

Two constraints on ergative anaphors

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The Voice System:

The “Philippine-type” languages of the Philippines, Taiwan, and Indonesia show *voice systems*.

- In the ‘Agent Voice’ (antipassive), the external argument is absolutive. AV; EXT
- In the ‘Patient Voice’ (transitive), the internal argument is absolutive. PV; INT

(1) *South Sulawesi: the Voice System*¹

- | | | | |
|----|------------------------------------|----|--------------------------------------|
| a. | Mam -baca= a ’ buku. | b. | U -baca= i iting buku. |
| | AV-read=1ABS book | | 1ERG-read=3ABS that book |
| | ‘I’m reading a book.’ | | ‘I read that book.’ |
| | | | Mandar |

The morphologically absolutive argument (“pivot”) shows systematic hierarchical privilege. This pattern has led to near-consensus that this argument sits above all others in the clause.

Guilfoyle et al. 1992, Aldridge 2004, Rackowski and Richards 2005, Hsieh 2020

The Proposal

There is little agreement over the position of the absolutive argument and the nature of its movement.

In today’s talk, we argue for a classical “High-Licensing” analysis: *(Guilfoyle et al. 1992)*

The absolutive argument undergoes A-movement to SPEC,TP as a result of licensing by T⁰.

We show that this analysis allows the voice system to be understood as typical “High-Absolutive” syntax.

Rethinking Anaphors

Having adopted this stance, we turn to a constraint which holds across these languages:

In the patient voice, reflexive anaphors cannot be external arguments. *(Anderson 1976; Keenan 1993)*

(2) *The Ban on Ergative Anaphors*

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|----|--|----|---|
| a. | *Na-pakaraya= a ’ alawe-u . | b. | *Sinampal siya ng sarili niya . |
| | 3ERG-respect=1ABS self-1GEN | | slap.PV 3ABS ERG self 3GEN |
| | ‘Myself respects me’ | | ‘Himself slapped him.’ |
| | Mandar | | Tagalog |

Some have taken this to suggest that the internal argument does not undergo A-movement in this context.

Wechsler 1999, Richards 2000, Pearson 2005

We argue against this view: ergative anaphors should be ruled out by independent constraints.

We are very grateful to Mateo Pablo and Matal Torres for Chuj judgments and to Jupri Talib and Anchu Mansur for Mandar judgments. For comments on this work, we thank Jessica Coon, Sandy Chung, and the audience at WCCFL 39.

¹GLOSSING: AV: Agent Voice ≈ ANT: Antipassive, ABS: Absolutive, ERG: Ergative, EXT: External argument, GEN: Genitive, INT: Internal argument, PV: Patient Voice ≈ TV: Transitive, PFV: Perfective.

1 The Licensing Analysis

The Basic Proposal

We propose that the absolutive argument systematically undergoes A-movement to SPEC,TP.

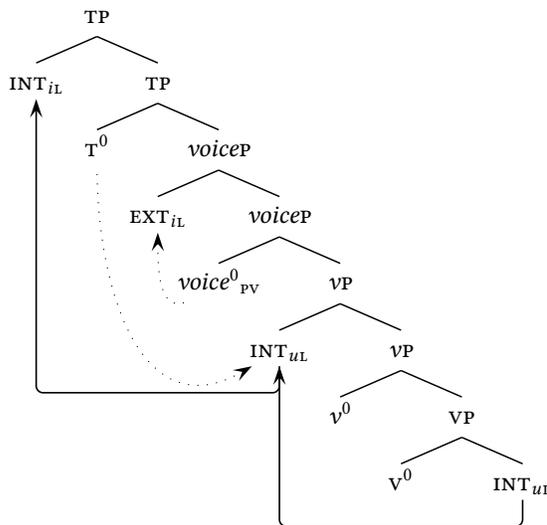
This step is a byproduct of a licensing relationship with τ^0 .

(Guilfoyle et al. 1992)

Definiteness effects are linked to a separate and lower step of object shift.

