juuna ikiu-ssa-llu-gu]
children.abs children-ERG J.ABS help-FUT-INF-3SG
niriursuipput
promised
'The children promised to help Juuna.'

- Imperative/hortative addresssee

(33) a. tagi-Ø *Siberian Yupik*
come-IMPER
'Come to visit!'
b. aglati-nga-Ø
lead-1SG.OBJ-IMPER
'Lead me!'
(*'Let me lead you')

- Coreference across clause

(34) a. ənpənačg-ən wiri-gʔi *Chukchi*
old_man-ABS descend-AOR.3SG
'The old man came down.'
b. ənpənačg-e nenenə winren-nin
old_man-ERG child.ABS help-AOR.3SG.3SG
'The old man helped the child.'
c. ənpənačg-ən wiri-gʔi ənqam *pro* nenenə
old_man-ABS descend-AOR.3SG and child.ABS
winren-nin
help-AOR.3SG.3SG
'The old man came down and helped the child.'
*'The old man came down and the child helped him.'
d. ənpənačg-e nenenə winren-nin ənqam *pro* retgʔe
old_man-ERG child.ABS help-AOR.3SG.3SG and left
'The old man helped the child and left.'
*'The old man helped the child and the child left.'

Evidence against VP-coordination: adverbial co-occurrence and placement, use of two finite forms, nominalization

- Raising

straightforward cases

(35) a. ne kamata ke uku hifo e tama *Niuean*
PAST begin SUBJUNCTIVE dive down ABS child
b. ne kamata e $tama_i$ [ke uku hifo t_i]
PAST begin ABS child SUBJ dive down
'The child began to dive down.'

(36) a. ne kamata ke hala he tama e akau
PAST begin SUBJ chop ERG child ABS tree
b. ne kamata e/*he $tama_i$ ke hala t_i e akau
PAST begin ABS/*ERG child SUBJ chop ABS tree
'The child began to chop the tree.' (Seiter 1983: 320-1)

problematic cases

- Niuean and Tongan also have "object-to-object raising" (analyzed as copy-raising or raising from the subject of the passive)
- Tongan (Chung 1978, Dukes 1998, Otsuka 2001): we will return to this structure in section 5
- Basque

- Passive

(37) a. Piiata-up Maali kunik-t-aa *Inuit*
P-ERG M.ABS kiss-PRES-IND.3SG.3SG
'Peter kissess Molly.'
b. Maali Piiata-mit kunik-ta-u-vuq
M.ABS P-ABLATIVE kiss-PASS-AUX-IND.3SG
'Molly was kissed by Peter.' (Bok-Bennema 1991)

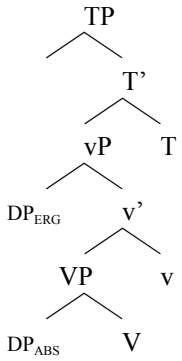
also in Basque (Bollenbacher 1977, Laka 1993, Hualde 2003), Abkhaz (Hewitt 1989), Tzotzil (Aissen 1987), Tongan, Samoan, possibly Halkomelem (Gerdts 1988, Wiltschko 2003)

- *pro*-drop licensing: absolutive intransitive and ergative (Chukchi, Tsez, Basque, Eskimo-Aleut), all arguments (Tongan, Samoan)

- nominalizations—just like in English (Tongan—Hendrick 2004, Chukchi)

☞ The ergative DP asymmetrically c-commands the absolutive DP; morphological ergativity does not show any syntactic effects

(38)

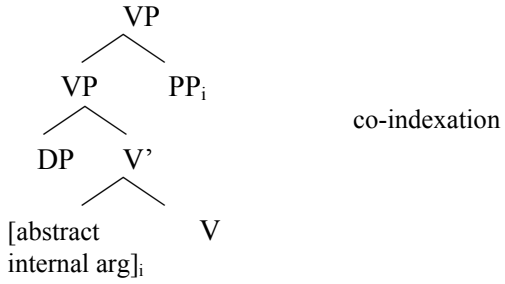


3.2 Morphological ergativity and antipassive

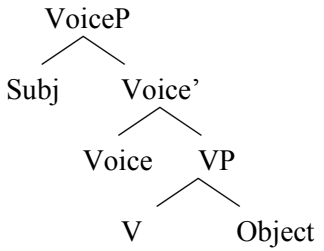
(39) a. ʔaaček-a kimitʔ-ən ne-nlʔetet-ən *Chukchi*
youth-ERG load-ABS 3PL.SUBJ-carry-AOR.3SG.OBJ
'The young men carried away the/a load.'
b. ʔaaček-ət **ine**-nlʔetet-gʔe-t kimitʔ-e
youth-ABS **ANTI**-carry-AOR.3SG.SUBJ-PL load-INSTR
'The young men carried away the/a load.'

