

October 2012; draft; comments welcome [ardeal@ucsc.edu]

## **Ergativity\***

Amy Rose Deal  
UC Santa Cruz

Submitted to A. Alexiadou and T. Kiss (eds.), *International Handbook on Syntactic Contemporary Research*, 2nd edition.

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\*Thanks to Jessica Coon for helpful comments.

## 1 Introduction: three ergativity properties

The study of ergativity is concerned with ways in which languages show one or more of the following properties:

(1) Ergativity properties

a. *The ergative property.*

Subjects of transitive clauses behave differently from subjects of intransitive clauses for some grammatical generalization(s)

b. *The absolutive property.*

Objects of transitive clauses and subjects of intransitive clauses behave identically for some grammatical generalization(s)

c. *The argument-structural property.*

Subjects of unaccusative verbs behave differently from subjects of unergative and transitive verbs for some grammatical generalization(s)

Ergativity properties have been a subject of intense research for over forty years. During this time, the range of data available to syntacticians concerned with ergativity has grown immensely, with important consequences for the way that ergativity is viewed. It is now uncontroversially clear that there is a great deal of syntactic and morphological diversity among languages to be considered ergative in the broad sense of (1). Theories of ergativity are tasked with handling this diversity in a way that balances predictive power with empirical coverage.

This situation is an interesting one for Minimalism and its antecedents, e.g. Government and Binding Theory, which will be the focus of theoretical attention here. In a sense, these theories *predict* diversity in ergative languages, in that they offer no possibility of a unified formulation of the properties in (1). It is notable in this connection that very little of the description in (1) corresponds to primitive elements recognized by these frameworks. ‘Subjecthood’ and ‘transitivity’ must be cashed out in structural terms. So too must the various grammatical generalizations which conform to the broad ergative mold. In each case there will be some range of choices which could be pursued, with different choices potentially appropriate for different languages. This leads us to expect that the net cast by (1) may well bring in a range of species which are different in various ways. Two languages which pre-theoretically both show the ergative property and the absolutive property, for instance, could nevertheless manifest systematic and far-reaching structural differences.

Indeed one of the major results of generative studies on ergativity has been that exactly this situation does obtain. Bittner and Hale’s important work in the 1990s on Warlpiri versus Inuit showed that two languages showing similar morphological (1a)/(1b) ‘ergative-absolutive’ patterns nevertheless differ from one another in a range of syntactic and semantic dimensions (Bittner and Hale 1996a, 1996b). There is not just one ergativity, then, but at least two ergativities, the Warlpiri type and the Inuit type – two ways that languages can fall under the joint umbrella of properties (1a) and (1b). And where there are two ergativities there might be more than two. Languages described as ergative in view of the argument-structural property (1c) deserve additional attention. So too do languages showing the ergative property (1a) but not the absolutive property (1b).

What accumulates from ergativity studies then is not an overarching theory of ergativity as a single parameter or a primitive. From a theoretical perspective there is no particular reason why

this should exist. Primary concerns of theoretical ergativity studies today are questions of diversity – How many ‘ergative’ grammars are there? – and of formal unity beneath: What sort of theory can predict exactly these ergative types and no others?

This article will survey two ways of seeking answers to these questions. The first, shorter part (section 2) overviews major results of the typological approach to ergativity. The culmination of this section is a list of some proposed universals, which will play an important role in the motivation and evaluation of theoretical points of view. The second part of the article discusses syntactic and morphological theories of ergativity behaviors, first in relation to case, agreement and control (section 3) and then in relation to A’ movement (section 4).

## 2 Ways of being ergative

What is the profile of a language demonstrating one or more of the properties in (1)? When a linguist or a child is exposed to certain evidence of ergativity properties in a given language, what else might he or she conclude? Of the dimensions along which languages showing ergativity properties diverge, let me highlight three:

- *Variation by ergativity properties*

Which ergativity properties are at play?

- *Variation by grammatical manifestation of ergativity*

What type of grammatical generalizations reflect ergativity properties?

- *Variation by scope of ergative patterns*

How generalized or restricted are the ergative patterns?

We will first consider the logical relationships among the ergativity properties, and then consider the scale of variation in their grammatical manifestations and the scope of the patterns they define. Against this varied domain we will then consider a set of unifying correlations, drawing together properties, manifestations and scopes of ergative patterns.

### 2.1 The relationship among the ergativity properties

What is the relationship among the ergativity properties? The ergative property (1a) and the absolutive property (1b) are logically independent of one another, and indeed, natural languages occupy each place in the possibility space these two properties define. If we consider ergativity properties as seen in morphological case-marking, the following languages represent the four possibilities:

- (2) Interactions among (1a) and (1b) (absent (1c))

	Ergative property: yes	Ergative property: no
Absolutive property: yes	Warlpiri	Chinese
Absolutive property: no	Nez Perce	Latin

Warlpiri is a language showing ergativity properties (1a) and (1b). Subjects are marked with a distinct case in transitive clauses – the ergative – while objects appear in a bare form – the “absolutive” – also characteristic of intransitive subjects.

- (3) ngarrka-ngku ka wawirri panti-rni  
man-ERG AUX kangaroo spear-NONPAST  
The man is spearing the kangaroo.
- (4) kurdu ka wanka-mi  
child AUX speak-NONPAST  
The child is speaking.
- (5) kurdu kapi wanti-mi  
child AUX fall-NONPAST  
The child will fall.

These data come from Hale (1983), who provides (4) and (5) as evidence that Warlpiri makes no systematic division among intransitives. Warlpiri, that is, does not display property (1c). Parallel facts are found in a host of unrelated and geographically diverse languages, including Inuit languages such as West Greenlandic (Bittner 1994) and Inuktitut (Johns 1992), Austronesian languages such as Niuean (Seiter 1980), Australian languages like Dyirbal (Dixon 1972), West Nilotic (African) languages Pāri and Shilluk (König 2008, ch 3) as well as Eastern Basque (Aldai 2009). Languages showing this combination of ergativity properties are called ‘ergative/absolutive’.

Nez Perce is a language showing the ergative property (1a) but not the absolutive property (1b). Subjects are marked with a distinct case in transitive clauses (again glossed 'ergative'), but intransitive subjects and transitive objects behave distinctly for case purposes. The former appears in a bare form ('nominative'); the latter takes a distinct case marker ('objective').

- (6) haacwal-nim pee-p- $\emptyset$ -e cu'yeem-ne  
boy-ERG 3SUBJ-eat-P.ASP-REM.PAST fish-OBJ  
The boy ate the fish.
- (7) haacwal hi- $\hat{x}$ eeleewi- $\emptyset$ -ye  
boy.NOM 3SUBJ-work-P.ASP-REM.PAST  
The boy worked.
- (8) haacwal hi-peeleeey-n-e  
boy.NOM 3SUBJ-get.lost-P.ASP-REM.PAST  
The boy got lost.

As in Warlpiri, there is no systematic divide among intransitives in Nez Perce. All intransitive subjects appear in the unmarked (nominative) form. Other languages showing this type of pattern include Wangkumara and Pitta-Pitta in Australia (Blake 1987, 22, 59) and Cashinawa in Peru (Montag 1981, 599). Languages showing this type of pattern are sometimes called ‘three-way ergative’ or ‘tripartite’ (Dixon 1994, 39).

This typology of (1a) and (1b) is rounded out by two additional types of languages. Chinese is a language with no morphological case-marking on subjects or objects. The absence of a distinctive mark is (trivially) in common between intransitive subjects and transitive objects, as in Warlpiri, conforming to (1b); but there is no mark on transitive subjects, either, failing (1a). Latin is a language that marks subjects distinct from objects regardless of transitivity, failing both (1a) and (1b). These examples remind us that the ergative property, (1a), and the absolutive property, (1b), are entirely logically distinct.

The relationship of the argument-structural property, (1c), to the ergative property (1a) and the absolutive property (1b) is slightly more complex. The absence of argument-structural effects is compatible with any combination of (1a) and (1b); the four languages just considered all fail to show argument-structural effects in case-marking. On the other hand, the presence of argument-structural ergativity, as applied to particular areas of linguistic generalization (e.g., morphological case), is not compatible with either the ergative property or the absolutive property on a strict interpretation. A system characterized by the ergative property (1a) and/or the absolutive property (1b) treats intransitive subjects as a class, whereas a system characterized by the argument-structural property (1c) bifurcates intransitive subjects. At the same time, whenever argument-structural ergativity obtains, there will necessarily be some intransitive subjects (i.e. subjects of unaccusatives) which behave unlike subjects of transitives, giving a partial case of the ergative property (1a). It can be helpful to think of loose versions of the ergative property (1a) and the absolutive property (1b) as follows:

- (9) (1a) (loose) Subjects of transitive clauses behave differently from *some* subjects of intransitive clauses for some grammatical generalization(s)  
 (1b) (loose) Objects of transitive clauses and subjects of *some* intransitive clauses behave identically for some grammatical generalization(s)

In contrast to the (1c) - loose (1a) relationship, the relationship between the argument structural property (1c) and the loose version of the absolutive property (1b) is more flexible. It may or may not be the case that some intransitive subjects behave like transitive objects.

- (10) Given (1c), interactions among (1a)-loose and (1b)-loose

	(1a)-loose yes	(1a)-loose no
(1b)-loose yes	Georgian	impossible by definition
(1b)-loose no	Hindi/Urdu	impossible by definition

In Georgian, transitive subjects in the aorist aspect are marked with a distinct case, called the ergative, while objects appear in a bare form. Harris (1981) calls this form the nominative.

- (11) glexma      datesa      simindi  
 farmer-ERG he-sowed-it-II-I corn-NOM  
 The farmer sowed corn. (Harris 1981, 147)

Harris shows that the marking of intransitive subjects in Georgian is sensitive to a distinction between unaccusative and unergative predicates. Subjects of unergative verbs mark the ergative case, like subjects of agentive transitives. Subjects of unaccusatives appear in the nominative case, like objects of agentive transitives. Loose versions of both the ergative property (1a) and the absolutive property (1b) are in effect.

- (12) ninom      daamtknara  
 nino-ERG she-yawned-II-I  
 Nino yawned. (Harris 1981, 40)
- (13) rezo      gamoizarda  
 rezo.NOM he-grew-up-II-2  
 Rezo grew up. (Harris 1982, 293)

The operative distinction in Georgian splits the class of intransitive subjects into two groups. This type of pattern is therefore sometimes called ‘split S’ (Dixon 1979) or ‘split intransitive’ (Merlan 1985); other names include ‘active-inactive’, following Sapir (1917), ‘agentive’ (Mithun 1991), and ‘semantically aligned’ (Donohue and Wichmann 2008). Languages showing such patterns include Udi and Batsbi in the Caucasus (Harris 2010), Pomoan languages of California (Mithun 1991, O’Connor 1992, Deal and O’Connor 2011), and Western Basque (Aldai 2009).

A final combination of ergativity properties is found in Hindi/Urdu. This language marks transitive subjects with the ergative (in the perfective aspect), and marks certain objects with a distinct case-marker, here labeled ‘accusative’.

- (14) yasin-ne                      kōtte-ko                      dek<sup>h</sup>-a  
       Yassin.M.SG-ERG dog.M.SG-ACC see-PERF.M.SG  
       Yassin saw the dog. (Butt and King 2004, ex (16b))

Intransitives show a split similar to Georgian. Subjects of unergatives may optionally mark the ergative case; unaccusative subjects must appear in a bare, nominative form.

- (15) yassin(-ne)                      k<sup>h</sup>ās-a  
       Yassin.M.SG(-ERG) cough-PERF.M.SG  
       Yassin coughed (Butt 2006, 147)
- (16) yassin                      gir-a  
       Yassin.M.SG.NOM fall-PERF.M.SG  
       Yassin fell (Butt 2006, 115)

The optionality of ergative case in (15) presents two ways of approaching the Hindi/Urdu facts. Focusing on the version without the ergative case, we see no argument-structural ergative pattern; case-marking is simply 3-way, as in Nez Perce. Focusing on the version with the ergative case, the pattern is argument-structural, entailing a loose version of (1a). Unlike in Georgian, however, the case possibilities for unaccusative subjects and transitive objects remain distinct. The latter may appear in the accusative case; the former may not. A similar profile (also including merely optional ergative marking of unergative subjects) is found in Semelai, a Mon-Khmer language of the Malay Peninsula (Kruspe 2004).

## 2.2 *The grammatical manifestation of ergativity*

Where in the grammar do ergativity properties show up? The most intense study has concentrated on morphosyntactic properties of case and verbal agreement, as well as on more narrowly syntactic properties related to A’-movement and control.

*Agreement.* Verbal agreement showing an ergative/absolute pattern is found in Halkomelem, a Salish language. 3rd person subjects of transitives control a special verbal agreement suffix əs; subjects of intransitives and objects of transitives control no verbal agreement.

