DOM and ergative as structural oblique cases in an Agree framework

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Abstract. Accusative and ergative alignments are accounted for in terms of head licenced case, i.e. in terms of Agree, rejecting dependent case approaches. In the accusative alignment, nominative case depends on T agreement and accusative case on *v** agreement. In the ergative alignment nominative/absolutive case depends on T, while ergative is an oblique. Importantly, not all oblique case is inherent – specifically DOM is structural (sections 2-3). This distinction is relevant in approaching ergative case (sections 4-5), in an active language (Punjabi) and in an ergative language proper (Kurmanji Kurdish). Ergative case can be construed as inherent in Punjabi, but must be construed as structural in Kurmanji. Furthermore, DOM and ergative are shown to oscillate between not being able to enter Agree or being able to. This is imputed to the possibility for them to project either as PPs or as DPs.

Keywords: Case, Agree, Differential Object Marking, ergative, oblique case

1. Overview

Current debate about case[1] revolves around the alternative between the Agree model of Chomsky (2000, 2001) and the dependent case model of Marantz (1991), recently taken up by Bobaljik (2008), Baker (2015), Baker and Bobaljik (2017). The Agree model is the latest Chomskyan realization of the original model of case in generative grammar (Vergnaud 2008), whereby a head assigns case to an argument in a given structural configuration (government). In the Agree formalization, the valuation of the case feature is a byproduct of Agree in phi-features between a phase head v* or I and an argument (subject to Minimality, Phase Impenetrability). The underlying intuition remains constant and it is in fact the same encoded in the notion of dependent marking (Nichols 1992) of the typological tradition. In other words, case (a nominal inflection) is a relation between a predicative head and an argument dependent on that head. In the Agree version, case is the same basic relation between a head and an argument that is enshrined in agreement (head-marking in typological terms).

The dependent case model differs not just from the Agree model, but in fact from the whole idea of case as a relation involving a head. In this alternative conception, case is a label for a relative prominence relation between two arguments, measured in terms of c-command. So in a nominative – accusative configuration, accusative is the case assigned to the configurationally lower argument (dependent case). Thus the Agree and the dependent case models are clearly distinct from a conceptual point of view – and as a consequence are clearly distinct from an empirical point of view.

One of the differences concerns ergative alignments. In terms of dependent case, ergative and accusative alignments share a deep parallelism. Specifically, in ergative alignments ergative is the dependent case (parallel to accusative in accusative alignments). No deep parallelism between accusative and ergative alignments can be formulated in terms of the Agree theory of case – since the dedicated phase heads are just two and they define just two cases: accusative (*v**) and nominative/absolutive (I). Ergative must perforce remain out of this system – and is indeed often argued to be an inherent case (Woolford 1997, Legate 2008, 2014b, Coon 2013, Sheehan 2017 and references quoted there), i.e. a case intrinsically connected with a particular argument slot/theta-role

[1] I do not capitalize the name of categories nor of case; I use capitals just for rules (Agree) and of course for abbreviations and acronyms. Abbreviations in the text are expanded when they first occur. Abbreviations in the glosses are as listed in the Leipzig glossing rules, with the exception of MP (Middle Passive) and LKR (Linker).

(Chomsky 1986). Though this characterization is undoubtedly suitable for so called active alignments, where ergative case is associated with external arguments, dependent case theorists point out that it is problematic for ergative alignments proper, where the sole arguments of unergatives and unaccusatives pattern alike (Baker and Bobaljik 2017).

In the present chapter I adopt the Agree model. Before discussing ergative alignments (sections 4-5), I address the issue of oblique case by reference to accusative alignments (sections 2-3). I adopt recent views to the effect that Differential Object Marking (DOM) is realized in several languages as an oblique, and specifically as a dative (Torrego 2010, Manzini and Franco 2016 with specific reference to the Indo-European languages). This construal of DOM has been criticized in that it fails to predict several contrasts between DOM and goal datives (Barany 2018). I argue that these difficulties can be solved by adopting the view that DOM objects are structural obliques, whereas canonical goal datives are inherent obliques.

In section 4, the treatment of DOM arguments as obliques, as opposed to acccusatives, facilitates the reduction of ergative alignments to unaccusative structures – which I adopt for the Indo-Aryan language Punjabi. Furthermore, in section 5 I make the point that ergative can also be a structural oblique, yielding ergative alignments proper (here in Kurmnaji Kurdish) where the ergative is not tied to the external argument.

In section 5, I mention some possible arguments in favour of the Agree model. One is suggested by morphological case and syncretism patterns. Case hierarchies developed on typological and morphological (i.e. syncretism) grounds (Blake 2001, Caha 2009) indicate a close affinity of accusative to nominative, and of ergative to obliques, casting doubts on the ergative/accusative parallelism characteristic of dependent case theories. Indeed, nominative and accusative, i.e. direct cases, are often syncretic (e.g. the Indo-European neuter). Vice versa, though the ergative itself is often syncretic, the syncretism is always with another oblique case (genitive, dative, instrumental, see Palancar 2008).

Baker (2015) on the other hand suggests that the Agree model is compromised by the fact that it is not difficult to find languages where case and agreement are dissociated (the same agreement is triggered by different cases and the same case triggers different agreements). In section 5, I briefly comment that this argument actually cuts both ways. It undoubtedly forces the Agree model to be weakened. However, accusative systems are generally characterized by robust alignments of case and agreement – and only ergative systems dissociate them. The dependent case theory is especially ill-placed to capture this asymmetry, precisely because of the complete independence it postulates between case and agreement.

2. The accusative alignment and DOM

The present section is concerned with the accusative alignment and the role of DOM marking within it. English provides a standard illustration of how the Agree model applies to the accusative alignment. With transitive verbs (1), the internal argument agrees with *v** (i.e. a v phase head) and is accusative; the external argument agrees with T and is nominative. As is well-known, *v** agreement can be overtly seen, for instance with perfect participles in French (Kayne 2000).

(1) a. He loves her

b. [$_{TP}$ T [$_{vP}$ he v* [$_{VP}$ loves her]]]
|_____| |_____|

Unergatives are very much like transitives, except that there is no object. The sole argument agrees with T and is nominative, as in (2).

(2) a. He slept
b. [$_{TP}$ T [$_{vP}$ he v* [$_{VP}$ slept]]]
|_____|

Unaccusative verbs introduce transitivity alternations. I assume *v* is defective, namely that it is not a probe and it does not head a phase. The only argument agrees with T and is nominative as in (3).[2]

(3) a. He arrived
b. [$_{TP}$ T [$_{vP}$ v [$_{VP}$ arrived he]]]
|_____|

The main point of this section and of the following one is to consider a variation on the basic accusative schema, arising in those languages which display Differential Object Marking (DOM). Crosslinguistically, DOM is sensitive to the animacy and specificity of the object DP. I assume that there is a single relevant hierarchy and it is essentially a D-hierarchy in the sense of Kiparsky (2008) (see also the references quoted there). For the sake of explicitness, I refer to it as the Referentiality hierarchy and I assume that the major cuts on it are as indicated in (4).[3]

(4) Referentiality hierarchy
1P > 2P > deictic > proper name > definite & animate > definite or animate > indefinite & inanimate

In Spanish, and in most other Romance languages, DOM consists in introducing a high-ranked DP by means of the preposition *a*, otherwise known as the dative/locative preposition, as in (5); in any event, an oblique preposition is involved (for instance Romanian locative *pe*).

(5) Maria llamò a Juan
Maria called DOM Juan

[2] There is of course considerable debate in the minimalist literature on the nature of *v*, specifically in relation to an additional Voice category (e.g. Harley 2013, Legate 2014a) – as an anonymous reviewer points out. The reason why this debate is eschewed in favour of the account of *v* by Chomsky (2000, 2001) is that the latter is both particular simple and entirely sufficient for present purposes. A similar neutrality between a Voice/v system and a conflated *v* grammar is signalled by Polinsky (2016: 46-48).

[3] I am aware of the considerable amount of literature whose discussion I am avoiding here. This is because the particular choice of referential hierarchy is irrelevant for present purposes. The hierarchy in (1) is lifted from Manzini et al. (2020), where it is motivated by microvariation in Italo-Romance, see also the references quoted there. An alternative account of Italo-Romance varieties is found in Ledgeway et al (2019), where attention is payed to a phenomenon not considered here, namely whether a definite article is or is not present.

