

Recent developments in (the theory of) ergativity

BLOCK C

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- Recall the universal involving ergativity splits based on *T/M/A* (*Tense/Mood/Aspect*):

$$(1) \quad \begin{array}{ccccc} \leftarrow & \text{ERG/ABS} & || & \text{NOM/ACC} & \rightarrow \\ \hline \text{perfective} & \gg & \text{imperfective} & \gg & \text{progressive} \end{array}$$

[Coon 2010, following Dixon 1994]

- ERG/ABS is always on the *past/perfective/indicative* side
- NOM/ACC is always on the *non-past/imperfective/irrealis* side
- [Coon \(2010\)](#): offers a proposal for why this might be so
- the proposal proceeds in two steps; the first:

(2) *ERGATIVE SPLITS AS BI-CLAUSALITY*

In non-perfective aspects which show “split ergativity”, ergative Case is absent in transitive clauses because the subject is assigned Case not by the lexical verb, but by an intransitive aspectual verb.

[Coon 2010:148]

- The general schema for such non-perfective aspects is thus as follows:

$$(3) \quad [\text{SUBJDP}_i \text{ ASPECTUAL VERB } [\text{EC}_i \text{ PRED VERB OBJDP }]]$$

where “EC” can be:

- a trace of SUBJDP (in the event that *ASPECTUAL VERB* is a *raising* predicate)
- PRO (in the event that *ASPECTUAL VERB* is a *control* predicate)

QUESTION: Why would (3) give rise to the appearance of a NOM/ACC pattern?
(Remember: to answer this question, one must consider what happens when *PRED VERB* is transitive, as well as when it is intransitive!)

- It turns out that analyses of specific ergative splits in particular languages along the lines of (3) have already been proposed
 - for example, [Laka’s \(2006\)](#) analysis of “split ergativity” in Basque—and in particular, of the appearance of a NOM/ACC pattern in the Basque progressive

- We’ve already seen the behavior of Basque in “core” clauses:

- (4) a. [_S Otso-a] etorri da.
 wolf-ART_{sg} arrived AUX(be)
 ‘The wolf has arrived.’
 b. [_A Ehiztari-ak] [_P otso-a] harrapatu du
 hunter-ART_{sg} wolf-ART_{sg} caught AUX(have)
 ‘The hunter has caught a/the wolf.’ [Laka 1996, annotations mine]

- but here’s what happens in the progressive:

- (5) a. [_S emakume-a] dantza-n ari da.
 woman-ART_{sg} dance-LOC PROG AUX(be)
 ‘The woman is dancing.’
 b. [_A emakume-a] [_P ogi-a] ja-te-n ari da.
 woman-ART_{sg} bread-ART_{sg} eat-NMZ-LOC PROG AUX(be)
 ‘The woman is eating the bread.’ [Laka 2006:174]

- As a first observation, note that in the progressive, Basque doesn’t—strictly speaking—shift into a NOM/ACC pattern
 - Rather, all 3 of the arguments have the *same* marking
 - sometimes called a “neutral” marking system (e.g., in [WALS](#))
 (note, of course, that a “neutral” alignment is—strictly speaking—a particular instance of NOM/ACC alignment; the point is that it is not unambiguously so)
- but it does shift *out* of its normally ERG/ABS Case-alignment
 - which is what [Laka](#) sets out to explain

- [Laka’s proposal](#) *ari*, the “progressive marker”, is syntactically just a verb
- its complement is a *locative* adpositional phrase
 - the complement of the locative adposition is an event-nominal (e.g., *dantza* ‘dance (n.)’ and *ja-te* ‘eat-NMZ’)
 - which may, itself, take an argument (like an ordinary event-nominal)

NOTE: the *-te/tze* suffix, which I gloss NMZ, is a nominalizer that can turn verbs into nominals, not unlike English *-ing*

- Note that the *locative* part of this story is far from arbitrary:

“The majority of progressive forms in our [crosslinguistic] database derive from expressions involving locative elements.” [Bybee et al. 1994:192]

*“The most widespread parallel is between progressive aspect and expressions referring to the place where something is located, though in some languages, as noted below, this locative form of the verb is also used with habitual meaning, i.e. is **imperfective rather than just progressive**”* [Comrie 1978:98, emphasis added]

[Laka \(2006:188\)](#):

(6) Ik ben **aan** het werken. (Dutch)
I am **LOC** the working
'I am working.'