- (17) ni      ʔiməš  
       AUX walk  
       He/she/it walked. (Gerdt 1988, 47)

- (18) ni q'wəl-ət-əs  
 AUX bake-TR-3ERG  
 He/she/it baked it. (Gerdts 1988, 47)
- (19) cf. ni cən q'wəl-ət  
 AUX 1SG bake-TR  
 I baked it. (Gerdts 1988, 47)

The inverse of this pattern is found in Tsez (Polinsky and Potsdam 2001) and a variety of Amazonian languages (Gildea and Castro Alves 2010): subjects of intransitives and objects of transitives control verbal agreement, whereas subjects of transitives do not. In Mayan languages, these patterns overlap (Larsen and Norman 1979): one form of verbal agreement ('set B') is controlled by the intransitive subject and transitive object, whereas another is controlled only by the transitive subject ('set A'). The following examples show this type of agreement in K'ichee (Larsen and Norman 1979).

- (20) x-at-war-ik  
 COMPLETIVE-2SB-sleep-PHRASE.FINAL  
 You slept.
- (21) x-at-u-ch'ay-oh  
 COMPLETIVE-2SB-3SA-hit-PHRASE.FINAL  
 He hit you.
- (22) x-∅-war-ik  
 COMPLETIVE-3SB-sleep-PHRASE.FINAL  
 He slept.

Verbal agreement also may reflect the argument-structural property, (1c), in parallel to the case facts in Georgian and Hindi/Urdu discussed above. Languages with this type of agreement include Karuk and Chimariko in California (Mithun 2008), Chol Mayan (Coon 2010a) and various dialects of Neo-Aramaic (Doron and Khan 2012).

*A' movement.* The case- and agreement-based patterns that we have now seen are morphosyntactic in nature. Other manifestations of ergativity properties occur in syntactic patterns, where they are sometimes discussed under the heading of 'syntactic ergativity'. The most famous of these concerns A' extraction, and ergativity properties (1a) and (1b). A variety of languages possess distinct relativization, focalization and/or interrogation strategies for intransitive subjects and transitive objects on one hand versus transitive subjects on the other. An example of this can be seen in Roviana, an Austronesian language. Roviana relative clauses featuring A' movement of intransitive subjects or transitive objects involve the same forms of verbal marking as seen in ordinary matrix clauses (Corston 1996).

- (23) Hierana sa tie [RC sapu kote taloa ]  
 this DEF man REL FUT leave  
 This is the man who is going away.
- (24) Hierana sa koreo [RC sapu tupa-i-a e Zone ]  
 this DEF boy REL punch-TR-3SG.DO ART John  
 This is the boy that John punched.

Those featuring A' movement of transitive subjects, on the other hand, require a specialized form of the verb.

- (25) a. \* Hierana sa tie [RC sapu tupa-i-u ] \*Normal verb form  
           this DEF man REL punch-TR-1SG.DO  
           This is the man who punched me.
- b. Hierana sa tie [RC sapu tupa-qa rau ] <sup>OK</sup>Special verb form  
           this DEF man REL punch-1SG.NSUF I  
           This is the man who punched me.

Many other Austronesian languages show similar patterns (Aldridge 2004), as do Dyirbal (Dixon 1977), Halkomelem Salish (Gerdtz 1988), Coast Tsimshian (Mulder 1994), Chuckchi (Comrie 1979), Trumai (Guiradello-Damian 2010), Eskimo languages such as Kalaallisut (Bittner 1994), and Mayan languages such as Mam (England 1983), Jacalteco (Craig 1977) and Q'anjobal (Coon, Mateo Pedro, and Preminger 2012).

*Control.* An additional 'syntactic' area in which ergativity properties have been observed is control. Languages plausibly showing ergativity properties this area are very rare, however, and their existence has been repeatedly called into doubt. For many years the only clear reported example of ergativity properties in control came from Dixon's work on Dyirbal (1994). In this language, according to the generalizations Dixon provides, properties (1a) and (1b) are implicated in the distribution of controlled PRO. PRO may serve as an intransitive subject, as in (75), or as a transitive object, as in (76), but not as a transitive subject.

- (26) yabu           ŋuma-ŋgu giga-n           [ PRO banaga-ygu ]  
       mother.ABS father-ERG tell.to.do-NONFUT [ PRO return-PURP ]  
       Father told mother<sub>i</sub> PRO<sub>i</sub> to return.
- (27) yabu           ŋuma-ŋgu giga-n           [ gubi-ŋgu mawa-li PRO ]  
       mother.ABS father-ERG tell.to.do-NONFUT [ doctor-ERG examine-PURP PRO ]  
       Father told mother<sub>i</sub> the doctor to examine PRO<sub>i</sub>

Dixon also reports that ergativity properties are manifested in the class of possible controllers of PRO in the main clause (1994, 136). The controller must be intransitive subject or transitive object; it cannot be transitive subject.

Recent work in Austronesian augments the picture from Dyirbal. Aldridge (2004) reports that for Seediq, property (1a) plays a role without property (1b): only intransitive subjects, not transitive subjects or transitive objects, may be controlled PRO. ((In)transitivity here must be understood formally, rather than notionally.)

- (28) M-n-osa           [ PRO m-ari patis taihoku ] ka Ape.  
       INTR-PERF-go [ PRO INTR-buy book Taipei ] ABS Ape  
       Ape went to buy books in Taipei.
- (29) \* M-n-osa           [ PRO burig-un taihoku ka patis ] ka Ape.  
       INTR-PERF-go [ PRO buy-TR Taipei ABS book ] ABS Ape  
       Ape went to buy books in Taipei.

For Sama Southern, Trick (2006) reports a pattern of control showing both property (1a) and (1b), just as in Dyirbal. In this language, both intransitive subjects and transitive objects may be controlled PRO, but transitive subjects may not be.



- (30) a. Tuli akú  
sleep 1SG.ABS  
I will sleep.
- b. ka-bilahi-an-ku [ tuli PRO ]  
INV-want-PAT-1SG.ERG [ sleep PRO ]  
I want to sleep
- (31) a. ni-lengan-an akú leh si Ben  
AGR-call-PAT 1SG.ABS ERG PM Ben  
Ben will call me.
- b. ka-bilahi-an-ku [ ni-lengan-an PRO leh si Ben ]  
INV-want-PAT-1SG.ERG [ AGR-call-PAT PRO ERG PM Ben ]  
I want Ben to call PRO
- c. \* ka-bilahi-an si Ben [ ni-lengan-an akú PRO ]  
INV-want-PAT PM Ben [ AGR-call-PAT 1SG.ABS PRO ]  
Ben wants to PRO call me.

This type of fact will play a crucial role in the discussion in section 3.2.

### 2.3 The scope of ergative patterns

To what degree do particular ‘ergative languages’ show ergative properties? Moravcsik (1978) observes that every language that shows ergativity properties shows them to a limited degree. There are no languages where *all* grammatical generalizations distinguish transitive from intransitive subject; group intransitive subject and transitive object together; or distinguish among subjects of unaccusative and unergative intransitives. This means that every language showing ergativity properties has what is sometimes called an ‘ergative split’, or a division among domains in the grammar which do and do not show ergative behaviors.

The most famous such split concerns a distinction between languages which show ergativity properties only in morphological domains such as case-marking and agreement versus those which show ergativity properties in syntactic domains such as control and A’ extraction. Based on the data we have seen above, Roviana and Sama Southern can be classified as ‘syntactically ergative’. Languages like Warlpiri have been held up as clear exemplars of the contrasting ‘morphologically ergative’ type (Bittner and Hale 1996a). Only subjects may be controlled PRO in this language, regardless of transitivity (Legate 2002).

- (32) Ngana<sub>j</sub>-kurra-npa Jakamarra-kurlangu maliki<sub>i</sub> nya-ngu [ PRO<sub>i</sub> t<sub>j</sub> paji-rninja-kurra ]?  
who-OBJC-2SG Jakamarra-POSS dog see-PAST [ bite-*INFIN*-OBJC ]
- a. Who did you see Jakamarra’s dog<sub>i</sub> PRO<sub>i</sub> biting t<sub>who</sub>?
- b. \* Who did you see Jakamarra’s dog<sub>i</sub> biting t<sub>who</sub> PRO<sub>i</sub>?
- (33) Ngarrka-ngku<sub>i</sub> ka karli jarnti-rni, PRO<sub>i</sub> wangka-nja-karra-rlu  
man-ERG PRES boomerang trim-NONPAST, PRO speak-*INFIN*-SUBJC-ERG  
The man is trimming a boomerang while speaking. (Legate 2002, 126)

While both Warlpiri and Sama Southern have ergative/absolute case-systems, only Sama Southern also shows the ergative and absolute properties in control. Thus the scope of ergative patterns

is broader in Sama Southern than it is in Warlpiri. Distinctions of this type will play a central role throughout sections 3 and 4 below.

Additional limitations on the scope of ergative patterns are found in reflection of two other types of distinctions, which, for reasons of space, will play less of a role in the theoretical survey to follow. First, many languages show a division in ergativity properties among different classes of nominals. It is quite common, for instance, to find first and second person pronouns lacking ergative case or agreement forms, in contrast to other nouns. This type of pattern is seen for instance in Nez Perce, a language with a three-way case system for non-pronominals.

- (34) **'iin** lilooy-ca-0  
1SG.NOM be.happy-IMPERF-PRES  
I'm happy
- (35) **'iin** cuy'eem-ne 'aa-p-sa-qa  
1SG.NOM fish-OBJ 3OBJ-eat-IMPERF-REC.PAST  
I was eating the fish.
- (36) ciq'aamqal-m hi-ke'nip-0-e **'iin-e**  
dog-ERG 3SUBJ-bite-P-REM.PAST 1SG-OBJ  
The dog bit me

Whereas other nominals (including third person pronominals) show distinct ergative, nominative and accusative case forms, first and second person pronouns in this language show only nominative and accusative forms. Silverstein (1986) observes that the reverse of this type of pattern – pronouns, but not common nouns, showing an ergative marking – is not attested. Rather, he posits, types of nominals (pronouns, proper names, animate nouns, etc) are universally organized into an implicational hierarchy with respect to ergative versus nominative case marking. If any nominals lack an ergative form, it will be pronouns; if any nominals possess an ergative form, it will be inanimate nouns. This type of phenomenon is further studied in recent work by Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou (2006), Merchant (2006), Wiltschko (2006) and Coon and Preminger (2012).

Second, in many languages the distribution of ergative patterns is limited by factors related to clausal properties, in particular viewpoint aspect. This type of pattern is found for instance in Chol Mayan (Coon 2010a). Agreement in this language shows the argument-structural property (1c), but only in the perfective aspect. In non-perfective aspects, for instance the progressive, the same agreement markers are used, but their behavior no longer shows the ergativity properties. All subjects agree using one set of markers ('set A'), and all objects agree using the other ('set B').

- | <i>Perfective: Ergative</i>  | <i>Progressive: Non-ergative</i>   |
|--|--|
| <p>(37) a. Tyi i-jats'-ä-yoñ<br/>PRFV <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">A3</span>-hit-TV-<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">B1</span><br/>She hit me.</p> <p>b. Tyi majl-i-yoñ<br/>PRFV go-ITV-<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">B1</span><br/>I went.</p> | <p>(38) a. Choñkol i-jats'-oñ<br/>PROG <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">A3</span>-hit-<span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">B1</span><br/>She's hitting me.</p> <p>b. Choñkol i-majl-el<br/>PROG <span style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 0 2px;">A3</span>-go-NML<br/>She's going.</p> |

This type of pattern again reveals an asymmetry which appears to be universal. Where a language shows a split pattern in correlation with viewpoint aspect, it is always the perfective aspect, rather

than the imperfective, which shows ergativity properties (Dixon 1994). Recent studies of this type of ergative split may be found in the work of Laka (2006), Ura (2006), Reilly (2007), Salanova (2007) and Coon (2010b,2012).

## 2.4 *Six potential ergative universals*

The wide variation we have just seen is balanced by a number of potentially universal generalizations. Some of these have already come up in discussion of the relationships among ergativity properties and of ergative splits. Further generalizations concern relations between manifestations of ergativity properties, and relations between ergativity properties and other aspects of particular grammars. Six of these are mentioned below.

The discovery of universals related to ergativity properties is a central project for ergativity investigators, and much attention has focused on particular proposed universals from both empirical and theoretical points of view. Some of this work has brought forward what are apparently counterexamples to the generalizations below. The proper treatment of these cases is clearly of the utmost important to grammatical theories which take the various generalizations as a starting place. For this reason, I have reproduced or referenced data claimed to be problematic in the appropriate places as an indication of the current state of knowledge on these matters.

### 1. *Syntactic ergativity implies morphological ergativity.*

The languages that show ergativity properties in A' movement or control are all languages which show ergativity properties morphologically – in case and/or agreement. This generalization comes from Dixon (1994, 172).

The only potential counterexample of which I am aware comes from Bajau, the issue of which is raised by Donohue and Brown (1999). The status of Bajau as a language with syntactic but not morphological ergativity is deserving of close scrutiny, though, on the basis of its pronominal paradigm: in a language claimed to lack any morphological manifestations of ergativity, it is telling that the form of pronouns in this language suggests a case-system organized on an ergative/absolutive basis. As Miller (2007) shows, intransitive subjects appear in 'set II' forms, as do objects in transitive clauses with certain verbal morphology. Subjects in such sentences appear in a distinct 'set I' form.