'Maria called Juan'

As is turns out, the oblique-looking form taken by DOM in (5) is not unique to Romance. According to Bossong (1991: 157-158), "identity of marked accusative and dative is by no means limited to Romance and Semitic languages; it is a frequent and widespread morphological pattern all over the world, from modern Indo-Aryan languages like Hindi and Punjabi to Amerindian languages like Guarani and Aymara". In his estimate, syncretism of DOM and dative accounts for more than half of the cases of syncretic realizations of DOM. In addition, another important source of syncretism with DOM is locatives.

This in itself is sufficient to exclude that DOM and dative are simply homophonous. For instance Baker (this volume) takes Hindi dative case *ko* to be homophonous with the DOM marker *ko*, for historical reasons. Historical explanations could hold if a single language, say Hindi, or Spanish was involved. It cannot hold if several unrelated language families are involved. Furthermore, even within the well-known Indo-European family the coincidence involves morphemes which do not have a common ancestor, such as Spanish prepositional *a* and Hindi postpositional -*ko*.

Assuming that the typological spread of the phenomenon warrants an explanation, the traditional approach is to postulate a low-level morphological syncretism (Barany 2018) having to do with the morphological organization of case features (markedness hierarchies, feature hierarchies, or other). Nevertheless, a few theorists have advanced the stronger proposal that DOM arguments are syntactically dative (Torrego 2010, Pineda 2014, Manzini and Franco 2016). I adopt and develop their view here.[4]

Torrego (2010) assumes that datives are lodged in an Appl projection. Manzini and Franco (2016) argue that in languages like Spanish there is no Appl projection, but the dative information is carried by the preposition *a*. Here I strike a middle course. I recognize that Manzini and Franco are correct in imputing semantic content to the *a* preposition, specifically the content of an elementary (part/whole) relator. At the same time, I agree with Torrego that Romance has and Appl head, which is overtly realized in particular by dative clitics (Manzini and Savoia 2017). Thus a ditransitive sentence like (6a) in Spanish, involving a thematic dative, has the structure in (6b).

(6) a. Maria le dio el libro a Juan
Maria him.dat gave the book to Juan
'Maria gave the book to Juan'

b. $[_{TP}$ T $[_{vP}$ Maria v* $[_{ApplP}$ le $[_{VP}$ dio el libro] a Juan]]
|_____| |_____|

If the lexical identity of thematic datives with DOM objects is determined by their structural coincidence, then a DOM sentence like (5) has the representation in (7). The structure in (7) is better understood if we consider that, in the tradition of studies inaugurated by Hale and Keyser (1993), a transitive verb decomposes into a causative elementary predicate represented by *v** and a nominal component. Thus *to call Juan* as in (7) is essentially *to make/give a call to Juan,* along the lines of

[4] Alternative views, from homophony to morphological syncretism, are only mentioned in passing, in that section 3 below is entirely devoted to the critics of the approach I adopt. I refer to the works quoted in the text for a more comprehensive survey of the vast literature on DOM.

(8). In this perspective, finding the high ranked object *Juan* in the dative is the normally expected state of affairs.

(7) [$_{TP}$ T [$_{vP}$ Maria v* [$_{ApplP}$ [$_{VP}$ llamò] a Juan]]] cf. (5)
|_____|

(8) [$_{TP}$ T [$_{vP}$ Maria CAUSE [$_{ApplP}$ [$_{NP}$ llam-] a Juan]]]
|_____|

Next, low ranked objects like *a taxi* in (9a) are embedded not as *a* objects but as bare DP objects. These now require some explanation. The idea of Hale and Keyser (1993) is that a transitive predicate like *call* is obtained via the incorporation of the resultative nominal into the causative or other transitivizing *v** predicate. A bare DP object argument reflects this incorporated representation of the predicate, as in (9b).

(9) a. Maria llamò un taxi
Maria called a taxi
'Maria called a taxi'

b. [$_{TP}$ T [$_{vP}$ Maria v* [$_{VP}$ llamò un taxi]]]
|_____| |_____|

We now need to understand why it is high ranked referents that are matched to the structure in (8) and low ranked referents to the structure in (9) – as opposed to the reverse. Furthermore, languages which do not have DOM typically treat objects as in (9) not as in (8). Manzini and Franco (2016) invoke the need for high ranked referents to be matched with a higher role than theme, namely possessors/locators (of the event), without quite explaining why low ranked referents couldn't also have access to it.

Now, a stream of formal literature, not concerned with DOM,[5] associates the dative/applicative position with person/participant features absent from the accusative object position, as in the account of the PCC (Person Case Constraint) by Anagnostopoulou (2005) and much subsequent literature. More in consonance with a referential hierarchy like (4), Charnavel and Mateu (2015) associate dative/applicative with logophoric properties, i.e. point of view/perspective properties, as schematized in (10). The reason why in languages where the structure in (8) is available, high ranked referents are lodged in Appl may then be as simple as the fact that they are viewpoint/perspectival centers.[6]

[5] As an anonymous reviewer observes, the literature quoted in this final part of section 2 is diverse and is not necessarily compatible with the views held here. A detailed account of the various schools of thought involved is beyond the scope of the present chapter, cf. fn. 4. The references merely indicate that in many instances, I don't introduce new assumptions, I just combine independently made assumptions to forma a somewhat different picture.

[6] The PCC and the Charnavel-Mateu phenomena are restricted to functional heads (clitics and inflections) – which is not true of DOM. This may connect to the fact that they are sensitive to different cuts in the referentiality hierarchy. In fact, even the Charnavel-Mateu phenomenon and the PCC do not completely overlap. I leave these issues open for future research.

Ledgeway et al (2019) propose that DOM objects check a [person] feature in *v**, while bare objects do not. Evidently [person] must imply wider reference to the properties of the Referential hierarchy – and in this sense the same intuition seems to be pursued as here. In their approach, however, the further connection with dative morphosyntax is not perceived. However, an anonymous reviewer points to the connection between dative and DOM made by Ledgeway et al

(10) $[_{\text{ApplP}}$ DP $[_{\text{Appl}}$ Dat $_{\text{viewpoint/perspective}}$

In a dependent case framework, Baker and Vinokurova (2010), working on the Turkic language Sakha, are able to demonstrate that DOM correlates with adverb positioning with respect to the object – showing that DOM object are structurally higher than ordinary objects. Since in Turkic DOM is based on specificity they further correlate the movement of specific object to a higher position with scope requirements.[7] Needless to say, the overall result of the present approach is also to associate DOM objects with a higher position than other objects. Therefore, the dependent case approach does not seem to have an explanatory edge.

In short, both typological and formal models traditionally approach the DOM case as a differential accusative. Torrego (2010), Manzini and Franco (2016) take the step of assimilating DOM syntactically (not just morphologically) to dative/applicative. The connection to referentially high ranking arguments may then depend on intrinsic properties of the Appl head (10).

3. Thematic and DOM datives.

As noted above, the traditional and the formal literature generally treat DOM as the manifestation of a differential accusative case. The same literature often deems the analysis of DOM in section 2 too strong, and raise various objections against it (Bossong 1991, Barany 2018, also Baker this volume, in a dependent case framework). This section addresses these objections in some detail in order to further support the thesis that DOM is to be identified with obliquization in a robustly attested set of languages. As anticipated in section 1, the treatment of DOM is connected to the discussion of ergative alignments in at least two ways. First, the oblique treatment of DOM, removes accusativity altogether from ergative alignments of, say, Hindi (section 4). Second, both DOM and ergative case are argued to be structural (as opposed to inherent) obliques (section 5).

Let us then consider the unification of thematic and DOM datives. In the light of the discussion in section 2, at least one of the objections that has been raised against this unification seems unmotivated. Both Bossong (1991) and Baker (2019), from their very different perspectives, mention the fact that DOM and (thematic) dative are not unifiable because the former, but not the latter is used differentially. The fact of the matter is that the formal literature just quoted claims the reverse, that dative is treated differentially – and in fact matched to referentially high ranked arguments, like DOM.[8]

Another issue that constantly recurs in the list of differences between dative and DOM is passivization/transitivity (Bossong 1991, Barany 2018). The facts about passive can be very simply

(2020, fn. 10), based on the shared feature [presuppositional].