(40) Deriving the antipassive
a. base-generation (Chung 1998); antipassives are provided in the lexicon
b. abstract nominal incorporation saturating the internal argument position, with the logical object adjoined (Baker 1988; Basilico 2006)
c. logical object remains low in the VP and does not participate in case checking (Bobaljik and Branigan 2006)
d. additional aspectual projection licensing the non-absolutive/non-accusative object, which is structurally equivalent to the regular object (Alexiadou 1999, Borer 2005)

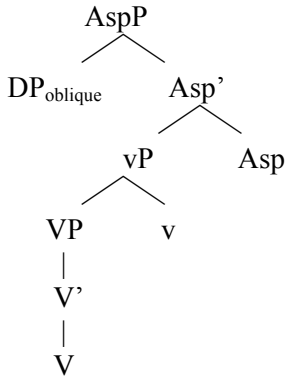
(41) a. incorporation-style derivation (40b)



b. voice derivation (40c)



c. aspectual derivation (40d)



(42) Antipassive correlations:
a. antipassive ~ imperfective
b. antipassive ~ ergative case-marking

Table 1. The antipassive construction and case marking

ACCUSATIVE	ERGATIVE
Acoma, Cahuilla, Canela-Krahô, Chamorro, Choctaw, Comanche, Cree, Kiowa, Koyraboro Senni, Krongo, Lango, Lavukaleve, Nez Perce, Ojibwa, Paiwan, Sanuma, Thompson	Archi, Bezhta, Cakchiquel, Central Yup'ik, Chechen, Chukchi, Copainalá Zoque, Diyari, Djaru, Dyirbal, Embaloh, Godoberi, Gooniyandi, Halkomelem, Hunzib, Jakaltek, Kabardian, Kapampangan, Lai, Lak, Mam, Mangarrayi, Päri, Tsez, Tzutujil, Wardaman, Warrungu, West Greenlandic, Yidiny, Yukulta,

(Polinsky 2005 [WALS: ch. 108])

4 Syntactic ergativity

4.1 Syntactic ergativity in A-bar phenomena

main generalization: the absolutive is the only DP that undergoes A'-movement

- relativization

(43) a. ənpənačg-ən wiri-gʔi *Chukchi*
old_man-ABS descend-AOR.3SG
'The old man came down.'

b. [~~ənpənačgən~~ wiri-lʔ-]ən ənpənačg-ən
descend-PART-ABS old_man-ABS
'the old man that came down'

(44) a. ənpənačg-e kimitʔ-ən nəlʔetetə-nen
old_man-ERG load-ABS carry-AOR.3SG.3SG
'The old man carried away the load.'

b. [(ənpənačg-e) ~~kimitʔ-ən~~ nəlʔetetə-lʔ-]ən kimitʔ-ən
old_man-ERG carry-PART-ABS load-ABS
'the load that the old man/someone carried'

c. *[~~ənpənačge~~ kimitʔ-ən nəlʔetetə-lʔ-]-ən ənpənačg-ən
load-ABS carry-PART-ABS old_man-ABS
('the old man that carried the load')

(45) a. ənpənačg-ən ine-nlʔetet-gʔe kimitʔ-e
old_man-ABS ANTI-carry-AOR.3SG load-INSTR
'The old man carried away the load.'

b. [~~ənpənačgən~~ kimitʔ-e ine-nlʔetetə-lʔ-]ən ənpənačg-ən
load-INSTR ANTI-carry-PART-ABS old_man-ABS
'the old man that carried the load'

- topicalization

(46) a. Ko e fefiné$_i$ ia, na'a (*ne) kata ___$_i$ *Tongan*
PRED DEF woman that PAST 3SG laugh
'This woman, laughed.'

b. Ko e fefiné$_i$ ia, na'a (*ne) manatu'i
PRED DEF woman that PAST 3SG remember
'e he faiakó __$_i$
ERG DEF teacher
'This woman, the teacher remembered.'

c. Ko e faiako$_i$ ia, na'a *(ne) manatu'i ___$_i$
PRED DEF teacher that PAST 3SG remember
'a e fefiné
ABS DEF woman
'This teacher, remembered the woman.'