(Brodkin 2021)

(3) The Patient Voice: INT to Spec,TP



Mandar: A-movement linked to τ^0

Many Philippine-type languages provide robust evidence from binding for this step of A-movement. In Mandar, the profile of condition-c violations shows that the absolutive is in a high A-position.

1. R-expressions in the ergative: CANNOT be coindexed with an absolutive pronoun: (4a).
2. R-expressions in the absolutive: CAN be coindexed with an ergative pronoun: (4b).

(4) Mandar: Condition C

a. Na-ita=i pro kindo'-na iNina.
 3ERG-see=3ABS mom-3GEN NAME
 'Nina's_i mom saw her^{+_{i,j}}'

b. Na-baca=i buku na-alli iNina gena'.
 3-read=3ABS book 3-buy NAME early
 'She_i'll read the book N_i bought earlier.'

Mandar and its relatives provide a morphological clue for the relevance of τ^0 to this movement:

The absolutive argument triggers agreement on τ^0 .

(Béjar 1999; Finer 1999; Brodkin 2021)

1. This agreement follows middle-field auxiliaries, and
2. It disappears in non-finite contexts.

(5) Mandar: High Absolutive Agreement

a. Pura=a' na-pesita.
 already=1ABS 3ERG-visit
 'He already visited me.'

b. Melo=a' [_{NFC} ma'-jama] .
 want=1ABS AV-work.
 'I want to work.'

These facts suggest that the absolutive argument undergoes A-movement after interacting with τ^0 .

2 High Absolutive Parallels

The Typological Picture

The “High Absolutive” schema is not something which is unique to Philippine-type languages. The same two patterns recur across many morphologically-ergative languages:

1. The absolutive argument appears to undergo A-movement above all arguments in the clause, and
2. The absolutive argument shows morphological evidence of interaction with τ^0 .

Proposal: these languages share the same basic “High Absolutive” Syntax.

- Mayan, Inuit, Salish, West Circassian (Coon et al. 2014; Bittner 1994; Brown 2016; Ershova 2019)

The Mayan System

We illustrate the High Absolutive system in Mayan with data from Chuj (Q’anjobalan; 70,000 speakers). Like Mandarin, this language shows an ergative-absolutive agreement system and no case-marking. Moreover, it shows a diathesis between ‘Agent Voice’ (EXT = ABS) and ‘Patient Voice’ (INT = ABS).

(6) *Chuj: Antipassive vs. Transitive*

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>a. Ix-(<u>onh</u>)-xik-(<u>wi</u>) k’atzitz
 PFV-1PL.ABS-chop-AP\approxAV wood
 ‘We wood-chopped.’ Coon 2019: (26)</p> | <p>b. Ix-(<u>ko</u>)-xik-□ te’ k’atzitz
 PFV-1PL.ERG-chop-TV\approxPV the wood
 ‘We chopped the wood.’</p> |
|--|--|

Evidence for A-Movement

The same binding diagnostics suggest that the absolutive undergoes A-movement.

For instance, the profile of condition-C violations looks just like what we see in Mandarin:

1. The ergative argument CAN be a pronoun coindexed with an R-expression in the absolutive (4a).
2. The absolutive argument CANNOT be a pronoun coindexed with an R-expression in the ergative (4b).

(7) *Chuj: Condition C effects*

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>a. Ol-y-awtej [_{ABS} ch’anh libro [_{RC} s-man (<u>ix Ana</u>) ewi]] [_{ERG} (<u>pro</u>)].
 will-3ERG-read the book 3ERG-buy the NAME yesterday PRON
 Lit: ‘She₁ will read the book that Ana₁ bought yesterday.’</p> | <p>b. *Ix-s-tum-ej [_{ABS} (<u>pro</u>)] [_{ERG} ix ix ix-il-an-i (<u>waj Xun</u>)].
 PFV-A3-scold-DTV <i>pro</i> the woman PFV-see-AF-IV the Xun
 Intended: ‘The woman that saw Xun₁ scolded him₁.’</p> |
|---|---|

The Link to τ^0

Moreover, the High-Absolutive Mayan languages show the same link with licensing by τ^0 .

