

The Locus of Ergative Case

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The Oxford Handbook of Ergativity

Edited by Jessica Coon, Diane Massam, and Lisa Demena Travis

Print Publication Date: Jun 2017 Subject: Linguistics, Morphology and Syntax

Online Publication Date: Aug 2017 DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198739371.013.6

Abstract and Keywords

This chapter demonstrates that for a diverse range of languages the assignment of ergative case is determined by a cluster of factors, which vary between the languages. While ergative assignment thus resists a simple, uniform analysis, the relevant factors are consistently based low in the clausal structure, centered around vP. The low factors identified include the theta-position and theta-role of the subject, the presence of a complement, the presence of a DP object, the case of the object, the presence of object agreement, and the Aspect selecting vP. Illustrative languages examined are Tsova-Tush (East Caucasian), Nez Perce (Sahaptin), Warlpiri (South-West Pama-Nyungan), Tshangla (Tibeto-Burman), and Hindi/Urdu (Indo-Aryan). Kurmanji Kurdish (Iranian) and Yukulta (Tangic) are also considered: here, the governing factors of ergative case assignment are *prima facie* high in the clause, based in TP/CP. These languages are revealed to instead fall under the low ergative pattern.

Keywords: ergative, Kurdish, Yukulta, Ganggalidda, Tsova-Tush, Batsbi, Nez Perce, Warlpiri, Tshangla, Hindi

6.1 Introduction

IN this chapter, I demonstrate that the factors governing the assignment of ergative case vary significantly from language to language, are multifaceted, and are low in the clause, centered around vP, in a wide range of languages. I consider two languages for which the governing factors *prima facie* seem high in the clause, and find that instead these factors are in fact low. It is left open whether all apparent high-ergative languages are similarly subject to reanalysis.

The patterns discussed herein demonstrate that the assignment of ergative case cannot be reduced to a single factor and should not be oversimplified. In addition, the patterns are perhaps unexpected for two types of approaches to ergative case. One such approach treats ergative as a high case, based in the CP/TP domain (for example, Levin and Massam 1985; Bobaljik 1993a; Chomsky 1993; Bittner and Hale 1996a; Bobaljik and Branigan 2006). (Note that care must be taken with such a high-ergative analysis to ensure that we

are not simply dealing with nomenclature—a proposal for a language whereby “ergative” is a structural case assigned by T and “absolutive” is a structural case assigned by v is a proposal that the language in question is in fact nominative-accusative.) The second approach for which the patterns discussed here are perhaps unexpected are dependent case approaches, whereby the assignment of ergative is dependent on the presence of another DP in the same domain not already marked with a (lexical) case (for example, Marantz 1991; Bittner and Hale 1996a, 1996b; Baker 2014a).

Before beginning, I should note that ergative as a term is used descriptively by authors from many different traditions, sometimes due to the unique patterning of the transitive subject in the relevant language, sometimes due to the unified patterning of the intransitive subject and the transitive object, sometimes for other reasons. We cannot expect that everything labelled “ergative” will turn out to be instances of a single phenomenon.

(p. 136) In this chapter, I leave aside the unified patterning of the intransitive subject and the transitive object; see Legate (2008) for my thoughts on this matter. I focus instead on the unique patterning of the transitive subject, and include the extension of this patterning to unergative intransitive subjects in some languages (these forming a subset of split-S languages). There are many ergative languages for which ergative case fails to be morphologically realized on a subset of nominals; I abstract away from this morphological realization here, but see Legate (2014a). However, I exclude languages that lack morphological realization of ergative case entirely—agreement/clitic patterns are not simply faithful representations of case patterns, and cannot be treated as such.

6.2 Low Ergative

In this section, I review a number of unrelated languages in which ergative is assigned based on properties low in the clause, centered around vP. Indeed, this situation is well attested; I only provide a few representative examples here. The examples chosen also illustrate that the factors contributing to ergative case assignment differ across languages, and are often multifaceted within a language, and hence we cannot insist upon a simplistic, uniform analysis of ergative case assignment.

6.2.1 Tsova-Tush

Tsova-Tush (aka Batsbi) (East Caucasian: Georgia) (Holisky 1984, 1987; Holisky and Gagua 1994)¹ exhibits a case pattern whereby transitive subjects bear ergative case, while intransitive subjects bear either ergative or nominative.² The case found on the intransitive subject is based on the θ -role borne by the DP, a property determined low, within the vP; to wit, subjects of unaccusatives bear nominative, whereas subjects of unergatives bear ergative.

Holisky (1987) separates Tsova-Tush intransitive predicates³ into classes, based on the propensity to use nominative or ergative case; she notes, however, that the classes are fluid, depending on what situation the speaker has in mind. The first class, consisting of approximately 31 verbs, allows nominative only on S, and only an unaccusative interpre-

tation is possible. Examples include *a=rev(a)d(d)alar* ‘be confused,’ and *h”abdalar* (p. 137) ‘be mentioned, be remembered.’ Verbs in the second class, about 27 of them, preferentially use nominative, but allow ergative with a marked volitional interpretation (=unergative). For example of *dah” dax:ar* ‘drown, suffocate,’ a consultant suggested: “if a distraught rejected lover throws herself into a river and drowns, she could later, hypothetically, relate her death by using ergative marking” (Holisky 1987: 110). About 61 verbs appear either with nominative or ergative subjects; the corresponding meaning difference reflects an unaccusative versus unergative interpretation. For example, *ʃopdalar* with a nominative subject means ‘come to be hidden,’ in the context that something moves in front of you so that you end up hidden, whereas with an ergative subject means to hide oneself. Similarly, ‘fall’ can be understood as agentively with an ergative subject, or non-agentively with a nominative subject:

(1)

a. (as) vuiž-n-as
 1SG.ERG fell-AOR-1SG.ERG
 ‘I fell down, on purpose’

b. (so) vož-en-sO
 1SG.NOM fell-AOR-1SG.NOM
 ‘I fell down, by accident.’

(Holisky 1987: 105)

For approximately 36 verbs, the subject is usually ergative, but may be nominative under a marked non-volitional interpretation. *ga=rek’a(d)dalar* ‘run very fast’ falls into this class; a consultant suggested for the nominative interpretation “a person doesn’t want or intend to run, but starting down a hill, finds himself running because it is very steep” (Holisky 1987: 112). Finally, approximately 78 verbs appear only with ergative subjects under an unergative interpretation, including *lavar/levar* ‘talk,’ and *lap’c’ar* ‘play.’

Furthermore, there is evidence of a structural difference between intransitives with nominative subjects and intransitives with ergative subjects. The intransitive marker *-Dalar*⁴ when added to a transitive eliminates the ergative subject, yielding an unaccusative. When added to an intransitive that normally takes an ergative subject, it yields an intransitive that takes a nominative subject, with an unaccusative “unintentional action” interpretation (Holisky and Gagua 1994).

(2)

a. ču Jiš-n-as
 PVB go.to.bed-AOR-1SG.ERG
 ‘I went to bed’

b. ču Jiš-Jal-iⁿ-sö
 PVB go.to.bed-INTR-AOR-1SG.NOM
 ‘I went to bed (unconsciously, without realizing it)’

(Holisky and Gagua 1994: [81b,c])

(p. 138) Thus, the pattern of ergative case assignment in Tsova-Tush shows significant sensitivity to the θ -position of the DP—external arguments receive ergative case, while subjects of unaccusatives receive nominative. This factor regulating ergative assignment is low in the clause, within the vP.