- (39) Ai   pungkaw iyo  
       PERF wake.up 3S.II  
       (S)he has awakened/ gotten up.
- (40) Boi  0-boo=ku    iyo  pitu.  
       CMPL UV-bring=1S.I 3S.II to.here  
       I brought him/her here.

If clauses like (40) are indeed transitive (a question made especially difficult by the voice system of the language), then Bajau is not a language that lacks morphological manifestations of ergativity properties. It is rather a language with both morphological manifestations (in case) and syntactic manifestations (in relativization). The counterexample to Dixon's generalization is then merely apparent.

2. *In languages showing ergativity in syntactic patterns, the pattern seen in syntax is ergative/absolutive – not just ergative (showing (1a) but not (1b)), and not argument-structural (1c).*

Austronesian languages showing syntactic ergativity are of the classic ergative/absolutive morphological type, contrasting transitive subject with intransitive subject/transitive object. It is this pattern which shows up in control (e.g. in Sama Southern) and in A' extraction. The Mayan family contains both languages showing syntactic ergativity (e.g. Mam, Q'anjob'al) and languages showing argument-structural ergativity (e.g. Chol (Coon 2010a)), but the two patterns do not seem to overlap. There are not, for instance, languages in which only unaccusative subjects may be A' extracted with normal verbal morphology (in which case A' extraction would show an argument-structural ergativity property); nor are there languages in which intransitive subjects, but neither transitive subjects nor transitive objects, may be A' extracted with normal verbal morphology (in which case A' extraction would show the ergative property (1a) but not the absolutive property (1b)). To my knowledge, this generalization has not been noted in previous work.

The only potential exception of which I am aware concerns languages like Seediq, discussed above in connection with control. Aldridge (2004) reports that controlled clauses in Seediq must be formally intransitive. It is as a byproduct of this transitivity restriction that the distribution of PRO in Seediq shows the ergative property (1a); absolutive property (1b), however, is not involved. I am not aware of any potential exceptions to the generalization from syntactic ergativity in A' extraction.

It is especially interesting that this generalization should hold given that syntactically ergative patterns do crop up in languages which are not strictly ergative/absolutive on a *morphological* level. Dyirbal, for instance, is argued by Legate (2012) to show a (partially covert) three-way case system of the Nez Perce type. Nevertheless it appears that control and A' extraction treat intransitive subject and transitive object as a natural class in this language, even where morphology does not.

3. *Ergative case is never unmarked.*

When verbal agreement shows ergativity properties (1a) and (1b), either transitive subject (ergative) or intransitive subject/transitive object (absolutive) may be morphologically marked. Dixon (1994) observes that the same freedom does not hold in the domain of case-marking. While there are many languages with a null or unmarked absolutive morphological case, there are no languages with unmarked ergative morphological case.

The Nias language of Indonesia provides a potential counterexample, as Donohue and Brown (1999) point out. In Nias, absolutive case is marked by an initial mutation. (The character of this morphology is discussed by Anderson, Brown, Gaby, and Lecarme (2006).) There is no morphological marking of transitive subjects, however.

- (41) Abe'e        sibai    g-ehomo   n-omo        s=e-bua  
       STAT.strong INTENS MUT-pillar MUT-house REL=STAT-big  
       The pillars of the big house are very strong
- (42) I-a                    m-bavi    ama    Gumi  
       3SG.REALIS-eat MUT-pig father Gumi

Ama Gumi is eating/eats pork.

Thus the subject of (41) and the object of (42) are marked in the same way, in opposition to the subject of (42), yielding an ergative/absolutive system. However, the subject of (42) – the argument expected to show the ergative case – is distinguished not by any special marking, but by the absence of the initial mutation marking the absolutive.

4. *All ergative languages are verb-peripheral, or have free word order.*

This generalization was perhaps first noticed by Trask (1979) and subsequently popularized by Mahajan (1994, 1997), after whom it is sometimes called. There are certain well-known exceptions. Mahajan (1997) observes that languages like Kashmiri, which show V2 patterns, show ergativity in case-marking despite a preponderance of SVO clauses. Further counterexamples come from languages like Shilluk (West Nilotic), which has basic OVS and SV patterns without a clear case for Germanic-style V2:

- (43) byél      á-'rākk<sup>1</sup>                      yī    pān    dájò  
grain.PL PAST.E-grind.TR.REP ERG person female  
The woman ground the durra grain (Miller and Gilley 2001, 36)
- (44) māk á-dùŋ                      áwālā  
fire PAST.E-smoke.ITER yesterday  
the fire smoked yesterday (Miller and Gilley 2001, 37)

Survey data from Comrie (2008) suggests that some generalization along the Trask/Mahajan line nevertheless holds at least as a statistical trend. Further work is needed to ascertain whether word order correlates with an particular subset of ergativity properties, or particular grammatical manifestations thereof. It remains to be shown, for instance, whether languages showing both (1a) and (1b) are especially likely to obey this generalization, and what the facts are like for languages showing property (1c).

5. *Manifestations of ergativity properties never treat derived subjects like basic transitive subjects.*

This generalization comes from Marantz (1991), a work which focuses primarily on languages showing ergativity property (1c). Marantz's generalization has nevertheless inspired a literature dealing primarily with languages which show ergative/absolutive (1a)/(1b) patterns, e.g. Legate (2008), and so bears discussion in relation to all three properties.

Let us first consider unaccusative subjects, as a prime instance of subjects that are derived. The generalization follows by definition. Ergativity property (1c) is manifested where unaccusative subjects are treated *unlike* transitive and unergative subjects; a process that treated the various subjects the same way would simply not show ergativity property (1c). Ergativity properties (1a) and (1b) call for intransitive subjects to pattern together in a way distinct from transitive subjects, ensuring that the pattern follows in this case, as well.

Things are more interesting when we consider passive subjects, in particular passive subjects of ditransitive verbs. Such subjects – for instance *we* in the English example below – are derived subjects; they do not originate as external arguments. At the same time, there is

also a natural sense in which they are subjects of verbs which remain transitive (albeit with transitivity reduced by comparison to the active ditransitive form).

(45) We were given *t* this book.

Manifestations of ergativity properties do not classify such subjects with basic transitive subjects. In Nez Perce, for instance, ditransitive constructions are expressed via double-object constructions, as in English, but the passives of such constructions feature no ergative marking:

(46) haama-pim cickan      pee-'ni-se-ne      ki-nye 'aayat-ona  
man-ERG blanket.NOM 3/3-give-IMPERF-REM.PAST this-OBJ woman-OBJ  
The man was giving this woman a blanket.

(47) kii 'aayat hii-wes 'in-yiin cickan  
this.NOM woman.NOM 3SUBJ-be.PRES give-PASSIVE blanket.NOM  
This woman was given a blanket (lit. is blanket-given).

I am not aware of any language showing a passive like (47) but with ergative marking on the (derived) subject. Other types of derived subjects – in particular, subjects of raising verbs – have engendered more controversy, however. These are discussed in section 3.4.

6. *If ergativity properties are manifested in verbal agreement, either (i) there is no morphological case-marking, or (ii) case-marking also shows ergativity properties.*

There is an asymmetry in the scope of ergativity properties in agreement and in case. Languages like Warlpiri show ergative/absolutive patterns in case-marking, but not in verbal agreement. All subjects agree in the same way in this language, e.g. both nominative subject *ngaju* 'I' and its ergative counterpart *ngaju-rlu* control agreement suffix *-rna* (Hale 1983, 18):

(48) Ngaju ka-**rna**      wangka-mi  
I      PRES-1SUBJ speak-NONPAST  
I am speaking.

(49) Ngaju-rlu ka-**rna**-ngku      nyuntu nya-nyi  
I-ERG      PRES-1SUBJ-2OBJ you      see-NONPAST  
I see you.

Languages like Nez Perce show property (1a) alone in case-marking, but not in verbal agreement. All subjects agree in the same way in this language, too:

(50) haacwal **hi**-xeeleewi-0-ye  
boy.NOM 3SUBJ-work-P.ASP-REM.PAST  
The boy worked.

(51) ciq'aamqal-m **hi**-ke'nip-0-e      'iin-e  
dog-ERG      3SUBJ-bite-P-REM.PAST 1SG-OBJ  
The dog bit me

Anderson (1977) generalizes that there are no languages showing the reverse pattern: ergativity properties in verbal agreement but not in morphological case (where there is a morphological case system to speak of).

Exceptions to this generalization from the Indo-Aryan family are discussed by Patel (2007). In Kutchi Gujarati past perfectives, verbal agreement is on an ergative/absolutive basis: only intransitive subjects and transitive objects agree. Case-marking, however, treats all subjects identically (leaving them unmarked), and singles out objects of transitive clauses (marking them accusative).

(52) Reena        aav-i  
       Reena.NOM came-F.SG  
       Reena came

(53) Reena        chokra-ne mar-ya  
       Reena.NOM boys-ACC hit-PFV.M/N.PL  
       Reena hit the boys

Other exceptions are found in connection with pronouns only. As Gildea and Castro Alves (2010) discuss, pronouns in the Jê language Canela show a nominative-accusative case pattern; other nominals in Canela are unmarked. Despite this, verbal agreement in Canela is on an absolutive basis (just as in Kutchi Gujarati), targeting intransitive subjects and transitive objects.

(54) wa ha i-wrik        narɛ  
       1 IRR 1-descend.NF NEG  
       I will not descend.

(55) wa ha iʔ-pir        na  
       1 IRR 3-grab.NF NEG  
       I will not grab it (e.g., the knife).

Canela is thus an additional example of a language showing an ergative/absolutive agreement system, but nominative-accusative behavior in case-marking. It is striking that such patterns, while extremely rare, are nevertheless found in languages widely separated in genetic and geographical terms.

### 3 Theories of ergativity in case and its relatives

Moreso than any other manifestation of ergativity, syntacticians concerned with ergative languages have focused on its manifestation in case-marking, agreement and control, a group of phenomena generally held to be closely related. The ideal theory in this domain must face a trio of challenging desiderata. First, it must account for the differences between ergative languages and non-ergative ones. Second, it must allow for differences among ergative languages. Third, it must provide a natural account of universal constraints, to the extent these hold, related to ergativity in case and its relatives. These potentially include the implication from ergativity in agreement to ergativity in case-marking (should there be adequate treatment available for counterexamples such as Kutchi Gujarati) as well as the implication from ergativity in control to ergativity in case and/or agreement.

In this section I introduce a range of theories responding to ergativity in case and its relatives, sorted into three groups depending on the types of explanatory mechanisms posited. A first group makes use of strictly morphological mechanisms; a second, strictly syntactic mechanisms; and a

third makes use of both. For reasons that will become clear, I will discuss the workings of the latter two types of proposals before returning to some critiques which potentially apply to both.

### 3.1 *Morphology-based theories*

The description of case in a particular language is traditionally a purely morphological description. Given the weight of morphological facts to be dealt with, various theorists have proposed to deal with case and related morphological phenomena in an autonomous morphological representation. As noted by Bobaljik (2008), these morphological representations are autonomous not in failing to make reference to syntax (which, as we will see, they consistently do), but in failing to effect representational changes which are visible to syntactic rules. Two theories sharing this characteristic will be highlighted here: the case theory of Marantz (1991), and the agreement theory of Bobaljik (2008).

#### 3.1.1 *Morphological case hierarchies*

The morphological case theory proposed by Marantz (1991) is one of a family of approaches, morphological and syntactic, making use of the idea of ‘case dependency’ (e.g. Yip, Maling, and Jackendoff 1987, Bittner and Hale 1996a,b). Marantz proposes that case assignment falls under the purview of a post-syntactic morphological component, the input to which is syntactic structure. Four types of morphological case are identified, which are realized according to a disjunctive hierarchy:

- (56) Marantz’s case hierarchy
  - a. Lexically governed case
  - b. Dependent case (accusative and ergative)
  - c. Unmarked case (environment sensitive)
  - d. Default case

Lexically governed case covers datives and related cases assigned in a way connected to thematic information. In a given clause, if the conditions are met for a lexically governed case, the case algorithm assigns this case first. Subsequently, the algorithm checks whether the conditions are met for dependent case. The relevant condition considers not just a single DP, but the set of DPs present in a given clause: dependent case is assigned to a DP when *a distinct nominal without lexical case is present*. One nominal is distinct from another if the two are not part of a chain. Languages differ in whether the dependent case is assigned ‘up’, to the subject, or ‘down’, to the object, or (in an extension of what Marantz proposes) both. Finally, unmarked and default cases are realized on nominals not already covered by prior parts of the algorithm.

Several types of case systems can be handled in this way. In English, which lacks lexically governed cases, dependent case is assigned to the object when there is another nominal in the clause – the subject. The subject subsequently receives unmarked case. This produces a nominative/accusative case system. A language like Warlpiri assigns dependent ergative to its subject when there is another nominal in the clause – the object. After dependent case is assigned to the subject, unmarked case is available to the object. This produces an ergative/absolutive case system. In Nez Perce, we could plausibly claim that dependent case is assigned both upward to the subject



(which depends on the object) and downward to the object (which depends on the subject). Subsequently there remains no nominal in need of realization in an unmarked case. This produces a three-way case system.