The agreement which indexes the absolutive argument is in τ^0 : Coon et al. 2014, Coon et al. to appear

1. It linearly follows middle-field auxiliaries, and
2. It disappears in non-finite contexts.

(8) *Chuj: High Absolutive Agreement*

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>a. Ix-(<u>ach</u>)-w-il-a’
 PFV-2ABS-1ERG-see-PV
 ‘I saw you.’</p> | <p>b. *Ixinyamoch [_{NFC} (<u>hach</u>)=in-chel-a’]
 I.began 2ABS=1ERG-hug-PV
 ‘I began to hug you.’</p> |
|---|--|

3 The Ban on Ergative Anaphors

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The Generalization

The patterns above lead us to a theory where the absolutive argument undergoes A-movement to SPEC,TP. In light of this fact, the following pattern raises a **puzzle**:

Neither language allows an absolutive argument to bind a reflexive anaphor in the position of the EXT.

(9) *No Ergative Anaphors*

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>a. *Na-ita=a' [EXT alawe-u].
 3ERG-see=1ABS self-1GEN
 ('Myself saw me.') Mandar</p> | <p>b. *Ix-y-il waj Xun [EXT s-b'a].
 PFV-A3-see the NAME 3GEN-self
 ('Himself saw Xun.') Chuj</p> |
|---|---|

This pattern- *the Ban on Ergative Anaphors*- holds across ergative languages. Anderson 1976
 In previous work, it has been taken to provide evidence **against**:

- Movement of the INT above the EXT (Bobaljik and Branigan 2006; Legate 2006; Otsuka 2006), or
- A-movement of the INT, as opposed to \bar{A} -movement (Richards 2000, Pearson 2005).

We argue that this logic does not go through: this ban says nothing about the absence of A-movement. Instead, we propose that ergative anaphors may be ruled out for several independent reasons:

- §4 'Low' anaphors: some anaphors must remain within the VP.
- §5 'High' anaphors: others can be banned in the EXT position on any post-GB approach to binding.

Result: The ban on ergative anaphors does not provide an argument against the A-movement analysis.

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Sidenote: No Exemptions

Both of these anaphors are roughly subject to condition A of the classical binding theory. For our purposes, this means that they require clause-internal, c-commanding antecedents. We focus on this type of anaphor- and set logophors aside- for the remainder of this talk.

(10) *Mandar: Condition A*

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>a. Na-pakaraya=i [INT alawe-na] [EXT guru-nna iNina].
 3ERG-respect=3ABS self-3GEN teacher-3GEN NAME
 'Nina's_i teacher_j respects herself*_{ij}.'</p> | <p>b. Ma'uangi iWati mua' na-pakaraya=i [INT alawe-na] [EXT iNina].
 says NAME C 3ERG-respect=3ABS self-3GEN NAME
 'Wati_i says that Nina_j respects herself*_{ij}.'</p> |
|---|--|

(11) *Chuj: Condition A*

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>a. Ix-y-il [INT s-b'a] [EXT s-nulej ix Xuwan] t'a k'en ne'en.
 PFV-3ERG-see 3GEN-self 3GEN-sister the NAME PREP the mirror
 '[Xuwan's_i sister]_j saw herself_{j,*i} in the mirror.'</p> | <p>b. Ixyl ix Malin to ix-y-il [INT s-b'a] [EXT ix Xuwan] t'a k'en ne'en.
 said the NAME that PFV-3ERG-see 3GEN-self the NAME PREP the mirror
 'Malin_i said that Xuwan_j saw herself_{j,*i} in the mirror.'</p> |
|---|--|

4 Two Types of Non-Exempt Reflexive Anaphor

Internal Diversity

Much work has shown that non-exempt reflexive anaphors do not form a homogeneous class (Paul 2004). Across High-Absolutive languages, we can observe minimally two types.

In some languages, the condition-A anaphor behaves like a regular argument:

1. It shows the same distributional properties as other types of INT, and
2. In the languages which show the definiteness effect, it typically occurs in PV.