(7) He is **on** hunting. (Middle English)

(8) Mae Rhiannon **yn** cysgu. (Welsh)
is Rhiannon **in** sleep
'Rhiannon is sleeping.'

- In fact, even in (modern) English:

- while the grammaticalized progressive doesn't show overt signs of locative morphology, three are other associated (and interpretively similar) constructions that do:

(9) John is working.

(10) a. John is engaged *in* work.

b. John is engaged *in* working.

('in' being a locative preposition, of course)

- Recall now the discussion from *BLOCK B* regarding the difference between what we might consider the *semantic* or *thematic* structure of predication, and the **syntactic relation among the relevant elements**

- while they sometimes (often? usually?) go hand in hand, this is not always so

- in particular, we saw a kind of light-verb construction, where what we might consider the main *semantic* or *thematic* predicate was—**syntactically** speaking—a *complement* to the light verb

- and the light-verb was—again, **syntactically** speaking—the main verb of the clause

(11) Tyi a-**cha**'l-e k'ay (Chol)
PRFV SETA2-**do**-DTV song
'You sang.' [Coon 2010:56]

(12) Jon-ek dantza **egin** d- ϕ -u- ϕ . (Basque)
Jon-ERG dance **do** 3.ABS-sg.ABS-have-3sg.ERG
'Jon danced.'

- The idea is that what's going on in Basque progressives is quite similar:

- we might consider the "main predicates" in (5a–b) (repeated below) to be *dantza* ('dance') and *ja(-te)* ('eat(-ing)'), respectively
 - in the *semantic* or *thematic* sense

- (5) a. [_S emakume-a] dantza-n ari da.
 woman-ART_{sg} dance-LOC PROG AUX(be)
 ‘The woman is dancing.’
 b. [_A emakume-a] [_P ogi-a] ja-te-n ari da.
 woman-ART_{sg} bread-ART_{sg} eat-NMZ-LOC PROG AUX(be)
 ‘The woman is eating the bread.’ [Laka 2006:174]

► but that is not what’s going on, syntactically

◦ syntactically, we would be better served annotating (5a–b) as follows:

- (13) a. [Obliq emakume-a dantza-n] ari da.
 woman-ART_{sg} dance-LOC **engaged** AUX(be)
 ‘The woman is dancing.’
 b. [_S emakume-a] [Obliq ogi-a ja-te-n] ari da.
 woman-ART_{sg} bread-ART_{sg} eat-NMZ-LOC **engaged** AUX(be)
 ‘The woman is eating the bread.’ [Laka 2006:174]

⇒ The lack of ERG marking on the agent in (13b) is therefore *completely expected*

◦ since (13b), as now conceived, is an intransitive clause

(RECALL: it is entirely uncontroversial that oblique phrases do not factor into the calculus of transitivity)

• We might think of this in the following terms:

◦ the embedding structure created by the verb *ari* bifurcates what-was-previously-thought-of-as-a-single-clause into **two separate Case domains**, as far as Case calculus is concerned

– each Case domain containing only a single noun-phrase

⇒ that noun-phrase gets marked with ABS Case¹

• As Laka shows, this approach—of viewing *ari* simply as an ordinary verb—is supported by the following facts:

I. the so-called “progressive marker” *ari* can take not only locative PPs, but other kind of PPs as well:

- (14) emakume-a oi-hu-ka ari da.
 woman-ART_{sg} scream-ITER engaged AUX(be)
 Literally: ‘The woman is engaged in a repeated scream.’ [Laka 2006:182]

◦ which looks like the behavior we’d expect from a verb proper (cf. *speaking to, speaking about, speaking with*)

– rather than a grammaticalized functional element

II. *ari* can itself undergo nominalization by affixing the *-te/tze* suffix

¹This follows trivially under a *case-competition* (Marantz 1991) approach—but not entirely trivially under a ERG-as-inherent-Case approach (Woolford 1997, 2006, Legate 2008, Aldridge 2004). Under the latter approach, we would have to add the assumption that *ari* itself is unaccusative (with respect to its single non-oblique argument), rather than unergative.

