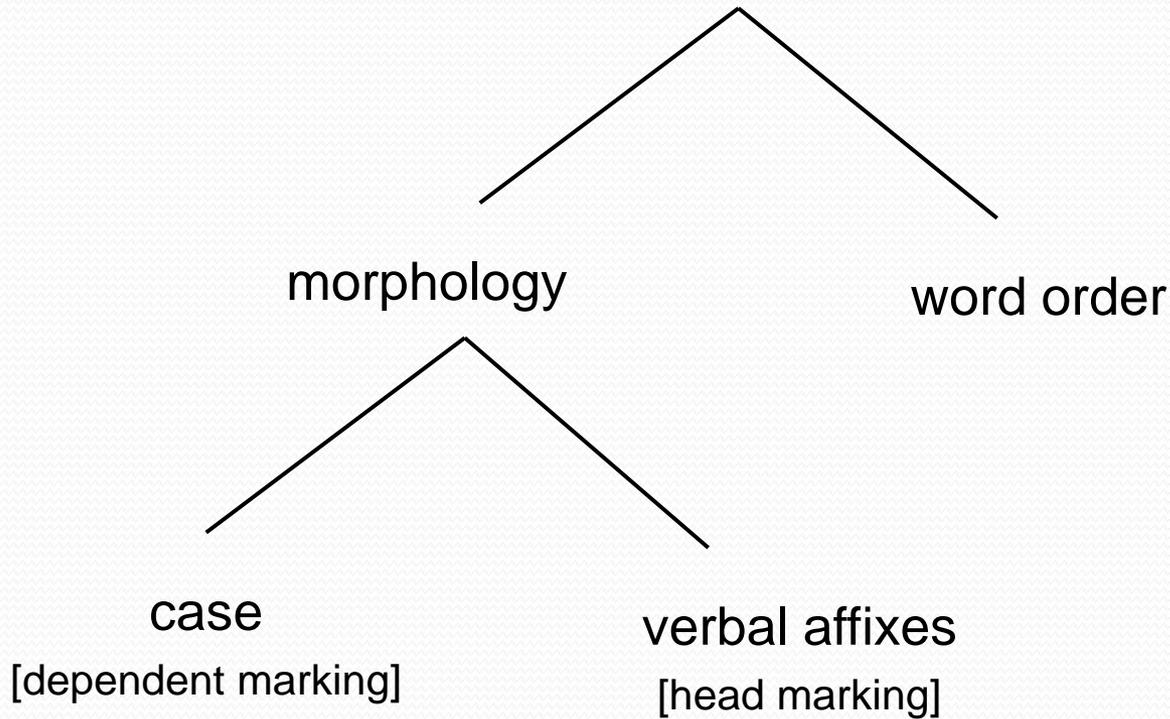


Ergativity

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Grammatical relations



Case marking

German

- (1) **Der** Mann schläft.
- (2) **Der** Mann sieht **den** Vogel.

English

- (1) The man is sleeping.
- (2) The man is watching the bird.

Dyirbal

- (1) η uma banaga- η u
father return-NONFUT
'Father returned.'
- (2) yabu banaga- η u
mother return-NONFUT
'Mother returned.'
- (3) η uma yabu- η gu bura-n
father mother-CASE see-NONFUT
'Mother saw father.'
- (4) yabu η uma- η gu bura-n
mother father-CASE see-NONFUT
'Father saw mother.'