(12) High Anaphors

- | | |
|---|--|
| <p>a. U-pakaraya=i alawe-u.</p> <p>1ERG-respect=3ABS self-1GEN</p> <p>‘I respect myself.’</p> <p>Mandar</p> | <p>b. Sinampal niya ang sarili niya.</p> <p>slap.PV 3ERG ABS self 3GEN</p> <p>‘He slapped himself.’</p> <p>Tagalog</p> |
|---|--|

Low Anaphors

Other High-Absolutive languages, however, contain condition-A anaphors which show different behavior. In Chuj, for instance, anaphors show constraints that regular DPs do not *cf.* (Burukina 2019)

Observation 1: They have a very limited distribution (only INT; never exempt; not inside PPs).

- (13) *Ix-lolon waj Xun [_{PP} t’a s-b’a].
- PFV-speak the Xun PREP 3POSS-self
- Intended: ‘Xun spoke to himself.’

Observation 2: They generally must be verb-adjacent.

(14) Reflexive object (VOS/*VSO)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>a. Ix-y-il s-b’a winh</p> <p>PFV-3ERG-see 3POSS-self he</p> <p>‘He saw himself.’</p> <p>✓VOS</p> | <p>b. *Ix-y-il winh s-b’a</p> <p>✗VSO</p> |
|---|---|

(15) Regular object (VOS/VSO)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>a. Ix-y-il nok’ tz’i’ winh</p> <p>PFV-3ERG-see the dog he</p> <p>‘He saw the dog.’</p> <p>✓VOS</p> | <p>b. Ixyil winh nok’ tz’i’</p> <p>✓VSO</p> |
|---|---|

The Chuj *b’a* resembles the “low” anaphors that we find across Austronesian: (Chung 1976; Paul 2004)

(16) Low Anaphors in Austronesian

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>a. Ma-naja tena iSahondra.</p> <p>AV-respect self NAME</p> <p>‘Sahondra respects herself.’</p> <p>Malagasy; Paul 2004</p> | <p>b. Dia meng-hargai diri.</p> <p>3SG AV-respect self</p> <p>‘He respects himself.’</p> <p>Indonesian; Nissa Aprilia (p.c.)</p> |
|--|---|

These elements share several systematic properties:

Table 1: Low anaphors in Chuj, Malagasy, Indonesian

Properties	Chuj <i>b'a</i>	Malagasy <i>tena</i>	Indonesian <i>diri</i>
1. Restricted distribution (only INT; never exempt)	✓	✓	✓
2. Generally verb adjacent	✓	✓	✓
3. Cannot appear in focus position	✓	✓	✓
4. Do not block extraction of the EXT	✓	✓	✓

Observation 3: The anaphor *b'a* cannot appear in the left-peripheral focus position:

(17) *No Extraction*

- a. * $[\text{Ha}]$ s-b'a] [ix-y-il ix].
 FOC 3GEN-self PFV-3ERG-see she
 ('She saw HERSELF') Chuj
- b. *Tena $[\text{no}]$ haja-in' iSoa
 self REL respect-PV NAME
 ('Soa respects HERSELF') Paul 2004:22

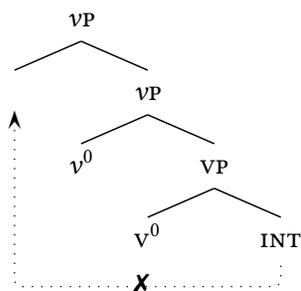
Observation 4: Low anaphors cannot occupy the “High Absolutive” position (seen in different ways).

1. Austronesian: LOW anaphors have to appear as the INT in AV, not PV.
 2. Mayan: LOW anaphors occur with PV morphology, but allow the EXT to extract. Aissen 2017
- **N.b.:** some Mayan languages require AV/AP when the INT is a reflexive (Mam: England 1983: 186-87).

- (18) Mach [ix-y-il- \square s-b'a]?
 who PFV-3ERG-see-TV 3GEN-self
 'Who saw themselves?'
 Chuj
- (19) *Haja- $[\text{in}']$ iSoa tena
 respect-PV NAME self
 ('Soa respects herself')
 Malagasy; Paul 2004:22

Proposal: these low-anaphors cannot appear in positions outside of the VP.