- (15) emakume-a lan-ean ari-tze-a ona da.
 woman-ART_{sg} work-LOC engaged-NMZ-ART_{sg} good AUX(be)
 ‘The woman’s engaging in work is good.’ [Laka 2006:183]

◦ this contrasts with the behavior of modals, auxiliaries, and other verb-like particles in Basque:

- (16) * emakume-a izan ahal-tze-a ona da.
 woman-ART_{sg} be can-NMZ-ART_{sg} good AUX(be)
 ‘The woman’s engaging in work is good.’ [Laka 2006:183]

(similar, in a sense, to the impossibility of forming infinitival forms of certain modals—e.g., *to can)

III. *ari* can bear pretty much the full set of aspect markers that any other verb can (-*tu* ‘PRFV’, -*tzen* ‘IMPF’, -*ko* ‘IRR’)

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- So Basque, given Laka’s proposal, constitutes an existence proof that we can get the *appearance* of aspect-based split ergativity, when the supposed NOM/ACC alignment is really the result of a larger structure
 - in particular, a structure that involves embedding—in a way that bifurcates the supposed “single clause” into two separate Case domains
 - Recall that there was a slight defect in using Basque as the exemplar of an aspect-based split between ERG/ABS and NOM/ACC
 - namely, that while Basque shifts out of its ERG/ABS pattern in the progressive, it doesn’t shift into a NOM/ACC alignment, narrowly defined
 - but rather, into a “neutral” alignment

⇒ Let's look at Chol:

(17) *PERFECTIVES*

a. *TRANSITIVE*

Tyi k-măñ-ä-ϕ ixim. (Chol)
PRFV SETA1-buy-TV-SETB3 corn
'I bought corn.'

b. *INTRANSITIVE*

Tyi lok'-i-yoñ.
PRFV exit-ITV-SETB1
'I left.'

(18) *IMPERFECTIVES*

a. *TRANSITIVE*

Mi k-măñ-ϕ ixim.
IMPF SETA1-buy-SETB3 corn
'I buy corn.'

b. *INTRANSITIVE*

Mi k-lok'-el.
IMPF SETA1-exit-NMZ
'I leave.'

(19) *PROGRESSIVE*

a. *TRANSITIVE*

Choñkol k-jap-ϕ jiñi kajpej.
PROG SETA1-drink-SETB3 DET coffee
'I'm drinking the coffee.'

b. *INTRANSITIVE*

Choñkol k-jajts'-el.
PROG SETA1-hit.PASV-NMZ
'I'm being hit.'

[Coon 2010, Coon and Preminger 2009]

- what we see is that Chol also seems to have aspect-based split ergativity
 - grouping the *imperfective* together with the *progressive*
(unlike Basque, which groups the *imperfective* together with *perfective*, contrasting with the *progressive* alone)
- In Chol, however, the alignment appears to regard *agreement morphology*, rather than Case-marking
- unlike the Basque scenario, however, Chol really does shift from an ERG/ABS alignment into a NOM/ACC alignment
 - specifically:
 - in the perfective, the verbal prefix targets only **A**, while the suffix targets **P** and **S**
 - in the imperfective and the progressive, the verbal prefix targets **A** and **S**, while the suffix targets **P**
- [Coon 2010](#): the non-perfective aspects (imperfective, progressive) involve an embedding structure
 - in particular, they involve an “aspectual marker” which is syntactically just a verb, and which embeds a nominal (or nominalization) as its complement
 - rendering them quite similar to English *poss-ing* nominalizations (Abney 1987)

◦ **IMPORTANT INGREDIENT #1:**

the GEN (genitive) agreement marker in Chol is, independently of what one thinks of split ergativity, syncretic with the ERG marker—across the board

– for example:

- (20) **k-wakax**
SETA1-cow
 ‘my cow’

[Coon 2010:46]

⇒ as a result, possessors of nominals will look the same (in terms of the agreement they trigger) as ERG arguments of verbs

- As in Basque, then, we might revise our annotation of the relevant non-perfective data

– for example:

- (21) *TRANSITIVE PROGRESSIVE*
Choñkol [s [Poss **k**] -[NP jap- ϕ jiñi kajpej]].
engaged **SETA1** - drink-SETB3 DET coffee
 ‘I’m drinking the coffee.’