However, the pattern is not uniquely determined by θ -position; transitivity of the predicate and person features of the DP also play a role. To wit, the above pattern is limited to first-/second-person DPs. Third-person DPs remain nominative with intransitive verbs,⁵ regardless of interpretation, whereas third-person DPs do bear ergative with a transitive verb.⁶

(3)

a. *bader dah* *dapx-dalĩ*
 child.NOM PVB undress-AOR
 ‘The child got undressed’ (Holisky 1987: 104)

b. *as dah* *japx-jail-n-as*
 1SG.ERG PVB undress-INTR-AOR-1SG.ERG
 ‘I got undressed’ (Holisky 1987: 105)

c. *k'nat-ev bader dah* *dapx-diẽ*
 boy-ERG child.NOM PVB undress-TR.AOR.3
 ‘The boy undressed the child’ (Holisky 1987: 104)

The transitivity of the verb is again a property determined low in the structure. The person features of the DP are first present low in the structure, although higher structural heads could also be sensitive to these features.

In addition, lexical selection, a relationship established within the vP, also seems to play a role, in that there are predicates with a nominative-oblique case pattern, as well as predicates with an ergative-oblique case pattern. The ergative-oblique pattern is rare in the language, a “minor pattern” (Holisky and Gagua 1994, section 3.2.1.6), in contrast with the nominative-oblique pattern, which is found on a “large group” of verbs (Holisky and Gagua 1994, section 3.2.1.2). This contrast indicates that the presence of a nominative (rather than oblique) object is also a factor in ergative assignment. Compare the following.

(p. 139)

(4)

a. *mastov mak qet-iⁿ vai-n*
 enemy.NOM PVB attack-AOR 1PL-DAT
 ‘The enemy attacked us’ (Holisky and Gagua 1994:[76c])

b. *tupliv h"eĉq'O son*
 shoe.PL.ERG pinch 1SG.DAT
 — ‘My shoes are pinching me’ (Holisky 1984: 188)—

Lexical selection can also be found in intransitives like *mušebadar* “work” and *gamarjbadar* “win, be victorious”, which obligatorily take ergative subjects even when the subject is third person. Holisky (1984: 189) attributes this exceptional pattern to them being borrowed from Georgian.

Overall, we find that there is not a single deciding factor in the assignment of ergative case in Tsova-Tush, but rather a variety of factors play a role. These factors include the θ -position of the DP, the person features of the DP, the presence of an object, the case borne by the object, and lexical selection by the predicate; these factors are overwhelmingly clustered low in the clause, in the vP domain.

6.2.2 Nez Perce

Nez Perce (Sahaptin: North Idaho) (Rude 1985; Woolford 1997; Deal 2010a, 2010b) illustrates a different cluster of low properties governing ergative case assignment. The basic case pattern is tripartite, with ergative *-nim*, accusative⁷ *-ne*, and zero nominative/elsewhere. These are illustrated in the following.

- (5)
- | | | | | | |
|----|-------------------------------|------------|---------------|------------|------------------|
| a. | hi-pnám-se | | | pícpic. | |
| | 3SBJ-sleep-PFV | | | cat | |
| | ‘The cat is sleeping.’ | | | | |
| | | | | | |
| b. | ki-nm | picpíc-nim | pee-p-ú’ | cu’yéem-ne | |
| | this-ERG | cat-ERG | 3/3-eat-PROSP | fish-ACC | |
| | ‘This cat will eat the fish.’ | | | | (Deal 2010a: 77) |

Ergative case fails to be assigned with pseudo noun incorporated objects (see Massam 2001 on pseudo noun incorporation, and Deal 2010b for discussion of the Nez Perce instance), as illustrated in (6).

(p. 140)

- (6)
- | | | | |
|------|--------------------------|-------------|-------------------|
| ’ipí | hi-qn’ii-se | qequíit. | |
| 3SG | 3SBJ-dig-PFV | edible.root | |
| | ‘He digs qequíit roots.’ | | (Crook 1999: 238) |

The lack of ergative case in such constructions may have several potential sources. It may be that these are syntactically treated as intransitive; indeed Rude (1985) argues for such an analysis for Nez Perce. Also, the object is unmarked for case; since ergative subjects do not occur with unmarked objects, ergative could be tied to assignment of accusative case. The object also fails to trigger object agreement, thus, the presence of object agreement may be a crucial factor in ergative case assignment.

Additional data demonstrate that more than simple intransitivity is at issue. Deal (2013), building on Rude (1985), discusses transitive clauses in which the object is a possessed DP. If the possessor is disjoint in reference from the subject, it bears accusative case and triggers object agreement; the subject bears ergative case. Deal (2013) analyses this as an obligatory possessor raising construction. If the possessor is bound by the subject, on the other hand, the possessor bears genitive case and fails to trigger object agreement. Like in the possessor raising construction, however, the possessed DP also does not bear accusative or trigger object agreement.⁸ In the absence of accusative case and object agreement, ergative case is not assigned.

(7)

a. Pit'iin'-im_i paa-'yaaŋ-na'ny-Ø-a 'ip-ne_k picpic
 girl-ERG 3SBJ-find-PR-PFV-REM.PST 3SG-ACC cat
 'The girl_i found his/her_{k/*i} cat.'