This analysis makes a clear prediction for ergative case in clauses where a lexical case is assigned. In a clause with only two distinct DPs, if one of those DPs receives lexical case, the other may not receive a dependent case such as ergative; the conditions for dependent case assignment are not met. While this prediction is often borne out, there are certain well-known problems. One is Warlpiri, which allows ERG-ABS (57), ABS-DAT (58) and crucially also ERG-DAT (59) case arrays (Nash 1980, Simpson 1991).

- (57) ngajulu-rlu ka-rna        nya-nyi        kurdu  
       1SG-ERG   PRES-1SUBJ see-NONPAST child.ABS  
       I see the child (Simpson 1991, 100)

- (58) Ngarrka ka-rla        marlu-ku        yura-ka-nyi,  
       man.ABS PRES-3DAT kangaroo-DAT stalk-NONPAST  
  
       marna        nga-rninja-kurr-ku  
       grass.ABS eat-INF-OBJ.COMP-DAT

The man is stalking the kangaroo, (while it is) eating grass (Simpson 1991, 319)

- (59) ngarrka-ngku ka-rla        karli-ki        warri-rni  
       man-ERG        PRES-3SG.DAT boomerang-DAT look.for-NONPAST  
       A man is looking for a boomerang. (Hale 1982, 248)

Coverage of the Warlpiri facts seems to require that certain lexically case-marked nominals (e.g. the dative in (59)) trigger dependent case for the subject whereas others do not. In Warlpiri, this is in spite of the fact that the dative arguments in (58) and in (59) behave similarly for a variety of ‘objecthood’ tests (Simpson 1991). It is notable that this problem does not arise in all ergative languages. It is possible therefore, that the difference between a language like Warlpiri, which allows ERG to co-exist with a case other than absolutive, and a language like Greenlandic, which does not, will constitute an important parameter dividing one class of ergative languages from another.

### 3.1.2 Morphological agreement hierarchies

The theory proposed by Bobaljik (2008) extends Marantz’s case theory to the domain of agreement. Bobaljik proposes that control of agreement is determined by the following principle:

- (60) The controller of agreement on the finite verbal complex (Infl+V) is the highest accessible NP in the domain of Infl + V.

Accessibility in turn is crucially defined in terms of morphological cases, which can be classified into unmarked, dependent and lexical/oblique groups (following Marantz). Building from Moravcsik (1974)’s work on implicational universals in agreement systems, Bobaljik proposes an implicational relationship among case types for accessibility to agreement.

- (61) Unmarked > Dependent > Lexical/Oblique

In a particular language, if any of the classes in (61) is accessible to agreement, so too will be all classes to its left. Thus in some languages, only unmarked nominals are accessible; in others both unmarked and dependent nominals are accessible; but in no language are dependent nominals accessible whereas unmarked ones are not.

This theory provides a natural analysis of two types of agreement systems important in connection with ergativity. In one type, only unmarked DPs are accessible to agreement. In a language with ergative case-marking, ergative DPs will bear a dependent case, and thus agreement in a transitive clause will ignore the higher, ergative subject in favor of the lower, unmarked object. This leads to an absolutive pattern in agreement. A language plausibly analysable in this way is Tsez.

- (62) *ziya*            *b-ik'i-s*  
       cow.III.ABS III-go-PST.EVID  
       The cow left. (Polinsky and Potsdam 2001, 586)

- (63) *eniy-ā*        *ziya*            *b-išer-si*  
       mother-ERG cow.III.abs III-feed-PST.EVID  
       The mother fed the cow. (Polinsky and Potsdam 2001, 586)

In a second type of language, both unmarked and dependent-marked DPs will be accessible to agreement. In this scenario, control of agreement will be determined on the basis of structural height. Supposing ergative subject DPs occupy structural positions superior to those occupied by absolutive object DPs, the former rather than the latter will control agreement. This gives an analysis of languages showing a split in ergativity between case and agreement. Bobaljik proposes to analyze Nepali in this way. Transitive subjects are nominative (unmarked) in the imperfective in this language and ergative (dependent) in the perfective. In either situation, the subject and not the object controls agreement.

- (64) *ma*            *yas*            *pasal-mā* *patrikā*            *kin-ch-u.*  
       1SG.NOM DEM.OBL store-LOC newspaper.NOM buy-NPT-1SG  
       I buy the newspaper in this store.
- (65) *maile*        *yas*            *pasal-mā* *patrikā*            *kin-ē*  
       1SG.ERG DEM.OBL store-LOC newspaper.NOM buy-PT-1SG  
       I bought the newspaper in this store. (Bickel and Yādava 2000, 348)

A nominative pattern of agreement thus emerges in an ergative-case-marking language because both unmarked and dependent-marked nominals are equally accessible to agreement.

Because agreement rules operate on the output of case-marking rules on this theory, what is not expected are languages which show the reverse of the Nepali pattern: ergativity properties in agreement but nominative-accusative orientation in case-marking. This captures one of the universals proposed above. The challenges to that universal from Kutchi Gujarati and Canela are therefore challenges to the Bobaljik proposal; these are each reportedly languages with a nominative-accusative case system but an absolutive agreement system. Challenging too are the agreement facts from languages like Halkomelem, which shows agreement only with ergative DPs, rather than absolutive ones. This pattern is not straightforwardly describable if agreement with ergative DPs can arise only in languages where unmarked DPs (such as intransitive subjects) may also control agreement.

### 3.1.3 General discussion

The scope of the theories just reviewed is by necessity limited to ergativity behaviors in morphological domains. On each proposal, a constrained range of syntactic facts constitutes the input to a morphological algorithm. The algorithm determines case or agreement behaviors in morphology alone. What these theories by their nature do *not* do is handle syntactic patterns of ergativity. Other things being equal, this deficit does not speak against the mechanisms just discussed *qua* analyses of the morphological facts; separate principles could be responsible for ergativity in syntax.

It seems quite clear on a cross-linguistic basis that other things are *not* equal, however. Ergativity in syntactic patterns is only found in languages that show ergativity in morphological patterns as well. For both of the theories reviewed above, this generalization is unexpected. Morphological factors *ex hypothesi* do not influence syntactic rules, and therefore the mechanisms for morphological ergativity cannot by themselves be implicated in syntactic ergativity. There must, rather, be some aspect of the syntax of syntactically ergative languages which requires morphological case and/or agreement mechanisms to kick in. Further development of morphology-based theories is required to elucidate what this connection might be.

## 3.2 Syntax-based theories

A second group of theories addressing ergativity in case and its relatives seeks to capture these patterns via fully syntactic means. There are two families of approaches in this vein: one which treats ergative marking as reflective of an adpositional structure, and one which treats ergative as a syntactically active feature or feature combination, assigned based on structural relationships between nominals and particular heads.

### 3.2.1 Ergative as an adposition

In classic instances of an ergative/absolutive case pattern, the ergative subject is marked overtly whereas the transitive object and the intransitive subject remain unmarked. A number of authors have proposed to handle this asymmetry by treating the ergative nominal as structurally larger than the absolutive nominal. In the theory of Bittner and Hale (1996a,b), the additional structure is a KP; other authors proposing additional structure for the ergative have identified this structure as a PP. Notably, the PP analysis immediately makes for a similarity between ergative clauses and passives. Both are syntactic encodings of semantically transitive clauses which involve the realization of the external argument in a prepositional adjunct. Indeed passive clauses are a major source of ergative constructions diachronically (Dixon 1994).

The general outline of this view is lent plausibility by patterns in nominalizations. In languages like Greek, as Alexiadou (2001) shows, adpositional structures are required for transitive subjects only.

- (66) i katastrofi tis polis (apo tus Italus)  
the destruction the city-GEN by the Italians  
the destruction of the city by the Italians

- (67) i afiksi tu Jani  
the arrival the John-GEN  
the arrival of John

This makes Greek nominalizations a particularly revealing example of an ergative pattern on the adpositional view. The transitive subject requires a PP structure, whereas other arguments do not.

Mahajan (1997) extends this type of analysis to ergative arguments in Hindi/Urdu, a language where adpositional status is harder to ascertain. He points out that the Hindi/Urdu ergative marker is P-like in occurring outside of coordinated subjects—a fact that is handled straightforwardly if ergative marking sits above the DP level. Note that parallel facts obtain in Nez Perce.

- (68) a. Raam or siitaa-ne (Hindi)      b. Matt kaa George-nim (Nez Perce)  
       Ram and Sita-ERG                      Matt and George-ERG  
       Ram and Sita (ergative)                Matt and George (ergative)

On the strongest version of the adpositional analysis, one might expect this behavior to obtain for the ergative case-marker only. In this respect Nez Perce coordinations involving objective case markers prove problematic. Here, too, the case-marker follows the entire coordination.

- (69) Matt kaa George-na  
       Matt and George-OBJ

This complicates the assimilation of the Nez Perce pattern to the pattern of Greek nominalizations. If coordinations of this type provide a diagnostic for adpositions, then it is sometimes the case in ergative languages that all arguments, not just the ergative, are adpositional. If natural languages contain covert adpositions, such an analysis could in principle hold for a language like Hindi/Urdu, where objects may be unmarked. The ability of the adpositional analysis to account for the ways in which ergative is marked vis-à-vis other arguments thus seems to depend on a theory of covertness in adpositional structure.

An argument for the adpositional analysis from a rather different direction is provided by Stepanov (2004), who also draws evidence from Hindi/Urdu. In ergative constructions in Hindi/Urdu, agreement targets the object, rather than the ergative subject.

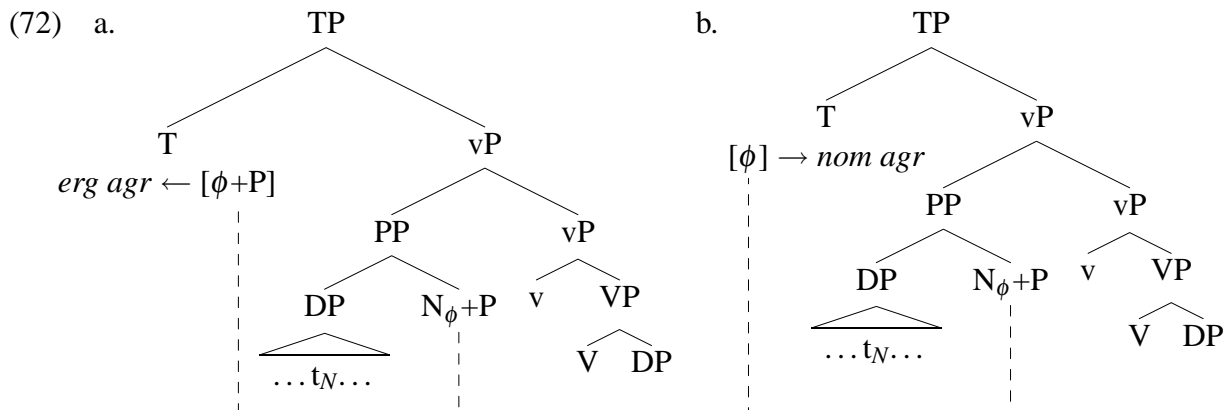
- (70) raam-ne      roTii      khaayii      thii  
       Ram.M-ERG bread.F.ABS eat.PERF.F be.PAST.F  
       Ram had eaten bread.

Assuming that this agreement reflects the contribution of a T head, the question arises as to why the higher, ergative subject should be skipped over in favor of the lower, unmarked object. Stepanov proposes that the minimality problem is only apparent: ergative subjects are PP adjuncts adjoined late in the derivation, after agreement between T and the object has taken place. English PP adjuncts fail to intervene in raising constructions in a similar way.

- (71) Mary<sub>i</sub> seems [ to Sue ] t<sub>i</sub> to be smart.

As late-adjoined adjuncts, Stepanov proposes that ergative PPs cannot undergo cyclic syntactic rules. This provides an explanation for the absence of ergative on derived subjects, a proposed universal. The challenges to that universal from raising constructions (section 3.4) are therefore challenges to the Stepanov proposal. Further challenges come languages where ergative subjects do in fact agree. These subjects would presumably need to be adjoined earlier in the derivation in order to be visible to agreement.

Some of these challenges are taken up by Markman and Grashchenkov (2012) in work on ergative agreement. These authors propose that ergative PPs may enter into agreement relationships with clausal heads just as ordinary DPs may (a view which entails that PPs are not always merged late in Stepanov's sense). The form of agreement that results will depend on two factors: whether the noun head of the ergative DP incorporates into the ergative P, and whether special realizations are possible for agreement with PP elements. Ergative agreement, which we see for instance in Halkomelem, comes about when the head N of the ergative nominal incorporates into P, and T agrees with the N-P complex in both  $\phi$ -features and P category, (72a). Nominative-accusative agreement surfaces in connection with ergative case when N incorporates into P, but agreement of the N-P complex with T reflects only  $\phi$ -features, not P category, as in (72b). Markman and Grashchenkov propose this type of analysis for Warlpiri.