◦ **IMPORTANT INGREDIENT #2:**

as one could already discern from the examples in (17–18) and (19a), the “SETB” (a.k.a., ABS) marker for 3rd-person is phonologically null (marked ϕ)

⇒ (21) re-revised:

- (22) *TRANSITIVE PROGRESSIVE*
Choñkol- ϕ [s [Poss **k**] -[NP jap- ϕ jiñi kajpej]].
engaged-SETB3 **SETA1** - drink-SETB3 DET coffee
 ‘I’m drinking the coffee.’

- As before: the matrix clause, so conceived, is a run-of-the-mill intransitive clause
 - since Chol lacks (verbal) unergatives, it is unsurprising that we find ABS agreement-marking in that clause
- the embedded domain is a possessed nominal —
 - the possessor triggers GEN marking (syncretic with ERG, across the language)
 - the internal argument of the event-nominal triggers ABS marking (also unsurprisingly)
- when the embedded verb (what we initially identified as the “main predicate”, before reanalyzing the “aspect marker” as also being a verb) is intransitive:
 - we find a suffix on it, which can independently be shown to nominalize verbs in the language

- (23) *INTRANSITIVE PROGRESSIVE*
Choñkol- ϕ [s [Poss **k**] -[NP jajts’-**el**]].
engaged-SETB3 **SETA1** - hit.PASV-NMZ
 ‘I’m being hit.’

- when the embedded verb is transitive, no such suffix is visible
 - however, regarding of ones analysis of the “disappearance” of the nominalizing affix in this case, it can be independently shown that these still have the distribution/behavior of nominalizations:

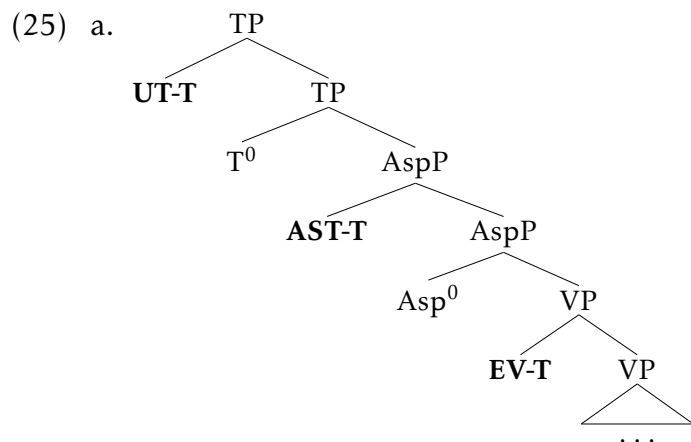
(24) Much uts'aty [[Poss a]-[NP jats'-oñ]].
 NEG good SETA2 - hit-SETB1
 ‘Your hitting me isn’t good.’ [Coon 2010:117]
 (see Coon 2010 for additional arguments to the same effect)

- This wraps up what I called “step one” of Coon’s account
 - namely, showing that at least for certain aspect-based splits, bi-clausality is a viable explanation for what would otherwise look like a NOM/ACC (or, in the case of Basque, “neutral”) alignment
- this is a possible explanation of why we might find “splits”—at least in certain cases—but not yet an explanation of the directionality universal of splits
 - given in (1), repeated here:

(1) $\begin{array}{ccccc} \Leftarrow & \text{ERG/ABS} & \parallel & \text{NOM/ACC} & \Rightarrow \\ \hline \text{perfective} & \gg & \text{imperfective} & \gg & \text{progressive} \end{array}$
 [Coon 2010, following Dixon 1994]

- that is where “step two” comes in...
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- Following [Demirdache and Uribe-Etxebarria \(2000\)](#) and ([Klein, 1995](#)), who adopt the classical decomposition of aspect proposed by [Reichenbach \(1947\)](#) —



NOTE: *not a syntactic representation!*

b. ABBREVIATIONS:

UT-T	<i>utterance time</i>	time at which the sentence is uttered
AST-T	<i>assertion time</i>	time for which an assertion about the event is made
EV-T	<i>event time</i>	time of the event

- what (25) is meant to schematize is—for each syntactic head in $\{T^0, Asp^0\}$ —the two times between which that head mediates
- [Demirdache and Uribe-Etxebarria \(2000\)](#) (building on [Hale 1986](#)): using these as the building-blocks for tense and aspect “explains the pervasive use, crosslinguistically, of prepositions as well as locative, motion, directional, postural, and stance verbs to express temporal and aspectual relations”