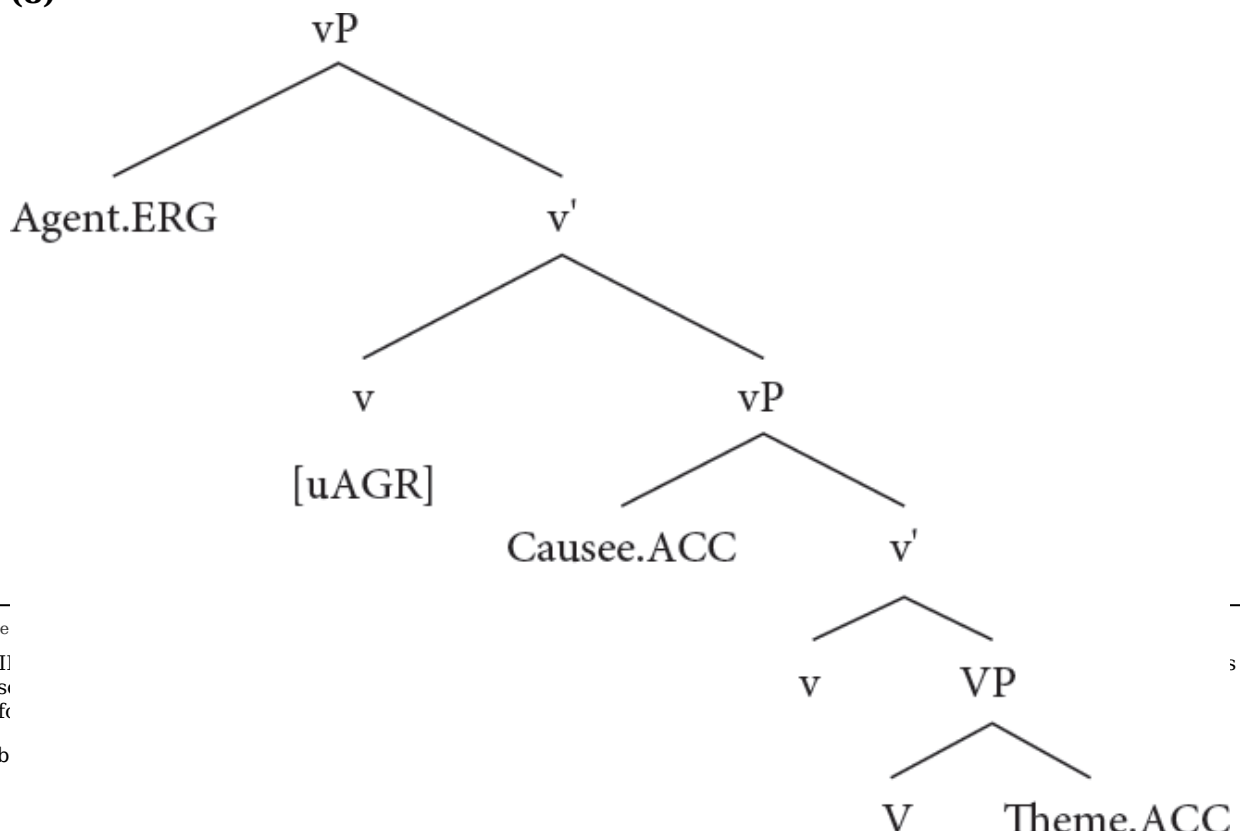
b. Pit'iin'_i hi-'yaaŋ-n-a 'ip-nim_i picpic
 girl 3SBJ-find-PFV-REM.PST 3SG.GEN cat
 'The girl_i found her_{i/*k} cat.'

(Deal 2013: 413)

Causatives provide potential evidence disambiguating whether lack of accusative or lack of object agreement is the crucial factor. In the causative of a transitive in Nez Perce, the causee does not bear ergative case. It is important to recognize that causees in ergative languages are only expected to bear ergative case if they are introduced into the structure in a vP identical to the vP that introduces agents; see for example Ippolito (2000) and Legate (2014b) for arguments that causees are rather introduced into the structure more like (high) applicative objects. Specifically to Nez Perce, provisionally assuming the causee to be introduced in the specifier of the right type of v, as sketched in (8), there is accusative case associated with this v, but no object agreement, and no ergative case.

(p. 141)

(8)



Object agreement is not the only factor in determining ergative case assignment in Nez Perce, however; person is also relevant: ergative case is found only on third-person DPs. Deal (2016) uses the tests developed in Legate (2014a) to demonstrate that first- and second-person DPs are not assigned ergative case in Nez Perce. The Nez Perce data thus stands in contrast with the widespread pattern whereby ergative case is assigned to all DPs, but is only realized morphologically on a subset of DPs; see Legate (2014a) for details.¹⁰ The following examples illustrate the Nez Perce pattern.

(10)

a. 'Ip-ním pée-'pewi-se Méli-ne.
 3SG.-ERG 3/3-look.for-IPFV.PRS Mary-ACC
 'She is looking for Mary.' (Deal 2016: [(2c)])

b. 'Iin 'ipéwi-se Méli-ne.
 1SG..NOM look.for-IPFV.PRS Mary-ACC
 'I am looking for Mary.' (Deal 2016: [(2a)])

In summary, the person features of the DP, and at least one of object agreement, accusative case, and the θ -position of the DP are primary determinants of whether ergative case is assigned in Nez Perce. Again, while the role of person is potentially ambiguous in height, the other factors are clearly low in the clause, associated with vP.

6.2.3 Warlpiri

Warlpiri (Pama-Nyungan, South-West: Northern Territory, Australia) is often discussed in the literature, but the complex factors governing ergative case assignment are (p. 143) often glossed over. The presence of an object is indeed relevant. This is evidenced by the lack of a class of transitive verbs that have two absolutive arguments in their basic use (see for example, Swartz 1996), and by the fact that that many intransitive verbs take absolutive subjects.¹¹

(11)

a. Mirni ka-lu yapa wangka-mi-lki
thereabouts PRS.IPFV-3PL.SBJ person.ABS speak-NPST-now
'There are people talking over there somewhere.'

b. Parnpa-ngka, malkarri-rla, ka-lu
ritual.type-LOC ceremonial.shield.design-LOC PRS.IPFV-3PL.SBJ
miirn-nyina-mi yapa panu
work-sit-NPST person.ABS many.ABS
'Many people work at the *parnpa* ceremony.'

c. Ngawininyi ka wararrkurra-parnka.
snake.species.ABS PRS.IPFV slither-run.NPST
'The snake slithers away.'

However, an absolutive object is not required for ergative case assignment. For example, Warlpiri retains ergative with a dative unaffected object (see also for example, Djaru (Pama-Nyungan, South-West: Northern Territory, Australia) (Tsunoda 1981a), Gurindji (Pama-Nyungan, South-West: Northern Territory, Australia) (McConvell 1980)).

(12)

a. Ngarrka-ngku ka marlu luwa-rni
man-ERG PRS.IPFV kangaroo.ABS shoot-NPST
'The man is shooting the kangaroo.'

b. Ngarrka-ngku ka-rla-jinta marlu-ku luwa-rni
man-ERG PRS.IPFV-3DAT.OBJ-3DAT.OBJ kangaroo-DAT shoot-NPST
'The man is shooting at the kangaroo.' (Hale et al. 1995: 1439)

Whether an object is required is less clear. It is difficult to unambiguously distinguish unergative verbs from transitive verbs in the language, given that the language has rampant pro-drop, given that third-person singular absolutive object agreement is null, and given that the language has productive applicative constructions (see for example, Legate 2003). It is worth noting that Swartz (1996) does not include for the language a class of verbs that are intransitive with an ergative subject. However, we do find interesting con-

trusts like the following, whereby *yunparni* ‘sing’ takes a subject in ergative case, even when apparently being used unergatively, whereas *wirntimi* ‘dance’¹² takes an absolutive subject in the same context.

(p. 144)

(13)

- a. Yurapiti-rli ka yunpa-rni jarda-kungarnti-rli.
rabbit-ERG PRS.IPFV sing-NPST sleep-PREP.COMP-ERG
‘The rabbit sings before sleep.’
- b. Wirnti-ja-lpa-lu karnta-patu-ju.
dance-PST-PST.IPFV-3PL.SBJ women-PAUC.ABS-TOP
‘The women were dancing.’

Interestingly, Laughren et al. (2007) reports that there is dialectal variation on this point, whereby an ergative subject is used with *wirntimi* for some speakers from Lajamanu.

It is clear that the presence of an object (absolutive or dative) is not the primary determinant of ergative case assignment, in that when an object is added to intransitives with an absolutive subject the subject remains absolutive. This is true whether the object is absolutive, (14a), or dative, as in (14b), which also illustrates that the dative passes object-hood tests in triggering object agreement and use of the object control complementizer *-kurra* (see Hale 1983; Simpson and Bresnan 1983). (14c) provides an additional illustration of an absolutive subject with an agreeing object, this time a high applicative dative object (see Simpson 1991 and Legate 2001 on dative high applicatives in Warlpiri).

