Some evidence for structural ergative case

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1 Introduction
Canonical ergative alignment:

- **Intransitive subject** and **transitive object** pattern alike (**absolutive**).
- **Transitive subject** patterns differently (**ergative**).

Canonical ergative alignment in a case system:

1. nguma yabu-nggu bura-n
   father.ABS mother-**ERG** see-NFUT
   ‘Mother saw father.’
2. yabu banaga-n’u
   mother.ABS return-NFUT
   ‘Mother returned.’

[Dyirbal, Dixon 1994:161]

Two major GB/minimalist approaches to ergative case:

- **Inherent** — ergative case is assigned to NPs alongside an agent/external
  -argument θ-role\(^1\)

\[
\text{NP[ERG]} \quad T \quad \ldots \quad \text{4NP} \quad \ldots
\]

First, I demonstrate a problem for both analyses. In **Choctaw** (Muskogean), we find ergative NPs which are simultaneously...

(a) unaccusative subjects — a problem for inherent ergative;
(b) alone in their clause — a problem for dependent ergative.

\[
\text{CP} \quad \ldots \quad \text{C}
\]

How is it ERG!? \(\rightarrow\) NP[ERG] \(\rightarrow\) V

Second, I show that structural ergative case can account for the distribution of ergative in Choctaw.

- Structural case (akin to nominative in Chomsky 1981) is:
  - non-θ-related
  - assigned from a functional head

\(\text{I primarily use head-final trees, to reflect the structure of Choctaw.}\)
In Choctaw, Voice [Kratzer 1996] assigns ergative to all external arguments (as in the inherent ergative analysis): (5)

\[
\text{VoiceP} \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{NP} \\
\vdots \\
\text{Voice}
\end{array}
\]

but also...

- Sometimes, Voice assigns ergative downwards to unaccusative subjects: (6)

\[
\text{VoiceP} \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{XP} \\
\text{NP} \\
\vdots \\
\text{Voice}
\end{array}
\]

Roadmap:

- §2 Choctaw and its syntax
- §3 Ergative-marked unaccusative subjects
- §4 Further evidence for structural ergative: dative intervention
- §5 Conclusion

2 Choctaw and its syntax

In this section:

- §2.1 General background
- §2.2 Syntax
- §2.3 The syntax of active alignment

2.1 General background

- Choctaw is a Western Muskogean language, spoken in Mississippi (all ages) and Oklahoma (mainly elderly people).

- Examples and data here come largely from:
  - targeted elicitation and narrative collection conducted in Pearl River, MS and Bogue Chitto, MS, 2017-2019.
  - published sources.

- Important orthographical note! Underlined vowels (a \_ i o) are nasalized (/ã ˜ı õ/).

2.2 Choctaw syntax

- Rigidly head-final, mirror-principle-respecting.

- NOM/ACC case-marking:

\[
alikchi-\text{yat} \quad \text{alla-m-a} \quad \text{masaali-ch-aachi-h}
\]

\[
\text{docto-} \text{r-NOM} \quad \text{child-DEM-ACC} \quad \text{heal-CAUS-FUT-TNS}
\]

‘The doctor will heal that kid.’
• Pervasive argument drop:

(8) pro pro pro im-aa-tok
dat-give-pst
'She gave it to him.'

• An active agreement system, dissociated from NOM/ACC case-marking.
  → Active alignment is where an NP’s marking correlates (in part) with its thematic role:

(9) a. chishnaak-oosh ish-taloowa-h
you.foc-nom 2sg.erg-sing-tns
'YOU sang.'

b. chishnaak-oosh chi-ttola-h
you.foc-nom 2sg.abs-fall-tns
'YOU fell.'

(11) a. hapi-ll-aachi-h
1pl.abs-die-fut-tns
'We will die.'

b. Hapitaköbih.
hapi-takoobi-h
1pl.dat-lazy-tns
'We are lazy.'