Finally, for languages in which N does not incorporate into ergative P, they propose that agreement with the ergative PP is simply not possible. This is the pattern that we see in Tsez, where only absolutes agree (62)-(63). Given that ‘ergative agreement’ requires the presence of the ergative P on this view, we are close to an alternative explanation of the fact that ergative agreement systems are almost entirely absent from nominative-accusative case systems. To derive this effect, we will need a better understanding of covertness in ergative P heads, accusative case-marking, and the interaction between these two.

If the presence of a P head is the major distinguishing property of an ergative case system, ergative patterns in A' movement and control must also be able to take account of the P head's presence. Further exploration is required to probe whether the adpositional analysis lends itself to insightful approaches to these effects.

### 3.2.2 Ergative as a case

The remaining group of theories under the ‘syntax-based’ umbrella treat ergative marking as realizing a feature assigned by a head. Contemporary work tends to identify the heads which are involved in case assignment as functional ones, and to connect the assignment of case to a nominal with a relationship, sometimes purely abstract, of agreement between the head and the nominal. Theories differ on the particulars of the heads they posit and the relationships that the posited heads enter into. An excellent summary of the different positions authors have taken in this domain through the end of the 1990s is provided by Johns (2000).

An important theme running through this literature is the connection between case-assignment and movement. For languages like English, it is now generally assumed that the subject is both

assigned case by T and moves to the specifier of the TP projection. The object, by contrast, is assigned case in situ by a functional head *v*. Parameterization of both pieces of this picture have been proposed in connection with morphological ergativity. Three positions can be discerned on what it is that makes ergative languages special:

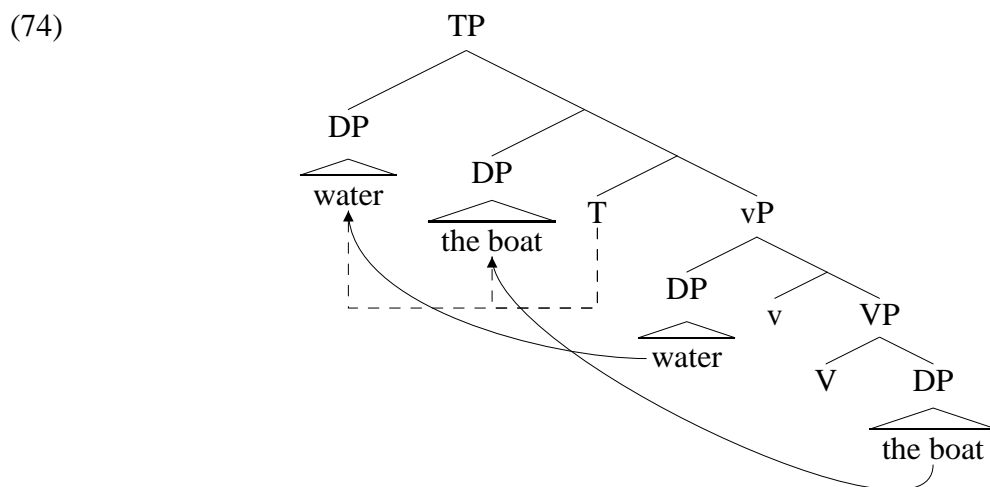
1. Subjects and objects receive case ex situ from T.
2. Subjects and objects receive case in situ from *v*.
3. Subjects receive case in situ from *v*; objects receive case ex situ from T.

The latter two of these have received the lion's share of attention in recent work, and various authors have proposed that both are indeed correct, for distinct groups of languages. In this section, I present exemplars of all three theories individually, noting in particular their predictions for control. After a discussion of jointly morphology- and syntax-based theories in section 3.3, I return to discuss certain critiques of the shared innovation of theories 2 and 3, namely the mechanism of in-situ case assignment to the subject, in section 3.4.

### 3.2.3 *Subject receives case ex situ, object receives case ex situ*

Bok-Bennema (1991) proposes that ergative languages are special in failing to assign case in situ to the object. This means that the object must receive case from another case assigning head, presumably the one which is also involved in assigning case to the subject. In order to receive this case, Bok-Bennema and others propose that the object must undergo movement in ergative languages. A recent exemplar of this type of approach is Bobaljik and Branigan (2006). These authors propose that in Chukchi, both subject and object move to specifiers of a TP projection. Case assignment in the tree below is indicated with dotted lines.

- (73) əʔtvʔet jərʔen-nin mimt-e  
 boat.ABS fill-3SG/3SG water-ERG  
 Water filled the boat.



If the identification of absolutive with nominative is correct – both, on this proposal, would be unmarked cases assigned by T – predictions follow for the treatment of non-finite clauses. A loss of finiteness in TP is associated with the loss of nominative case. Indeed, it is absolutive nominals in opposition to ergative ones which are lost in Dyirbal in purposive control complements, as we saw above.

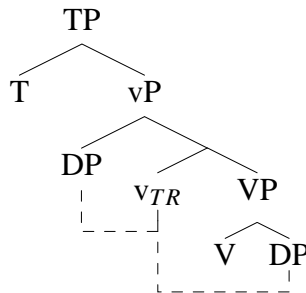
- Several aspects of this view limit its applicability beyond languages of the Dyirbal type, however. Languages in which absolutive nominals persist in non-finite environments will require a different treatment. Warlpiri has been discussed in this connection (Legate 2008); see for instance the persistence of absolutive DP *miyi* ‘food’ in the non-finite clause bracketed below.

- Additional distinct machinery will be required for languages in which the ergative is not the more marked of the cases assigned in transitive clauses. This is particularly relevant for languages showing property (1a) but not (1b), as in the Nez Perce facts shown in (6)-(8).

An alternative line of thinking locates the source of ergativity in case-assignment not to the object, but to the subject. This approach owes its impetus to Woolford (1997)'s proposal that ergative be treated as an inherent case, a case assigned in connection with  $\theta$ -role assignment. Woolford proposed that languages showing ergativity in morphology have lexical entries for their verbs which

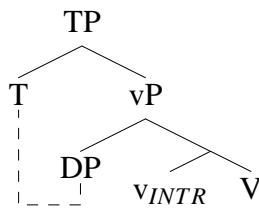
connect the Agent role and the ergative case. This idea connects naturally with the proposals from Kratzer (1996) and others that Agent arguments are introduced by a special functional head  $v$  or Voice, and from Bittner and Hale (1996a,b) that ergative DPs are case-licensed in their base positions. Putting these pieces together, Legate (2002, 2006, 2008, 2012) and Aldridge (2004, 2008, 2012) propose that  $v$  assigns ergative case, in situ, to its specifier argument in ergative languages. It may additionally assign case to the object in such languages, meaning that both arguments are case-licensed in situ by the same head. Let us call the  $v$  head which assigns case features in this way ‘transitive  $v$ ’, or  $v_{TR}$ .

(78)

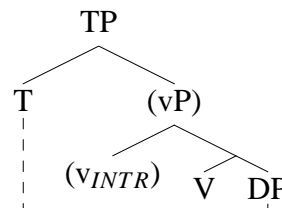


Whereas in a transitive clause  $v$  assigns case both to the subject and to the object, leaving T with no case-assignment duties, intransitive clauses feature either (i) no  $v$  head, or (ii) a  $v$  which assigns no case at all. In either situation, T steps in to assign case to the subject.

(79) a.



b.



A central feature of this view is that objects and intransitive subjects, despite their similarity in surface case, receive their case features from different grammatical loci. Absolutive on objects reflects case assignment by  $v$  and not by T. It is therefore expected to persist in non-finite environments; this accounts for Warlpiri examples like (77). Absolutive on subjects reflects case assignment by T, however, and is thus expected to be impossible in non-finite environments. Legate (2008) shows that this is indeed so; a grammatical absolutive non-finite object in (77) contrasts with an ungrammatical absolutive non-finite subject in (80).

- (80) \* Ngarrka-patu-rlu ka-lu-jana puluku  
 man-PAUC-ERG PRES.IMPERF-3PL.SUBJ-3PL.OBJ bullock.ABS  
 turnu-ma-ni [kurdu parnka-nja-rlarni].  
 group-CAUSE-NONPAST [child.ABS run-NONFIN-OBV.C]  
 The men are mustering cattle while the children are running.

This pattern is different from the Dyirbal pattern discussed above, and indeed both Aldridge and Legate propose a distinct analysis for languages of the Dyirbal type. This proposal is discussed in section 3.2.5.

Legate (2008) discusses an extension to this view to cover languages like Georgian or Western Basque which show argument-structural ergativity. Whereas Warlpiri differs from English in the ability of  $v_{TR}$  to assign ergative case, Legate suggests that languages showing property (1c) are



systems where all  $v$  heads, both in transitive and in unergative clauses, assign ergative to their specifiers (2008: 58). Three groups of languages may thus be discerned:

- (81)  $v$  assigns ergative to its specifier
- Never: English
  - Only when it also assigns case to the object: Warlpiri
  - Always: Western Basque

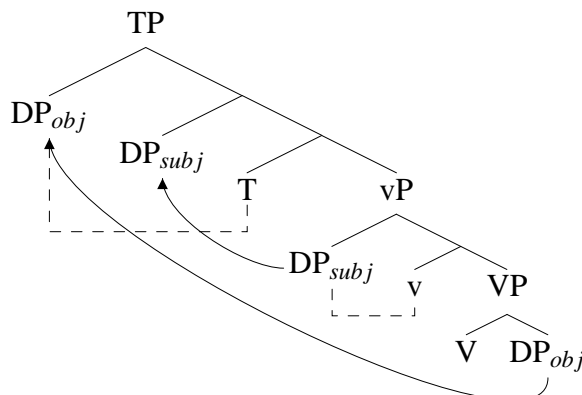
The treatment of ergative as a case assigned to the subject in situ, along with in-situ mechanisms for object case, thus are able to account for a broad range of morphological patterns of ergativity, as well as a distinction between absolutive subjects and absolutive objects in non-finite contexts in Warlpiri.

### 3.2.5 *Subject receives case in situ, object receives case ex situ*

A final combination of subject and object case assignment mechanisms involves subject case assignment in situ in  $vP$  and ex situ case assignment to the object. This type of proposal is advanced by Ura (2001) as a general treatment of ergative case-marking, and by Bittner and Hale (1996a), Aldridge (2004) and Legate (2008) specifically in light of manifestations of ergativity properties in syntax.

On Ura's proposal,  $v$  may only assign one case. As on the Marantz 1991 view, this assignment may look either 'up' (to the subject) or 'down' (to the object); ergative case is the name for what  $v$  assigns to the subject, and accusative case for what it assigns to the object. Assignment of  $v$ 's sole case to the subject leads to a lack of  $vP$ -internal case assignment possibilities for the object, as on the Bok-Bennema (1991) and Bobaljik and Branigan (2006) views. The object must therefore move close to the nominative-assigning  $T$  head. Ura proposes that the subject moves into an inner specifier of  $T$ , receiving no additional case, and that the object receives nominative case in an outer specifier of  $T$ .

(82)



This proposal makes predictions for non-finite clauses which parallel those of the Bobaljik and Branigan view. Absolutive case should be uniformly lost in non-finite environments. This prediction is appropriate for the Dyirbal facts, as we've seen, but not for the facts of other languages such as Warlpiri. For this reason, Aldridge (2004) and Legate (2008) propose derivations similar to (89) only for languages showing loss of absolutive arguments in non-finite contexts. Languages like Warlpiri are to be handled with in situ case assignment mechanisms for both subject and object according to these authors.

### 3.3 Jointly morphology- and syntax-based theories

A final group of theories makes use of both syntactic and morphological means to capture ergativity in case and agreement. One of these is the theory of Legate (2002, 2006, 2008), discussed above in connection with syntactic approaches. Beyond the syntactic means of case feature assignment, an essential piece of Legate's proposal involves the interface between morphology and syntax. Case distinctions present in syntax in virtue of syntactic configurations can be lost or obscured by morphological impoverishment. This is generally the situation, Legate proposes, in ergative/absolutive languages showing only morphological ergativity. For Warlpiri (83), for instance, she proposes that the *v* head assigns accusative case to the object *wawirri* 'kangaroo', and ergative case to the subject *ngarraka* 'man'. In intransitive (84), the *v* head assigns no case, and the subject is assigned nominative by T.

- (83) *ngarrka-ngku ka wawirri-0 panti-rni*  
 man-ERG AUX kangaroo-ACC spear-NONPAST  
 The man is spearing the kangaroo.
- (84) *kurdu-0 ka wanka-mi*  
 child-NOM AUX speak-NONPAST  
 The child is speaking.

Case assignment in Warlpiri is then entirely parallel to what we see in a three-way case-marking system like Nez Perce. There is no syntactic category of absolutive that is assigned sometimes by T and sometimes by *v* (cf. Aldridge 2004). Why does the transitive object share the surface realization of the intransitive subject? The key lies in the way that syntactic case features are mapped to phonological realizations. Legate proposes the following list of syntax/phonology pairings for the Warlpiri case system:

- (85) Warlpiri case morphemes (partial list)  
 [ERG] ↔ -rlu/-ngku  
 [DAT] ↔ -ku  
 [CASE] ↔ ∅ (= 'absolutive')

This list does not provide special exponents for [NOM] and [ACC] cases. These cases, then, have recourse to a default case form. It is their shared realization through default case morphology that leads to the conflation of [NOM] and [ACC] in an 'absolutive' category in Warlpiri.