(14)

- a. Warlpiri ka-rna ngajulu wangka-mi.
Warlpiri.ABS IPFV-1SG.SBJ 1SG.ABS speak-NPST
‘I am speaking Warlpiri.’
- b. Karnta ka-rla wangka-mi ngarrka-ku
woman.ABS PRS.IPFV-3DAT.OBJ speak-NPST man-DAT
[jarnti-rninja-kurra](-ku).
trim-INF-OBJ.COMP-(DAT)
‘The woman is speaking to the man trimming it.’ (Simpson and Bresnan, 1983: 54)
- c. Karnta ka-rla kurdu-ku parnka-mi.
woman.ABS PRS.IPFV-3DAT.OBJ child-DAT run.NPST
‘The woman is running for the sake of the child.’ (Simpson, 1991: 381)

In Legate (2012a), I provide evidence that the θ -position of the DP also plays a role in whether ergative case is assigned. I examine Warlpiri verbs with two arguments, one of which receives dative case. For those verbs that are ergative-dative, the ergative is an ex-

ternal argument; examples are provided here for *jinkami* ‘support, help to walk’ and *warrini* ‘seek.’ For those verbs that are absolutive-dative, in contrast, many of the absolutes are internal arguments, especially themes/patients; examples are provided here for *wiirr-parntarrimi* ‘be a white film over’ and *rdipimi* ‘come upon.’

(p. 145)

(15)

a. Ngati-nyanu-rlu ka-rla kurdu-ku
 mother-ANAPH-ERG PRS.IPFV-3DAT.OBJ child-DAT
 nyanungu-nyangu-ku warru jinka-mi.
 3-POSS-DAT around help.to.walk-NPST
 ‘The mother is propping up her child as he walks around.’

b. Wati-ngki ka-rla kurduku warri-rni.
 man-ERG PRS.IPFV-3DAT.OBJ child-DAT seek-NPST
 ‘The man is looking for the child.’

(16)

a. Wiirr-parntarri-mi ka-rla kurdu-ku yurlkurrpa
 white-over.top-NPST PRES.IPFV-3DAT child-DAT soap.ABS
 palka-juku.
 body-still
 ‘The soap is still plastered over the child.’

b. Pardany-para-ja ngula-ji yangka
 chance.meeting-follow-PAST that.ABS-TOP like
 kuja-ka-rla yapa —wati marda,
 DECL.COMP-PRS.IPFV-3DAT.OBJ person.ABS man.ABS maybe
 karnta marda, kurdu marda—rdipi-mi warna-ku
 woman.ABS maybe child.ABS maybe encounter-NPST snake-DAT
 marda, wardapi-ki marda, lungkarda-ku marda,
 maybe goanna-DAT maybe blue.tongued.lizard-DAT maybe
 ngurrpa marda, yangka marna-ngka-ku marda,
 ignorant.ABS maybe like grass-LOC-DAT maybe
 ngulya-ngka-ku marda.
 burrow-LOC-DAT maybe
 ‘*Pardany-paraja* is like when someone—a man or a woman or a child—comes across a snake or a goanna or a Blue Tongue lizard perhaps without knowing it was there—like in the grass or in a burrow.’

Experiencer subjects may have either ergative or absolutive case, depending on the predicate; examples are provided for *pulka-pinyi* ‘approve of, praise,’ which takes an ergative subject, and *kapatimi* ‘dislike,’ which takes an absolutive.

(17)

- a. Pulka-pi-nyɪ ngula-ji yangka
 approval-hit-NPST that.ABS-TOP like
 kuja-ka-rla-jinta ngati-nyanu-rlu
 DECL.COMP-PRS.IPFV-3DAT.OBJ-3DAT.OBJ mother-ANAPH-ERG
 manu kirda-nyanu-rlu kulu-parnta-ku, kurdu-nyanu-ku,
 or father-ANAPH-ERG anger-having-DAT child-ANAPH-DAT
 ngula yangka kuja-ka-jana yapa-kari pi-nyɪ
 that.ABS like DECL.COMP-PRS.IPFV-3PL.OBJ person-other hit-NPST

(p. 146)

kulu-parnta-rlu
 anger-having-ERG
 ‘Pulka-pinyi is when a mother or father gives approval to their child who fights, like when he fights and beats up other people’

- b. Warrki-ki ka-rla kapati-mi yangka yapa.
 work-DAT PRS.IPFV-3DAT.OBJ dislike-NPST that.ABS person.ABS
 ‘That person doesn’t like work.’

The role of lexical selection is also apparent in that certain agents appear with absolutive case in the presence of a dative object, including the subjects of *jaka-yirrarri* ‘plan, plot’ and *jurrurru-yarnkami* ‘seize.’

(18)

- a. Napanangka-rla jaka-yirra-rnu Napaljarri-ki. Kapu
 Napanangka.ABS-3DAT.OBJ plan-put-PST Napaljarri-DAT FUT.COMP
 nganta paka-rni kulu-ngku
 perhaps hit-NPST anger-ERG
 ‘Napanangka threatened Napaljarri that she would hit her in anger.’
- b. Kulu ka-rla karnta
 fight.ABS PRS.IPFV-3DAT.OBJ woman.ABS
 jinta-kari-ki-rlangu-ku jurrurru-yarnka-mi watiya-ku
 one-other-DAT-for.example-DAT grabbing-grab-NPST wood-DAT
 karlangu-ku.
 digging.stick-DAT
 ‘In a fight a woman grabs hold of the other woman’s stick.’

In summary, we see that at least the presence of an object and the θ -position of the subject are relevant factors in the assignment of ergative case in Warlpiri. However, neither are determinative, and there is a significant role for lexical selection. These three factors

are again low in the syntactic structure, within the vP, supporting an approach whereby ergative case assignment is determined within the vP.

6.2.4 Tshangla

Tshangla (Tibeto-Burman: Bhutan) (Andvik 1999)¹³ contrasts the transitive subject marked with ergative *-gi*,¹⁴ with the intransitive subject and transitive object, which are morphologically unmarked (and un glossed) for case.¹⁵

(p. 147)

(19)

a. Ji-gi shing chat-pa
1SG-ERG tree cut-NMLZ
'I cut the tree.' (Andvik 1999: 200)

b. Jang yi-pha
1SG sleep-NMLZ
'I slept.' (Andvik 1999: 180)

Andvik (1999) examines the multiple factors involved in the appearance of ergative case, stating (1999: 193) "no single one of which is sufficient on its own to motivate agentive marking". From the above examples we see that some notion of transitivity is relevant, but the details need to be determined. To begin, assignment of ergative is not dependent on an object that bears the unmarked case: verbs that select for locative/dative¹⁶ objects also take ergative subjects. For example, 'to cheat,' 'to rebel against,' 'to bother,' and 'to scold' fall into this class; examples follow.