An intuitive analysis:


• The syntacticized classic analysis: agreement is determined by syntactic position, i.e. internal vs. external argumenthood [Davies 1981, 1986].

(12) Unergative: (13) Unaccusative: (14) Transitive:

(15) a. katii-fokaali-h-o ii-máy-aachi-h
int-approximately-tns-ds town pl
1pl.erg-be-pl.ing-fut-tns
'How long will we be in town?'

b. [sa-ttiyaapishi ii-toklo-k-at] chókfi awatta-t
1sg.abs-sibling 1pl.erg-be-two-comp-nom rabbit hunt-ftpcc
il-iiya-tok
1pl.erg-go-pst
'My brother and I went hunting rabbits.'

But there are agreement/θ-role mismatches [cf. Munro and Gordon 1982]. A taster:

2For in-depth typological and theoretical discussion of the syntax of active alignment, and an analysis in the ‘syntacticized classic’ mold, see J. Baker 2018.
Those bolded subjects don’t *look* like external arguments. This is investigated next.

Analysis: I will propose that **ERG** agreement picks out NPs with an **[ERG]** case feature.

→ external arguments and *some unaccusative subjects* get an **[ERG]** feature.

3 Ergative-marked unaccusative subjects

In this section: four classes of intransitive verbs whose **ERG** subject patterns otherwise like an **unaccusative** subject.

- **Motion verbs**

(18) a. *ish*-baliili-tok

2sg.**ERG**-run-PST

‘You ran.’

b. *ish*-la-tok

2sg.**ERG**-come-PST

‘You arrived.’

- **Positional verbs**

(19) a. *ii*-binohmá¯ya-h

1pl.**ERG**-sit.PL.NG-TNS

‘We’re sitting.’

b. *ish*-hikí¯ya-h

2sg.**ERG**-stand.NG-TNS

‘You’re standing.’

- **Quantifier verbs**

(20) a. *ii*-lawa-h

1pl.**ERG**-be.many-TNS

‘There are a lot of us.’

b. *ii*-tochchina-h

1pl.**ERG**-be.three-TNS

‘There are three of us.’

- *i-shahlí* ‘exceed’ (used to form comparatives)

(21) chaaha-k-at  chi-shahlí-li-h

tall-COMP-SS 2sg.DAT-exceed-1sg.**ERG**-TNS

‘I am taller than you.’ (lit. ‘I exceed you in being tall.’)

Verb classes and their agreement properties:

(22)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>verb type</th>
<th>Subject agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>unaccusative</td>
<td><strong>ABS</strong></td>
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<td><strong>ERG</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>ERG</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Four properties which diagnose unaccusativity/unergativity:

- **3.1 Auxiliary selection**
- **3.2 Plural allomorphy**
- **3.3 Compatibility with dative subjects**
- **3.4 Surviving the causative alternation**

### 3.1 Auxiliary selection

Generalization: unaccusative verbs select a different completive auxiliary from unergative/transitive verbs


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• Unergative and transitive verbs use *tahli*:

(23) a. Suzie-at taloowa-t *tahli*-h
    Suzie-NOM sing-PTCP *finish.ACT*-TNS
    ‘Suzie’s finished singing.’

b. [naissance-a ikbi-t *tahli*-hm-a]
    thing-DEM-ACC make-PTCP *finish.ACT*-when-DS
    oppani-moma-tok
    break.ACT-again-PST
    ‘When I had fixed that thing, they broke it again.’

• Unaccusative verbs use *taha*:

(24) achi-yat shila-t *taha*-h
    blanket-NOM dry-PTCP *finish.NACT*-TNS
    ‘The blanket has dried.’

Motion verbs, quantifier verbs and *ishali* ‘exceed’ use *taha*:

(26) a. balii-t *taha*-h
    run-PTCP *finish.NACT*-TNS
    ‘He’s finished running.’

b. okla ii-lawa-t *taha*-h
    PL 1PL.ERG-be.many-PTCP *finish.NACT*-TNS
    ‘There are (already) a lot of us.’