⇒ Here’s why:

- Consider the *present tense*, for example
 - the *present tense* is a head (T^0) that essentially means WITHIN
 - namely, that **UT-T** is WITHIN **AST-T**
- the *progressive aspect*:
 - is a head (Asp^0) meaning WITHIN
 - namely, that **AST-T** is WITHIN **EV-T**
- the *past tense*, in contrast:
 - is a head (T^0) meaning AFTER
 - namely, that **UT-T** is AFTER **AST-T**
- This account invokes a *spatio-temporal* connection
 - Crucially, this *spatio-temporal* connection is not a mere stipulation
 - [Bybee et al. \(1994:132\)](#): in a sample of the world’s languages (a stratified probability sample, with languages chosen from all over the world): “The majority of progressive forms in our database derive from expressions involving locative elements”

- verbs of *stance*, *posture*, or *location* are frequently used in progressive aspect constructions

(26) Bybee et al. (1994) survey:

LANGUAGE	<i>progressive</i> IS BASED ON...
Isl. Carib	<i>here</i>
Cocama	<i>be located</i> + complement of Place
Jivaro	<i>be, sit</i>
Alyawarra	<i>sit, stay, be</i>
Tahitian	<i>be here</i>
O'odham	<i>sit, stay for a while</i>
Baluchi	LOC + <i>be</i>
Ngambay	<i>be seated</i> + verbal N
Shuswap	<i>be there, stay</i>
Haka	<i>place, participle</i>
Lahu	<i>be in place, live</i>
Cantonese	<i>stay, reside</i>
Dakota	<i>sit, stand</i>
Tok Pisin	<i>stop, stay</i>
Kui	<i>be, live, exist</i> + PRES PART
Maidu	<i>be</i> + participle
Buriat	<i>be</i> + gerund

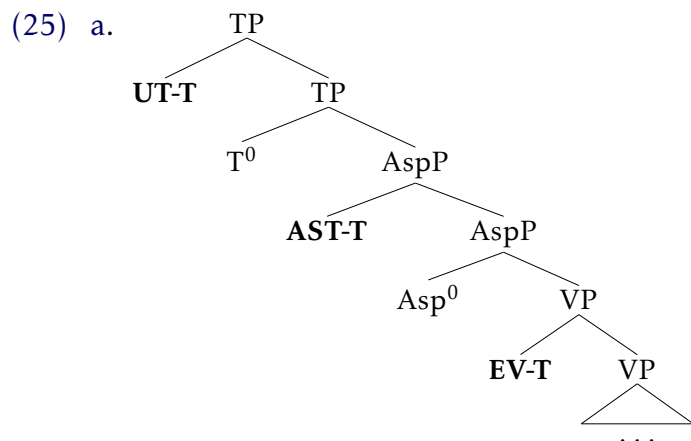
- note also (6–8) (repeated below)
 - as well as the (modern) English ‘*engaged in*’ construction, as well as the (modern) English constructions in (27–28), below

- (6) Ik ben **aan** het werken. (Dutch)
 I am LOC the working
 ‘I am working.’
- (7) He is **on** hunting. (Middle English)
- (8) Mae Rhiannon **yn** cysgu. (Welsh)
 is Rhiannon **in** sleep
 ‘Rhiannon is sleeping.’ [Laka 2006:188]

(27) I am **in the middle of** washing the dishes.

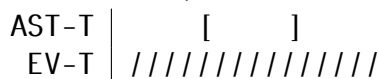
(28) She is **at** rest.

- Suppose that this locative(/spatial) component is what’s responsible for the additional structure—sometimes resulting in full-fledged biclausality—involved in ergative splits
 - ⇒ why would such locative(/spatial) structure be found in *non-perfective* contexts, but not in *perfective* ones?
 - after all, the schema in (25a) (repeated below) is supposed to represent the general logic of tense and aspect in the clause



- Let's take a look at some representations of different aspects, given this system:

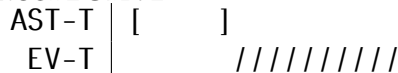
(29) a. IMPERFECTIVE/PROGRESSIVE



b. PERFECT



c. PROSPECTIVE



- Notably absent from this taxonomy is the *perfective* —

NOTE: While the two are often confused, the *perfect* and the *perfective* are quite different, and it is an open question—according to Coon—whether the *perfect* should be considered an “aspect” at all (see related discussions in Comrie 1976:52, as well as Alexiadou et al. 2003).