(20)

a. Tsongpen-gi a-ha tem a-wa.
merchant-ERG 1PL-LOC/DAT cheat do-NMLZ
'The merchant cheated us.' (Andvik 1999: 221)

b. Ro-ki ro-ka apa-ga ngolok a-na.
3-ERG 3-GEN father-LOC/DAT rebellion do-COP
'He is rebelling against his father.' (Andvik 1999: 222)

c. Kuchi, ji-gi nan-ga trok-pa na.
excuse 1SG-ERG 2SG-LOC/DAT bother-NMLZ PRT
'Excuse me, I have bothered you.' (Andvik 1999: 243)

d. Ro-ki ja-ga brang-pa.
3-ERG 1SG-LOC/DAT scold-NMLZ
'He scolded me.' (Andvik 1999: 243)

Nor is the assignment of ergative dependent on a DP object. Verbs of cognition, including for example *sele* ‘to know,’ *tsile* ‘to reckon, consider,’ *nale* ‘to comply, agree,’ and verbs of utterance, including for example *yekpe* ‘to speak,’ and *jime* ‘to ask,’ take ergative whether used with a nominal complement, propositional complement, or a null complement. Two examples follow.

(21)

- a. Nyi nga-ba-ki “jang bu-i jang bu-i” yek-pa-la.
 PRT fish-PL-ERG 1SG take-HOR 1SG take-HOR speak-NMLZ-COP
 ‘And the fish said, “Take me! Take me!”’ (Andvik 1999: 197)

(p. 148)

- b. Ji-gi ma-se-la. Jang shi-n nyok-nyi-sha ji-gi se-le.
 1SG-ERG NEG-know-PRT 1SG die-SE receive-NF-PRT 1SG-ERG know-INF
 ‘I don’t know. Only if I had died would I know.’ (Andvik 1999: 196)

The presence of a complement is relevant, though; predicates that normally appear as intransitive with an unmarked subject take ergative subjects when used with a complement (including null, as seen for the transitive in (21)). Andvik (1999: 215) characterizes this usage as “the action of the subject referent has consequences for another referent.” In the following examples, the same complex predicate (consisting of a light verb and noun), takes an unmarked subject with the unergative interpretation ‘pray,’ but an ergative subject with the transitive interpretation ‘entreat.’

(22)

- a. Nyi shepa phi-n chhum-deke, rokte sewu ta-phe
 PRT preach do-SE finish-NF 3PL prayer make-INF
 ren-pa-kap-nyi ...
 prepare-PTCP-with-NF
 ‘And when the preaching was finished, and the others were about to pray ...’
 (Andvik 1999: 221)

- b. Songo-ba-ki ro-ka sewu ta-pha-la.
 person-PL-ERG 3-LOC/DAT prayer make-NMLZ-COP
 ‘The people entreated him.’ (Andvik 1999: 221)

Another example involves the verb ‘walk,’ which takes an unmarked subject in its unergative use, but in the following takes an ergative subject on the interpretation ‘walk ahead of.’

(23)

- Apa-gi gum gum dang-nyi, jang tshin-ga lus chho-wa
 father-ERG ahead ahead walk-NF 1SG after-LOC leave stay-NMLZ
 ‘Father walking ahead, I was left behind.’ (Andvik 1999: 216)

Similarly, an experiencer subject may appear with ergative case in the presence of a complement. Thus, in the following, a complex predicate (consisting of a light verb and a noun) appears with an unmarked subject with the meaning ‘be happy’ but an ergative subject with the meaning ‘be pleased with.’

(24)

- a. Ro kap-nyi chhas phi-nyi jang-ta shonang phi-wa.
 3SG with-NF talk do-NF 1SG-PRT happy feel-NMLZ
 ‘Talking with him I feel happy.’ (Andvik 1999: 223)
- b. Nyi khaila onyen shi-deke, semchen thamche-ki ribong-ga namesame
 PRT tiger DEM die-NF animal all-ERG rabbit-LOC very
 shonang phe-nyi...
 happiness feel-NF
 ‘And after the tiger died, all of the animals were very pleased (with the rabbit).’
 (Andvik 1999: 224)

(p. 149) The presence of a complement is only one of the factors determining ergative case assignment. The θ -position of the DP is also relevant; thus, we find ergative only on thematic subjects, not two-argument unaccusatives.

(25)

- a. Ama shi-n chhum-deke omchhang ata-ga unyu
 mother die-SE finish-NF another elder.brother-LOC/DAT DEM
 pruskin natsha-rang nyong-pa
 similar disease-EMPH receive-NMLZ
 ‘After mother died, the older brother also got the very same disease.’
 (Andvik 1999: 212)
- b. Nyi unyu chhesung-gi not-dengai-la songo thamchen yi
 PRT DEM spirit-ERG harm-NF-PRT person all blood
 phros-nyi shile.
 vomit-NF die-INF
 ‘And if this spirit makes them sick, everyone will vomit blood and die.’
 (Andvik 1999: 204)

Furthermore, verbs that are normally unaccusative do appear with ergative subjects when used in a marked agentive context, again demonstrating the relevance of the θ -position of the DP. Compare the unaccusative use of ‘vomit’ in (25b), with the use with an ergative external argument in (26).

(26)

Shi-wa songo-gi bra songo-ga not-nyila, unyu
 die-NOM person-ERG other person-DAT/LOC make.sick-COND this
 shinang. ... Shinang tshebang-gi phros-pe.
shinang shinang some-ERG vomit-NOM
 ‘If a dead person causes another person to become sick, this is “shinang”. ...
 Some shinangs vomit.’ (Andvik 1999: 204)

Another example follows, in which the owner of a house is expecting a thief that night and thus is forcing himself to stay awake.

(27)

ro-ki onya binang-ga ma-yi-pha
 3-ERG DEM night-LOC NEG-sleep-PTCP
 ‘on that night he will not sleep.’ (Andvik 1999: 205)

The following use of ergative on the subject of a normally unaccusative predicate Andvik (1999: 205) treats as a separate phenomenon, as “contrary to expectations of what is normal.” In that violating expectations may require a volitional act, and in that the point of this utterance seems to be that the DP has agentive control over the situation, it is likely that this type of example may be assimilated to the two previous.

(28)

Apa nan shuk chaka, nan-gi mar-be hang-rang mancha.
 father 2SG power COP 2SG-ERG be.sick.INF what-EMPH NEG.COP
 ‘Father, you are powerful; you are never going to get sick.’ (Andvik 1999: 205)

(p. 150) Aspect is also relevant, and operates in the crosslinguistically expected direction: in the perfective, ergative on transitive subjects is obligatory, whereas in the imperfective, the ergative is optional.

(29)

a. Ji-gi/*Jang shing chat-pa.
 1SG-ERG/*1SG tree cut-NMLZ
 ‘I cut the tree.’ (Andvik 1999: 200)

b. Ji-gi/Jang shing chat-cha.
 1SG-ERG/1SG tree cut-COP
 ‘I am cutting the tree.’ (Andvik 1999: 200)

Here I note simply that aspect falls under our generalization that ergative assignment is affected by properties low in the clause, in that Aspect is in a selectional relationship with vP. However, see for example Laka (2006a), Mateo-Toledo (2008), Mateo Pedro (2009), Coon (2010a) for approaches whereby the imperfective functions as an intransitive matrix predicate; such approaches are compatible with the current discussion.