Grammatical relations

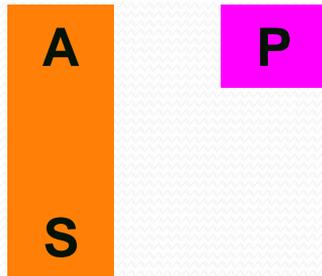
S = subject of intransitive clause

A = subject of transitive clause

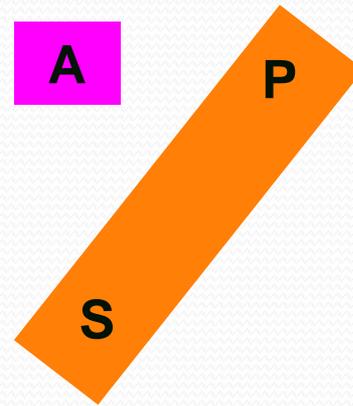
P = direct object

Alignment

nominative-accusative



ergative-absolutive

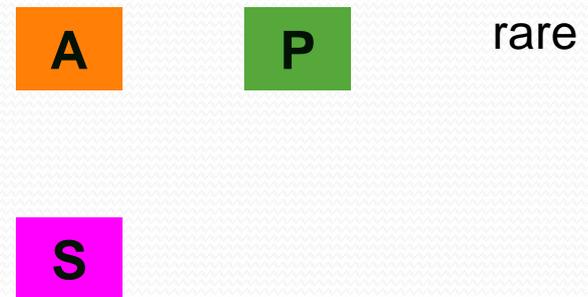
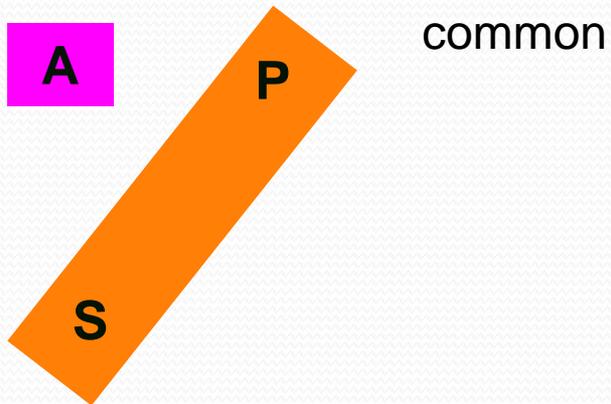
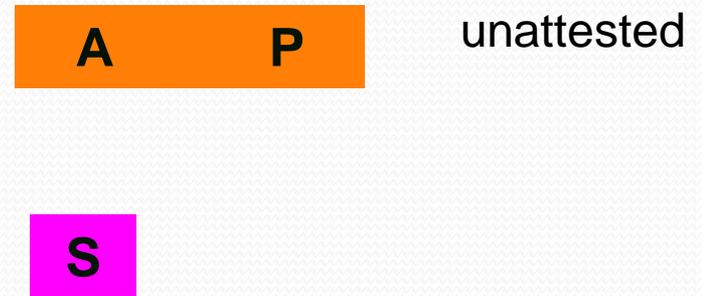
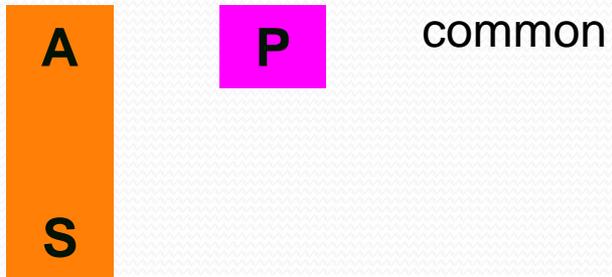


Avar

(1) **w**-as-∅ **w**-eker-ula
M-child-CASE M-run-PRS
'The boy is running.'

(2) inssu-cca **j**-as-∅ **j**-écc-ula
father-CASE F-child-CASE F-praise-PRS
'Father praises the girl.'

Alignment



Wangkumara

- (1) kana-**ulu** kalkana titi-**nana**
man-ERG hit dog-ACC
'The man hit the bitch'
- (2) kana-**ia** paluna
man-NOM died
'The man died.'

A = **ulu**
P = **nana**
S = **ia**

Ergativity

- 25% of the world's languages employ an ergative pattern.
- Ergative case-marking and ergative-agreement marking are common, but ergative word order is rare.

Dyirbal

- (1) η uma banaga- η u
father return-PST
'Father returned.'
- (2) yabu η uma- **η gu** bura-n
mother father-CASE see-PST
'Father saw mother.'

Dyirbal

(1) η ana banaga- η u
1PL return-PST
'We returned.'

(2) η ura banaga- η u
2PL return-PST
'You returned.'

(3) η ana η ura-**na** bura-n
1PL 2PL-CASE see-PST
'We saw you.'

(4) η ura η ana-**na** bura-n
2PL 1PL-CASE see-PST
'You saw us.'

Animacy hierarchy

1st/2nd > 3rd > proper name/kin term > human NP > animate NP > inanimate NP

Nominative

Ergative

Dyirbal

1st / 2nd

3rd ...

Yidin

1st / 2nd / 3rd / DEM / proper name

common N ...

Eastern Pomo

- (1) **há:** xá:qákki
I bathe
'I bathed.' [other verbs: run, jump]
- (2) **há:** mí:pal sá:ka
I him killed
'I killed him.'
- (3) xá:su:là **wí** ko:kóya
Rattlesnake 1SG bit
'A rattlesnake bit me.'
- (4) **wí** qa:lálma
1SG sick
'I got sick.' [other verbs: fall, get unhappy]

Split intransitivity

A
 S_A

P
 S_P

German

- (1) a. Er **hat** das Bild gesehen. transitive: *haben*
b. Er **hat** den Ball geschlagen.
c. Er **hat** das Buch weggelegt.
- (2) a. Er **hat** gearbeitet. a-telic
b. Er **hat** gelacht.
c. Er **hat** geschlafen.
- (3) a. Er **ist** gekommen. telic
b. Er **ist** losgefahren.
c. Er **ist** eingeschlafen.
- (4) a. Die Blume **hat** geblüht. a-telic
b. Die Blume **ist** aufgeblüht. telic



Syntactic ergativity

Passive

Active

John carried the bag.