- Acquisition: A-bar phenomena cause difficulty in L1 acquisition (Pye 1990, 2002, 2005; Ochs 1988)

☞ A-bar phenomena are sensitive to the ergative/absolutive distinction
i. any ABS and only ABS can undergo extraction (Chukchi)
ii. only subject ABS can undergo extraction (Mayan, Austronesian)

4.2 More unusual cases: coreference across clauses and control

Austronesian and Mayan control; Dyirbal; Tongan

- Control in Mayan and Austronesian: in some Mayan and Austronesian languages, control is possible only into intransitive clauses (Aldridge 2004, 2005)

(47) a. m-n-osa [m-ari patis taihoku PRO] *Seediq* ka Ape
INTR-PERF-go INTR-buy book Taipei ABS Ape
'Ape went to buy books in Taipei.'

b. *m-n-osa [burig-un taihoku (ka) patis PRO] ka Ape
INTR-PERF-go buy-TRANS Taipei ABS book ABS Ape

- Dyirbal coreference (Dixon 1972, 1994)

(48) a. bayi yaṛa bani-nʸu
DEM.ABS man.ABS come-TENSE
'The man came here.'

b. balan dʸugumbil baŋgul yaṛa-ŋgu balga-n
DEM.ABS woman.ABS DEM.ERG man-ERG hit-TENSE
'The man hit the woman.'

c. bayi yaṛa baŋgun dʸugumbi-ṛu balga-n
DEM.ABS man.ABS DEM.ERG woman-ERG hit-TENSE
'The woman hit the man.'

(49) a. bayi yaṛa bani-nʸu, baŋgun dʸugumbi-ṛu balga-n
DEM.ABS man.ABS come-TENSE DEM.ERG woman-ERG hit-TENSE
'The man came here and the woman hit him/*hit the woman.'

b. bayi yaṛa$_i$ baninʸu, *pro*$_i$ baŋgun dʸugumbi-ṛu balgan

(50) a bayi yaṛa baŋgun dʸugumbi-ṛu balga-n, bani-nʸu
DEM.ABS man.ABS DEM.ERG woman-ERG hit-TENSE come-TENSE
'The woman hit the man and he/*she came here.'

b. bayi yaṛa$_i$ baŋgun dʸugumbiṛu$_j$ balgan, *pro*$_{i/*j}$ baninʸu

(51) *bayi yaṛa$_i$ baninʸu, baŋgul dʸugumbil *pro*$_i$ balgan
DEM.ABS man.ABS came DEM.ABS woman-ABS hit
('The man came here and hit the woman.')

- Dyirbal control?

(52) a. nguma banaga-nʸu [___ yabu-nggu bura-li]
father.ABS return-TENSE mother-ERG see-PURPOSE
'Father returned for the mother to see him.'
('Father returned to be seen by the mother.')

b. nguma banaga-nʸu [___ bural-nga-ygu yabu-gu]
father.ABS return-TENSE see-ANTIPASS-PURP mother-DAT
'Father returned to see mother.'

Alternative explanations?

ii. Center embedding, not coordination: accounts for "coordination" but not for control

iii. Ergative = passive, antipassive = active; accounts for all the data

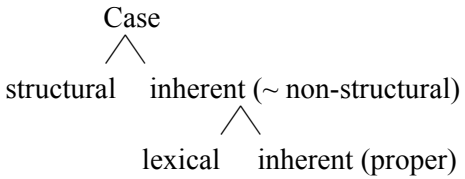
- Tongan coreference (Otsuka 2000)

☞ beyond A-bar movement, the range of syntactic ergativity is not entirely clear, and alternative explanations need to be explored

5 Deriving ergativity

5.1 Ergative: structural or inherent case?

Woolford (2006): "regular" inherent case
(similar approach in Massam 2006, Anand and Nevins 2006, Legate 2006)

(53)


(54) Difference in licensing conditions:
a. lexical case is licensed by lexical heads only
b. inherent case is licensed by light v heads only; ergative is analogous to dative

(55) Non-structural case diagnostics:
a. case preservation on the subject of tensed clause (but see Bittner and Hale 1996)
b. use of nominative on the object (but see Legate 2006 on the heterogeneity of the absolutive)
c. θ-relatedness (many arguments against: Woolford 2006, Davison 2003, Anand & Nevins 2006)
d. selection by specific lexical items (Woolford dispenses with this criterion via the disjunctive definition)
e. case preservation under A-movement; competition between inherent and structural cases

