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languages of Anatolia, Caucasus, Iran, Mesopotamia

# Georgian ergative

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# goals and contents

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## Goals

- ergative in Georgian
- inherent or dependent

## Contents

- background information on ergative
- illustrative examples
- questions
- related research and ideas

# ergativity

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- Georgian is morphologically ergative language

<i>case</i>	<i>case markers</i>	
Nominative (NOM)	-i, Ø	person hierarchy 1PL > 1SG > 2PL > 2SG > 3PL > 3SG (Woolford 2008)
Ergative (ERG)	-ma, -m	
Dative (DAT)	-s	
Genitive (GEN)	-is, -s(i)	
Instrumental (INSTR)	-it, -t(i)	
Adverbial (ADV)	-ad, -d	
Vocative (VOC)	-o, -v	

	1SG	1PL	2SG	2PL
NOM	me	<u>chven</u>	<u>shen</u>	<u>tkven</u>
ERG	me	<u>chven</u>	<u>shen</u>	<u>tkven</u>
DAT	me	<u>chven</u>	<u>shen</u>	<u>tkven</u>
GEN	chem-	<u>chven-</u>	<u>shen-</u>	<u>tkven-</u>

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# ergativity

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- Georgian shows patterns of a **split ergativity** conditioned by tense+aspect

- (1) a. mk'vlevar-i                      mokhseneba-s      k'itkhul-ob-d-a.  
researcher-**NOM/ABS**    talk-DAT/ACC      read-THM-**IPFV**-3SG.SBJ:PST  
'The researcher was giving a talk.'
- b. mk'vlevar-ma                      mokhseneba-∅      ts'a-i-kitkh-a.  
researcher-**ERG**                      talk-NOM/ABS      PR-PV-read-3SG.SBJ-**PFV**.PST  
'The researcher gave a talk.'

# ergativity

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- Georgian exhibits an **argumental-structural property** of ergativity: so-called *split S*

	Accusative case alignment		Ergative case alignment		Split S alignment	
<u>Transitive</u>	<u>SNOM</u>	<u>OACC</u>	<u>SERG</u>	<u>OABS</u>	<u>SERG</u>	<u>OABS</u>
<u>Unergative</u>	<u>SNOM</u>		SABS		<u>SERG</u>	
<u>Unaccusative</u>	<u>SNOM</u>		SABS		SABS	

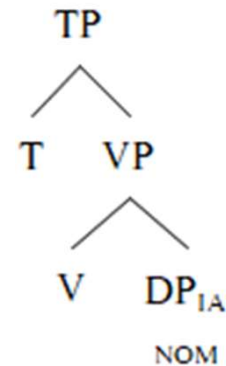
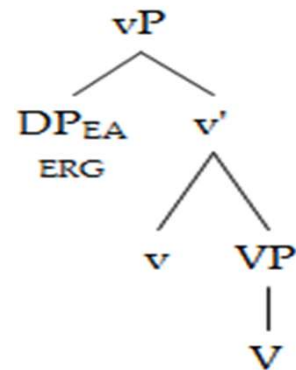
(see Harris 1981, 1982, 1990; Hewitt 1982, 1987, 1995;

See also Amiridze 2006 about ergativity in Georgian).

# Illustration 1: split-S

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- (2) a. *k'ats-ma*      *ga-i-tsin-a.*  
man-**ERG**      PR-PV-laugh-3SG.SBJ:PFV.PST  
'The man laughed.'
- b. *sakhl-i*      *ga-tb-a.*  
man-**NOM/ABS**      PR-PV-heat-3SG.SBJ:PFV.PST  
'The house was heated.'



## Illustration 2: morphologically ergative

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Argument omission in coordination is possible only if the common argument is a subject

- (3) a. [deda- $\emptyset_k$  ts'avida] da [ $\Delta_k$  uk'an ar moikheda].  
mother-**NOM** went and **ERG** back not looked\_at.  
'Mother went and did not look back.'
- b. [deda- $m_k$  nakha shvil-i:] da [ $\Delta_{k^*j}$  otakhidan gavida].  
mother-**ERG** saw child-NOM and **NOM** from\_room went\_out.  
'Mother saw a child and went out from room.'

## Illustration 3: morphologically ergative

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Ability to control the missing argument in a subordinate-adjunct clause is indicative of subjecthood in syntactically accusative languages

- (4) a. nika- $\emptyset_k$     dabrunda    [PRO<sub>k</sub> amb-eb-is    mosaq'ol-ad].  
Nika-**NOM** returned                      news-PL-GEN                      tell.PTCP-ADV  
'Nika returned to tell news.'
- b. nika-m<sub>k</sub>    mariam-j<sub>j</sub>    dainakha    [PRO<sub>k\*</sub> otakh-shi    shemosvlisas].  
Nika-**ERG**    Mariam-NOM    saw                      room-in                      entering  
'Nika saw Mariam while entering the room.'