Crucial evidence for this proposal comes from mismatches in case-marking within a single DP. An interesting example of this is seen in Djapu, a Pama-Nyungan language. Case-marking in this language is generally on a three-way basis, like in Nez Perce.

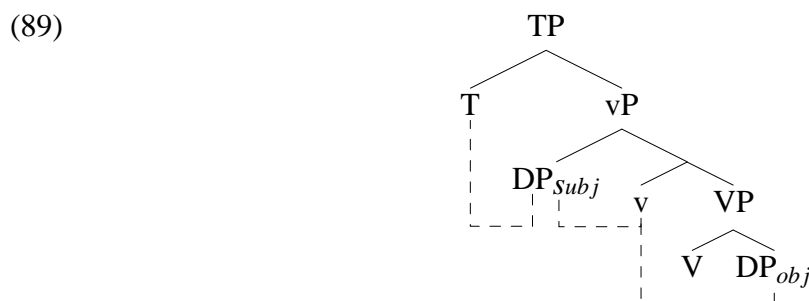
- (86) *Mak rlinygu-n galka-y' ba:pa-'ngali-n dharpu-ngal.*  
 maybe already-IM sorcerer-ERG father-KIN.PROP-ACC spear-PERF  
 Maybe a sorcerer has already speared your father. (Morphy 1983:111)
- (87) *Ngarritj nha:-ma wa:yin-gu.*  
 Ngarritj.NOM see-UNM animal-DAT  
 Ngarritj is looking for animal(s). (Morphy 1983:38)

However, whereas common nouns show specialized accusative case forms, demonstratives lack any accusative morphology. When a demonstrative forms a DP with an accusative noun, the demonstrative appears in the unmarked, default case – a seeming partial emergence of a morphological absolutive.

- (88) Wungay' marrtji-nya                      **ngunhi-ny-dhi**                      **yolngu-n**  
honey.ABS go-PAST.NONINDIC that.ABS-PRO-ANAPH person-ACC  
**wapirti-warrtju-na-puyngu-nha-ny**                      weka-nha.  
stingray-spear.PL-NMLZR-INHAB-ACC-PRO give-PAST.NONINDIC  
We would go and give honey to those stingray-spearing people

Such mismatches are elegantly accounted for via the distinction between syntactic and morphological case permitted by Legate's system. The overall DP 'those stingray-spearing people' is assigned [ACC] by  $v$ , but the component pieces of the DP present different possibilities for inflection. Nouns which have specialized accusative forms adopt those forms, but demonstratives, lacking any such forms, appear in an unmarked, default morphological case. This default is a constrained example of a pattern that happens on a larger scale in a language like Warlpiri.

A somewhat different example of a mixed syntax- and morphology-based theory is provided by Deal (2010a,b). As on the proposals by Legate and Aldridge discussed above, Deal proposes that  $v$  enters into a syntactic relationship both with the subject in Spec, $v$ P and with the object inside VP. These relationships, however, are understood to be agreement relationships which transfer only  $\phi$ -features; there are no case features in the syntax per se. Deal also proposes that T enters into an agreement relationship with the subject; in languages like Nez Perce, this additional agreement is realized as a subject agreement affix on the verb. It is agreement relationships, rather than syntactic case assignment, that are indicated via dotted lines in the tree below.



One nominal, then, agrees with two functional heads, in virtue of being closest to T within its c-command domain (agreement down) and being in the specifier of  $v$ P (agreement up). Deal proposes that this syntactic configuration is interpreted morphologically as ergative case. Morphological interpretation of agreement dependencies first copies the features of the object onto the  $v$  head and of the subject onto the T head. It then interprets the spec-head agreement relationship between  $v$  and the subject by sharing the subject's features and  $v$ 's agreement features, which have been obtained from the object. The subject DP thus ends up endowed with two sets of  $\phi$ -features, its own and those of the object. The morphological exponent of this complex feature bundle is what we recognize as the ergative case.

- (90) Nez Perce case morphemes (partial list)  
 $[\phi-T, \phi-v, D] \leftrightarrow$  -nim  
 $[\phi-v, D] \leftrightarrow$  -ne

This type of approach provides a natural treatment of languages like Sahaptin, a Penutian language, where the appearance of ergative on the subject is conditioned by the person of the object. Ergative case is only expressed on a 3rd person singular subject in the presence of a 1st or 2nd person object.

- (91) iwínš-nim=naš i-q'ínun-a.  
man-ERG=1SG 3SUBJ-see-PAST  
The man saw me. (Rude 1997, ex 25)
- (92) iwínš i-q'ínun-a miyánaš-na.  
man 3SUBJ-see-PAST child-ACC  
The man saw the child. (Rude 1997, ex 26)
- (93) i-wiyánawi-ya iwínš.  
3SUBJ-arrive-PAST man  
The man arrived. (Rude 1997, ex 2)

Because the ergative case marker realizes, in part, the features of the object, it is possible for the marker to be different or to be zero only where the object has a certain featural profile.

### 3.4 Challenges for ergative in situ

Several of the theories considered above have in common the treatment of the ergative case as assigned in situ to the specifier of  $\nu$ P. This approach has been quite influential in the recent literature<sup>1</sup> and for this reason it is especially important to consider the types of examples that have been raised as possible challenges to it. These concern the correlation between ergativity and thematic role; the absence of ergative case on certain nominals occupying Spec, $\nu$ P; and the possibility of raising to ergative.

First, insofar as the  $\nu$  head assigning ergative case is connected with agency per se, the proposal makes the prediction that ergative case should not be available on non-agent subjects. There are many languages showing ergativity properties in case and agreement for which this prediction is not accurate (Comrie 1978, Bobaljik and Branigan 2006, Otsuka 2006, Bruening 2007, Deal 2010a, Preminger 2012). Examples below from Chukchi and Nez Perce underline this point.

- (94) əʔtvʔet jərʔen-nin mimt-e  
boat.ABS fill-3SG/3SG water-ERG  
Water filled the boat. (Chukchi)
- (95) piswe-m 'inii-ne pee-tqe-likeece-Ø-ye.  
rock-ERG house-OBJ 3/3-suddenly-on.top-P-REM.PAST  
A rock fell on the house. (Nez Perce)

The standard way to reconcile such data with the  $\nu$ P proposal is to weaken the connection between  $\nu$  and an agent  $\theta$ -role. The  $\nu$  head may assign a broader class of 'external' or 'causer'  $\theta$ -roles, for instance, including whatever roles are appropriately assigned to the ergative nominals in the examples above (e.g. Monróis 2007, Legate 2012). In this sense the original proposal that ergative is

<sup>1</sup> See e.g. the papers in Johns, Massam, and Ndayiragije (2006); Woolford (2006), Aissen (2010), Coon (2010a), Coon et al. (2012), Mahajan (2012)

a  $\theta$ -linked case is crucially modified to highlight the *structure* in which various roles are assigned, rather than the roles themselves. What is central to the proposal is that ergative is assigned in situ to the specifier of  $\nu$ P; a full account of examples like those above is left to await a proper theory of mapping between this type of structural configuration and observable semantic consequences.

A second challenge concerns whether occupying the Spec, $\nu$ P position is sufficient for ergative case-marking. Arguments that it is not come from Basque and from Nez Perce. Between them, Basque dialects and Nez Perce cover three major types of ergativity: ergative/absolutive (eastern Basque), three-way (Nez Perce), and argument-structural (western Basque).

Basque dialects converge on the marking of transitive and unaccusative clauses. Transitive objects and unaccusative subjects appear in an unmarked absolutive case; transitive subjects take a special marker, the ergative.

- (96) Nekane-k Miren eta Jon ikusi ditu.  
 Nekane-ERG Miren.ABS and Jon.ABS seen AUX.3PA.3SE  
 Nekane saw Miren and Jon.
- (97) Miren eta Jon etorri dira.  
 Miren.ABS and Jon.ABS come AUX.3PA  
 Miren and Jon came.

For the question of the sufficiency of Spec, $\nu$ P position for ergative marking, the relevant examples in Basque involve gerundive complements of perception verbs, which contrast with full clausal complements (Rezac, Albizu, and Etxepare 2010). In full clausal complements, such as the bracketed constituent below, transitive subjects must be marked ergative.

- (98) [ Katu-ek/\*ak sagu-ak harrapa-tu  
 [ cat-DEF.PL.ERG/\*DEF.PL.ABS mouse-DEF.PL.ABS catch  
 dituzte-la ] ikusi dut  
 AUX.3PLABS.3PLERG-that ] seen AUX.1SGERG  
 I saw that the cats caught / were catching the mice.

If ergative is assigned in situ in  $\nu$ P, the possibility of ergative assignment to the subject is expected to persist in gerundive complements, which possess a reduced clausal structure. This, however, is not the case: gerundive complements show absolutive subjects, rather than ergative ones. (See Rezac et al. (2010) for arguments for the constituency represented here.)

- (99) [ Katu-ak/\*-ek sagu-ak harrapa-tzen ] ikusi  
 [ cat-DEF.PL.ABS/\*DEF.PL.ERG mouse-DEF.PL.ABS catch-ing ] seen  
 ditut  
 AUX.3PLABS.1SGERG  
 I saw the cats catching the mice.

On the basis of these facts, Rezac et al. (2010) argue that position in Spec, $\nu$ P alone is not sufficient to condition ergative case assignment in Basque. The involvement of the TP system is required. This conclusion is especially telling to the degree that the contrast above holds across a dialect continuum in Basque, including both dialects showing ergative/absolutive case (where  $\nu_{TRANS}$  would be implicated in case assignment to the subject) and those showing argument-structural ergativity in case (where  $\nu$  would always be implicated in case assignment to the subject).

Related arguments from Nez Perce concern reduced clausal structures appearing in the causative. In a full clause in Nez Perce, subjects are marked ergative and objects are marked objective (accusative).

- (100) Annie-nim paa-’yaŋ-n-a ciq’aamqal-na  
 Annie-ERG 3/3-find-P-REM.PAST dog-OBJ  
 Annie found the dog.

In a causativized form of (100), however, ergative case on the subject disappears in favor of objective:

- (101) Meeli-nm **Annie-ne/\*nim** paa-sapa-’yaŋ-n-a ciq’aamqal-na  
 Mary-ERG Annie-OBJ/\*ERG 3/3-CAUSE-find-P-REM.PAST dog-OBJ  
 Mary made Annie find the dog.

Deal (2010b) argues that the structure of (101) involves a single TP in which the  $vP$  found in (100) is embedded under a higher, causative  $vP$ . Just as in the Basque example, when a  $vP$  whose subject would normally bear the ergative case is not in a local relationship with a T head, ergative case on the subject disappears. This provides another argument that Spec, $vP$  position is not sufficient for ergative case assignment.

A final challenge to the ergative in situ analysis concerns whether Spec, $vP$  position is *necessary* for ergative case assignment. This question must be handled with some care in view of analyses in which in situ assignment by  $v$  is in fact *definitional* of ergative case (e.g. Legate 2002, 143, Legate 2012). The questions that can be addressed empirically are (i) how closely this definition corresponds to the pretheoretical ergative class, and (ii) in cases in which the definition makes distinctions among elements in that class, whether these distinctions in fact track linguistic differences in a useful way. With these questions in mind, let us examine a potential argument for ergative assignment independent of Spec, $vP$ . This argument comes again from work on Basque.

Basque shows certain raising constructions which result in the assignment of the ergative case to the DP which moves. This holds even in cases when the base position of that DP is not one in which ergative case is assigned. The examples below come from Rezac et al. (2010), who provide several arguments to show that the structures involve raising (see also Artiagoitia 2001, Preminger 2012). In (102), *Jon eta Miren* raises from the specifier position of a transitive  $vP$ , in which ergative could be assigned on the in-situ proposal. This provides a possible explanation for the presence of ergative in the matrix clause.

- (102) Jon-ek eta Miren-ek<sub>k</sub> [ t<sub>k</sub> lagunei<sub>j</sub> liburuak<sub>i</sub> bidali ] behar di-zkii-ej-tek.  
 Jon-ERG and Miren-ERG [ friends.D books.A send ] must AUX-3PA<sub>i</sub>-3PD<sub>j</sub>-3PE<sub>k</sub>.  
 Jon and Miren must send friends books.

In (103), on the other hand, *Jon eta Miren* raises from a position in the projection of unaccusative ‘come’, in which ergative case is *not* assigned. The ergative case appearing on *Jon eta Miren* in its derived position must therefore be the result of raising.

- (103) Jon-ek eta Miren-ek<sub>k</sub> [ t<sub>k</sub> etorri ] behar du-te.  
 Jon-ERG and Miren-ERG [ come ] must AUX-3PE  
 Jon and Miren must come.

This appears to counterexemplify the proposed universal that ergative does not appear on derived subjects.