Verb classes and their properties:

(27) | verb type | Subj agr | Auxiliary selection |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>motion</td>
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<td>ABS</td>
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<tr>
<td>unergative</td>
<td>ERG</td>
<td>ERG</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 Plural allomorphy

Generalization: only internal arguments can condition plural allomorphy/suppletion.

• Plural allomorphy conditioned by transitive objects:

(28) bakafi *to split up [sg. object]’
    bakah(li)chi* to split up [pl. object]’

  *Broadwell 2006:135*

• Plural allomorphy conditioned by unaccusative subjects:

(29) bakaafa *to be split up [sg.]’
    bakahli *to be split up [pl.]’

  *Broadwell 2006:135*

---

*I currently lack data on the auxiliary selection properties of positional verbs. Note also that motion verbs may also select the unergative-class auxiliary *tahli*, but allowing *taha* makes them exceptional among verbs with ERG subjects:

(25) li-balii-t *tahli*-h.
    1PL.ERG-run-PTCP *finish.ACT*-TNS
    ‘We finished running.’

Broadwell (2006) only mentions the plural-object forms ending in *-hlichi*, but the speakers I consulted would generally prefer the forms ending in *-hchi*, derived by a regular process of ‘-li-deletion’, on which see Broadwell (2006:130).
Choctaw unergative subjects never condition plural allomorphy [cf. Broadwell 1988].

- Expected, since cross-linguistically only internal arguments can condition plural allomorphy [cf. Durie 1987, Harley 2014, Bobaljik 2015, Bobaljik and Harley 2017, pace Toosarvandani 2016].

Many motion and positional verbs show plural allomorphy conditioned by the subject:

(30) **Motion verbs**

a. iyah 'she goes'
   ittiyaachih 'they two go'
   ilhkoolih 'they go'
b. alah 'she arrives'
   ittalaachih 'they two arrive'
   aayalah 'they arrive'

(31) **Positional verbs**

a. biniili-h 'she sits'
   chiinya-h 'they two sit'
   binohli-h/binohmahy-a-h 'they sit'
b. takaali-h 'it hangs'
   takooha-h 'they two hang'
   takohli-h/takohmahy-a-h 'they hang'

Verb classes and their properties:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>verb type</th>
<th>Subj agr</th>
<th>Aux selection</th>
<th>Plural Allomorphy</th>
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<tr>
<td>unergative</td>
<td>ERG</td>
<td>ERG</td>
<td>N</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

3.3 Compatibility with dative subjects

Generalization: only unaccusative verbs are compatible with having applied dative subjects added to them [see Davies 1986, Munro 1999, Broadwell 2006, Tyler 2018b, in press-b].

(33) a. abooshi möma-k-at kashoo-pa-t táaha yaa-tok

room all-COMP-NOM clean.NACT-PTCP finish.NACT.LG be-PST

‘All the rooms had been cleaned.’ (unacc.)

b. miko-yat abooshi möma-k-qa i-kashoo-fa-t

chief-NOM room all-COMP-ACC DAT-clean.NACT-PTCP

táaha yaa-tok

finish.NACT.LG be-PST

‘The chief had all of the rooms cleaned.’ (unacc. with DAT subject)

(34) a. chi-holiso-at iittola-tok

2SG.DAT-book-NOM fall-PST

‘Your book fell down.’ (unacc.)

b. proisi chi-holiso am-iittola-tok

2SG.DAT-book 1SG.DAT-fall-PST

‘I dropped your book.’ (unacc. with DAT subject)
Some evidence for structural ergative case

• Unergative verbs cannot have applied DAT subjects:

(35) a. *Hoshi a-taloowa-tok.
   bird 1SG.DAT-sing-PST
   (’My bird sang./’I had the bird sing.’)

   b. #Alikchi-yat ofi iy-wohwa-tok.
      doctor-NOM dog DAT-bark-PST
      (’The doctor’s dog barked./’The doctor had the dog bark.’)

