1. Alignment

(1) Alignment
The grouping of grammatical functions across clause types

(2) Grammatical functions
subject
object

(3) Clause types
intransitive
transitive

(4) A = transitive subject
S = intransitive subject
O = object

(5) ‘grouping’: identical behaviour for some grammatical phenomenon
(typically case, agreement, but also position, movement possibilities, etc.)

(6) Accusative alignment: German case
a. de-r mann schwimm-t
   DET.M-NOM man_m swim-3SG
   ‘The man is swimming.’

b. de-r mann sieh-t de-n hund
   DET.M-NOM man_m see-3SG DET.N-ACC dog
   ‘The man sees the dog.’

(7) Ergative alignment: Coast Tsimshian predicate connectives
a. yagwa hadiks a üüla
   PRES swim ABS seal
   ‘The seal is swimming.’

b. yagwa-t hum da duus a hoon
   PRES-3SG.SUBJ smell ERG cat ABS fish
   ‘The cat is sniffing the fish.’

(8) Known issues
a. What is the ‘ergativity parameter’?
b. Is ergative case inherent or structural?
c. Are alignment features for the various phenomena (case, agreement) correlated?
d. What is the status of ‘syntactic ergativity’?
(9) **Typological correlation**  
When agreement is ergative, so is case (or case is absent); not the other way around.

(10) Bobaljik's explanation  
a. Case hierarchy (Marantz 1991) adapted into agreement hierarchy: unmarked > dependent > lexical/oblique  
b. dependent case: accusative/ergative, unmarked case: nominative/absolutive  
c. (9) explained because agreement tracks highest accessible element (determined by hierarchy)  
e.g. if dependent is accessible, agreement will be with nominative, even if case marking is ergative, but never vice versa

(11) No language is ergative all the way (Moravcsik 1978), there are lots of splits (depending on grammatical phenomenon, NP-type, tense/aspect, clause type, etc.)

(12) To investigate correlations, we need a more fine-grained alignment typology.

## 2. Current alignment typology

(13) 1. accusative  \(A/S : O\)  
2. ergative  \(A : S/O\)  
3. tripartite  \(A : S : O\)

(14) **Tripartite**  
a. yulju-\(\acute{t}u\) tayka-\(\acute{n}\)a puy \(\text{man-ERG woman-ACC hit}\)
   ‘The man hit the woman.’

b. taykka yatyuwan  
   \(\text{woman:NOM screamed}\)
   ‘The woman screamed.’

(15) **Deal 2012: two ways of understanding ergativity**  
a. ergative property: A behaves different from O  
b. absolutive property: S behaves the same as O

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>+ ABSOLUTIVE</th>
<th>+ ERGATIVE</th>
<th>- ERGATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+ ABSOLUTIVE</td>
<td>Coast Tsimshian (7)</td>
<td>Chinese [no case at all]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- ABSOLUTIVE</td>
<td>Dhangu (13)</td>
<td>High German (6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2, interaction of ergative and absolutive properties
3. A taste of the problem

(16) Paumarí (Arauan, Chapman and Derbyshire 1991)
- looks ergative (special case for A)
- but: case-marking only with immediate preverbal NP
  (NB, in marked AOV order, O is case-marked and A is not)

(17) a. Dono-a bi-kö’diraha-’a-ha ada isai hoariha
    Dono-ERG 3SG.TR-pinch-ASP-THEME:MASC DEM:MASC child other
    ‘Dono pinched the other boy.’
  b. soko-a-ki hida mamai
    wash-DETRANS-NONTHEME DEM:FEM mother
    ‘Mother is washing.’

(18) Marked AOV order
    bano pa’isi o-sa’a-ra anani-hi
    piranha small 1SG-finger-OBJ bite-THEME
    ‘A small piranha bit my finger.’

(19) We need a distinction between elements that do and do not participate in a grammatical phenomenon:
  - Paumarí immediate preverbal NP: participates in case-marking (SV, AVO)
  - Paumarí other NPs: do not participate in case-marking (AVO, AOV)

(20) Unmarked clauses in Paumarí (SV and AVO): O does not participate in case-marking
  > the zero marking for S is fundamentally different from the zero marking for O
  > S = zero in opposition to A (= -a); O = zero because it doesn’t participate

(21) Opposition A : S, but not A : S/O
(22) In Deal’s system: [+ERG, !ABS], i.e. tripartite,
    but that obscures the fact that O does not participate.
(23) Alignment typology should be a two-step process:
  1. decide which elements participate
  2. align participating elements

4. Proposal

(24) Questions to ask
  i) does a grammatical process apply to all of { A, S, O }?
  ii) is the process realized identically in those of { A, S, O } to which it applies?