If ergative is by definition a case that is assigned to DPs in Spec,vP in virtue of their base-generation in that position, two main avenues remain open to deal with the Basque facts. First, we might treat the case similarity between the raised subject in (103) and the ordinary transitive subject in (96) as an instance of homophony. The ordinary transitive subject in (96) indeed receives the ergative case in virtue of its base position, but the raised subject in (103) receives some other case, which happens to be realized in a way identical to the ergative. Just as for the two types of absolutive in Warlpiri discussed above, what must be shown is a distinction in syntactic or morphological behavior between these two case categories in support of the postulated difference. The alternative avenue is simply to deny that Basque makes use of an ergative case. This in turn requires identifying an alternative means of case-assignment for Basque and distinguishing this route from the ergative one by independent means.

#### 4 Theories of ergativity in A' movement

We now turn to the manifestation of ergativity properties in the grammar of A' dependencies. The core phenomenon in this domain concerns a difference in the way that A' dependencies are encoded when transitive subjects are extracted versus when other constituents are extracted. Roviana data showed us this pattern above. Object and intransitive subject relativization in Roviana makes use of ordinary verb forms in the embedded clause. Transitive subject relativization makes use of a special nominalized form.

- (104) Hierana sa tie [<sub>RC</sub> sapu kote taloa ]  
 this DEF man REL FUT leave  
 This is the man who is going away.
- (105) Hierana sa koreo [<sub>RC</sub> sapu tupa-i-a e Zone ]  
 this DEF boy REL punch-TR-3SG.DO ART John  
 This is the boy that John punched.
- (106) a. \*Hierana sa tie [<sub>RC</sub> sapu tupa-i-u ] \*Normal verb form  
 this DEF man REL punch-TR-1SG.DO  
 This is the man who punched me.
- b. Hierana sa tie [<sub>RC</sub> sapu tupa-qa rau ] <sup>OK</sup>Special verb form  
 this DEF man REL punch-1SG.NSUF I  
 This is the man who punched me.

Corston (1996) reports that the type of verbal morphology seen in (106b) cannot be used in object extraction, and suggests that it cannot be used in intransitive subject extraction either. This suggests that verbal morphology is strictly correlated with whether an ergative or a non-ergative is extracted. The literature on ergativity in A' extraction explores both morphological and syntactic explanations for this type of correlation.

An example of a purely morphological approach is provided by Stiebels (2006)'s study of A' extraction in Mayan. Across a range of Mayan languages, a special verb form appears when transitive subjects are A' extracted. This form is called the 'agent focus' (AF) in the Mayanist literature. The AF form does not appear when intransitive subjects or transitive objects are extracted. An example from Q'eqchi is given below.

- (107) Q'eqchi agent focus (Dayley 1981)
- a. x-at-in-sak'  
REC.PAST-2SG.ABS-1SG.ERG-hit  
I hit you.
- b. ani x-Ø-a-sak'  
who REC.PAST-3SG.ABS-2SG.ERG-hit  
Who did you hit?
- c. ani x-sak'-[o]-k aw-e  
who REC.PAST-hit-AF-NON.FUT.INTR 2SG.E-DAT  
Who hit you?

Working in lexical decomposition grammar, Stiebels analyzes the special verbal morphology in (107c) as akin to a form of agreement. Agreement in Mayan languages is generally on an ergative-absolutive basis. The AF morphology is like other ergative agreement markers, Stiebels proposes, but with an additional focus feature (triggering A' movement) and impoverished  $\phi$ -features. When the subject is ergative and has a focus feature, use of AF agreement is obligatory; this is simply because failure to use the correct agreement form generally leads to ungrammaticality. When the subject has a focus feature but is not ergative, use of AF is not possible for these same reasons. Together with additional machinery regulating the form of agreement with objects in AF clauses, this proposal is able to account for a wide range of data from diverse Mayan languages.

The agreement-based proposal, as Stiebels notes, is to a certain degree reminiscent of patterns of agreement in A' movement in Austronesian languages like Chamorro. Declarative clauses in Chamorro contain subject agreement in person and number. Note that, according to Chung (1998), Chamorro is not an ergative language.

- (108) Pära bai u-agang      *pro* hämyu un    pupuengi  
FUT.IRR 1SG.IRR-call      you.PL one evening  
I was going to call you one evening. (Chung 1998, 35)

When there is A' extraction, however, the form of agreement changes, and the change is determined by the case of the A'-moving element. When a nominative is A' moved, the infix *um* is inserted; when an accusative is A' moved, the infix *in* is inserted (Chung 1982, 1998).

- (109) Hayi f-um-a'gasi           *t i*     kareta  
who WH[Nom]-wash   the car  
Who washed the car? (Chung 1998, 236)
- (110) Hafa k-in-annono'-mu                 *t ?*  
what WH[Obj].Agr[2s]-eat.Prog  
What are you eating? (Chung 1998, 237)



As analyzed by Stiebels, the Mayan AF form is essentially a form of *wh*-agreement in an ergative language. Agreement in Mayan, as in Chamorro, reflects both case and extraction. Extracted ergatives trigger a special overt form of *wh*-agreement, namely the AF suffix, and other instances of agreement with *wh*-phrases are syncretic with ordinary agreement. Now, the Chamorro forms demonstrate the possibility of *wh*-agreement both with subjects and with objects, with roughly equal morphological complexity in the two cases. One might expect to find, then, an ergative language showing special forms of verbal morphology of equal complexity in both ergative A' movement and in absolutive A' movement. It is striking that such a language appears to be unattested. The generalization seems to be:

- (111) When verbal morphology is affected by A' extraction of arguments in an ergative language, the forms used for A' extraction of ergatives are always more complex than those used for non-ergatives.

The challenge for the morphological account is to provide a natural account of this type of generalization.

## 4.2 *Syntax-based theories*

In contrast to the morphological view, various researchers have posited a structural difference between clauses where ergatives are extracted and those where non-ergatives are. On this view, the standard clausal syntax of some ergative languages makes it impossible to A' move the subject. While theories differ in the particular problem they identify for this movement, a point of consensus concerns the involvement of object movement. This movement is frequently, though not always, connected with the idea that the object receives case *ex situ* in ergative languages. The structure resulting from the object's movement is one in which the subject cannot undergo A' movement. The special morphology which must appear for A' extraction of transitive subjects reflects a structure which obviates the need for object movement, leaving subjects free to extract.

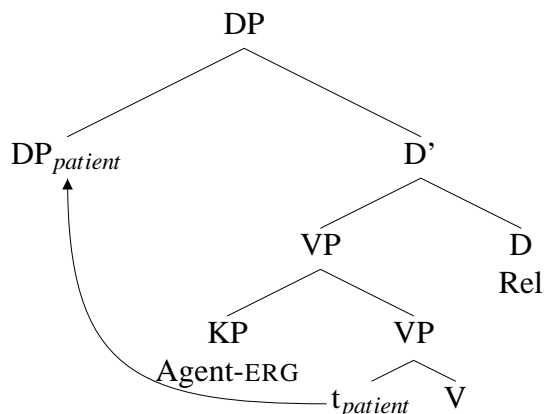
### 4.2.1 *The problem is object A' movement*

A first set of analyses identifies syntactically ergative languages as languages in which objects must undergo A' movement in ordinary transitive clauses. This leads to problems in A' extraction of subjects in transitive clauses. Theories along these lines are proposed by Bittner (1994), Bittner and Hale (1996a) and Campana (1992).

For Bittner and Hale, objects move to an A' position for reasons of case in a syntactically ergative language. Spec,IP, the nominative-case checking position, is to be considered A'; in ordinary transitive clauses, it is to Spec,IP that objects raise. Case-driven object movement interacts with other types of A' movement when a limited number of A' positions are available. This is the situation Bittner and Hale find in Inuit relative clauses, which they propose are formed via nominalization of VP. To fulfill its case needs, the object of a transitive must raise to Spec,DP, the closest A' position. The subject receives ergative case *in situ* in virtue of case competition with the object. (Details of this are discussed by Bittner and Hale (1996b).)

- (112) a. miiqqa-t [ \_\_ Juuna-p paari-sa-i ]  
 child-PL [ \_\_ Juuna-ERG look.after-REL[+TR]-3SG.PL ]  
 the children that Juuna is looking after (Bittner 1994, 55)

b.

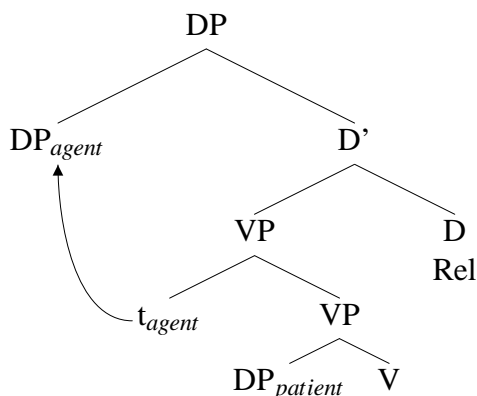


Subject relativization is dependent on transitivity. When an object is not present, the subject may raise to Spec,DP for case reasons, (113a). A transitive subject may not do so, however, (113b).

- (113) a. miiqqa-t [ \_\_ sila-mi pinnguar-tu-t ]  
 child-PL [ \_\_ outdoors-LOC play-REL[-TR]-PL ]  
 the children who are playing outdoors (Bittner 1994, 55)
- b. \* angut [ \_\_ aallaat tigu-sima-sa-a ]  
 man [ \_\_ gun take-PRF-REL[+TR]-3SG.SG ]  
 the man who took the gun (Bittner 1994, 58)

As Bittner (1994, 58) discusses, the problem with (113b) concerns the case filter. When the subject raises to the only available A' position, the object is left without a source of case. No case is available to it VP-internally.

- (114) Structure of \*(113b): no case for the object



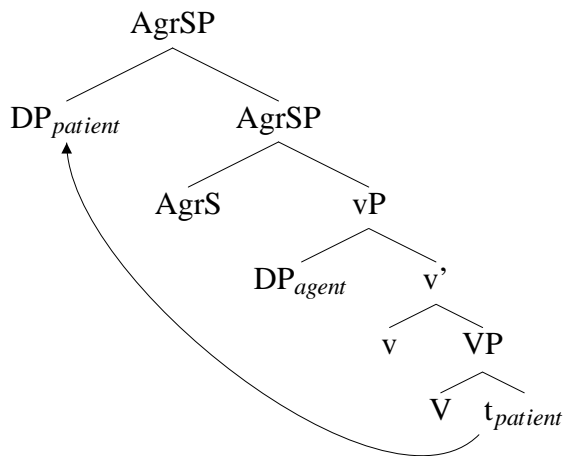
Special morphology reflects a structure in which the object's case-needs have found a different means of satisfaction. In this structure – the 'antipassive' – the object is able to receive case VP internally, freeing the subject to occupy the sole A' position available in the relativization structure.

- (115) angut [ \_\_ aallaam-mik tigu-si-sima-su-q ]  
 man [ \_\_ gun-INST take-AP-PRF-REL[-TR]-SG ]  
 the man who took the gun (Bittner 1994, 58)

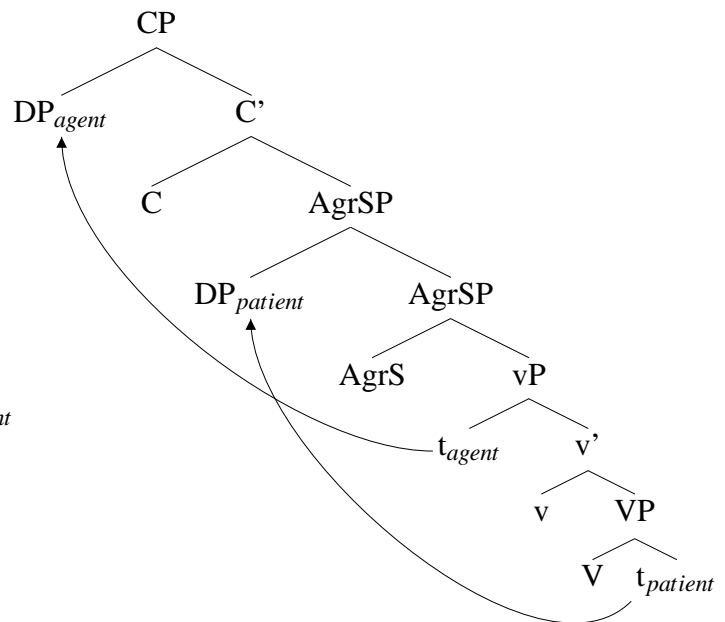
Additional machinery is required to extend this proposal to ergativity in A' movement in full clausal domains, such as relative clauses in Roviana or matrix questions in Q'eqchi. Here, object movement to Spec,IP should be possible, fulfilling the case needs of the object; the remaining difficulty in subject A' movement to Spec,CP remains to be accounted for.