Positional verbs and quantifier verbs both freely allow dative subjects

(36) Positional verbs

   a. [pro1 sg] doctor-NOM dog DAT-lie.PL.NG-TNS
      nokoowa-chi-tok
      angry-CAUS-PST
      ’I had a fast car, which made people mad.’

   b. [pro1 sg] car palhki-t a-hikíya-h-aatok-oosh]
      1SG.DAT-stand.NG-TNS-because-SS
      ’That man has a lot of troubles.’

   a. [pro1 sg] car palhki-t a-hikíya-h-aatok-oosh]
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      ’That man has a lot of troubles.’

   b. [pro1 sg] car palhki-t a-hikíya-h-aatok-oosh]
      1SG.DAT-stand.NG-TNS-because-SS
      ’That man has a lot of troubles.’

   a. Pam-at katos-at baliili-h.
      Pam-NOM cat-NOM DAT-run-TNS
      ’Pam’s cat is running.’

   b. Jan-at ofi-at kopi
      Jan-NOM dog-NOM DAT-swim
      ’Pam’s dog is swimming.’

Verb classes and their properties:

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>verb type</th>
<th>Subj agr</th>
<th>Aux</th>
<th>PI Allomorphy</th>
<th>DAT subject</th>
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</table>

Aside: interpreting dative subjects

Dative subjects may be interpreted as:

• indirect causers, e.g. (33)

• affected experiencers, e.g. (34)

• predicative possessors, e.g. (36), (37)

• external possessors, e.g. (38)

The speakers I consulted generally did not allow applied dative subjects with motion verbs—this is likely a generational difference among Choctaw speakers.
3.4 Participation in the causative alternation

Choctaw has a (partly lexicalized) *causative alternation* — the active, transitive alternant is marked by *-li* or *-chi*.

(40) a. fakooh-a-h it peeled off  
    fakoh-li-h she peeled it off

b. koow-a-h it smashed  
koo-li-h she smashed it

c. haksi-h he is confused/drunken  
haksi-chi-h she tricked him

d. shila-h it dried  
shilaa-chi-h she dried it

Generalization: if the verb has a transitive alternant, the verb is unaccusative.

→ Unergative verbs do not form lexical causatives.

Positional verbs, quantifier verbs and *i-shahli* all have transitive alternants.

(41) **Positional verbs**

a. binii-li-h ‘it is sitting’  
    binii-chi-h ‘she sat it down’

b. takaa-li-h ‘it is hanging up’  
takaa-chi-h ‘she hung it up’

c. hiki-ya-h ‘it is standing’  
hilii-chi-h ‘she stood it up’

(42) **Quantifier verbs**

a. momi-chi-h ‘she did it to all them’

b. lawa-chi-h ‘she did it to many of them’

c. tokli-chi-h ‘she did it to two of them’

(43) **i-shahli ‘exceed’**

a. chaaha-k-at chi-shahli-li-h  
    tall-comp-ss 2sg.dat-exceed-1sg.erg-tns  
    ‘I am taller than you.’ (lit. ‘I exceed you in being tall.’)

b. hattak-m-at anopoli-k-at a-shahlichi-h  
    man-dem-nom talk-comp-ss 1sg.dat-exceed.act-tns  
    ‘That man talks more than me.’ (lit. ‘That man exceeds me in talking.’)

Verb classes and their properties (final):

(44) | verb type | Agr | Aux | Pl All | dat subj | Trans alternant |
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12 In addition to forming lexical causatives for some verbs, *-chi* also forms syntactic causatives from all verbs (Broadwell 2006). In this way it is like Japanese *-sase* — see [Tyler 2018a](#) for morphosyntactic decomposition of Choctaw lexical and syntactic causatives.

13 There is, I believe, only one Choctaw verb that clearly participates in the causative alternation: *yilhiblih* ‘to run (them) off’/ *yilhipah* ‘to be run off’.

