

ERGATIVITY IN WESTERN INDO-ARYAN LANGUAGES

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This Thesis is Dedicated to My Master

Sant Rajinder Singh Ji

CERTIFICATE

The thesis titled “**Ergativity in Western Indo-Aryan Languages**”, being submitted by Ms. **Usha Udaar** to the Indian Institute of Technology Delhi for the award of the degree **Doctor of Philosophy (Ph.D.)** is a record of bonafide research work carried out by her. She has worked under my supervision and has fulfilled the requirements for the submission of this thesis, which has attained the standard requirement for the Ph.D. degree of the Institute. The results presented in this thesis have not been submitted elsewhere for award of any degree or diploma.

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ABSTRACT

The present work aims to explore the phenomenon of ergativity in some Western Indo-Aryan languages namely- Haryanavi, Mewati, Mewari and Marwari. These predominantly nominative-accusative languages display aspect based split-ergativity in the perfective aspect. Additionally, we come across interesting variations in terms of case marking and verbal agreement patterns across these closely related “dialects” of Haryanavi and Rajasthani languages.

My first task in this thesis is to explore the locus of ergativity. Through a comprehensive survey of generative literature, I analyze various available theories of ergativity and conclude that the mechanism of case licensing is a clearly narrow-syntactic process. That is, the determination of ergative case takes place alongside the structure building operation inside the syntax, even as the morphological insertion of cases may be relegated to the phonological form. Also cross-linguistic comparison of these ergativity theories reveals that the dependent case analysis works best for the languages under consideration in this thesis.

I further analyze the reason behind the ‘split’ in the default nominative alignment and realize that the perfective aspect plays a crucial role here. The defective nature of perfective verbal head brings about the feature inheritance mechanism which sets off the dependent case mechanism, and leads to appearance of an ergative-absolutive alignment. The mechanism of feature inheritance among verbal heads is also to be blamed for the quirky case on unergative subjects in these languages.

I also utilize the feature inheritance mechanism to explain the realisation of syncretic cases in these languages. I focus on the one case analysis given by Baker and Atlamaz (2014), and demonstrate that the syncretism in these languages can be blamed on the narrow syntactic processes brought about by case-independent processes like reduction of clause size.

Extending the discussion further, I show that similar morphemes are actually tied to specific

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Extending the discussion further, I show that similar morphemes are actually tied to specific configurational positions in the syntax. Therefore, if a certain DP lands up in that particular position it appears with the given morpheme. In this way, I demonstrate the role played by narrow-syntactic processes, while underplaying the post-syntactic processes, for insertion of phonological units of cases.

The last chapter is dedicated to the parametric setup of ergativity across SALs and non-SALs. A cross-linguistic overview discloses the interplay of structure of relevant functional heads and transitivity for ergativity to surface in given context. This chapter makes exclusive the role played by aforementioned factors and clarifies that even slightest changes to these factors have wide repercussions on the ergativity paradigm across languages. This discussion underlines the significance of factors like featural composition of functional heads, availability of NPs and configurational issues in bringing about variations in ergative languages.

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