Splits in Marked Nominative case systems

Corinna Handschuh & Michael Cysouw

1 Relative clauses

1.1 Yuman and Wappo: Marking neutralization in relative clauses

In some Marked Nominative languages the contrast of overt S+A marking (Nominative) as opposed to zero-coded P (Accusative) is not found in all clause types. In a number of Yuman languages and the geographically adjacent Wappo (Yukian) the marking contrast is found in main clauses but neutralized in relative clauses.

This is demonstrated by the following examples from Mojave (Yuman). The sole argument of intransitive verbs is marked by the Nominative in main clauses (1a) but zero coded in relative clauses (1b).[1]

(1) a. **ʔavaː-č**   nʸəməsaː-m
house-NOM white-TNS
'The house is white.'

  b. **ʔavaː** kʷ-nʸəməsavc-lʸ ʔ-iva-m
house REL-white-LOC 1-sit-TNS
'I am in the white house.'

<div align="right">Munro (1976: 188)</div>

For transitive verbs the same pattern holds. Transitive subjects are marked with the Nominative-suffix in main clauses (2a), yet there is no overt marking in relative clauses (2b).

(2) a. **hatčoq-č** poš taver-m
dog-NOM cat chase-TNS
'The dog chased the cat.'

  b. **hatčoq** poš kʷ-taver   ʔ-iyuː-pč
dog   cat REL-chase 1-see-TNS
'I saw the dog that chased the cat.'

<div align="right">Munro (1976: 188)</div>

1.2 Nias 1: Marking reversal in relative clauses

The Austronesian language Nias is typologically exceptional in exhibiting the rare pattern of Marked Absolutive. An overtly coded form is used for the S and P relations (the so called 'mutated form', which corresponds to the Absolutive case), whereas for the A relation the zero-coded form is employed ('unmutated from' or Ergative).

The encoding of the S, A and P relations is, however, reversed in relative clauses. Compare the mutated S in main clauses (3a) with the unmutated S in relative clauses (3b).

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[1] Glosses: 1/2/3 = first/second/third person, A = most agent-like argument of transitive verb, ACC = accusative, AUX = auxiliary, CL = classifier, CNJ = conjunction, CPL = completive, DIST = distal, ERG = ergative, EXIST = existential, F = feminine, LOC = locative, M = masculine, MP = mediopassive, MUT = mutated form, N = neuter, NEG = negation, NOM = nominative, P = most patient-like argument of transitive verb, PC = past continuous, PERF = perfect, PL = plural, POSS = possessor, PP = past punctual, REL = relative clause marker, RLS = realis, S = sole argument of intransitive verb, SG = singular, TNS = tense

(3)   a. mate **zibaya**-nia   meneßi
            die   uncle.MUT-3SG.POSS yesterday
            'His uncle died yesterday.'

       b. nihs   si=ma=mate   **fo'omo** meneßi
            person REL=CPL=die wife   yesterday
            'the man whose wife died yesterday.'

<div align="right">Brown (2001: 559, 2005: 580)</div>

The same pattern can be observed for the P argument in main (4a) and relative clauses (4b).

(4)   a. i-usu   **ndrao**   asu
            3SG.RLS-bite 1SG.MUT dog
            'The dog bit me.'

       b. Andrehe'e nasu   si=usu   **ya'o**
            DIST   dog.MUT REL=bite 1SG
            'That's the dog that bit me.'

<div align="right">Brown (2001: 414)</div>

A arguments on the other hand are in the unmutated form in main clauses (5a), but in the mutated form in relative clauses (5b).

(5)   a. Ma=i-bözi   nasu   **ono** matua ba   ma=m-oloi   ya
            PERF=3SG.RLS-hit dog.MUT child male   CNJ PERF=DYN-run 3SG.MUT
            'The boy hit the dog and ran away.'

       b. Andrehe'e nohi   si=löna   ni-lau **nono**   matua
            DIST   coconut_tree.MUT REL=NEG *ni*-climb child.MUT male
            'That is the coconut tree the boy did not climb.'

<div align="right">Brown (2001: 422)</div>

2   Nias 2: Positive vs. negative existential predication

Also in Nias, another split arises with existential constructions. Positive existential constructions are built with the verb *ga* which takes the mutated form of the noun it predicates over (6).