14 Evidence that the pairs in (41) are lexical rather than syntactic causatives comes from (a) that they encode direct rather than indirect causation, (b) that they show root allomorphy (e.g. (41c)), which syntactic causatives never show; and (c) that they may be causativized themselves (e.g. *hakushi-chi-h* ‘she made him hang it up’), which syntactic causatives do not allow.
3.5 Analysis

Proposal: some unaccusative subjects—motion verbs, positional verbs, quantifier verbs and i-shahli ’exceed’—exceptionally receive ergative case.¹⁵

(45) **regular unacc.**

VoiceP

VP

Voice

NP

V

(46) **unerg./transitive**

VoiceP

NP

[ERG]

...Voice

Unaccusative intransitive subjects with ergative case (e.g. (47)) are a problem for:

- **Inherent** accounts of ergative (’ergative requires a particular θ-role’)
  → Unaccusative subjects are not external arguments.

- **Dependent** accounts of ergative (’ergative requires a competitor NP’)
  → These verbs are intransitive.

Only **structural** ergative allows for them [cf. Deal 2010, 2019, Preminger 2012, Rezac et al. 2014, Bjorkman 2018]. Ergative is:

- not θ-related

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¹⁵I have nothing to add regarding the assignment of absolutive case (or non-assignment—ABS agreement may well pick out NPs which lack a case feature.

Aside: case and agreement


- I am assuming that verbal agreement is sensitive to (abstract) case features distinguishing ERG/ABS/DAT NPs.
  - N.B. A Bobaljik 2008-style agreement hierarchy will not help here: agreement distinguishes nominals that are undistinguished in the (nominal) case system.

- A consequence is that NPs must be able to bear multiple case features [Béjar and Massam 1999, Yoon 2004, Pesetsky 2013, Levin 2017]

4 Further evidence for structural ergative: dative intervention

Claim: ergative case-assignment is subject to **dative intervention** Chomsky 2001, Holmberg and Hróarsdóttir 2003, Hiraiwa 2005, Preminger 2009 a.m.o. 

The relevant configuration: ergative-subject intransitives with applied dative subjects.

(50) a. alla-yat okla máya-móma-h
child-nom pl be.pl.ng-still-tns
'The kids are still here.'

b. [pro\,2sg] alla okla [chi] máya-h-q
child pl 2sg.dat-be.pl.ng-tns-q
'Do you have kids?'

- Unfortunately, the erg→abs switch in [50] is invisible...
  - erg and abs agreement are not distinguished in the 3rd-person!
- So how do we know the theme argument (alla 'kids') switches erg→abs?
  → Answer: presence vs. absence of PCC effects.

4.1 Diagnosing abs-hood with the PCC

The Choctaw Person Case Constraint, (the 'PCC', i.e. clitic co-occurrence restrictions) [Tyler in press-b]:

- There are no restrictions on erg+abs/dat clusters. E.g.:

  (51) \(\text{ii-chi-aapil-aachi-h}\)
  1pl.erg-2sg.abs-help-fut-tns
  'We will help you.'

- There are restrictions on abs+dat clusters. E.g.:

  (52) *\(\text{chi-pi-nokshoopa-h}\)
  2sg.dat-1pl.abs-scared.nact-tns
  ('We are afraid of you.')

So we have a test for sentences like [50b]:

- If the theme is erg:
  - A 1st/2nd theme would control erg agreement; no PCC restrictions.
- If the theme is abs:
  - A 1st/2nd theme would be un-utterable thanks to abs+dat PCC.

Results:

- 1st/2nd-person themes cannot control erg agreement:

  (53) *\(\text{ish-im-átt-a-h}\)
  2sg.erg-dat-be.ng-tns
  ('He has you.')

  ← bad because theme is erg

- 1st/2nd-person themes are un-utterable in this construction\[16\]

  (54) *\(\text{i-chi-átt-a-h}\)
  dat-2sg.abs-be.ng-tns
  ('He has you.')