(25) Step 1 : completeness
  a. yes > complete (26a)
  b. no > incomplete (26b)
  c. d.n.a. > neutral
(26) Step 2: alignment

a. complete types
   \[ A = S = O \] identical
   \[ A = S \neq O \] accusative
   \[ A \neq S = O \] ergative
   \[ A = O \neq S \] intransitive
   \[ A \neq S \neq O \] tripartite

b. incomplete types
   only A/S same subjective
   only S/O same (in)transitive subjective absolutive
   only A/O same (in)transitive absolutive subjective/objective tr.
   only O narrow accusative
   only A narrow ergative
   only S narrow intransitive

> 18 types

5. Illustrations

(27) Dutch/English verbal agreement = incomplete, in fact subjective

(28) High German case (6) = complete, in fact accusative

(29) Coast Tsimshian predicate connectives (7) = complete, in fact ergative

(30) Dhangu case (14) = complete, in fact tripartite (or incomplete?)

(31) Paumarí case [in AVO clauses] (17) = incomplete, in fact transitive subjective (even though it looks ergative!)
    Paumarí case [in preverbal position] (17-18) = complete, in fact tripartite

(32) Chinese case = neutral

6. Application: split systems

(31) Coast Tsimshian is in fact much more complicated (Mulder 1994):
   a. NP-type split: NPs/free pronouns (ergative) vs. names (accusative)
   b. tense split: NPs/free pronouns elsewhere (ergative) vs. past (identical), names elsewhere (accusative) vs. imperfect (triptite)
   c. mood split: clitics organized differently in subjunctive (ergative) vs. elsewhere (ergative, tripartite, or intransitive, depending on animacy hierarchy)
   d. agreement is poor: either narrow ergative or neutral
    > you might test whether that is sensitive to case: it doesn’t look like it
Wambaya (West Barkly, Nordlinger 1998) has a quasi-ergative agreement pattern.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TR.SUBJECT</th>
<th>INTR.SUBJECT</th>
<th>OBJECT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1SG</td>
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<td><em>ngi-</em></td>
<td><em>-ng-</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2SG</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>nyi-</em></td>
<td><em>-ny-</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3SG.MASC</td>
<td><em>gini-</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3SG.NONMASC</td>
<td><em>ngiyi-</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3, Wambaya agreement markers (singular only)

a. Nordlinger (1998:146) argues that object agreement in 3SG is not zero but absent
b. If so, agreement in 1/2SG = complete, and accusative,
c. and agreement in 3SG = incomplete, and transitive subjective (only A/S, and marked differently)

> how can we tell 3SG object agreement is absent?
- when object agreement is present, you get PAST/PRESENT morphology syncretisme
- you don’t get that with intransitives and with 3SG objects

7. Is there an ergative system?

With 18 alignment types, it’s hard to say.
Rough grouping into four major types:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EQUAL</th>
<th>ACCUSATIVE</th>
<th>ERGATIVE</th>
<th>WEIRD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>neutral</td>
<td>accusative</td>
<td>ergative</td>
<td>intransitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(A=S≠O)</td>
<td>(A ≠S=O)</td>
<td>(A=O ≠S)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>identical</td>
<td>3 x subjective</td>
<td>3 x absolutive</td>
<td>3 x transitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(A=S=O)</td>
<td>(A=or ≠S)</td>
<td>(S=or ≠O)</td>
<td>(A=or ≠O)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tripartite</td>
<td>objective</td>
<td>narrow ergative</td>
<td>narrow intransitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(A ≠S ≠O)</td>
<td>(O)</td>
<td>(A)</td>
<td>(S)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4, alignment type families

There are too many patterns to expect a single parameter to derive ‘ergativity’

Moreover, what looks ‘ergative’ often is not:
- ‘Ergative’ agreement is very often transitivity-sensitive subjective agreement (e.g. Wambaya [32]), so not in the ergative family
- The tripartite pattern is not a subcase of the ergative pattern, but part of the ‘equal’ family
- In all ‘ergative languages’, splits are normal and the truly ergative pattern is often restricted (though highly visible, e.g. by appearing with 3SG subjects)
(36) This supports the (contentious) position of DeLancey (2004), that ‘ergativity’ cannot be viewed as a common property, worthy of study, of languages showing ergative-like phenomena (any more than ‘blueness’ can be viewed as a common property of birds showing the color blue).

(37) The question of case-agreement correlations (Bobaljik 2008) needs to be studied anew.

References


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