As for the *perfective*:

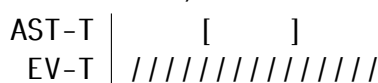
“In the perfective aspect, the event is viewed in its entirety, as a whole, without any internal structure. As with aspect more generally, this does not mean that no internal structure is present (i.e. the event need not be punctual), simply that none is asserted.” [Coon 2010:192]

- Thus, the *perfective* can be thought of as the “opposite” of the *imperfective* (Klein 1995, Kratzer 1998)

(30) IMPERFECTIVE: $AST-T \subseteq EV-T$ [Coon 2010:174]
 PERFECTIVE: $EV-T \subseteq AST-T$

- in terms of the graphical representations used earlier:

(31) a. IMPERFECTIVE/PROGRESSIVE (= (29a))



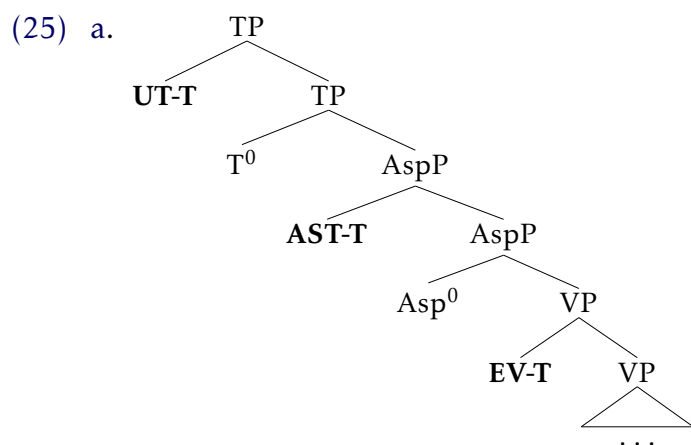
b. PERFECTIVE



- **Coon's observation:** while there are prepositions expressing the relation of AST-T to EV-T in (31a) (e.g., 'in', 'within'), there seem to be no prepositions that express the relation of AST-T to EV-T in (31b) ('properly containing', which is of course not a preposition)
- In the domain of prepositions, we are generally free to reverse which noun-phrase is used as the *figure*, and which as the *ground*—quite simply, by merging them in the opposite order:

- (32) a. *The square is in the circle.*
 b. *The circle is in the square.*

- **However**, this kind of reversal is decidedly unavailable when we look at the temporal-aspectual structure of the clause
 - The reason, quite simply, is that the functional skeleton $T^0 \gg \text{Asp}^0 \gg v^0/V^0$ is *fixed*



- in other words, we don't have the freedom to build a clause the other way around— $v^0/V^0 \gg \text{Asp}^0 \gg T^0$ —just because we need to invert the spatio-temporal relations
 - i.e., we don't have the same kind of freedom exemplified in (32a–b)
- ⇒ Consequently, when Asp^0 does its job of mediating between AST-T and EV-T, it is fixed which temporal span acts as the “*figure*”, and which as the “*ground*”
- If there is no prepositional/locative structure that can convey the *perfective* aspect, we must ask: *How is the perfective conveyed?*
 - The answer to this question does not follow *logically* from what has been said so far
 - we might have found that we live in a world where there is simply *no way* to express the perfective
 - but of course, it turns out that this is not the world we live in

- The empirical answer, however, has already been observed quite long ago in the typological literature:

“[P]erfectives are the unmarked members of any aspectual opposition based on perfectivity.” [Comrie 1978:21]
- This “unmarkedness” is probably not a matter of morphophonology alone
 - i.e., the locative/prepositional element facilitating the progressive is just phonologically null
- since we just spent time showing that there aren’t really locative/prepositional elements with the right semantics to do this
- Rather, it means that **when there is no morphosyntactic structure corresponding to Asp^0 , perfective interpretation arises**
 - in other words, the *perfective* is the default
 - which is, of course, the other sense of “unmarkedness”