(20) *Low Anaphors: No Movement*



This pattern may be derived from independent constraints, e.g.

1. Patterns of nominal licensing (the anaphors might be structurally-deficient, cf. Paul 2004)
2. Derivational properties of anaphors (see Royer 2021, and next section)

The crucial point: the fact that they must remain low rules out their appearance as the PV EXT.

5 Deriving The Ban

Possible Constraints

Even in the absence of this constraint, there are many ways to rule out ergative anaphors.

This is a necessary goal for languages like Mandarin and Tagalog where condition-A anaphors are not small.

Our claim: Most post-GB approaches to binding *predict* the ban on ergative anaphors (cf. Travis 1998).

Domain Constraints

There is a classical intuition in the Government and Binding literature on reflexive anaphors:

“Anaphors must be bound within specific domains.” (Chomsky 1986)

In modern terms, we might identify these binding domains as phases. (Charnavel and Sportiche 2016)

On this view, we might propose the following constraint:

(21) *The Phasal Binding Constraint*

Condition-A anaphors must be bound within the first phase in which they are merged.

Domain Constraints Block Ergative Anaphors

This constraint would rule out ergative anaphors on two uncontroversial assumptions:

1. There is a clause-internal phase which corresponds to the *voiceP*.
2. The INT does not move above the EXT in this phase in PV.

The first reflects the basic intuition of Chomsky 1986

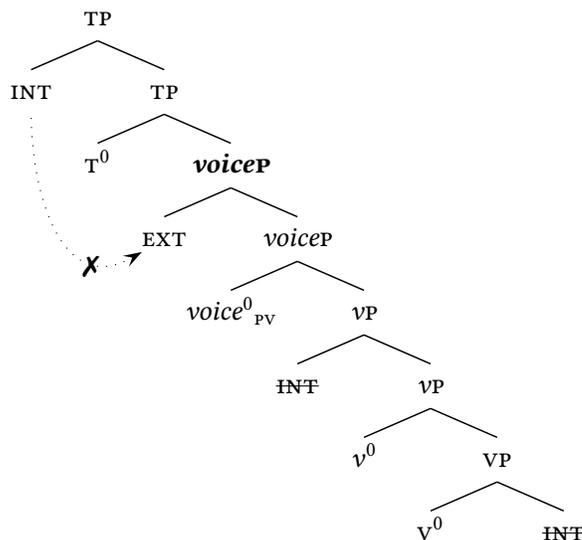
Anaphors must be bound within the smallest constituent that contains an EXT.

The second assumption has independent justification in Mandarin and beyond.

Brodkin, Friday.

The ban on ergative anaphors follows directly from these assumptions.

(22) *The Binding Domain: VoiceP*



Domain Constraints Block Other Anaphors

This analysis makes additional predictions about the distribution of condition-A anaphors.

For instance, it holds that they should not occur in positions where they lack phase-internal antecedents.

In Mandarin, this prediction is correct:

1. The anaphor *alawe* does not occur inside complex DPs: (23a).
2. It is completely impossible inside all types of PP: (23b).

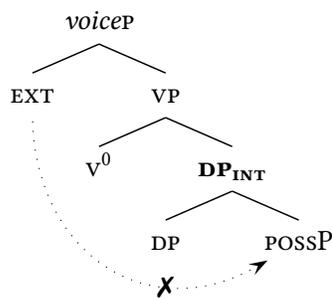
(23) *No Anaphors in complex DPs and PPs*

- a. *U-olo'i=i [poto-nna alawe-u].
 1ERG-like-3ABS photo-3GEN self-1GEN
 ('I like photos of myself.')
- b. *Makanyang=a' [lao alawe-u].
 trust=1ABS to self-1GEN
 'I trust myself.'