Passive

The bag was carried (by John)

Active

She saw him.

Passive

He seen (by her)

Passive

Passive

Peter hit Mary

A-NOM V P-ACC

Mary was hit (by Peter)



Dyirbal

Active

yabu-Ø

mother-ABS

‘Father saw mother.’

ɲuma-**ɲgu** bura-n

father-CASE see-PST

Antipassive

ɲuma-Ø

father-ABS

‘Father saw mother.’

bural-**ɲa**-ɲu

see-ANTIPASS-NONFUT

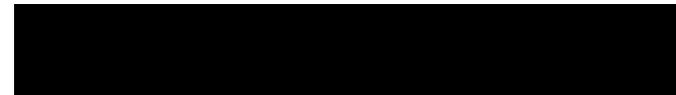
yabu-**gu**

mother-DAT

Antipassive

Antipassive

Peter hit Mary.



Peter hit (Mary)



Syntactically nominative

(1) Mother saw father and ___ returned.

A verb P and ___ verb.

The diagram consists of a horizontal line with a vertical line extending upwards from its right end, forming a right-angled shape. This shape is positioned under the words 'A verb P and ___ verb.', with the vertical line pointing to the blank space before 'returned' in the sentence above.

Dyirbal

- (1) η uma- \emptyset banaga- η u miyandn- η u S
father-ABS return-NONFUT laugh-NONFUT
'Father returned' '(and) laughed.'
- (2) η uma- \emptyset yabu- η gu bura-n banaga- η u P
father-ABS mother-ERG saw-NONFUT return-NONFUT
'Mother saw father' '(he) returned.'
- (3) η uma-**gu** yabu- \emptyset bura- **η a- η u**
father-DAT mother-ABS saw-**ANTPAS**-NONFUT
'Mother saw father'
- banaga- η u
return-NONFUT
and **(she)** returned.'
- A

English

- (1) Peter saw the man who ___ was walking. S
- (2) Peter saw the man who Mary kissed ___. P
- (3) Peter saw the man who ___ was driving the car. A

Kalkatunga

(1) tuata pa-ji marapai icaji [injaninka-cin]
snake this-ERG woman bit go-REL
'The snake bit the woman who was walking.'

S

(2) nkumaji naika tumpak-i
look.for 1SG.ABS tobacco-DAT
'I'm looking for the tobacco'

[pa-ji kupanjuru-tu utijakapi-nin-ku]
this-ERG old.man-ERG lose-REL-DAT
'(that) this old man lost.'

P

(3) natu nana macumpa
1SG.ERG saw kangaroo
'I saw the kangaroo'

[ari-li-nin katir-ku]
eat-ANTPAS-REL grass-DAT
that is eating the grass.'

S

Syntactic ergativity in purpose clauses

(1) Peter went home [] in order to sleep. S

(2) Peter hit John in order [] to scare him. A

(3) Peter went home [] in order to sleep. S

(4) Peter helped John in order [for] to succeed. P

DuBois (1987)

- A nominative-accusative pattern is motivated by syntactic and pragmatic factors: The A/S-argument is topic and controller.
- An ergative pattern is motivated by the types of NPs that are typically encoded as A, S and P: Across languages S and P tend to be expressed by lexical NPs while A is overwhelmingly pronominal.

PRO

N

N

Preferred argument structure

Historical explanations

(1) Schematic example (e.g. Hindi)

- | | | | | |
|----|----------------|------|------------------|----------------------|
| a. | Man | kick | ball-ACC. | active (frequent) |
| b. | Ball | kick | man- by . | passive (infrequent) |
| c. | Ball | kick | man- by . | passive (frequent) |
| d. | Man- by | kick | ball | active (by = ERG) |

(2) Schematic example (e.g. Hittite)

- | | | | | | |
|----|------------------|--------|-----------|--------------------|--------------|
| a. | Man-∅ | opened | door-ACC | key- INST . | |
| b. | ___ | opened | door-ACC | key- INST . | |
| c. | key- INST | opened | door-ACC. | | (INST = ERG) |