[7] Baker (this volume) extends this approach to Hindi, though there is an animacy component to DOM which is not readily explained in scopal terms.

[8] This may not be true of all datives, notably possessor datives in (i). The usual approach in the Applicative literature (Cuervo 2013) is to distinguish between different Applicatives. Here again I touch on a topic which goes beyond the scope of the present contribution.

(i) Le puse el mantel a la mesa.
3DAT I.put the tablecloth to the table
'I put the tablecloth on the table'

illustrated by reference to Spanish. To begin with, the dative goal in (11) cannot be passivized, as in (12). Note however that the English translation of (12) is possible, because of prepositions stranding. In other words, the dismantling of the *a* structure by passive is the source of the ungrammaticality of Spanish (12).

(11) Maria le hablò a Juan
Maria him.DAT spoke to Juan
'Maria spoke to Juan'

(12) *Juan fue hablado
Juan was spoken
'Juan was spoken to'

Following the discussion in section 2, the structure of (11) is as in (13). As for (12), one would need to dismantle the *a* prepositional structure in order for the bare, caseless DP to serve as an active target of T, as in (14); I of course assume the *v* phase to be defective. Since the suppression of structure projected from the lexicon (because the thematic selection requirements of the verb) is impossible, (14) is predicted to be illformed.

(13) [$_{TP}$ T [$_{vP}$ Maria v* [$_{ApplP}$ [$_{VP}$ hablò] [$_{PP}$ a Juan]]]] cf. (11)
|_____|

(14) [$_{TP}$ fue [$_{vP}$ v [$_{ApplP}$ [$_{VP}$ hablado] [$_{PP}$ a Juan]]]] cf. (12)
|_____X_____|

The problem raised by critics of the Appl analysis of DOM is that the high-ranked DOM object in (5) can perfectly well be passivized in Spanish, exactly as the low ranked referent in (9a), as shown in (15).

(15) Juan/un taxi fue llamado
Juan/a taxi was called
'Juan/a taxi was called'

Since the structure of the DOM object is identical to that of the goal dative, I conclude that the derivation of passive from this structure, as in (16a), is blocked. At the same time, the ordinary transitive structure is a perfectly possible source for passive. Since the *v* phase head is defective, T acts as probe for the embedded object, along the lines of (16b). The problem therefore can be reformulated as follows: why is the option of adopting structure (16b) open to high ranked referents just under passivization?

(16) a. [$_{TP}$ fue [$_{vP}$ v [$_{ApplP}$ [$_{VP}$ llamado] [$_{PP}$ a Juan]]]]
|_____X_____|

b. [$_{TP}$ fue [$_{vP}$ v [$_{VP}$ llamado Juan/un taxi]]] cf. (15)
|_____|

Recall that I have already indicated why the option in (16b) is not open to goal datives as part of my discussion of structure (14). Since goal datives are selected by predicates, the structure in (14)

is forced by selection (or projection) and any other structure would violate the lexical properties of the predicate. Another way to express the same concept is that goal datives are tied to a lexically selected thematic frame, i.e. they are inherent cases in the sense of Chomsky (1986).

On the contrary, transitive verbs normally occur in either the dative structure in (8) or in the accusative structure in (9b); neither is lexically selected. In the languages with DOM, low ranked referents and high ranked referents distribute themselves between the two structures. The dative structure, reflecting the underlying shape of transitive predicates, hosts highly ranked referents in keeping with the general character of datives (10). Low ranked referents are construed as objects of the complex v*-V predicate. Crucially, this distribution applies within the *v** phase. When the *v* phase is defective, the T probe within the C-T phase requires a suitable goal, which is provided by any object, as in (16b). Movement voids the context necessary for DOM to apply, and leads to the identical treatment of all objects.

There is a second way to form passive in the Romance languages, namely with the Voice clitic *se*. Considerable theoretical controversy surrounds this clitic, so that theorists do not even agree as to whether there are two homophonous *se* (Burzio 1986, Dobrovie-Sorin 1998 for different partitions) or a single *se* (Manzini et al 2016). These matters, however interesting in themselves, need not concern us here. All that matters is that *se* enables impersonal passives to be formed with unergative verbs, eventually with inherent dative arguments, as in Spanish (17a). Passives of transitive verbs with promotion of the object to subject can also be formed with *se*, as in (17b).

(17) a. Se hablò a Juan
M-P spoke to Juan
'Juan was spoken to'

b. (El) se entiende bien
he M-P understands well
'He is well understood' (also irrelevantly 'He understands himself well')

As expected, *se* passives exclude accusative objects, as seen in the impossibility for *se* to co-occur with the accusative clitic in (18a). The interesting point concerns the possibility of impersonal *se* passives with DOM objects, as in (18b), parallel to impersonal *se* passives with thematic datives in (17a). In present terms, (18a) is impossible because the defective *v* phase head of (middle-)passive voice does not licence accusative. However, DOM is not an accusative, it is a dative, and therefore it is predicted to co-occur with (middle-)passive voice – exactly in those instances where thematic datives can. On the contrary, it is not obvious how the contrast in (18) can be accounted for if DOM objects are (differential) accusatives.[9]

(18) a. *Se lo entiende bien
M-P him understands well
'He is well understood'

b. ¿Por qué no se entiende a mi hijo cuando habla?
why not M-P understands DOM my son when he.speaks
'Why isn't my son understood when he speaks?'

[9] The same point as in (18b) can be made with respect to the co-occurrence of DOM and ergative in Indo-Aryan, cf. section 4.

(retrieved online, ww.psicologosantacoloma.es)

Several arguments put forth by Barany (2018) against DOM as a dative can be explained away in terms of the preceding discussion.[10] A different set of facts distinguishing goal dative from DOM concern pronominalization, as mentioned by both Bossong (1991) and Barany (2018). In Spanish, DOM objects are pronominalized and eventually doubled by an accusative clitic, as in (19). By contrast, a DP lexicalizing a goal dative is pronominalized and doubled by a dative clitic, as in (20).

(19) Lo vio a el
3M.SG.ACC saw.3SG DOM Juan
'He saw him'

(20) Le dio el libro a el
3DAT gave.3SG the book to Juan
'He gave him the book (to John).'

The pattern in (19) appears to favour the view that the *a* phrase in DOM contexts is an underlying accusative, determining doubling by an accusative clitic. However, another way to look at the issue is that (19) apparently presents a categorial mismatch between the DOM argument, a PP, and the clitic, a D. Now, as pointed out by Manzini and Franco (2019), [P DP] structures involving elementary prepositions such as *of, to* have long being discussed in generative grammar as potentially ambiguous between a PP and DP status. A classical example is Selkirk's (1977) discussion of the double agreement properties of pseudopartitives (e.g. *a bunch of senators is/are voting against*). Selkirk argues that the *of*-phrase can either project a (PP) complement of the measure phrase – or an NP of which the measure phrase is a functional specification. I also explain (19) in terms of structural ambiguity/labelling. [11]

I assume that in the absence of selectional constraints imposed by the verb, nothing prevents

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[10] For instance, relativization of a highly ranked (potentially DOM) object is possible in participial relatives, but not relativization of a goal dative, as in (i). Now, participial relatives are essentially passive, cf. English *the woman seen by them* vs. **the woman talked to them.* Therefore the relativization argument is a variant of the passivization argument.

(i) la mujer vista en la calle/*dada el libro
the woman seen in the street/given the book

Another difference is that goal datives are preserved under nominalization (ii) while DOM is not (iii). As for (ii), the goal dative is preserved because it is lexically selected by the *entreg-* 'deliver' root. As for (iii), recall that DOM depends on an articulated internal structure of the predicate [v* [√]]. This is simply unavailable under nominalization – yielding lack of accusative (the *v** case) as well as of DOM.