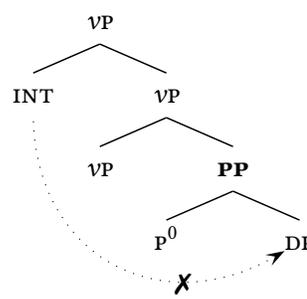
The domain constraints above capture this pattern on two assumptions:

1. The DP and PP are phases.
2. Neither constituent contains a legitimate antecedent for an anaphor.

(24) *DP Phasehood*



(25) *PP Phasehood*



Minimalist approaches

There are two main derivational approaches to Condition A (Drummond et al. 2011):

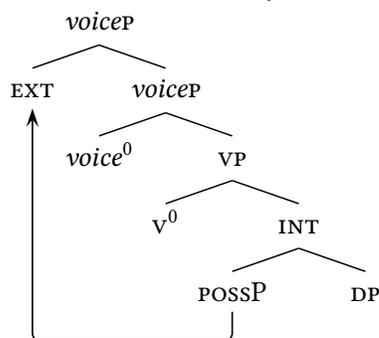
1. Agree-based approaches (e.g. Reuland 2001, 2011, Rooryck and vanden Wyngaerd 2011)
2. Movement-based approaches (e.g. Hornstein 2001, 2007, Kayne 2002, Zwart 2002)

Levin (2014) shows that an Agree-based approach can account for the ban on ergative anaphors in Balinese.

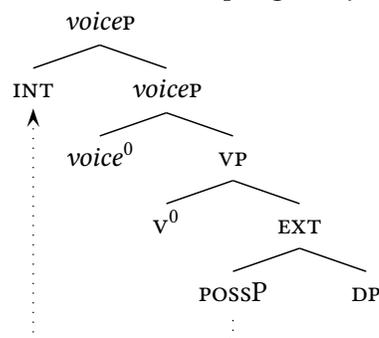
We note that movement-based approaches are just as well-equipped to do so:

- **Mechanism:** the anaphor is an INT which is “stranded” by movement of its possessor.
- **Point:** if movement is always upward and the EXT is invariably base-merged above the INT,
- Then the ban on ergative anaphors falls out from the derivational logic of the movement approach.

(26) *The Movement Analysis*



(27) *Not Possible: Deep Ergativity*



6 Conclusions

The Ban Makes Sense

The Ban on Ergative Anaphors is readily derived on modern theories of reflexive anaphora.

- Domain-Constraint models: derive the pattern on reasonable assumptions about phasehood.
- Movement-based accounts: derive the same effect from standard assumptions about clause structure.

As a result, the Ban on Ergative anaphors should not be taken as evidence against:

1. Movement of the absolutive INT above the EXT (pace Bobaljik and Branigan 2006; Legate 2006)
2. A-movement of the absolutive, as opposed to \bar{A} -movement (pace Richards 2000; Pearson 2005)

The Theory of Voice

This conclusion removes an apparent challenge for the A-movement analysis of the voice system.

This allows us to understand the position of the absolutive argument in terms of movement to SPEC,TP.

This analysis captures the key empirical patterns:

1. The unique binding privilege of the absolutive argument, and
2. The link between movement and licensing across Philippine-type languages (e.g. agreement).

Moreover, this analysis extends readily to “High-Absolutive” systems cross-linguistically.

- Philippine-type languages are not unique in that the absolutive argument occupies a high position.
- The absolutive argument shows the same privilege in binding, agreement, and \bar{A} -extraction in:
 1. Mayan: Smith-Stark 1978; Coon et al. 2014; Aissen 2017; Coon et al. to appear
 2. Inuit: Bittner 1994; Bittner and Hale 1996a,b; Yuan 2018
 3. Salish: Davis et al. 1993; Davis and Brown 2011; Brown 2016
 4. West Circassian: Ershova 2017, 2019
 5. Algonquian: Bruening 2005; Oxford 2019

These patterns exist independent of the question of morphological ergativity.

- Many conservative Philippine-type languages are morphologically ergative. (De Guzman 1988).
- Nevertheless, the label “absolutive” is not what is at issue. see: Guilfoyle et al. 1992
- The key observation is that all of these languages contain (transitive) constructions where different types of argument undergo A-movement to a position above all arguments in the clause.

We argue that these patterns are best explained on the “High Absolutive” analysis: in these languages, the absolutive argument undergoes A-movement to SPEC,TP as a byproduct of interaction with τ^0 .

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