(6)   a. ga   so   **göcoa**
            here EXIST cockroach.MUT
            'There's a cockroach here.'

       b. so   **nono**-nia   do-**mbua**
            EXIST child.MUT-3SG.POSS two-CL.MUT
            'She has two children.'

<div align="right">Brown (2001: 344,570)</div>

Negative existential constructions contain the verb *löna*, which takes a noun in unmutated form (7).

(7)   a.   löna   **baßi** ba   mbanu   ha'a
            NEG.EXIST pig   LOC village.MUT PROX
            'There are no pigs in this village.'

      b.   löna   **ona**-nia.
            NEG.EXIST child-3SG.POSS
            'She doesn't have any children.'

<div align="right">Brown (2001: 358, 575)</div>

3 Gender

3.1 Cushitic: Gender-based neutralization

In a number of Cushitic languages distinct forms for S+A and P function are only found in masculine gender. This distinction is neutralized in feminine gender, where the Absolute form (used for the object from, in citation and for nominal predicates among others) also covers the S+A function (Sasse 1984)

Absolute	Nominative	gender	
manc-o	manc-i	masculine	'man'
manc-o	manc-o	feminine	'woman'
ann-a	ann-u	masculine	'father'
am-a	am-a	feminine	'mother'

Figure 1: Sidamo case marking (Sasse 1984: 114)

3.2 Mangarayi: Gender-based alignment-splits

In the Australian language Mangarayi nouns belong to one of the three genders Feminine, Masculine or Neuter. Each of these genders has a distinct system of marking the S, A and P relations. Feminine nouns have an overt marker for the S+A relation (8a,8b) and another distinct marker for P (8c), and thus exhibit a standard nominative-accusative pattern.

(8)   a.   **ŋaḷa-gaḏugu**   ∅-ya-ɟ
            NOM.F-woman 3SG-go-PP
            'The woman went.'

      b.   buyʔ ɲan-wu-na   **ŋaḷa-bugbug**   **ŋaḷa**-X?
            show 3SG/2SG-AUX-PP NOM.F-old_woman NOM.F-X
            'Did old woman X (name deleted) show you?'

      c.   **ŋan-guḏugu**   buyʔ wuḷa-wu-na   ŋani
            ACC.F-woman show 3PL/3SG-AUX-PP language(N)
            'They taught the woman language.'

<div align="right">Merlan (1989: 59, 61, 64)</div>

Masculine nouns use the same form for S+A as well (9a,9b), but have a zero-coded P form (9c), thus exhibiting the marked nominative pattern.

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(9) a. **ŋa-malam**   ∅-gala+wu-yi-ni   ŋa-landi-yan
         NOM.M-man 3SG-hang-MP-PC LOC.N-tree-LOC
         'The man was hanging in the tree.'

     b. **ŋa-muyg**   ŋan-daḻag
         NOM.M-dog 3SG/1SG-bite.PP
         'The dog bit me.'

     c. **malam**   ŋa-ḑaṛa+wu-b
         man(M) 1SG/3SG-find-PP
         'I found the man.'

<div align="right">Merlan (1989: 59, 61, 63)</div>

Neuter nouns on the other hand exhibit an ergative pattern with zero-coded S+P (10a,10b) and overtly coded A (10b). Note that the Neuter Ergative marker is identical in form to the Masculine Nominative.

(10) a. wumbawa **ḻandi**   ɟir   ∅-ɟaygi-ni   wuburgba ŋa-budal-an
         one   tree(N) stand 3SG-AUX-PC halfway   LOC.N-billabong-LOC
         'One tree is standing in the middle of the billabong.'

     b. **ŋa-gunbur**   ŋan-gawa-ɟ   **ɟib**-ŋanju
         ERG.N-dust 3SG/1SG-bury-PP eye(N)-mine
         'Dust buried (i.e. blew into) my eye.'

<div align="right">Merlan (1989: 59, 61)</div>

4   Päri: Alignment-split between clause types

According to Andersen (1988, 2000) the Western Nilotic language Päri exhibits an alignment split between ergative and marked nominative. In most 'non-basic clause types' such as imperative clauses and most subordinate clause types – of which he explicitly lists purposive clauses and cleft sentences – "the morphological case marking of A and S is identical to that of A in basic clauses, where it is clearly ergative rather than nominative" (Andersen 1988: 316).

References

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