(ii) la entrega del paquete a Susana
the delivery of.the package to Susana

(iii) la captura de/*a Juan
the capture of/DOM Juan

[11] The labelling algorithm that allows either DP or PP to project is once again beyond the scope of the present contribution. For the sake of falsifiability, I adopt Cecchetto and Donati (2015) propose that "the label of a syntactic object {α, β} is the feature(s) that act(s) as a probe for the merging operation creating {α, β}". Consider the structure in (21). I assume that the preposition *a* is an elementary predicate, endowed with a general relator content, which as such requires the satisfaction of two argument places. P probes DP, in the sense that P holds the open argument place and DP the properties that satisfy it, so that P labels the constituent as PP. Consider then the structure in (22). The DP requires visibility/case. This may be construed as a case feature of DP that is valued as dative when DP saturates the argument place of *a*. In this reading, it is the case feature of DP that probes for P, leading to the projection of DP.

the DOM argument from being labelled DP. As a DP, the DOM object is doubled by a D object clitic, yielding (21). In (21) I follow Sportiche (1996) in assuming that all clitics are all generated as functional heads. Since the accusative clitic depends on the presence of the *v** transitivizing head, it is merged under *v** (Roberts 2010 for a movement execution of the same idea).

(21) $[_{vP}\ [_{D}\ lo]\ \ [_{ApplP}\ [\ _{VP}\ vio]\ \ [_{DP}\ a\ el]\ ]\ ]$

On the other hand, nothing prevents a DOM object to project as a PP, so that we expect pronominalization/doubling by a dative clitic to be also possible. This prediction is verified by the phenomenon known as *leísmo* in Spanish descriptive linguistics. In *leista* varieties of Spanish DOM objects are pronominalized (or doubled) by dative clitics, as illustrated in (22a). In present terms, in *leismo* the DOM object is labelled as a PP; hence it is pronominalized (or doubled) by the dative clitic, as in (22b). As in section 2, the dative clitic is the head of Appl. [12]

(22) a. Le vi (al niño/a la niña)
3DAT saw.1SG DOM the boy/DOM the girl
'I saw him/her/the boy/the girl.'
Spanish (Basque dialect, Ormazabal and Romero 2013)

b. $[_{ApplP}\ [_{Appl}\ le]\ \ [_{VP}\ vi]\ \ [_{PP}\ al\ niño]]$

Finally, the goal dative in (20) must project as PP. Thus, the PP label is one of the many consequences of the fact that the goal dative is part of the lexically selected thematic frame of the predicate. At this point, the *a* PP can only be doubled by an oblique, specifically by a dative clitic, yielding (23). [13]

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[12] This does not exhaust known variation within Romance. In the pattern known as *loismo/laismo* in the Spanish descriptive tradition and also attested in South Italian varieties, an accusative clitic pronominalizes goal datives, as in (i), as well as accusative and DOM objects. In present terms, the goal dative in (i) projects as DP.

(i) u/a ʃkrivu a iddu/a issa
3ACC.MSG/FSG I.write to him/to her
'I write to him/her.' Celle di Bulgheria (South Italy, Manzini and Savoia 2005: §4.9.2)

The present focus on the objections raised by recent literature against Manzini and Franco (2016), means that I cannot dwell on other arguments that may favour the identification of dative and DOM. An anonymous reviewer mentions evidence from Ledgeway (2000: 25 ff.) to the effect that in Northern Calabrian varieties the accusative and the dative clitic alternate in contexts like (i) – which the reviewer takes to hint at a reanalysis of the thematic dative as an accusative (or rather, a structural dative in present terms).

Pineda (2014) pursues a distinct but related line of argumentation, discussing evidence that a subset of South Italian dialects allows passivization of the goal – in other words sentences like (12) above are well-formed in the relevant varieties. The anonymous reviewer asks how this follows within the present framework. The answer would seem to be that thematic datives are reanalysed as structural datives (DOM) and hence passivizable in present terms.

[13] Another phenomenon listed by Barany (2018) in support of treating DOM as differential accusative is that DOM objects can control adjectives functioning as secondary predicates, whereas goal datives cannot. This is true also in Basque *leista* dialects, cf. (i). Examples like (i) point to the conclusion that DOM objects project as DPs in *leista* dialects as well. Pronominalization/doubling by the Appl clitic may then reflect simply the fact that DOM objects are lodged in Appl.

(i) Juan le *hablò/encontrò a Maria borracha
Juan 3DAT spoke/met to/DOM Maria drunk-FSG

(23) [$_{ApplP}$ [$_{Appl}$ le] [$_{VP}$ dio el libro] [$_{PP}$ a el]]]
|_____|

Let me summarize so far. I have adopted the standard Agree account of accusative languages. Within this framework, I have considered DOM in some detail. I have argued that DOM provides an instance of a morphologically and syntactically oblique case which is not thematically enforced, i.e. not inherent. The differences between DOM objects and goal datives depend on the fact that goal datives are thematic (inherent) datives. Conversely, if DOM datives are just differential accusatives, their differences with respect to accusatives remain unexplained, for instance their ability to enter impersonal passives, or to be pronominalized by oblique clitics.

In the next section, and for the remaining part of this chapter, I abandon the more familiar accusative alignment, on which I have also based my discussion of DOM, and turn to the ergative alignment, into which the model of DOM adopted here feeds directly (see the outline in section 1).

4. Ergative case: Indo-Aryan

Theories of case as relations with a head, including the minimalist implementation via Agree, have been formulated for accusative languages. For ergative languages, there isn't a standardized account comparable to the account of English provided in section 2. In this section, I provide an Agree case account of an Indo-Aryan language, Punjabi, which presents what is more properly characterized as an active alignment.[14] The model of DOM adopted in previous sections directly feeds into the discussion of ergativity in this section. The treatment of DOM as an oblique/applicative – as opposed to an accusative – removes a potential obstacle from the analysis of the ergative alignment as an unaccusative structure.

As is well-known, Indo-Aryan languages are characterized by an ergativity split based on aspect. Hence perfective verb forms are associated with an ergative alignment, while imperfective/progressive forms of the verb have an accusative alignment. Let me begin with the latter. In the accusative alignment, both the subject and object of a transitive verb can surface in a bare DP/direct case form endowed just with number and gender specifications, as in (24a). When the object is human or definite, it is associated with DOM, realized by the *-nu* postposition, as in (24b). Example (25) shows that the postposition *-nu* embeds the goal dative as well. In both (24) and (25) the verb agrees in gender and number with the subject, namely the external argument. The auxiliary is an invariable form, but in other languages (e.g. Hindi) it can be seen to agree with the same argument as the participle.

(24) a. muɳɖ-a/muɳɖ-e dərvaddʒ-a khold-a/-e si
boy-M.SG/boy-M.PL door-M.SG opening-M.SG/-M.PL be.PST
'The boy/the boys was/were opening the/a door'
b. mɛ: muɳɖ-e-nu/ ti-nnu dekhd-i a

'John spoke to/met Mary when she was drunk'

[14] Data are from Manzini et al (2016), using phonetically transparent transcriptions from native speakers; cf. also Bhatia (1993).

I(F) boy-M.SG-DOM/you-DOM seeing-F.SG be.PRS
'I am seeing the boy/you'

(25) o mi-nnu/una-nu kita:b dind-i/-a a
s/he me- DAT/they-DAT book giving-M.SG/-F.SG be.PRS
'S/he is giving the book to him/me/them'

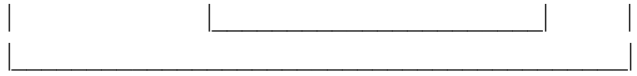
With intransitive verbs, the only argument surfaces as a bare DP/direct case form and agrees with the verb, independently of whether the verb is unergative (26a) or unaccusative (26b).

(26) a. muɳɖ-a/ muɳɖ-e hassəd-a/-e si
boy-M.SG/boy-M.PL laughing-M.SG/-M.PL be.PST
'The boy/the boys was/were laughing'

b. muɳɖ-a/ muɳɖ-e degd-a/-e
boy-M.SG/boy-M.PL falling-M.SG/-M.PL
'The boy/the boys is/are falling'

In an Agree model, examples like (24)-(26) can be assigned structures similar to those proposed for English in section 2, modulo the position of the head, which is final in a language like Punjabi. Specifically, transitive (24a) is associated with structure (27) where the object agrees with *v** and is associated with the *v** case. The subject enters an agreement and nominative case relation with T.

(27) [TP [vP muɳɖ-e [VP dərvaddʒ-a khold-e] *v**] si] cf. (24a)



The structure for unergative (26a) parallels that in (27) except that there is no object, as in (28a). Unaccusative (26b) is associated with the structure in (28b), where in the absence of a *v* phase the internal argument of the verb is the target of T agreement and nominative case.