# questions

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Several questions arise that have been the subject of numerous studies on Georgian ergative

- how ergative is assigned?
- is it structural or inherent?
- why unaccusative intransitive subject (SP) patterns together with transitive object (O), while unergative intransitive subject (SA) patterns together with transitive subject (A)?

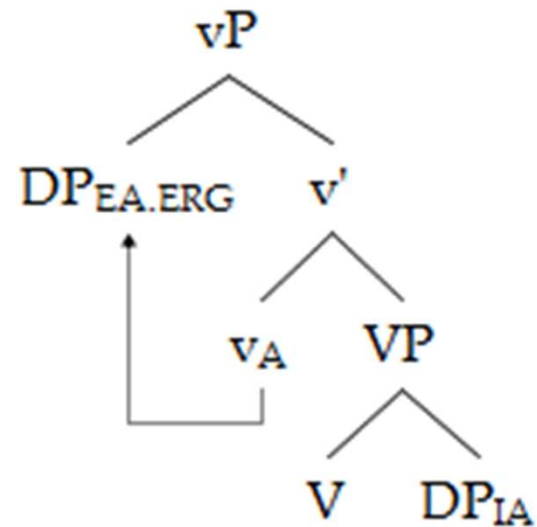
# case theory

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## Inherent Case

is assigned by *v* to the external argument in Spec,*v*P together with the argument's theta role

- non-structural case
- associated with theta position



proposed by Woolford (2006)

# case theory

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## Dependent Case

is assigned to the higher DP when there are two DPs in the same domain.

The rule of DCT states:

“If  $NP_1$  c-commands  $NP_2$  and both are contained in the same domain (say, clause), then value the case feature of  $NP_1$  as ergative.”

(Baker and Bobaljik 2017: 112)

- structural case
- associated with a position relative to another DP

proposed by Marantz (1991)

# DC theory

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Georgian ERG supports both IC theory (see Nash 1996, Legate 2008) and DC theory (see Marantz 1991, Nash 2017).

I adopt the view that Georgian ergative is best analysed under the DCT: ERG is assigned to the higher DP in a clause with transitive verbs, when the lower DP bears an unmarked case.

- (5)      *p'ropesor-ma*              *ts'ign-i*              *ts'a-i-k'itkh-a.*  
         professor-**ERG**              book-**ABS/NOM**              PR-PV-read-3SG.SBJ:PFV.PST  
         'The professor read a book.'

# unergatives

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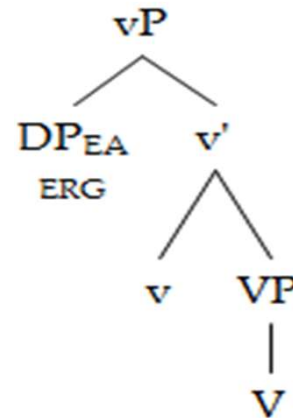
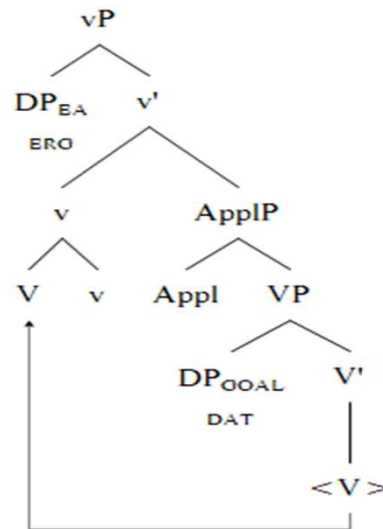
If that is a case the question that arises is, what happens with verbs which take an ergative subject but have no second DP that can be counted as a case competitor for assigning ergative.

- (a) **indirect transitive verbs** without a second unmarked DP which have only a DP dative goal argument; and
- (b) **unergative intransitive verbs** lacking a second DP whatsoever.

# unergatives

(6) *k'ats-ma*      *she-khed-a*      *kal-s.*  
 man-**ERG**      PR-look-3SG.SBJ:PFV.PST      woman-**DAT**  
 'The man looked at the woman.'

(7) *jarisk'ats-ma*      *bolo-mde*      *i-brdzol-a.*  
 soldier-**ERG**      end-till      PV-fight-3SG.SBJ:PFV.PST  
 'The soldier fought till the end.'



# unergatives

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## Controversial accounts

- Unergatives are treated as intransitives, that borrow Aorist forms from transitive verbs (Vogt 1971; Shanidze 1980)
- Unergatives are treated underlyingly as transitives in Georgian (Schuchardt 1895; Hewit 1987; 1995; Nash 1995; 2017; Melikishvili 2001, 2014; Melikishvili, Humphries et. al. 2008)

Lazard (1998) treats them as anti-impersonal constructions and assumes that they have implicit cognate object.