The proposal by Campana (1992) allows for these further examples while carrying over various features of the Bittner and Hale approach. Like Bittner and Hale, Campana proposes that objects must raise for case reasons to an A' position in ordinary transitive clauses in syntactically ergative languages. He identifies this position as an adjunct position in Agr,SP. Subjects receive case below AgrSP. (I show this position, anachronistically, as Spec,vP in the trees below.) A' movement of a transitive subject therefore creates a second A'-dependency which crosses over the first:

(116) a. Ordinary transitive clause



b. Transitive subject extraction



Campana proposes that structure (116b) is ill-formed due to the ECP, a principle requiring the trace of the subject in Spec,vP and its co-indexed antecedent (the subject DP itself) to be sufficiently close together. In (116b) the A' position occupied by the object intervenes between the subject's trace and its landing site, disrupting this locality and producing deviance. Just as on the Bittner and Hale proposal, circumventing this deviance requires finding some way to assign case to the object without A' moving it. Campana discusses the use of passive and antipassive strategies that achieve this result.

The ECP-based explanation makes for a natural parallel between syntactic ergativity in A' movement and the *that*-trace phenomenon. Examples like (117b) are handled in much the same way as are instances of ergative extraction such as (113b): something intervenes between a trace of the moving subject and its next highest antecedent. In structures like (116b), this is the object DP; in (117b), it is the complementizer *that*.

- (117) a. Who<sub>i</sub> do you think [<sub>CP</sub> t<sub>i</sub> [<sub>IP</sub> t<sub>i</sub> won the game ] ] ?  
 b. \* Who<sub>i</sub> do you think [<sub>CP</sub> t<sub>i</sub> that [<sub>IP</sub> t<sub>i</sub> won the game ] ] ?

A major prediction of both Campana's and Bittner and Hale's theories concerns non-finite clauses. Transitive subject movement on these theories is complicated by movement of the object,

and object movement is driven by a need to receive case *ex situ*. The object's case, received from T and its analogues, is the nominative. In non-finite clauses, nominative is expected to become unavailable. This means that languages with ergativity in A' movement should be languages where overt objects, modulo some special means of case-assignment, are impossible in non-finite clauses. Structures which are plausibly non-finite in West Greenlandic Inuit appear challenging from this perspective.

- (118) Miiqqat [ PRO Juuna iku-ssa-llu-gu ] niriursui-pp-u-t  
 children.ABS [ PRO Juuna.ABS help-FUT-INF-3SG ] promise-IND-INTR-3PL  
 The children promised to help Juuna. (Manning 1994, 113)

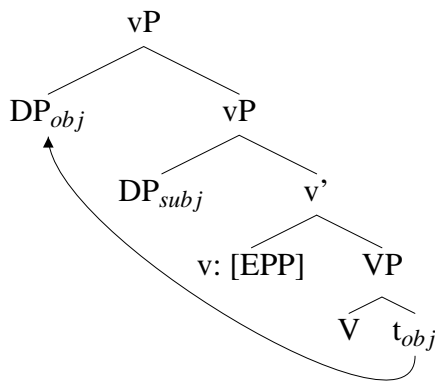
Bittner (1994) proposes to handle such non-finite clauses with mechanisms very similar to those used in finite clauses; nominative-assignment possibilities are dissociated from finiteness. It remains to be seen how a broader range of non-finite clauses, including those of the English and Dyirbal types, can be accounted for under this proposal.

#### 4.2.2 The problem is locality

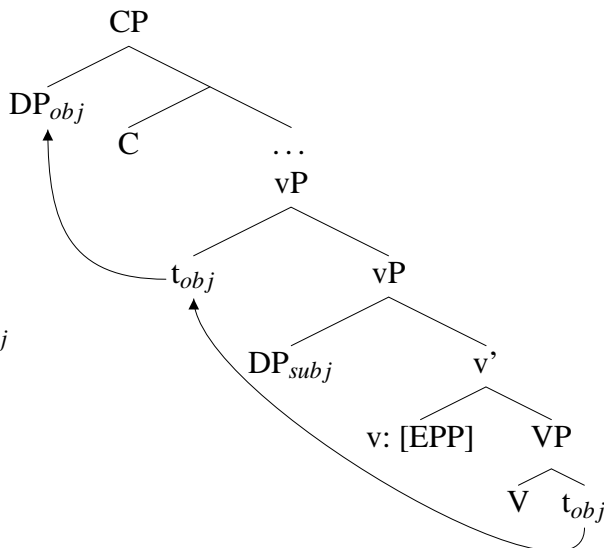
A second set of analyses identifies syntactically ergative languages as those in which transitive subject movement is barred by a principle of locality. Different types of locality conditions are invoked in this literature.

Aldridge (2004, 2008, 2012) proposes that the relevant principle is one of *relative* locality: Attract Closest. Syntactically ergative languages, on her proposal, are those in which transitive *v* possesses an [EPP] features which triggers raising of the object to *v*P's outer specifier. A' movement to Spec,CP is likewise triggered by an [EPP] feature which attracts *the closest DP*. A' movement of objects and intransitive subjects therefore proceeds straightforwardly; these are the highest DPs in their respective *v*Ps.

- (119) a. Basic *v*P structure

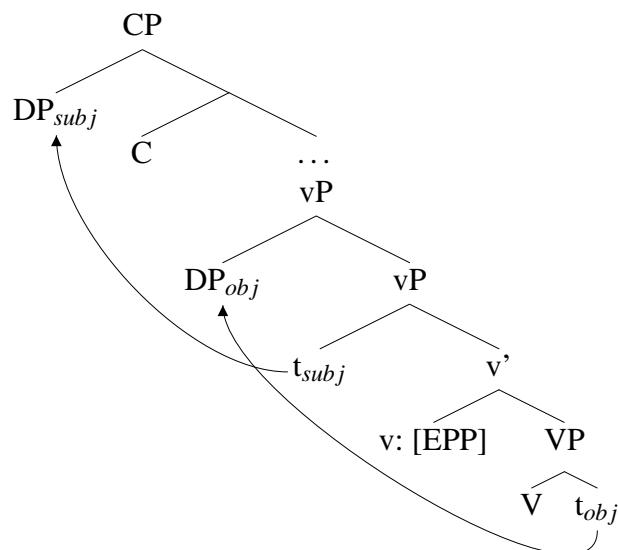


- b. Object A'-movement



A' movement of transitive subjects to Spec,CP is forbidden because relative to the object, the subject is not local to C. Only the highest DP in *v*P can A' move.

(120) \*Transitive subject movement: a violation of Attract Closest



Special morphology appearing in contexts of ergative A' movement is again connected to a difference in the syntax of the object. Aldridge proposes that antipassive clauses (e.g. (115)) contain a  $v$  head which does not carry an [EPP] feature triggering object movement. The subject remains the highest DP, and is able to A' move. What is unexpected from this perspective is generalization (111): the forms used for A' extraction of ergatives are morphologically more complex than those for extraction of non-ergatives. Given that transitive clauses and antipassive clauses both contain  $v$  heads on Aldridge's proposal, we must somehow assure that transitive  $v$  is not realized overtly unless antipassive  $v$  also is.

A potential advantage of the Aldridge proposal comes in the connection between object movement and object case. Unlike on the Campana and Bittner and Hale proposals, the connection between these two is only indirect. For languages like Tagalog and West Greenlandic, Aldridge proposes that movement of the object to the outer specifier of  $vP$  takes place even though there is a source for object case  $vP$  internally. Ergativity in A' movement is therefore possible even when absolutive case (being assigned at the  $vP$ -level) remains available to objects in non-finite clauses, as we saw for West Greenlandic in (118). The reverse, however, is not possible. In a language where absolutive objects are not possible in non-finite clauses, objects receive their case from T; T, like C, must attract the closest DP. In order for it to be the object that is attracted, the object must first shift past the subject at the  $vP$  level. Aldridge proposes that a language showing this profile is Seediq. Crucially, there is *no* language where absolutive objects are impossible in non-finite clauses (as in Seediq) but there is no A' extraction restriction.

(121) Aldridge's generalization

If a language does not provide a source for absolutive case in a non-finite clause, then it does not allow transitive subjects in normal clausal structures to be A' extracted.

The innovation of Aldridge's proposal is that it allows this generalization to be derived as a one-way implication, rather than a biconditional.

Turning to broader predictions, it is notable that the Aldridge analysis requires A' movement in syntactically ergative languages to work slightly differently than does its counterpart in English. Either subject or object may A' move in English, despite the fact that the former is systematically

closer to C than the latter. The English facts are typically handled by positing that an [EPP] feature on C attracts not just the closest DP, but the closest constituent with a *wh*-feature. This provides a ready account of superiority effects, as in (122c-d).

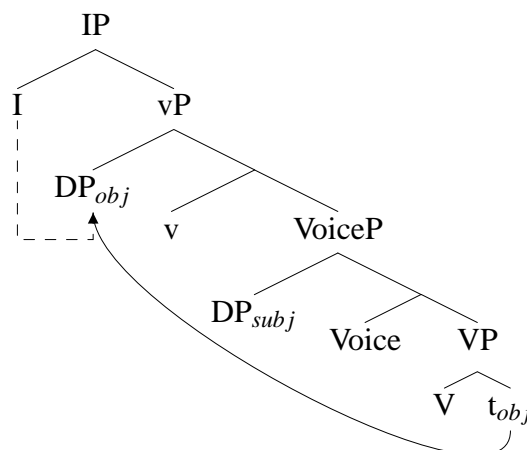
(122) English: C attracts the closest *wh*-feature

- a. Who ate the pizza?
- b. What did Susan eat?
- c. Who ate what?
- d. \*What did who eat?

To produce a syntactically ergative language, then, two independent pieces must come together. First, objects must move to a position above that occupied by subjects. This type of idea is widely explored in the literature on Germanic object shift (e.g. Collins and Thráinsson 1996). Second, triggers of A' movement must attract the closest DP without regard to its featural specification. This type of parameter could potentially be useful in dealing with Keenan and Comrie (1977)'s observations regarding languages where only subjects may relativize. Such languages may be examples of closest-DP attraction by a relative C independent of the object shift that Aldridge posits for syntactic ergativity.

Coon et al. (2012) propose an alternative locality-based account according to which the relevant principle is one of *absolute* locality: the Phase Impenetrability Condition (Chomsky 2001). In the syntactically ergative languages Coon et al. discuss, there is no source for object case in VP. Objects must therefore receive case *ex situ* from IP. IP, however, lies on the opposite side of a phase boundary from the object's base position. The object is therefore required to move into the specifier position of the phase head, which Coon et al. identify as a *vP* above the base position of the subject in VoiceP. Once moved to Spec,*vP*, the object may enter into a local agreement relationship with I.

(123)



Movement of the object through the specifier of *vP* also comes with consequences for the subject. A' movement to Spec,CP requires the subject to cross the *vP* phase boundary. However, the object is required to occupy the only specifier position available in *vP*. A' movement of the subject is thus ruled out in virtue of the PIC.

Special morphology appearing in A' movement of ergatives is again connected to an alternative means of case-assignment for the object. One might then expect that this means of case-assignment would appear in other environments in which objects have case-needs that cannot be met in IP; for instance, it might appear in non-finite clauses. Coon et al. discuss evidence from Q'anjob'al

showing exactly this type of convergence. The Q'anjob'al suffix *-on* appears in embedded non-finite clauses (124) and in contexts of transitive subject movement (125).

(124) Chi uj [ hin y-il-on[-i] ix Malin ].  
 ASP be.able.to [ ABS1 GEN3-see-AF-ITV CL Maria ]  
 Maria can see me.

(125) Maktxel max-ach il-on-i.  
 who ASP-ABS2 see-AF-ITV  
 Who saw you?

Coon et al. propose that this AF marker is a special Voice head which assigns case to the object in situ. This obviates the dependence of the object on I, and thus makes an overt object possible in a non-finite context in (124). It also obviates the need for object movement through Spec,vP, and thus opens the way for subject extraction in (125). The challenge of generalization (111) applies to this theory as it does to Aldridge's. Non-object-licensing Voice must be constrained to be overt only when object-licensing Voice also is.

## 5 Future directions in ergativity studies

It should be clear from the foregoing that ergativity studies offer a great number of leads on the shape of the human language faculty as it relates to syntax and to morphology. The various theoretical approaches surveyed here present different ways of contextualizing the result of ergativity studies in the theory of grammar. Ergativity may be valuable as a source of insight into post-syntactic morphological computation; into the mapping between verbal argument structure and syntactic categories; into the nature of case features in syntax and their distribution across clausal heads; into the shape of A' dependencies and the distribution of 'escape hatches' in syntax. Most likely ergativity as a broad phenomenon will bear on more than one of these components, given both the diversity of ergative languages and their systematicity in discrete domains.

Future work on ergativity is urgently needed in several areas. A high priority should be accorded to the proper treatment of the proposed ergative universals and especially their apparent counterexamples. Further work is also required to elucidate crucial questions on which turn promising ideas in the treatment of case and its relatives. Of particular concern is the ergative-in-situ hypothesis and its associated challenges related to raising-to-ergative and the absence of ergative on certain in-situ subjects. Finally, many of the analyses we have seen suggest interesting future work to be done on questions of covertness in ergative languages. If languages may not have the underlying syntax of ergativity without showing it overtly, why should this be? What sort of cues are required to be overt in the input in order for ergative languages to be learned?

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