  ← bad because it violates the PCC

\[16\] These kinds of sentence are not ruled out on semantic grounds; speakers just use a verb with a different case array, e.g. *ishi ‘have’, with an erg subject and abs object.
Conclusion: the theme argument is **not** assigned ergative in the presence of the dative argument.

(55)

4.2 Analysis

Where do the theories of ergative case stand on dative intervention?

- **Inherent** ergative: nothing to say about dative intervention.
  - The relationship between **erg**-assigner and **erg**-receiver is Spec-Head—too local to be intervened.

- **Dependent** ergative: nothing to say about dative intervention.
  - *Arguably*, adding an extra argument should *induce* ergative, not block it (depending on whether the dative argument counts as a competitor).

- **Structural** ergative: dative intervention is predicted (in the right configuration).
  - Only structural ergative allows intervenable ‘syntactic distance’ between the **erg**-assigner and **erg**-receiver.

A heartening cross-linguistic comparison: the dative intervention pattern arises with some Basque intransitives [Arregi 2018].

(56) a. Olatzek pozik dirudi.
    Olatz.ERG happy seems
    ‘Olatz seems happy.’

    b. Miren. DAT Olatz.ABS pozik iruditzen zaio.
    Miren.DAT Olatz ABS happy seem.IMPF AUX
    ‘Olatz seems happy to Miren.’

    [Basque, Arregi 2018:11]

Aside: raising-to-ergative is equivalent

Instead of having ergative exceptionally assigned downwards, some internal arguments could exceptionally raise to Spec-VoiceP, where ergative is obligatorily assigned [see Tyler in press-b on Choctaw; Arregi and Nevins 2012 on Basque; Deal 2019 on Nez Perce]:

(57) VoiceP
    DP ← [ERG]
   (DP)
    Voice°

- **Gain**: ergative is only ever assigned in a Spec-Head configuration.
- **Loss**: Spec-VoiceP is no longer a ‘strict’ 0-position; unmotivated movement operation.
5 Conclusion

I have made the case that Choctaw has some unaccusative subjects with ergative case

- The subjects of motion verbs, positional verbs, quantifier verbs and i-shahli 'exceed'.

This configuration is incompatible with inherent and dependent accounts of ergative case.

- the subjects are unaccusative — a problem for inherent ergative;
- there is no competitor NP — a problem for dependent ergative.

Analysis: Choctaw has structural ergative case:

- assigned by a functional head (Voice)
- not θ-related

Support for the analysis comes from dative intervention (§4).

Appendices:

- Appendix A: both dependent and inherent theories of ergative case suffer from under-generation and over-generation
- Appendix B: the patterns that are often used to argue for dependent ergative show up in languages with active alignment, where ergative cannot be realistically argued to be dependent.

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References


Appendix A: Problems with existing analyses of ergative

Inherent ergative

Under-generation problem: Some internal arguments get marked as ergative—often in the presence of a second internal argument:

   fruit.ABS-EVID ripen-PERF
   ‘The fruit ripened.’

b. Bimi-n-ra Rosa joshin-xon-ke.
   fruit-ERG-EVID Rosa ripen-APPL-PERF
   ‘The fruit ripened for Rosa.’

   Jesus.ABS die-PST-3SGS
   ‘Jesus died.’

   Jesus-ERG die-APPL-PST-3SGS/1PL0
   ‘Jesus died for us.’

Over-generation problem: Some external arguments don’t get marked as ergative.

(63) a. Wagu:d-a-Ø man-abs cut-AP-PRES tree-LOC
   ‘The man is cutting a tree.’

b. Jinta-kari-Ø one-other-ABS ka-ra aggressive-aggressive-speak.NPAST
   ngirrily-ngirrily-wangka
   ‘One is provoking the other to fight.’

Dependent ergative

Under-generation problem: Some intransitive subjects get marked as ergative.

(64) Klara-k onto eskia-tzen du.
   Klara-ERG well ski-IMPF AUX
   ‘Klara skis well.’

Over-generation problem: Some transitive subjects don’t get ergative case, leading to ABS-ABS arrays.