(28) a. [TP [vP muɳɖ-e [VP hassəd-e] *v**] si] cf. (26a)

b. [TP [vP [VP muɳɖ-e degd-e] *v*] T] cf. (26b)

Ditransitive structures like (25) involve an ApplP projection, as in (29a). In turn, in DOM contexts, the postpositional *-nu* of Punjabi is treated as an Appl head, exactly like prepositional *a* of Spanish in sections 2-3. Thus, the structures of the DOM object in (24b) is as in (29b).

(29) a. … [ApplP mi-nnu [VP kita:b dind-a]] … cf. (25)
b. … [ApplP ti-nnu [VP dekhd-i]] … cf. (24b)

In the perfect, Punjabi and the other Indo-Aryan languages display a different alignment of cases and agreement, namely an ergative alignment. To be more precise, they display what is known as an active alignment, in which the object of transitives is treated like the subject of unaccusatives,

while the subject of transitives and of unergatives pattern together. Consider first transitive sentences. The internal argument appears as a bare DP, while the external argument bears the ergative postposition *-ne*. The perfect participle agrees with the internal argument, as in (30), and so does the auxiliary in languages like Hindi where the auxiliary has overt agreement.

(30) a. kuɾ-ĩã-ne dərvaddʒ-a kolt-a (a)
girl-F.PL-ERG door-M.SG opened-M.SG be.PRS
'The girls opened the door'

b. o-ne roʈʈ-i khadd-i si
s/he-ERG bread-F.SG eaten-F.SG be.PST
'S/he ate the/some bread'

Intransitive verbs split into two different classes. The sole argument of unaccusative verbs appears as a bare DP and displays the same agreement with the verb as the internal argument of transitives, as in (31a). By contrast, with unergative verbs, the sole argument of the predicate behaves like the external argument of transitives. Thus it is embedded by the ergative postposition. The verb in turn displays an invariable, non-agreeing form, as in (31b).

(31) a. muɳɖ-a/muɳɖ-e depp-ea/-e
boy-M.SG/ boy-M.PL fallen-M.SG/-M.PL
'The boy/the boys has/have fallen'

b. kuɾ-i-ne/ muɳɖ-e-ne hass-ea si
girl-F.SG-ERG /boy-M.SG-ERG laughed-M.SG be.PST
'The girl/ the boy laughed'

If the internal argument of transitives is referentially high ranked, it shows up with the *-nu* DOM postposition. This in turn implies lack of agreement between the object and the verb. Since the verb does not agree with the ergative external argument either, the verb surfaces in an invariable masculine singular form, as in (32).

(32) a. muɳɖ-e-ne roʈʈ-i-nu khadd-a ni
boy-M.SG-ERG bread-F.SG-DOM eaten-M.SG NEG
'The boy did not eat the bread'

b. o-ne mi-nnu/ti-nnu dekkh-ea
s/he-ERG me-DOM /you-DOM seen-M.SG
'S/he saw me/you'

The simplest analysis of the ergative alignment within Agree theories of case uses the classical intuition (Hale 1970) that they are similar to passive – which does not mean that they are passive. Here I take this to mean simply that the crucial property of ergative and active alignments is the lack of a *v** phase. The unaccusative treatment of ergative alignment is amply represented in the generative literature, including Bittner and Hale (1996a, 1996b), Nash (1995) (see the discussion by Nash 2017:187), Alexiadou (2001), Laka (2006), Mahajan (2017).

Consider then transitive verbs. The defective *v* phase head is not a probe, in other words it does not licence accusative case. Rather, the auxiliary in T probes the internal argument, which gets

nominative (the T case) and agrees with the verb, as in (33). The only option that remains open for the external argument is to be realized as an oblique, namely as an ergative, again as shown in (33). The analysis in (33), which identifies the agreeing object of the ergative alignment with nominative, is endorsed in particular by Mahajan (2017), to whom I refer for a motivated rejection of alternative models.

(33) [$_{TP}$ [$_{vP}$ o-ne [$_{VP}$ roʈʈ-i khadd-i $_{VP}$] *v*] si] cf. (30b)
|_____|

Given (33), the pattern displayed by unaccusative verbs is also predicted. The sole argument of the unaccusative verb agrees with T and therefore gets nominative case, as in (34).

(34) [$_{TP}$ [$_{vP}$ [$_{VP}$ munɖ-e depp-e] *v*] T] cf. (31a)
|_____|

Consider then unergative verbs. As usual, the defective *v* phase head is not a probe and does not introduce accusative/transitivity properties. In principle, the external and sole argument of unergatives ought not to be affected by the defective nature of *v* – so that one may expect it to be probed by T. In section 5.1 we will see that this is indeed what happens in the ergative alignment proper. However, the essence of the active alignment, as exemplified by Punjabi, is that the sole argument of unergative verbs behaves like the external argument of transitive verbs, namely it is associated with ergative case, as in (35). Since T in (35) lacks a suitable goal, the verb inflection takes on default values (3rd person masculine singular).[15]

(35) [$_{TP}$ [$_{vP}$ kuɾ-i-ne [$_{VP}$ hass-ea] *v*] si] cf. (31b)

I defer further discussion of ergative case to section 5.1, where the active/ergative parameter will be considered. As already anticipated I take the key to the ergative alignment proper to be the structural oblique status of the ergative case. In the meantime, I illustrate an important consequence of the treatment of DOM objects as (structural) obliques. According to sections 2-3, highly ranked referents are positioned in Appl (as a consequence of the fact that a transitive predicate is decomposable into a causative *v** and a result nominalization, i.e. *call x* is *make/give a call to x*). If so, a sentence like (32b) has the double oblique structure in (36). Since the T probe finds no goals in its search domain, the verb presents default agreement.

(36) [$_{TP}$ [$_{vP}$ o-ne [$_{ApplP}$ mi-nnu [$_{VP}$ dekkh-ea]] *v*] T] cf. (32b)

It is evident that if DOM was an accusative it would be difficult to reconcile it with an unaccusative-like syntax (no *v** phase) for the ergative alignment. Thus for instance Mahajan (2017: 93) is forced to "leave open the issue of what governs the appearance of the DOM marking". The present conception of DOM crucially ensures that DOM does not interfere with it, since in present

[15] In the original conception of Chomsky (1995), the failure of a probe to find a goal results in ungrammaticality. I agree with Preminger (2014) that this leaves us without any natural interpretation for default agreement. What drives the obligatoriness of agreement must therefore be the Visibility needs of DPs.

terms, DOM is not an accusative but an oblique/Appl.

We should now briefly consider the question why the accusative alignment is associated with progressive aspect, while the ergative alignment is associated with perfective aspect. For all I have said so far, the reverse should also be possible. Another way to ask the same question is why progressive aspect should be associated with a bi-phasal sentence structure and perfective aspect with a mono-phasal structure.[16] I assume that the simpler eventive structure of perfective predicates, and specifically their phasal defectivity, is connected with their denotation of results or states. In this respect, perfective forms of the verb are close to other stative predicates such as nominals – a comparison also explicitly made by Alexiadou (2001).[17] Therefore we expect aspectually-based ergativity splits not to be reversed with respect to what observed in Punjabi.

In short, I have provided an Agree case account of the ergative/active alignments of Indo-Aryan languages in terms of a mono-phasal, unaccusative syntax. This is one of the accounts that are proposed in the literature – though it does not necessarily amount to the standardized account of ergativity in terms of Agree case. The analysis of DOM that I adopted in sections 2-3 facilitates the adoption of the unaccusative account of the ergative/active alignment, since DOM does not correspond to an instance of differential accusative, but simply to an oblique/applicative. In addition, the present discussion of DOM turns out to be relevant to that of ergative case as non inherent oblique to which I turn in section 5.[18]

5. Ergative case and its parameters

[16] Some authors go as far as adopting a bisentential structure for the accusative alignment as opposed to the monoclausal structure of the ergative alignment (Laka 2006).