Arguments against the inherent case analysis
- Cited instances of case preservation under A-movement are questionable
- Case-stacking

case preservation: Tongan, Hindi, Basque

Crucial example: Tongan *lava* 'be able to' (Woolford 2006)

(56) a. 'e lava 'o ako 'e Pita
TENSE be able COMP learn ERG P
'a e lea faka-Tonga
ABS DEF language Tongan
'Peter can t the Tongan language.'
b. 'e lava 'e Pita 'o ako
TENSE be able ERG P COMP learn
'a e lea faka-Tongá
ABS DEF language Tongan
'Peter can learn the Tongan language.' (Chung 1978; Hendrick 2004, Woolford 2006)

(57) a. 'e lava *expl* ['o faiako'i 'e Pita
TNS be able COMP teach ERG P
'a e lea faka-tonga]
ABS DEF language Tongan
'It is possible that Peter will teach Tongan.' UNRAISED
b. 'e lava 'a Pita$_i$ ['o faiako'i t_i
TNS be able ABS P COMP teach
'a e lea faka-Tonga
ABS DEF language Tongan
'Peter is able to teach Tongan.' RAISING
c. [$_{TP}$'e [$_{vP}$ lava$_k$ 'e Pita [$_{VP}$ 'o faiako'i
TNS be able ERG P COMP teach
'a e lea faka-Tongá]]
ABS DEF language Tongan
'Peter is able to teach Tongan.' RESTRUCTURING?

(58) evidence for structural differences between (57b) and (57c):
a. restructuring and/or serialization is otherwise attested in Tongan (Otsuka 2000)
b. wh-in-situ possible for both DPs in (57c) but not for the absolutive DP in (57b)
c. two separate negations in (57b), but only single negation in (57c)
d. the embedded complement in the raising construction can be fronted, the "embedded" portion in (57c) cannot
e. if a different complementizer is used, raising is possible, but only

with the absolutive DP upstairs; the "raised ergative" is impossible
f. (tentative) definitive stress placement indicates that the structure in (57c) is monoclausal; no definitive stress in (57b)

(59) wh-in-situ in the raising constriction
a. ‘e lava ‘a hai [‘o faiako’i
TNS be able ABS who COMP teach
‘a e lea faka-Tonga]?
ABS the language Tongan
‘Who is able to learn Tongan?’
b. *‘e lava ‘a Pita ‘o faiako’i ‘a e hā?
TNS be able ABS P COMP teach ABS DEF what
(‘what is Peter able to teach?’)

(60) wh-in-situ under restructuring
a. ‘e lava ‘e hai ‘o faiako’i
TNS be able ERG who COMP teach
‘a e lea faka-Tonga?
ABS the language Tongan
‘Who is able to teach Tongan?’
b. ‘e lava ‘e Pita ‘o faiako’i ‘a e hā?
TNS be able ERG P COMP teach ABS DEF what
‘What is Peter able to teach?’

(61) negation with raising
a. ‘e ‘ikai lava ‘a Pita ‘o faiako’i
TNS NEG be able ABS P COMP teach
‘a e lea faka-Tonga
ABS DEF language Tongan
‘Peter is unable to teach Tongan.’
b. ‘e lava ‘a Pita ‘o ‘ikai faiako’i
TNS be able ABS P COMP NEG teach
‘a e lea faka-Tonga
ABS DEF language Tongan
‘Peter is able to not teach Tongan.’

(62) negation with restructuring
a. ‘e ‘ikai lava ‘e Pita ‘o faiako’i
TNS NEG be able ERG P COMP teach
‘a e lea faka-Tonga
ABS DEF language Tongan
‘Peter is unable to teach Tongan.’
b. *‘e lava ‘e Pita ‘o ‘ikai faiako’i
TNS be able ERG P COMP NEG teach
‘a e lea faka-Tonga
ABS DEF language Tongan

(63) other complementizers: only absolutive DP can be spelled out
a. ‘e lava ‘a Pita ke faiako’i
TNS be able ABS P COMP teach
‘a e lea faka-Tonga
ABS DEF language Tongan
‘Peter is able to teach Tongan.’
b. *‘e lava ‘e Pita ‘ke faiako’i
TNS be able ERG P COMP teach
‘a e lea faka-Tonga
ABS DEF language Tongan

☞ ergative does not undergo case preservation in Tongan

case preservation in Hindi
Davison (2003): in Hindi, ergative is not preserved in counterfactual clauses, but dative is

case stacking (Suffixaufnahme)
structural cases do not stack (Yoon 2003)
(64) a. DAT-ERG
b. DAT-ABS
c. *ABS-ERG
d. *ERG-ABS

☞ the inherent case characterization of the ergative is untenable

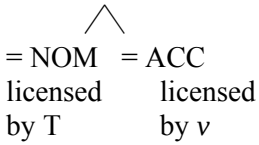
what head(s) can license the ergative case?

