

## COORDINATION IN TONGAN: IS SYNTACTIC ERGATIVITY REAL?

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A language is said to be syntactically ergative if it shows an ergative pattern with respect to syntactic phenomena, typically relativization and deletion under coordination. There are two puzzling facts about syntactic ergativity. First, it does not seem to be a direct consequence of morphological ergativity. Not all languages with ergative Case marking exhibit syntactic ergativity. Second, even when a language does show syntactic ergativity, it is often restricted to certain syntactic phenomena (Dixon 1979). This leads us to question whether syntactic ergativity is a property of language and can be reduced to a parameter, as suggested by Bittner and Hale 1996 and Ura 2000. In this paper, I argue that such a parameter does not exist, and that an ergative pattern arises in different languages and in different constructions within a language, due to independent reasons. Specifically, I propose that syntactic ergativity is in fact a direct consequence of morphological ergativity in the sense that an ergative pattern arises when the relevant syntactic rule is sensitive to Case. On the other hand, some syntactic rules are sensitive to theta-roles rather than Case. This gives rise to an apparent accusative pattern, in which external arguments are distinguished from internal arguments.

The current study examines two types of coordination in Tongan, *pea*-coordination and *mo*-coordination, and provides an account within the framework of the Minimalist Program (Chomsky 1995, 2000). Deletion under coordination shows an ergative pattern with *pea*-coordination, but an accusative pattern with *mo*-coordination (Dixon 1979, Otsuka 2000). The contrast between the two is illustrated in (1) and (2).

- (1) a. Na'e tangi 'a Hina<sub>i</sub> pea taa'i 'e Mele e<sub>i</sub>.  
 PST cry ABS Hina and hit ERG Mele  
 'Hina cried and Mele hit (her).'
- b. \*Na'e tangi 'a Hina<sub>i</sub> pea taa'i e<sub>i</sub> 'a Mele.  
 PST cry ABS Hina and hit ABS Mele  
 'Hina cried and (she) hit Mele.'
- c. Na'e taa'i 'e Hina<sub>i</sub> 'a Mele<sub>j</sub> pea tangi e<sub>i/j</sub>.  
 PST hit ERG Hina ABS Mele and cry  
 'Hina hit Mele and (\*Hina/Mele) cried.'
- (2) a. \*Na'e tangi 'a Hina<sub>i</sub> mo taa'i 'e Mele e<sub>i</sub>.  
 PST cry ABS Hina and hit ERG Mele  
 'Hina cried and Mele hit (her).'
- b. Na'e tangi 'a Hina<sub>i</sub> mo taa'i e<sub>i</sub> 'a Mele.  
 PST cry ABS Hina and hit ABS Mele  
 'Hina cried and (she) hit Mele.'
- c. Na'e taa'i 'e Hina<sub>i</sub> 'a Mele<sub>j</sub> mo kata e<sub>i/\*j</sub>.  
 PST hit ERG Hina ABS Mele and laugh  
 'Hina hit Mele and (Hina/\*Mele) laughed.'

Below I show that the distribution of empty category is governed by a Case-sensitive rule in *pea*-coordination and by a theta-role sensitive rule in *mo*-coordination in Tongan.

Note that if a pronoun follows instead of a gap, the relevant constraint is no longer effective in *pea*-coordination, while a similar strategy does not take effect in *mo*-

coordination. See (3) below. This suggests that the rule concerning *pea*-coordination is a constraint on deletion, whereas that concerning *mo*-coordination is a condition on coordination itself.

- (3) a. Na'e tangi 'a Hina<sub>i</sub> pea ne<sub>i</sub> taa'i 'a Mele.  
 PST cry ABS Hina and 3SG hit ABS Mele  
 'Hina cried and she hit Mele.'
- b. Na'e taa'i 'e Hina<sub>i</sub> 'a Mele<sub>j</sub> pea ne<sub>i/j</sub> tangi.  
 PST hit ERG Hina ABS Mele and 3SG cry  
 'Hina hit Mele and Mele/Hina cried.'
- c. \*Na'e tangi 'a Hina<sub>i</sub> mo taa'i ia<sub>i</sub> 'e Mele.  
 PST cry ABS Hina and hit 3SG ERG Mele  
 'Hina cried and Mele hit her.'

Assuming that deletion under coordination is a PF operation, I propose that deletion in *pea*-coordination must be licensed by feature-matching, including Case features. This deviates from Chomsky's (1995) proposal, in which Case features are assumed to be deleted after checking. I argue, however, that the value of Case features on NPs remains accessible after checking, as I have proposed elsewhere (Otsuka 2002) on independent grounds concerning the distribution of resumptive pronouns.

As for the gap in *mo*-coordination, I propose that licensing must take place in syntax rather than PF. Specifically, *mo* requires that theta-identification in the sense of Higginbotham 1985 obligatorily apply to [Spec,  $\nu$ P] of the two clauses it conjoins (Otsuka 2000). This hypothesis is supported by the fact that *mo*-coordination cannot involve impersonal constructions, which lack an external theta-role. See (4) below.

- (4) a. \*'Oku puke 'a Mele mo tapu ke mou hû ki hono loki.  
 PRS sick ABS Mele and forbidden KE 2PL enter to POSS.3SG room  
 'Mele is sick and it is forbidden that you enter her room.'
- b. \*Na'e 'ikai ke ha'u 'a Sione mo 'ita lahi 'a Mele.  
 PST NEG KE come ABS Sione and angry much ABS Mele  
 Lit. 'It wasn't that Sione came and Mele was angry.'

Obligatory theta-identification ensures that the two clauses conjoined by *mo* share the same subject. Otherwise, the derivation would be cancelled before reaching PF. Once the second NP is licensed in this way, the deletion rule may subsequently apply in PF.

In summary, the Tongan data support the claim that syntactic ergativity should be understood as a construction-specific phenomenon rather than a language-specific phenomenon. An ergative pattern with respect to a syntactic operation arises when the relevant syntactic rule is sensitive to Case (e.g., *pea*-coordination). In this respect, syntactic ergativity is in fact a direct consequence of morphological ergativity. The current approach also provides a simple solution to the two puzzles concerning syntactic ergativity—namely, (a) that not all languages with ergative morphology demonstrate syntactic ergativity, and (b) that not all syntactic operations show an ergative pattern in a so-called syntactic ergative language. The reason why an accusative pattern emerges in these cases is that some syntactic rules are sensitive to theta-roles rather than Case (e.g., *mo*-coordination). While it remains to be seen whether the current analysis can account for various phenomena involving syntactic ergativity in other languages, it clearly has one advantage. The problem with syntactic ergativity is that it is extremely difficult to make a generalization about the behavior of so-called syntactically ergative languages both crosslinguistically and language-internally.

Once each individual case is treated as an independent syntactic phenomenon, however, the problem disappears.

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