[17] A short detour into the history of the Indo-Aryan *-ne* ergative postposition may be instructive in this connection. The etymology of *-ne* is often connected to the Sanskrit instrumental. Yet several scholars (Butt and Ahmed 2011) argue that strict historical criteria favour a different etymology which connects the ergative *-ne* to the *-ne* dative still found in some Indo-Aryan languages. In other words, the so-called ergative case is a high Appl with general relator content, possibly inclusion (Belvin and den Dikken 1997, Manzini and Franco 2016). Indeed, the construal of ergative structures as possessive structures has long been upheld in in historical Indo-European linguistics as in generative frameworks. In an early generative treatment, Johns (1992) considers Inuktikut, where the genitive-ergative syncretism can be overtly seen, proposing a possessive construal of ergative, connected to a stative, nominal-like characterization of the verbal form supporting it.

Polinsky (2016: 29-34) points to passives and possessives/locative as the two grammaticalization sources for ergatives. From the present point of view one is not necessarily alternative to the other – nor is grammaticalization necessarily involved. *v* is defective as in passives, and the external argument is introduced as a possessor of a state – in the actual grammar of the language.

[18] In addition to an ergativity split based on aspect, Punjabi displays an ergativity split based on Person. This consists in the fact that 1st/2nd person (1/2P) arguments are never found in the ergative form, but appear in the direct case form, even as subjects in ergative alignments. In this case, modifiers of 1/2P pronouns, elements coordinated with them etc. all bear ergative case (cf. Manzini et al. 2015 for relevant data). This kind of evidence leads Legate (2014b) to conclude that in Person splits, or in splits between pronouns and other DPs, the underlying syntactic case is ergative, "but this case is not morphologically realized". However, the distinction between syntactic case and morphological case is otherwise avoided here (see also the discussion of syncretism at the beginning of section 5), as essentially stipulative.

Nash (1997: 137), writing on Georgian, is an early proponent of a different approach, namely that (1/2P) pronouns are "licenced higher than other pronominal arguments, at a level at which the ergative/ absolutive patterns is blocked" – for instance in a left periphery containing Speaker, Hearer projections (Delfitto and Fiorin 2011, Giorgi 2011), see also Manzini et al. (2015). The issue is also an empirical one (Ludovico Franco p.c.) – depending on whether other splits along the Referentiality Hierarchy can be individuated for this behaviour (Haspelmath 2020).

Treating ergative as an oblique case, as in section 4, implies rejection of its construal as a dependent case, symmetric to accusative. In Agree terms, the accusative alignment has two direct cases, nominative and accusative, i.e. the I and *v** cases respectively. By contrast, the ergative alignment has one direct case, nominative (the I case) while the ergative case must perforce be an oblique. Therefore, the parallelism between accusative and ergative alignments, which characterizes dependent case models, is not replicated in the Agree model. There are indications that this consequence is correct. One obvious, but significant indication comes from syncretism patterns.

Arguments from morphology to syntax tend to be absent from the theoretical debate – possibly because of the stance taken by Chomsky (2005, 2013) on the arbitrariness of externalization systems with respect to narrow syntax. Importantly, this stance does not logically imply another often assumed conclusion, namely that externalization implies an opacization of narrow syntax, very evident for instance in Distributed Morphology approaches. Opacity at the externalization interface indeed makes arguments from morphology bearing on syntactic computation potentially unreliable. Logically speaking, however, another conclusion is equally possible, namely that in the spirit of Chomsky's (2005) third factor explanations, the externalization interface is optimized, so that as to converge towards maximum legibility of the core syntax (Manzini and Savoia 2017, see also the discussion by Balari and Lorenzo 2018). In turn, considerations of learnability favour the transparency view.

Now, since nominative and accusative are often syncretic, for instance in Punjabi, in dependent case approaches, one may equally expect syncretism between the default and the dependent case of the ergative alignment, namely nominative and ergative. This however does not seem to be attested (to the exclusion of other obliques, such as dative or genitive). On the contrary, according to Palancar (2008), "ergative case is often used across languages to express other semantic roles". Specifically "instrument is by far the most common semantic category found in ergative syncretisms"; "occasionally, when an ergative expresses instrument, it may also serve to express cause in intransitive clauses"; "ergatives … may encode locative as well as instrument". Furthermore "possessor is another semantic category that ergative markers also express crosslinguistically"; in some languages "the ergative case has been treated as an 'oblique' marker … they may even express a dative participant". Under the Agree model, all of these are oblique cases, which do not depend on Agree with *v**/I probes, but rather require a preposition or an equivalent inflectional element (the oblique case).

A possible syntactic argument in favour of the asymmetry between accusative and ergative alignments is suggested by Polinsky (2016). She remarks that "if we were to select a random sample of thirty- plus accusative languages from across the world, the number of those languages that showed restrictions on the extraction of the accusative would be very small, and such languages would in general be hard to find". Vice versa, "there is clearly a sizeable cohort of morphologically ergative languages" whose ergative argument is inaccessible to movement (p. 13). Polinsky's conclusions are partially in line with present views – since she concludes that at least a subset of ergative languages have PP ergative subjects, namely those with no extraction.[19]

[19] Other languages (her morphological ergatives) display DP ergative subjects, receiving case from *v**. The question then arises whether extraction facts are compatible with the present view of ergatives as crosslinguistically oblique/PPs. Obviously the PP ergatives of Polinsky are not going to be problematic, on the assumption that their extraction is blocked by their oblique/PP status (as opposed to the accessibility of direct case arguments). Rather the questions arises as the languages where Polinsky attributes extractability to the DP status of ergatives. As it turns out, Indo-European languages can in general extract any oblique/PP, so that if ergatives can be extracted in Hindi (Polinsky 2016: 127), I can't see how

Moving then to objections to the Agree model, one argument developed in particular by Baker (2015) is that crosslinguistically case patterns are not always aligned with agreement patterns. In particular, several language display ergative case alignment, but accusative agreement alignment. I return to this point in section 5.2, arguing that in reality the argument cuts both ways. I begin by addressing an easier objection in section 5.1, concerning the inherent status of ergative case.

5.1 Ergative alignment: Kurmanji Kurdish

Agree case models generally maintain that ergative case is not only an oblique case, but also an inherent case, in the sense of Chomsky (1986) – as such associated with a particular theta-role, namely that of agent/causer. If ergative is an inherent case, then it can only be construed as the agent/causer case. If so, as pointed out by Baker and Bobaljik (2017), "the ICT [Inherent Case Theory] really predicts an active case pattern, rather than an ergative case pattern". In other words, it predicts so-called active languages like Punjabi. However, in ergative languages proper, only subjects/external arguments of transitive verbs are ergative, while subjects of intransitive verbs are nominative, independently of whether they are the theme of an unaccusative verb of the agent/causer of an unergative verb.

Now, the discussion of DOM in sections 2-3 led me to conclude that oblique case and inherent case are two different notions. Thus the same oblique case, say dative, can show up either as an inherent case (goal dative, depending on selection by a predicate) or as a structural case (DOM, depending on a structural configuration involving a highly ranked internal argument). If ergative is a non-inherent oblique case, then it is not lexically selected by the verb as part of a thematic frame, and it does not have any necessary connection to the agent/causer role.

We may conceive of ergative as an Appl head, capable of introducing an external argument of a predicate not otherwise licenced in the sentence, namely when the *v* head is defective. This high applicative can be an instrumental/causer/agent, but also a possessor/locator (of the event). If it is not tied to the external argument role, there is no reason to expect that the ergative alignment proper, where the subject of unergatives receives nominative case, is in any way problematic.

At the same time, we expect that a language may be able to lexically select the ergative applicative as part of the thematic frame reserved for external arguments (agents/causers). Therefore, the possibility arises that the active alignment of Punjabi really reflects an inherent construal of ergative. Having illustrated the active alignment of Punjabi in section 4, in this section I consider the ergative alignment of Kurmanji Kurdish (Iranian, Thackston 2006, Atlamaz and Baker 2018).[20] Kurmanji is a split ergative language, where the split is traditionally defined as determined by tense. Tenses formed with the present stem have an accusative alignment; tenses formed with the past stem have an ergative alignment.

I begin as usual with the accusative alignment. The external argument of transitive verbs, as in (37), and the sole argument of intransitives, as in (38), agree with the verb in person and number and are realized as nominative. The internal argument of transitives in (37) is in a non-nominative

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this would speak to their DP or PP status. Therefore, what are potentially problematic are languages where ergatives and nominative/absolutive can extract, though other obliques cannot. On the need for further research, see also fn. 23.