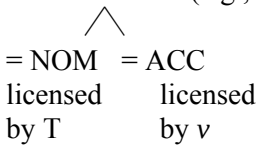
5.2 *Unpacking the absolutive*

Two main approaches:

- The absolutive is uniformly licensed by a (high) functional head (finite T, (indicative) C—Bobaljik 1998, Ura 2001, Bittner and Hale 1996)
- The absolutive is not a uniform category (Aldridge 205, Legate 2006)

(65) Main assumptions:
a. ergative is an inherent case licensed by the highest *v*
b. absolutive is always a structural case
c. *morphological default*: case used when no morphological exponent of a particular case is available
d. *syntactic default*: case assigned when no appropriate licenser is available

(66)


(67)


(68) Deriving intransitive clauses:
a. ACC or ERG is not assigned
b. T licenses NOM
c. T and the single argument agree in phi-features
d. movement to spec,TP satisfies the EPP
e. if a language lacks morphology for the nominative, the asbolutive is assigned as default

Deriving transitive clauses: main problem has to do with T licensing the nominative

Legate's solutions (left open):
(i) optional licensing
(ii) two different Ts
(iii) case is based on assignment, not feature checking, so NOM is either interpretable across the board or is interpretable on functional heads only (cf. Pesetsky & Torrego)

☞ the relativization of the absolutive ("split absolutive") entails the presence of (at least) two distinct light verbs

(69) intransitive light verb:
a. assigns theta-role to a thematic subject
b. combines with intransitive verbs
c. does not license structural case

(70) transitive light verb:a. assigns a theta-role to the thematic subject
b. assigns inherent ergative to the thematic subject
c. licenses structural accusative
d. combines with transitive verbs
e. has unvalued phi-features

(71) general result:
a. T checks ABS in intransitive clauses
b. *v* checks ABS in transitive clauses

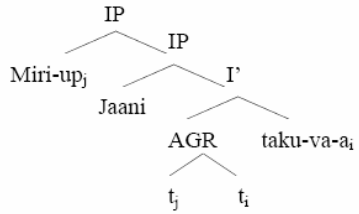
5.3 Deriving ergative clauses

- Main strategies that have been proposed:
  - Reverse theta-role assignment → deep ergative hypothesis (Levin 1983, Marantz 1984, Dixon 1994

Problems with this approach?

- Present diachronic derivation as synchronic → nominalization hypothesis (Johns 1993, 2006): the ergative is not an argument of the verb but a complement of the nominal derived from the main verb

26.



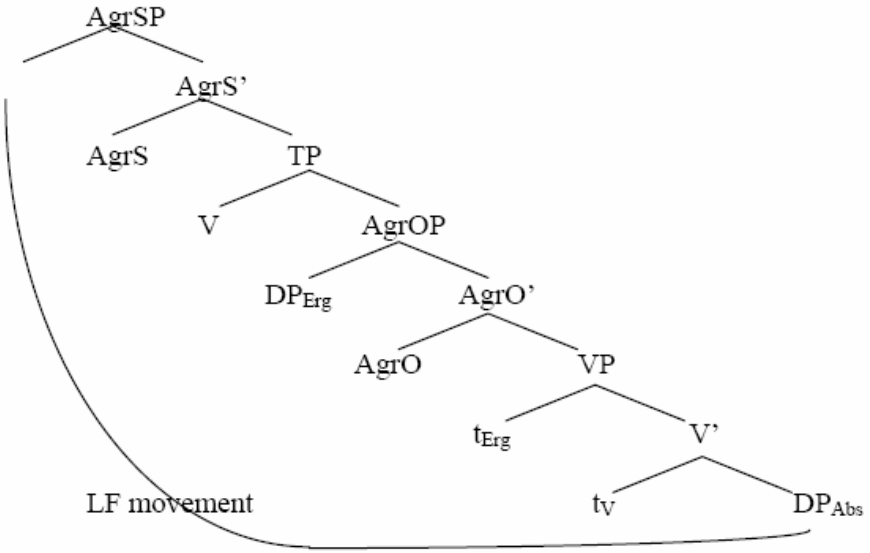
Miriup Jaani takuvaa. (Johns 1987:150

English: Jaani is Miri's seen (one)
German: Jaani ist Miris Gesehener agreement in number, gender, c

Problems with this approach?