In sum, ergative case assignment in Tshangla is determined by a cluster of factors that are low in the clausal structure, including at least presence of a complement, the θ -position of the DP, and aspectual marking.

6.2.5 Hindi

In this section we consider another well-studied language, Hindi/Urdu (Indo-Aryan: Pakistan, India) (Mahajan 1989; Mohanan 1994a; Butt and King 2004; Davison 2004a; among many others). The basic pattern in the perfective aspect is for the transitive subject to be marked ergative and the intransitive subject and transitive object to be unmarked.¹⁷ In other aspects, all of these core arguments are unmarked.

(30)

a. gaad̪ii muḍii.
vehicle turn.PFV
'The vehicle turned.' (Mohanan 1994a: 34)

b. raam-ne darvaazaa kʰolaa
Ram-ERG door open.PFV
'Ram opened the door.' (Mohanan 1994a: 8)

(p. 151)

c. raam darvaazaa kʰolegaa
Ram door open.FUT
'Ram will open the door.' (Mohanan 1994a: 8)

The assignment of ergative is not dependent on the object bearing the unmarked case; dative objects are equally compatible with ergative subjects.

(31)

raam-ne ravii-ko piiṭaa
Ram-ERG Ravi-DAT beat.PFV
'Ram beat Ravi.' (Mohanan 1994a: 70)

Note that despite some inconsistency in the literature, *ko* on the object in Hindi/Urdu is indeed dative rather than accusative. Synchronically, *ko* is used in contexts that are unambiguously dative, including experiencer subjects and the indirect object in a double object construction. These uses are also historically prior, appearing in Old Urdu in 1200AD for the indirect object in a double object construction and the object of 'seek' (Butt and Ahmed 2011) ('seek' commonly appears with a dative object crosslinguistically, see for ex-

ample the use in Warlpiri (section 6.2.3)), as well as for the goal of directed motion verbs (Butt, Ahmed, and Poudel 2008). Regarding the use of *ko* on objects in differential object marking (based on specificity/animacy), such marking is commonly dative crosslinguistically. See also Legate (2008) for arguments that Hindi/Urdu accusative is unmarked, morphologically syncretic with the nominative, and Bubenik (1998) for evidence that Old Indo-Aryan nominative and accusative cases became syncretic in Middle Indo-Aryan.

While presence of a complement is relevant for ergative assignment, it is not determinative. A few intransitive verbs allow ergative subjects, with a corresponding interpretive difference, including ‘cough,’ ‘sneeze,’ ‘smile,’ ‘spit,’ ‘cry,’ ‘laugh,’ ‘sleep.’ (See for example, Tuite et al. 1985, Hook et al. 1987, Mohanan 1994a, Davison 1999 for discussion.)

(32)

a. (raam-ko acaanak šer dik^haa.) vah /*us-ne cillaayaa.
 (Ram-DAT suddenly lion appear.PFV) he he-ERG scream.PFV
 (Ram suddenly saw a lion.) ‘He screamed.’

b. us-ne /*vah jaan buujk^hkar cillaayaa.
 he-ERG he deliberately shout.PFV
 ‘He shouted deliberately.’ (Mohanan 1994a: 72)

In addition, there are lexical effects, whereby particular lexical verbs unexpectedly appear without ergative, most notably ‘bring’ (Mahajan 1989), but also ‘speak’ and optionally ‘understand,’ among others.

(p. 152)

(33)

raam(*-ne) šiišaa laayaa
 Ram-ERG mirror bring.PFV
 ‘Ram brought the mirror.’ (Mohanan 1994a: 72)

Again, this cluster of factors is low in the clause, within vP.

The relationship between ergative case assignment and the vP is strongly supported by Hindi light verb constructions (see for example Butt 1995; Mahajan 2012). In such constructions, the presence/absence of ergative case on the external argument is determined by the light verb. For example, when ‘bring’ as a lexical verb combines with the light verb ‘give,’ its subject does receive ergative case.

(34)

Kabir-ne vo kitaab laa dii
 Kabir-ERG that book bring give.PFV.F
 ‘Kabir brought that book.’ (Mahajan 2012: 208)

6.3.1 Kurdish Past Tense

Kurmanji Kurdish (Iranian: Turkey, Iran) (Bynon 1979; Payne 1980; Haig 1998; Thackston 2006) exhibits a pattern that may be initially described as ergative dependent on past tense. Note that the ergative is marked with a generalized oblique case while the nominative is unmarked.¹⁸ In the past, the intransitive subject is unmarked, the transitive subject is oblique, i.e. ergative, and the transitive object is unmarked.

(36)

a. ez d̥û-m
1SG.DIR go.PST-1SG
'I went.' (Haig 1998: 157)

b. min nan xwar
1SG.OBL bread eat.PST.3SG
'I ate the bread.' (Haig 1998: 160)

In the present, in contrast, the subject is unmarked, while the object is oblique, in essentially an accusative pattern.

(37)

ez nên di-xw-im
1SG.DIR bread.OBL DUR-eat.PRS-1SG
'I am eating the bread.' (Haig 1998: 160)

(p. 154) We should not, however, conclude that ergative is assigned by past tense T, and hence dependent on a projection high in the clausal structure. The notion of “past” that is relevant to ergative case assignment here is not clausal tense associated with TP. Instead, the “past” is an allomorph of the verb stem, which evolved from an Old Iranian perfect participle (see for example Payne 1980; Haig 2008). The past versus present allomorph of the stem appears inside negation, aspect and agreement morphology, confirming that it is indeed based low in the clause.

(38)

a. Goşt me ne-ti-xward.
meat 1.PL.OBL NEG-DUR-eat.PST.3SG
'Meat, we didn't eat.' (Haig 1998: 160)

b. pe-ət n-â-le-əm Hiwa chi
to-2SG.DAT NEG-IPFV-tell.PRS-1SG.NOM Hiwa what
a-ka-â
IPFV-do.PRS-3SG.NOM
'I shall not tell you what Hiwa is doing.' (Karimi 2010: 697)

Furthermore, use of the past stem does not necessarily correspond to a clausal past tense interpretation. The present perfective combines the past stem with the perfective aspect, thus showing a dissociation between the verbal allomorph and clausal tense. Importantly, it is the verbal allomorph that determines case: ergative is indeed assigned in the present perfective, despite the clausal present tense.¹⁹

(39)

a. min nan xwar-*iy*e
 1SG.OBL bread eat.PST-PFV.3SG
 ‘I’ve eaten the bread.’ (Haig 1998: 159)

b. Min heta niha çar kitêb çapkir-*ine*.
 1sg.OBL until now four books publish.PST-PFV.PL
 ‘Until now I have published four books.’ (Thackston 2006: 54)

I conclude that the past allomorph of the verbal root is a factor in ergative assignment in Kurmanji Kurdish, not clausal past tense based in TP. The language thus confirms to the generalization that ergative is assigned based on properties low in the clausal structure.

6.3.2 Yukulta Irrealis

Yukulta²⁰ (Tangic: northwest Queensland, Australia) (McConvell 1981; Keen 1983) has been described as ergative dependent on the realis mood (see for example, Tsuonda (p. 155) 1981b). Lexical DPs in Yukulta have marked ergative and absolutive forms,²¹ pronouns show a single form for all of ergative, nominative, and accusative, while the clitic cluster has distinct agreement forms for each of ergative, nominative, and accusative. The following illustrate the basic pattern.

