

Functional Heads |
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Samoan Ergativity as Double Passivization*

HILDA KOOPMAN

1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I will argue that the current theoretical understanding provided by 'cartographic' approaches and strictly derivational approaches allows a new understanding of the problem of ergative case marking and transitivity in Samoan, a Polynesian language¹. A precise account of the distribution of ergative case in Samoan is difficult. Ergative case can only occur in the presence of an absolutive object, and is not an inherent property of a predicate, nor is it linked to a particular thematic role. Traditionally, linguists have taken the transitive form of the predicate as the basic atomic form (current: an ergative DP externally merges with little *v*). Various detransitivization processes apply to account for absolutive case on external arguments of

* This paper is dedicated to Memo for his inspirational work and friendship. May our good times in the past continue far in the future.

1. For Samoan, see Chung (1978), Mosel and Hovdhaugen (1992) (MH), Cook (1996), Durant (1990), Durant and Ochs (1996), and Ochs (1982). The Samoan data reported here have been gathered during the UCLA fieldmethods class (fall 2007 and winter 2008), and are largely in agreement with the published literature. Points of divergence will be indicated where relevant. I want to thank John Fruean (born in 1986, raised in Apia, Samoa) and Kare'i Lokeni for sharing their language with us; our class participants, Martine Bruil, Ben George, Ben Jones, Vincent Homer, Ji-eun Kim, Robyn Orfitelli, Constanze Weise, Kristine Yu, and Kie Zuraw, as well as Daniel Büring, Peter Hallman, Ed Keenan, Anoop Mahajan, Viola Schmitt, Dominique Sportiche, audiences in Tromsø (June 2008), Utrecht (June 2008), and Afla XV (Sydney, July 2008), and Chris Collins for comments and feedback. While the presentations focused on causatives, the present paper only treats "simple" transitive verbs. A very special thanks to Robyn Orfitelli and Vincent Homer for feedback and comments. Transcriptions follow the (loose) orthographic conventions for Samoan (*g=ŋ*, and 'for glottal stop), except for length, which will be marked with a semicolon (a: instead of ä.).

transitive predicates. A different approach is suggested in light of the atomization of syntactic and morphological structures (Cinque 1999), the cartography of argument structure, the cartography of "object" positions (Hallman 2004), and the understanding that what appear to be simple lexical items correspond to complex syntactic structures that "spell out" or "span" a certain size of the syntactic representation. Instead of starting from basic transitive structures, we should instead start from the tiniest possible structures, and consider how syntactic constituency is built up, spelled out and interpreted from the atomic parts, through external and internal Merge, in conjunction with strict and inviolable locality principles (Minimality), and universal hierarchies. If we do so, the core problem of Samoan ergativity can be brought back to the lexicalization patterns of morphologically simplex predicates. These "spell out" small syntactic structures that are roughly equivalent in size to English passive participles (big VPs following Collins 2005, section 5). These bare predicates are thus crucially smaller than English active predicates, or accusative Austronesian languages with active voice prefixes (which Samoan lacks). The small size of the predicates causes a chain of derivational events that eventually lead to ergative structures as "double passive voice" constructions. Two passive voices must be merged to allow "smuggling" (Collins 2005) to overcome repeated Minimality violations. A low passive voice is required to smuggle affected objects into the region where they receive their interpretation (i.e. higher than the lowest position of the external argument; cf. Hallman 2004)). A higher passive voice (which the ergative case depends on) must be merged to smuggle the subject out from under the intervening absolutive, but will only be merged under that circumstance. The lexicalization patterns in Samoan thus cause a cascade of derivational problems that ultimately lead to double passive voice constructions, explaining why the ergative patterns are restricted to the special contexts in which ergative arises.

2. BACKGROUND ON SAMOAN CASE AND CASE MARKING

Samoan is a nuclear Polynesian prepositional "VSO" language, with ergative-absolutive case marking (erg>abs>obl case marking), third-person subject pro-drop, scrambling in the postverbal domain, and (phrasal) predicate fronting, not V-movement. A Samoan clause consists of three regions; the left peripheral C region; the finite "C-T" region, which hosts tense/aspect markers, subject clitics (Scl), negation, and some restricted focus-type adverbs²; and the predicate and postpredicate domain: this is the VSO region. The syntax of this domain is relevant for the understanding of the general case marking patterns in Samoan.

2. Under the assumption that subject clitics occupy a fixed position, prepredicate tense and aspect marker (called TAM marker in MH) distribute over the "C" node and "T" node as follows: at spell out "C" contains *na* (definite past), *sa* (indefinite past), *a:* future, *ua* (perfect), and *T e* generic T/present. The C-T region further expands to: C (adv) Scl T (adv) Neg (adv) Pred, with adv restricted to adverbial particles elements that translate as 'just' or 'almost', suggest involvement of focus (see MH 1992). A complete mapping of the Cinque hierarchy for Samoan remains to be carried out.