- Separate case-checking from other syntactic properties → base-generated ergative in spec,TP or spec,CP, asymmetrically c-commanding the absolutive (Ura 2001, Bittner and Hale 1996, Campana 1992, Murasugi 1992, Bobaljik 1993, Laka 1993)

(72) early minimalist derivation (Murasugi 1992)



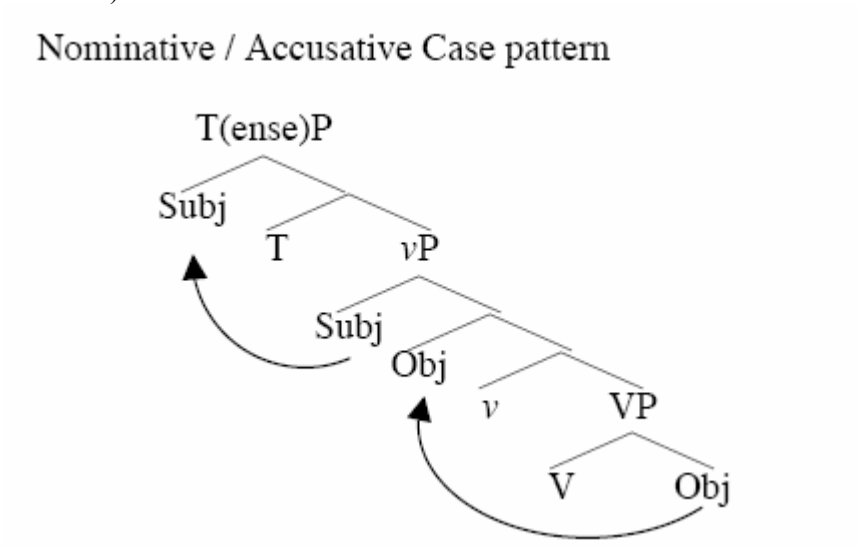
Improvement over the other approaches; remaining difficulties:

i. lack of evidence for the inherent case nature of the ergative
ii. agreement facts
iii. systematic restriction of syntactic ergativity to A-bar movement

- recent proposals (Aldridge 2004, 2005, Bobaljik and Branigan 2006)

(73) Desiderata:
a. universal relationship of argument structure to syntactic structure
b. non-uniform licensing of the absolutive (Aldridge, Legate), which brings ergative languages closer to accusative languages
c. structural case on the ergative
d. dissociation of case-checking and agreement
e. deriving the privileged status of the absolutive with respect to A-bar phenomena (see 4.1)

(74) NOM/ACC (Bobaljik and Branigan 2006)



(75) Difference between accusative and ergative language:

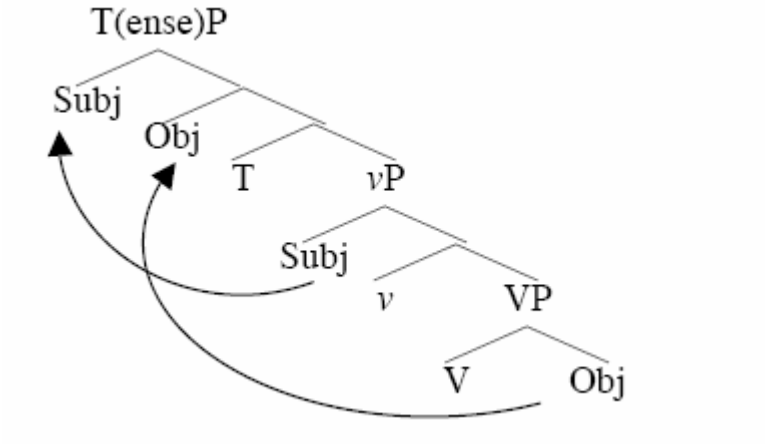
a. Ergative *v* assumption: v-heads in ergative languages are unable to check accusative

b. Tucking in (Richards 2001): merging closest to the attracting head and preserving the hierarchical structure

c. object has to raise to T for case reasons

d. object has to merge lower than subject

(76) ERG/ABS (Bobaljik and Branigan 2006)



(77) Unresolved issues:

a. the absolutive restriction on extraction (ergativity in A-bar phenomena)

b. the restriction to intransitives in non-finite contexts (for some ergative languages)

c. case-marking and agreement mismatches

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