[20] The present data come from the Bahdînî dialect (North Iraq) as provided in a phonetically based transcription by Manzini et al (2016). A difference with respect to the standard dialect is that it has a system of 'tense ezafes' in the present tense (Haig 2011); these can be thought of as clitics agreeing with the nominative subject (Franco et al. 2015).

case, provisionally glossed as objective. Note that this language does not have DOM and treats all objects alike whether animate or inanimate, definite or indefinite.

(37) a. ʒənək jɑ: kamis-i də-ʃʊ-t
woman F.SG shirt-OBJ PROGR-wash-3SG
'The woman is washing the shirt'

b. ɛz kurk-(æk)-i/ ketʃk-(æk)-e: jɑ:/je: də-bin-ɪm
I.F/M boy-(INDF)-ACC/girl-(INDF)-ACC F.SG/M.SG PROGR-see-1SG
'I(F/M) am seeing the/a boy/girl'

(38) ʒənək jɑ: də-nəv-it
woman F.SG PROGR-sleep-3SG
'The woman is sleeping'

In the past, the ergative alignment is found. The internal argument of transitives in (39) agrees with the verb in person and number and shows up in the nominative. The external argument bears a non-nominative case, provisionally glossed as oblique. As for intransitive verbs in (40), unlike what we saw in Punjabi, there is no difference between unaccusatives and unergatives. The sole argument of both classes agrees with the verb and bears the nominative case.

(39) a. ʒəŋk-e ɛz nəχoft-əm
woman-OBL I.NOM cover.PRF-1SG
'The woman covered me'

b. mən korek dit-ən
me.OBL boys see.PRF-3SG
'I saw the boys'

(40) a. aʊ kaft
he fall.PRF.3SG
'He fell'

b. tu nəvəst-i
you sleep.PRF-2SG
'You slept'

A descriptive issue needs to be clarified preliminarily. In the analysis of Punjabi a conceptually important role was played by the contrast between perfective (stative/resultative) aspect and imperfective (process) aspect in defining the alternation between *v*/v* as phase head or as a defective phase head. It is not obvious why the same alternation should be triggered by present vs past tense in Kurmanji. In reality, Atlamaz and Baker (2018) show that phasal organization and hence case alignments are determined by properties of the verb stem that correlate with tense but do not reduce to it. Specifically, the past stem is the basis for the formation of perfect participles which have the same passive properties as in English or Romance (see fn. 10 for examples). It also forms passive nominalizations (like *invasion* in *England's invasion by the Normans*). The historical background for this is that "the past stem verbs … in the Modern Iranian languages come from resultative participles in Old Iranian". In other words, the past stems of Kurmanji is just the property-like stem familiar from Punjabi perfect participles.

Turning now to structural analysis, the accusative alignment of Kurmanji is exactly like the

accusative alignment of the imperfective examples of Punjabi or like that of English. Agreement with *v** and objective case characterizes the object of transitives in (37). Agreement with T and nominative case characterizes the subject of transitives and the sole argument of intransitives in (37)-(38). I provide no structures here.

As for the ergative alignment, the *v* head is non-phasal and T probes the object determining agreement with the verb and nominative case, as in (41). With transitive verbs (41a) the subject is introduced as a high Appl/oblique, with unaccusatives verbs this additional structure is missing, as in (41b).

(41) a. [$_{TP}$ [$_{vP}$ ʒəŋk-e [$_{VP}$ ɛz nəχoft] *v*] -əm] cf. (39a)

b. [$_{TP}$ [$_{vP}$ [$_{VP}$ aʊ kaft] *v*] T] cf. (40a)

Consider then unergative verbs. To repeat once more, in the ergative alignment the *v* phase is defective. With transitive verbs, where T licences the object, the subject is forced to appear as an oblique/Applicative, as in (41a) above. However, unergatives have a single argument and T can perfectly well licence it. Thus, in structure (42) for sentence (40b), the external and sole argument of the sentence is probed by T, agrees with it and surfaces in nominative case.

(42) [$_{TP}$ [$_{vP}$ tu [$_{VP}$ nəvəst] *v*] -i] cf. (40b)

This takes us back to the active alignment and to the question why subjects of unergative verbs are not nominative but ergative in active languages like Punjabi. The answer most commonly provided in the literature is that ergative is inherently associated with agent/cause roles. Nothing prevents me from adopting this view for active alignments. In other words, inherent vs. structural ergative is a parametric choice. Classical ergative languages are those in which the ergative applicative is non-inherent, like Kurmanji. Active languages like Punjabi associate ergative with a thematic frame (i.e. they treat it as inherent).

A final wrinkle in the discussion of Kurmanji is introduced by its case inflections. In order to keep glosses relatively transparent, I used three different case labels, namely nominative, objective and oblique. In reality, Kurmanji distinguishes only two cases, namely nominative, corresponding to the lack of case inflections, and a non-nominative case which characterizes what I have glossed as accusative or as oblique according to its function. The matter is worth mentioning mainly because the accusative/ergative syncretism may look like a potential disconfirmation of the argument I made at the beginning of this section that ergative-accusative syncretism is unattested. In fact the argument stands.

What is predicted to be hard to find is an accusative-ergative syncretism that excludes other oblique cases. Instead, in Kurmanji the same case inflection which characterizes accusative objects and ergative subjects is also found on goal datives as in (43a) and on genitives, as in (43b).[21]

[21] The *-e* suffix on the head noun in (43b) is not its case inflection but an enclitic linker, which structurally forms a constituent with the following genitive. This is the element traditionally called *ezafe* in Persian grammars (Franco et al. 2015).

Therefore, Kurmanji has the most elementary of morphological case systems, distinguishing just two cases; specifically the two cases of Kurmanji are best characterized simply as nominative and non-nominative. In such as system, it falls to the non-nominative to lexicalize both accusative and oblique cases, including ergative, dative and genitive.

(43) a. aʊ je: partuk-e də-da-ta ʒəŋk-e
he M.SG book-OBL progr-give-3SG woman-OBL
'He is giving the book to the woman'

b. dest-e ketʃk-e
hand-LKR girl-OBL
'the hand of the girl'

In conclusion, for the active alignment of Punjabi, I adopt the widely accepted view that ergative is lexically selected, hence it is an inherent case tied to a particular thematic frame. The novelty of the present approach is that oblique cases can but need not be tied to a particular thematic frame, in other words they are not necessarily inherent. The ergative alignment proper, for instance of Kurmanji, follows if the ergative applicative simply kicks in when independent syntactic conditions do not allow the attachment of the external argument as a direct case – in practice in transitive frames. Thus the inherent vs structural construal of the same oblique case (ergative) is the parameter that distinguishes ergative alignments proper (structural ergative) from active alignments (inherent ergative).

5.2 Agreement parameters

The strongest argument of dependent case theorists against the Agree case model is that it predicts a fixed relation between nominative case and T agreement which is simply not observed crosslinguistically. Thus, Bobaljik (2008) quotes Nepali as displaying T agreement with the ergative subjects of transitive sentences. This raises at least two issues. The first issue is how an oblique argument, hence a PP, may be able to agree with T at all. The second, more fundamental issue is how the object is licenced, given that T agrees with the ergative subject and that *v* cannot agree with it because it is defective.

Let me begin by getting the first question out of the way, namely how can an oblique KP/a PP enter agreement with T – or with v*. This question in fact also arises for DOM, and an answer is already implied by the discussion of clitic doubling of DOM in section 3. Recall that DOM arguments are sometimes doubled by an accusative clitic (standard Spanish), and sometimes by a dative clitic (*leista* varieties of Spanish). I offered an analysis of these alternations in terms of ambiguous labelling of the DOM oblique as either PP or DP. The same analysis can be applied to Indo-Aryan data concerning variation in the agreement patterns of DOM arguments in the ergative alignment (i.e. in the perfect).

As discussed in section 4, in Punjabi (in Hindi, etc.), DOM arguments do not agree with the perfect participle in the ergative alignment, triggering default inflections on the verb, see for instance (32b) above. However, in other Indo-Aryan languages, DOM arguments do agree with the verb, for instance in Marwari in (44a). Note that the same *-naiṃ* postposition that attaches to DOM also embeds

goal datives, as in (44b); in this case, no agreement is possible.[22]

(44) a. mhaiṃ śaraṇ-naiṃ dekh-ī
I Sharan.F.SG-DOM see-PST.F.SG
'I saw Sharan.'

b. bābū mha-naiṃ baiṭh jāv-ṇai-ro isāro kar-yo
boss I-DAT sit go-INF-GEN sign.M make-PST.M.SG
'The boss made me a sign to sit down.'