(40)

a. *ṭir-iy*a -ka-*nt*a pa:*t*^ya maṇṭu^wara
 snake-ERG -TR-PST.TR.R bite.IND boy.ABS
 ‘The snake bit the boy.’ (Keen 1983: 205)

b. *ṭir-a* -ṇka pari^ya waḷmaṭ-*i* kamar-*i*
 snake-ABS -PRS.INTR.3SG crawl.IND on.top-LOC stone-LOC
 ‘The snake is crawling over the stone.’ (Keen 1983: 206)

A nominative-dative case frame is used for two-argument predicates that are not canonically transitive, including predicates with an experiencer subject and predicates with a goal object.

(41)

a. pulwit^ya -ka-ti ṭir-in^yt^ya
 feel.fright.IND -1SG.NOM-PRS.INTR.R snake-DAT
 ‘I’m frightened of snakes.’ (Keen 1983: 206)

b. t^yanit^ya -ka-ti maṇṭuwara-ṇṭa
 look.IND -1SG.NOM-PRS.INTR.R boy-DAT
 ‘I’m looking for the boy.’ (Keen 1983: 223)

The clitic cluster registers agreement, as well as information regarding transitivity, tense, and mood, under complex interactions. The past forms in the clitic cluster show a realis/irrealis distinction, but importantly, this distinction does not affect the assignment of ergative case. In the following, the first example is past realis and the second past irrealis; both have an ergative first-person subject indicated in the clitic cluster and an absolutive object.

(42)

a. ṭaṭin-ta -ṇa-nta warunta kurit^ya
 there-ABS 1SG.ERG-PST.TR.R goanna.ABS see.IND
 ‘I saw a goanna over there.’ (Keen 1983: 202)

b. walira-ṇa-nti kapa ṇumpanta miyaḷṭa
 NEG-1SG.ERG-PST.TR.IRR find your.ABS spear.ABS
 ‘I didn’t find your spear.’ (Keen 1983: 235)

This indicates that ergative assignment is not dependent on realis mood.

(p. 156) Instead, the intransitive nominative-dative frame is used in two contexts signaling reduced transitivity, in the sense of an unaffected/goal object. The first context is negative non-past clauses. In the first example of the following pair, the affirmative present appears with an ergative-absolutive case frame; note that the object is a patient affected by the event. In the second example, the negative present appears with a nominative-dative case frame; note that the object cannot be affected by the non-occurring event. The clitic cluster registers the first as a transitive verb and the second as an intransitive verb, but shows no realis versus irrealis distinction.

(43)

a. $\text{\textasciitilde{t}\textasciitilde{a}\textasciitilde{n}\textasciitilde{k}\textasciitilde{a}\textasciitilde{-}y\textasciitilde{a}} \quad \text{-ka-ri} \quad \text{\textasciitilde{n}\textasciitilde{a}\textasciitilde{w}\textasciitilde{u}} \quad \text{\textasciitilde{p}\textasciitilde{a}\textasciitilde{l}\textasciitilde{a}\textasciitilde{t}\textasciitilde{a}}$
 man-ERG -TR-PRS.TR.R dog.ABS hit.IND
 ‘The man is hitting the dog.’ (Keen 1983: 206)

b. $\text{\textasciitilde{w}\textasciitilde{a}\textasciitilde{l}\textasciitilde{i}\textasciitilde{r}\textasciitilde{a}} \quad \text{-\textasciitilde{n}\textasciitilde{k}\textasciitilde{a}} \quad \text{\textasciitilde{t}\textasciitilde{a}\textasciitilde{n}\textasciitilde{k}\textasciitilde{a}\textasciitilde{-}\textasciitilde{r}\textasciitilde{a}} \quad \text{\textasciitilde{n}\textasciitilde{a}\textasciitilde{w}\textasciitilde{u}\textasciitilde{-}\textasciitilde{n}\textasciitilde{t}\textasciitilde{a}} \quad \text{\textasciitilde{p}\textasciitilde{a}\textasciitilde{l}\textasciitilde{a}\textasciitilde{t}\textasciitilde{a}}$
 NEG -PRS.INTR.3sg man-ABS dog-DAT hit.IND
 ‘The man isn’t hitting the dog.’ (Keen 1983: 206)

The second context of reduced transitivity marked by use of the nominative-dative case frame is desideratives. The use of nominative-dative in the desiderative is optional, and “can suggest that the expectation of an action being completed or experienced is reduced due to outside factors” (Keen 1983: 239). Note that the desiderative itself is low in the clausal structure, appearing as a form of the lexical verb, below the higher inflectional information registered on the auxiliary. The following examples illustrate the desiderative nominative-dative, in contrast with the ergative-absolutive. Again, the distinction between the two is registered in the auxiliary as a difference in transitivity, not mood; both appear in the realis.

(44)

a. $\text{\textasciitilde{k}\textasciitilde{a}\textasciitilde{n}\textasciitilde{a}\textasciitilde{t}\textasciitilde{a}} \quad \text{-ka-ti} \quad \text{\textasciitilde{w}\textasciitilde{u}\textasciitilde{l}\textasciitilde{a}\textasciitilde{n}\textasciitilde{-}\textasciitilde{i}\textasciitilde{n}\textasciitilde{t}\textasciitilde{y}\textasciitilde{a}}$
 cook.DES 1SG.NOM-PRS.INTR.R food-DAT
 ‘I’d like to cook some tucker.’ (Keen 1983: 221)

b. $\text{\textasciitilde{w}\textasciitilde{u}\textasciitilde{l}\textasciitilde{a}\textasciitilde{n}\textasciitilde{t}\textasciitilde{a}} \quad \text{-\textasciitilde{n}\textasciitilde{a}\textasciitilde{-}\textasciitilde{r}\textasciitilde{i}} \quad \text{\textasciitilde{k}\textasciitilde{a}\textasciitilde{n}\textasciitilde{a}\textasciitilde{t}\textasciitilde{y}\textasciitilde{a}}$
 food.ABS 1SG.ERG-PRS.TR.R cook.IND
 ‘I’m cooking tucker.’ (Keen 1983: 221)

As an aside, note that this case frame is also employed when the object outranks the subject, according to a hierarchy whereby first-person nonsingular pronouns outrank first-person singular and second-person pronouns, which in turn outrank third-person pronouns and nominals. The following illustrates; note that the third-person subject ‘mosquito’ is in the nominative/absolutive, and the clitic cluster marks the clause as intransitive realis, and the first-person agreement clitic is the oblique form as triggered by a dative.

(45)

kunul-ta -tu-yinjka pa:t^ya
 mosquito-ABS 1SG.OBL-PAST.INTR.R bite.IND

‘A mosquito bit me.’

(Keen 1983: 234)

To summarize, Yukulta ergative is not assigned by realis mood. Instead, ergative is assigned to the thematic subject of transitive verbs. In selected contexts of reduced transitivity, and in contexts in which the thematic object outranks the thematic subject, the intransitive nominative-dative case frame is used instead. This case frame is otherwise used for two-argument predicates that are not canonically transitive, including experiencer subject predicates, and predicates with a goal object. The factors of transitivity, the θ -role of the subject and object, and the case borne by the object, are all low in the clause. The language therefore is in fact consistent with the generalization that ergative assignment is dependent on factors low in the clause, within the vP.