We now have the pieces in place to assemble an account for the directionality universal of ergative splits, repeated once more below:

$$(1) \quad \begin{array}{ccccccc} \leftarrow & & \text{ERG/ABS} & & \parallel & & \text{NOM/ACC} & & \rightarrow \\ \hline \text{perfective} & \gg & \text{imperfective} & \gg & & & \text{progressive} & & \end{array}$$

[Coon 2010, following Dixon 1994]

(33) *THE GRAMMATICAL BASIS FOR ASPECT-BASED SPLIT ERGATIVITY*

1. In an otherwise ergatively-aligned language, complex locative structure creates the appearance of a NOM/ACC pattern
 2. Locative structure is used to convey temporal and aspectual information, cross-linguistically. Specifically, the heads T^0 and Asp^0 denote preposition-like relations between UT-T and ASP-T, and between ASP-T and EV-T, respectively.
 3. There is no preposition that describes the relation of ASP-T to EV-T, as the two stand in the *perfective*.
- ∴ The perfective cannot involve locative structure, and therefore does not introduce the more complex structure that alters the original ergative alignment.
- Let us convince ourselves that this predicts the directionality universal:
- suppose we start with a NOM/ACC language (i.e., a language that has NOM/ACC alignment in the *perfective*)
 - and that following (33), a locative structure is used to form, e.g., the *progressive*

- (34) a. I_{NOM} read the book_{ACC}. (pseudo-English-#1)
 b. I_{NOM} am [PP at reading a book].
- by the very definition of NOM/ACC alignment, the subject of (34a) (a transitive) and the subject of (34b) will receive the same marking
 - ! Consequently, the language will not shift out of a NOM/ACC alignment in the progressive²
 - i.e., it will not start grouping the subject of (34b) with the *object* of (34a)
 - For completeness, let us change the original alignment of our *pseudo-English* to an ERG/ABS alignment, and see how things turn out
- (35) a. I_{ERG} read the book_{ABS}. (pseudo-English-#2)
 b. I_{ABS} am [PP at reading a book].
- this time—by the very definition of ERG/ABS alignment—the *object* of (34a) (a transitive) and the subject of (34b) will receive the same marking
 - ⇒ Consequently, the language appears to shift out of a NOM/ACC alignment in the progressive
 - i.e., it will not start grouping the subject of (34b) with the *object* of (34a)
 - Finally, if the locative structure embeds a nominal, we could find a possessive structure:
- (36) a. I_A read the book_P. (pseudo-English-#3)
 b. Happens [DP My_{<?>} [NP reading a book]].
- If we find a language where GEN is syncretic with P's marking, across the board (but crucially, distinct from NOM), we would actually have a counterexample to (1)
 - I don't know of such a language
 - On the other hand, if GEN is syncretic with A's marking, across the board (as in Chol) —
 - we get an ERG/ABS alignment, again
 - since the possessor in (36b) will be marked just like A in (36a)

Appendix: Imperfective vs. Progressive

- Coon's proposal, narrowly construed, predicts that there should not be languages that manifest an ergative split between the *perfective* and the *progressive*, but group the *imperfective* with the former, rather than the latter
 - i.e., the ERG/ABS alignment persists in the *imperfective*
- but we have already seen that Basque manifests precisely this pattern

²To be precise, it should be possible—given Coon's proposal—to find a language that shifts out of a NOM/ACC alignment and into a “neutral” alignment, in the progressive; just not into an ERG/ABS alignment.

- There is rather compelling evidence for a diachronic explanation, in this case:
 - the Basque imperfective marker is *-tzen*
 - which almost certainly came from *-tze* + *-n*
 - which is the gerund-like nominalizing suffix (*-tze*) + the LOCATIVE adposition (*-n*)
 - and it appears that in older varieties of Basque, these were treated as true locatives (Laka 2006:91)
 - possibly even triggering an ergative split
 - over time, *-tzen* became grammaticalized (i.e., lost its status as a locative selecting a nominal)
 - ⇒ and what was a bi-clausal construction became mono-clausal
- Importantly, there is evidence that the very same process is currently applying to the progressive, in eastern dialects of Basque (Laka 2006:189)
 - *-n* + *ari* is being grammaticalized into an unanalyzed complex
 - ⇒ and the ergative split is going away

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