(see Tuite 2017: 1118–1120 for an overview on this issue; see Hollisky 1981 for Georgian medial verbs)

# unergatives

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Claim: **Unergatives involve a covert object in the nominative/absolute**

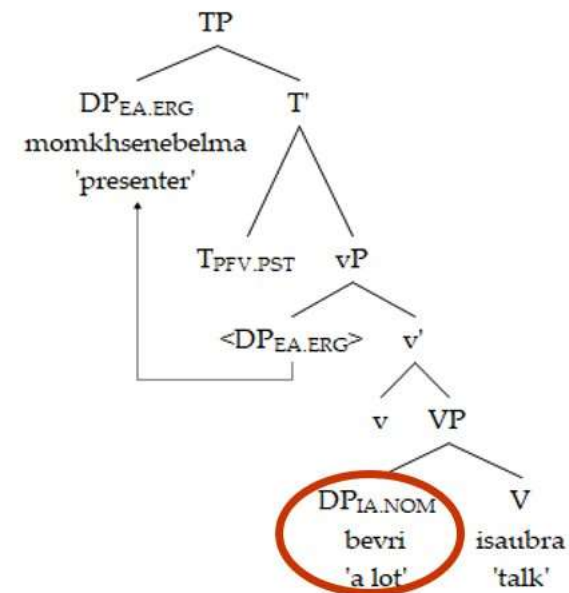
- **transitive structure** underlying unergatives: formation of Perfect tenses similar to transitives; subject case assignment; formation of causatives
- **agreement morphology** that indicates implicit argument
- **an ability to add a D head** as a residual of a DP with cognate object in ABS/NOM



# unergatives

It is possible to add a quantifier *bevri/tsota* 'many/few' to all unergative verbs which do not imply a theme argument. Crucially, this quantifier has the same case marking as a direct object.

- |    |   |  |  |
|----|---|--|--|
|    | PRS and FUT   |  |  |
| a. | <i>momkhsenebel-i</i><br>presenter-ABS/NOM<br>'Presenter talks a lot.'  | <i>bevri-s</i><br><b>a_lot-DAT/ACC</b> | <i>saubr-ob-s.</i><br>talk-THM-3SG.SBJ:PRS     |
|    | PFV.PST   |  |  |
| b. | <i>momkhsenebel-ma</i><br>presenter-ERG<br>'Presenter talked a lot.'    | <i>bevri-i</i><br><b>a_lot-ABS/NOM</b> | <i>i-saubr-a.</i><br>PV-talk-3SG.SBJ:PFV.PST   |
|    | PRE   |  |  |
| c. | <i>momkhsenebel-s</i><br>presenter-DAT<br>'Presenter has talked a lot.' | <i>bevri-i</i><br><b>a_lot-ABS/NOM</b> | <i>u-saubr-i-a.</i><br>PV-talk-PRF-3SG.SBJ:PST |



# ideas

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suggestions for further research

- to look for parallels in other ergative languages, the good example would be Basque unergatives
- to provide a critical overview on studies presenting controversial accounts (IC vs DC)
- to provide a critical overview on studies presenting controversial accounts on unergatives
- to provide a formal analysis of how case-assignment actually works in Georgian

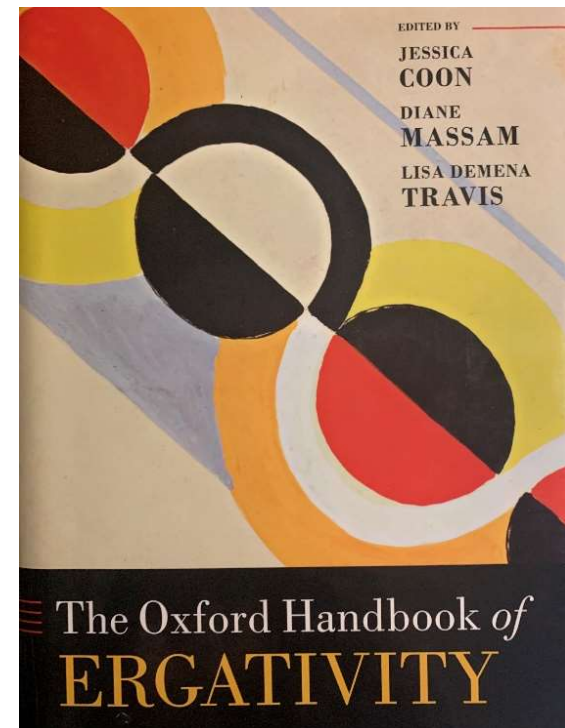
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## recommendations for further reading on Ergativity

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DOI: [10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198739371.001.0001](https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780198739371.001.0001)



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# this lecture

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