6.4 Conclusion

This chapter has had modest goals: to demonstrate that the assignment of ergative case is multifaceted, both within and across languages, and to demonstrate that ergative case in a range of unrelated languages is assigned based on properties low in the clause, centered around vP. We reexamined two languages, Kurmanji Kurdish and Yukulta, that have been described as exhibiting ergative dependent on factors high in the clausal structure, past tense, and realis mood respectively. We discovered that ergative case assignment in these languages in fact is not dependent on tense and mood, but rather on properties that are determined low in the vP: an allomorph of the lexical verb determined within vP, the θ -role borne by the subject and object, the case of the object, the desiderative form of the lexical verb, and the relative ranking of the person features of the subject and object. We leave open whether true “high ergative” languages may be found, that is languages in which assignment of ergative is dependent on factors high in the clausal structure, in the TP/CP domain. Note that only languages in which ergative can be clearly differentiated from nominative assigned by TP/CP would the label “high ergative” be appropriate for that case; otherwise, the case would simply be nominative.

In addition to Kurmanji Kurdish and Yukulta, we examined five typologically disparate languages in which the ergative is assigned based on a variety of factors centered around vP: Tsova-Tush, Nez Perce, Warlpiri, Tshangla, and Hindi. Many of the factors identified may fall under the notion of transitivity broadly conceived, including the presence of a complement, the assignment of accusative case, the presence of object agreement, and the thematic interpretation of the subject and the object. Other (p. 158) low factors identified include the identity of the lexical predicate, the identity of the light verb, and the clausal aspect. These properties are clustered around vP, and are independent of higher

projections in the TP/CP domain. I conclude that for a wide range of “low ergative” languages, the locus of ergative case is vP.

Acknowledgements

Thank you to the editors, Jessica Coon, Diane Massam, and Lisa Travis, to an anonymous reviewer, to the audience at the 2013 LSA Annual Meeting, and to all those who have discussed ergativity with me over the years.

Abbreviations

Abbreviations in glosses follow the Leipzig conventions, with the following additions: ANAPH = anaphoric, AOR = aorist, ASP = aspect, CON = contact, DES = desiderative, DIR = direct, EMPH = emphatic, HOR = hortative, NF = nonfinal verbal suffix, PAUC = paucal, PR = possessor raising, PREP = preparatory, PROSP = prospective, PRT = particle, PVB = preverb, R = realis, REM = remote, SE = stem extender.

Notes:

(¹) Thank you to Dee Ann Holisky for discussion of Tsova-Tush.

(²) I use nominative here as the traditional term for this morphological form of the verb; it appears on intransitive subjects and transitive objects. I leave aside whether this form corresponds to nominative from T for both the subject and object, or nominative from T for the subject and accusative from v for the object. For related discussion, see for example, Aldridge (2008a); Legate (2008a); Coon et al. (2014).

(³) Including those that appear with an oblique, rather than nominative, object; see Holisky 1984: 192, n.10.

(⁴) See Holisky and Gagua for the (morpho)phonological rules that yield the surface forms of this and other verbal morphology.

(⁵) Again, including verbs with an oblique object.

(⁶) Note that the contrast between (3b) versus (3c) is indeed due to the difference in person, not due to the difference in the status of the subject as a pronoun versus a full DP. Like full DPs, third-person pronouns (derived from demonstratives) do show ergative in transitives; hence in the following example the subject is the third singular ergative *oqus* rather than the third singular nominative *o*.

(i) *oqus* *Jet:* *xen-ex* *Bexk'-iⁿ*
3SG.ERG cow.NOM tree-CON tie-AOR.3SG
'He tied the cow to the tree.' (Holisky and Gagua 1994:[75a])

(⁷) It may be that this is better glossed as DAT. Note that in a double object construction, the goal must bear this case and the theme cannot. It is often referred to in the literature with the more neutral “objective.”

(⁸) This requires additional explanation; Rude (1986) and Deal (2010a) point out that a genitive possessor in the subject blocks ergative as well, yielding a clause with an unmarked subject and accusative object. Deal (2010a) notes that the possessor must be treated as closer to a higher probe than the containing DP in possessor raising constructions; she treats the lack of agreement for bound possessors (which do not raise) as an anaphor agreement effect (see Rizzi 1990a; Woolford 1999).

(⁹) Deal (2010a, 2010b) suggests an alternative explanation for the lack of ergative on causees, proposing that an ergative DP must enter an agreement relationship with T. In that this analysis is tantamount to a quirky case analysis of ergative, and given that ergative DPs do indeed undergo A-movement, raising to become the grammatical subject, as expected of quirky case-marked DPs, the analysis has plausibility. The necessity of agreement with T, however, cannot be established on the basis of causees alone, given that the lack of ergative on causees is subsumed under the requirement of object agreement for ergative assignment, and given that the θ -position of the causee may be distinct from that of more standard external arguments.

(¹⁰) Tsova-Tush, discussed in the section 6.2.1, constitutes another language in which the person feature of the DP is a factor in syntactic case assignment, rather than in the morphological realization of case. Interestingly, in that instance it is the third-person DPs that fail to be assigned ergative rather than the first and second-person DPs.

(¹¹) Warlpiri “absolute” is nominative on S and accusative on O, see Legate (2008). Warlpiri data from Laughren et al. (2007) unless otherwise noted.

(¹²) This is a particular style of dancing, typical of women.

(¹³) In the Tshangla data, note that the morpheme glossed as a copula (COP) has several uses, including the imperfective; the morpheme glossed as a nominalizer (NMLZ) also has several uses, including marking past perfective in the finite affirmative; the stem extender (SE) is added to vowel-final verb roots.

(¹⁴) The ergative also appears on instrumental and reason adjuncts; I leave this syncretism aside.

(¹⁵) There is additional complexity involving information structure that I don’t consider here. Ergative is obligatory for focal transitive subjects, but optional for topical, and impossible for contrastively focused. Case morphology affected by information structure is found in non-ergative languages; see for example the well-discussed case of Japanese.

(¹⁶) These are synthetic.

(¹⁷) The unmarked case is un glossed; see Legate (2008) for arguments that it corresponds to nominative on the intransitive subject and accusative on the transitive object.

(¹⁸) Case marking is neutralized when the noun is modified. “Nominative” here is used as a traditional term for the unmarked case. In pronouns, the distinction between the oblique and the unmarked is suppletive. Unmarked nouns are un glossed; unmarked pronouns are glossed as direct (DIR). See, for example, Dorleijin 1996 for discussion of dialect variation in case marking, including extension of the marked ACC of the present into the past, yielding a transitive OBL-OBL pattern.

(¹⁹) I have added glosses to the example from Thackston (2006).

(²⁰) This language is also known as Gang(g)alidda.

(²¹) Ergative is syncretic with locative. Absolutive is used as a traditional term, referring to the morphological realization of nominative on the intransitive subject and accusative on the transitive object; see Legate (2008, 2014a) for discussion.

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