Marwari (Verbeke 2013a: 230)

This parameter is well-known in the typological literature, and also acknowledged in the formal literature. In the dependent case literature, the standard approach is that proposed by Bobaljik (2008). This assumes that case is assigned separately from agreement and prior to it. Agreement then responds to the hierarchy of cases in (45). The parameter between Punjabi and Marwari depends on the different way the two language cut up the agreement hierarchy in (45). Punjabi is a language where agreement affects the unmarked case (absolutive/bare DPs), while the dependent case, hence DOM (construed as accusative) is excluded from agreement. Marwari is a language where agreement affects unmarked case and dependent case, hence DOM (construed as accusative). Leaving aside any other consideration, note that there is no intrinsic reason why Agree would be sensitive to the hierarchy in (45). Like all solutions based on markedness or other hierarchies there is an element of stipulation, introduced by the hierarchy itself.

(45) unmarked case ← dependent case ← oblique case (cf. Bobaljik 2008)

The approach to clitic doubling in section 3 suggests a different analysis. By hypothesis, DOM objects in Indo-Aryan languages consist of a DP embedded under a postpositional case marker, namely [[DP] P]. Adopting the labelling algorithm of section 3, PP may label the DOM constituent. A DOM object labelled PP, like any other PP, does not undergo Agree, yielding Punjabi (36) reproduced below as (46).

(46) … [$_{\text{ApplP}}$ [$_{\text{PP}}$ mi-nnu] [dekkh-ea $_{\text{VP}}$]] … cf. (32b)

Alternatively, DP may label the constituent so that P behaves more like a traditional inflection of DP. If the DOM object is labelled DP, it is in the search space of a T probe and undergoes Agree like any bare object DP, as indicated for Marwari in (47).

(47) … [$_{\text{ApplP}}$ [$_{\text{DP}}$ śaraṇ-naiṃ] [$_{\text{VP}}$ dekh-ī]] …. T cf. (44a)
|_____|

As for the lack of agreement with goal datives in Marwari (44b), I propose that labelling by D as

[22] The literature contains evidence that the same parameter concerning agreement of DOM objects is attested in Iranian. According to Korn (2008), Eastern Baluchi allows agreement of DOM arguments with the verb in the ergative alignment. Other varieties reported by Korn (2008) such as Southern Baluchi (19th century) display only default agreement with DOM objects.

opposed to labelling by P is impossible with inherent obliques, because they need to project the P content, as part of the fact that their P properties are selected by a verb. Therefore goal datives will have a PP structure and be unavailable as agreement goals.

Let us then go back to ergatives. The account of variation in DOM agreement potentially extends to any oblique, including ergatives. This removes a preliminary obstacle to ergatives ever serving as goals of agreement probes – since ergatives can in principle project a PP and not be goals of Agree, or project a DP and undergo Agree. [23] At the same time, the core of the problem raised by Baker (2015) for the Agree conception of case does not concern the possibility for an oblique to agree – it concerns the dis-alignment of case and Agree.

Burushaski appears to be a case in point (Baker 2017).[24] In Burushaski transitive sentences, the subject is ergative and the object a bare DP/nominative (48a). With intransitive verbs, the sole argument is a bare/nominative DP, as in unergative (48b) and unaccusative (48c).

(48) a. Hilés-e dasin mu-yeéts-imi
boy-ERG girl 3F-see-PST.3M
'The boy saw the girl'

b. In gucar-imi
he walk-PST.3M
'He walked'

c. Uwe hilešo u-waal-uman
those boy.PL 3PL-lost-3PL
'Those boys got lost.' Burushaski (Baker 2017)

The distribution of cases in (48) is ergative, since the sole argument of intransitives has the same nominative case as the object of transitives. Yet note that the agreement pattern is what one would otherwise describe as accusative, since the ergative subject of transitives and the nominative subject of intransitives are treated alike, in displaying suffixal agreement with the verb. Burushaski also presents an additional complexity, namely a prefixal agreement tracking internal arguments, seen both in the transtive (48a) and in the unaccusative (48c) but not in the unergative (48b).

From the point of view of an Agree model, (48b-c) are unremarkable, since subject agreement and nominative/absolutive case coincide on the sole argument of the verb – and both can be modelled in terms of Agree with the T head, along the lines of (49). In the unaccusative (49b), we may further assume that the internal argument enters Agree with *v*, though v is defective and leaves the argument active for Agree with T.

[23] Recall that Polinsky (2016) also argues in favour of PP ergatives – though she takes them to be a subset of ergative languages. For Polinsky, PPs can also trigger agreement, namely by "simple feature percolation: the PP inherits the phi-features of its complement DP" (p. 83). In fn. 19 I also left the question open whether the present model can account for the extraction behaviour of Polinsky's DP-ergative languages. The distinction now introduced between PP projecting and DP projecting ergatives may be relevant.

[24] Nepali, as quoted by Bobaljik (2008), might have been an ideal candidate for discussion, given that it is an Indo-European language closely related to those discussed here. Unfortunately the *-le* mark cannot be reliably identified with ergative case (Verbeke 2013b), since it appears on the subject of transitive sentences in the ergative alignment, but also optionally in the accusative alignment. A more general issue interfering with the analysis of agreement phenomena is the generally unclear division of labor between agreement and clitics.

(49) a. in gucar- [$_T$ imi]
|_____|

b. uwe hilešo [$_v$ u] -waal- [$_T$ uman]
|_____|_____|

The problematic pattern is therefore (48a). Following the analysis of the unaccusative in (49b), we may say that the *v* defective head agrees with the object, though it does not check nominative case on it. In turn, agreement of the T head is with the ergative. This prevents agreement of the object with T, and hence checking of the nominative case, as in (50).

(50)
Hilés-e dasin [$_v$ mu] -yeéts- [$_T$ imi]
|___ _____|_____*_____| → no Case

It is obvious that as things now stand, the Agree theory needs to be weakened in some respect to ensure that nominative case goes to the object. A technique to obtain this result is already deployed by Bittner and Hale (1996a, 1996b) for Walpiri, namely assuming that an extra functional head is involved.[25] Thus what I have called T throughout is responsible for agreement with the ergative – but it is not the actual phase head, call it Agr/C, responsible for agreement with the nominative argument.

The proper analysis of Burushaski is beyond the scope of the present chapter. However it seems fair to conclude that disharmonic case and agreement alignments are not necessarily evidence that the Agree model of case must be abandoned (in favour of the dependent case model) – but simply that it must be weakened for certain languages (or contexts).

6. Conclusions

This chapter is a defense of the Agree approach to case, not only in relation to the accusative case systems for which it was devised, e.g. Spanish in sections 2-3, but also in relation to ergative case systems in sections 4-5. In languages where case and agreement are aligned with one another the Agree case model gives particularly simple and elegant results, though for problematic languages like Burushaski in section 5, it can be weakened so as to separate case and agreement. Dependent case models nevertheless do not have an explanatory advantage – they simply start out weaker, separately accounting for case and agreement.

The parallelism established by dependent case theories between accusative and ergative alignments is not expressible in an Agree case model, where the accusative alignment has two direct cases (the *v** and the T case, i.e. accusative and nominative), but the ergative alignment has a single direct case (nominative). In section 5, I have argued that this result also seems correct, for more than one reason. For instance, while syncretisms between accusative and nominative are extremely frequent, ergative is only ever syncretic with instrumental, genitive, dative, locative – i.e. the fundamental oblique cases.

In dealing with ergative case, I further made use of the crucial assumption that not all oblique

[25] Walpiri is a language where the agreement system is clearly clitic (Hale 1973), cf. fn 24.

cases are inherent. Non-inherent obliques are characterized by behaviors somewhat intermediate between those of inherent obliques and those of direct case DPs. I discussed this in detail for DOM, upholding its characterization as a dative, despite much literature to the contrary. In addition, the inherent or non inherent nature of ergative is crucial when accounting for the ergative alignment proper, exemplified here with Kurmanji Kurdish (section 5.1), as opposed to the active alignment of languages like Punjabi (section 4).

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