(65) a. José-Ø-ra yapa-Ø fish-ABS want-IMPF
   ‘José wants some fish.’

b. Jé-Ø kaman peësá-Ø money.X-ABS 1stsgobj-need-1sgObj-ABS PRES
   ‘I need some money.’

Halle and Marantz (1993), Laka (1993), Bobaljik (1993) and Baker and Bobaljik (2017) propose that there are no true ergative subjects of intransitives, and that apparent counterexamples are are ‘concealed’ transitives. See Preminger (2012) for counterarguments.
• Baker [2014, 2015] and Baker and Bobaljik [2017] provide various technologies to account for the absence of ergative in ABS-ABS arrays like (65), including covert PPs, and relativizing case computation to phases.

Appendix B: ‘Dependent-ergative-like’ patterns in active languages

Choctaw

• Preliminary: intransitive psych verbs pattern like unaccusatives—crucially, ABS subject agreement:

(66) a. Sa nokshópah.
   sa-nokshoopa-h
   1SG.ABS-scare.NACT-TNS
   'I’m scared.'

b. *nokshoopa-li-h
   scare.NACT-1SG.ERG-TNS
   ('I’m scared.')</n
• Dependent-ergative-like pattern: add a DAT object; the ABS subject is optionally ‘promoted’ to ERG [cf. Rezac 2008, Arregi and Nevins 2012 on ‘Absolutive Promotion’ in Basque, Tyler in press-b on Choctaw].

(67) a. chi-sa-nokshoopa-h
   2SG.DAT-1SG.ABS-scare.NACT-TNS
   'I’m scared of you.'

b. chi-nokshoopa-li-h
   2SG.DAT-scare.NACT-1SG.ERG-TNS
   'I’m scared of you.'

• N.B. The ‘promoted’ ERG subject is still an internal argument:
  – Speakers report no change in interpretation
  – The ABS-class auxiliary taha is still selected:

(68) Mary ish-i-nokshoopa-t
   Mary 2SG.ERG-DAT-scare.NACT-PTCP
   finish.NACT-TNS
   'You’re terrified of Mary.'

The pattern:


→ This looks like a dependent ergative pattern.

Western Basque dialects

Person-conditioned Absolutive Promotion in transitive psych verbs [Rezac 2008, Arregi and Nevins 2012]:

(70) a. Itxaso-ri hura gustatzen zaio.
   Itxaso-DAT him.ABS liking AUX.3DAT
   'Itxaso likes him.'

b. Itxaso-ri zu-k gustatzen diozu.
   Itxaso-DAT you-ERG liking AUX.3DAT.2ERG
   'Itxaso likes you.'

Timucua (extinct isolate, Florida)

Person-conditioned ‘agreement switch’ [Broadwell 2016]:

(71) a. Mare-ma chi-nahiabo-hue-ti-la.
   never-ART 2SG.ABS-know-IRR-NEG-AFF
   'You will never know (it).'

b. chabeta-co ta=n-nahiabo-bi-ch-o?
   where-INDEF away=1SG.ABS-know-PST-2SG.ERG-O
   'Where did you know me?'
Creek and Alabama (Muskogean)

‘Agreement shift’ when dative argument is added in comparatives (obligatory in Creek, optional in Alabama):

(72)  a. ca-má:h-i:-t ó:-s
     1SG.PAT-tall-DUR-T be.fgr-IND
     ‘I’m tall.’

     b. is-cim-má:h-ay-i:-t ó:-s
     INST-2.DAT-tall-1SG.AGT-DUR-T be.fgr-IND
     ‘I’m taller than you.’ (Creek, Martin 2011:177)

(73)  a. Cha-hoop-a-hchi.
     1SG.ABS-be.sick-ASP
     ‘I’m sick.’

     PER-2SG.ABS-DAT-sick.hgr-1SG.ERG-ASP
     ‘I’m sicker than you.’
     (Alabama, Hardy and Davis 1993:470, reglossed)