- (1) (o) (Top/Foc DP) "C"-Scl "T" (Neg) [..Pred] ERG.DP ABS.DP (OBL.DP)
 left periphery C- T domain ["V"] S O PP

Topics and Foci can only be DPs, (often) preceded by a "presentational" particle *o* (conceivably a genitive P or a copular element). Subject clitics (Scl) do not vary for case. Only in postverbal position are DPs case marked, either by the oblique *Pi* (which is the locative/directional P), or the ergative *Pe* (*e* has no other prepositional or nominal uses; it does occur in the clausal spine as a seemingly unrelated, generic T, or a non-finite/unrealized like C). The absolutive DP is preceded by a H-boundary tone, as discovered by Kristine Yu in her careful instrumental study of the intonation of Samoan ergativity (Yu 2008). Promotion of the ergative to the finite C/T region or the left periphery generally requires the presence of a(n outer) voice suffix, *-ina* (or *-a*), not further discussed in this paper³.

The Case hierarchy in Samoan can be described as follows (with > representing c-command, and overt forms given in italics): (Erg)>Abs>(Obl). = (*e* DP) > *i*-DP > (*i* DP).

Samoan clauses contain an obligatory absolutive, and show two types of case marking patterns.

I. Abs (>Obl), with Abs c-commanding Oblique.⁴

This pattern arises whenever the highest argument in the thematic domain can map directly onto the absolutive (i.e. when there is no intervention). Morphological simple experiencer verbs fall into this class (cf. *alofa* 'love' has an absolutive experiencer, and an oblique theme/location).

II. (Erg)>Abs>(Obl).

Ergative case is optional and dependent on the presence of an absolutive object. These objects occur not only with highly transitive predicates that have volitional/agentive subjects, including volitional *fa'a*-causatives, but also with morphological complex predicates that contain an overt low "passive" voice suffix (*-(C)(i)a*).

3. ON SAMOAN ABSOLUTIVE AS NOMINATIVE

Absolutive is obligatory in all tensed clauses (modulo *pro*-drop); it is least marked phonologically (it is marked by a H-boundary but not by segmental material). This makes it like nominative (Bittner and Hale 1996). Since H- only appears to show up post-predicatively, I conclude that absolutive is *not* an unmarked or a default case. I

3. See Chung (1978) and MH (1992), Homer (2009). *-ina/-a* can stack onto predicates that bundle an overt "low passive" voice suffix ((C)(i)a), called the long form in MH.

4. In addition Samoan has Obl> Abs predicates (*galo* 'forget'). With these predicates, only the oblique argument can correspond to the subject clitic; Q-float is possible from the oblique for our speaker.

take as the null hypothesis that absolutive within Samoan should be given a uniform structural analysis: thus absolutive=nominative. Absolutive objects occur in clauses that are arguably non-finite (Chung 1978, MH 1992, and Homer 2009) and in imperatives. This shows it is NOT determined by the finite C/T under closest c-command. This is important, as the countercyclic nature (waiting for the relevant C/T probe to be merged to check absolutive=nominative, or probe down in any non-finite clause) and the non-local nature (ergative subjects are "invisible" or "inert" for nominative case) clash with strictly local derivational approaches. If absolutive is not an unmarked case and if absolutive=nominative, how then should we capture that it is independent of finiteness in Samoan? Strictly cyclic derivational theories dictate local determination of absolutive/nominative. Assume then that UG does not provide any variability in the configuration, but does allow for variability in terms of "height of merger." Like nominative, absolutive must be determined by some "C/T" complex, of which there is more than one possible site of merger in a "single" clause. Standard minimalist terminology distinguishes two phases: "CP" and "vP," each with edges. Let us adopt that what is called vP and its edge, in fact is a "C T" complex as well (with T one of Cinque's functional heads) (Hallman 1997, Koopman and Szabolcsi 2000), with potential recursion of the high left periphery (Belletti 2004). The linguistic variability in nominative case can then be attributed to the location of the C/T(nom) complex, with the possibility of recursion leading to multiple nominatives (Koopman 2005, for Icelandic). This yields the following rough typology (with the possibility that Samoan falls under (2c) as well (see note 9), possibly with an oblique region intervening:

- (2) C_{fin} [DP] T .. [C_{low} [DP] T [v/V. *Nom depends on finiteness*
 a. nom *yes*
 b. [nom/abs *no (Samoan . . .)*
 c. nom [nom *yes and no ("double nominatives")*

In Samoan then, the highest argument, including external arguments, will always map onto the absolutive in the absence of an intervener. What needs an explanation is why certain objects map onto the absolutive, and the external argument onto the ergative. What blocks accusative alignment in these particular contexts?

4. ON THE MISSING ACCUSATIVE IN SAMOAN

DP objects end up marked oblique or absolutive, but neither qualifies as an exponent of accusative. Thus, oblique objects are incompatible with affected object interpretations, and cannot occur in causative constructions, whether these are (purely agentive) *fa'a*-causatives, or predicates with natural force initiators (causes). The latter require argument reversal (i.e. obligatory passivization) with the theme mapping onto the absolutive and acting as the highest argument, and with the natural force/cause argument marked as an i-oblique (called 'stative agent' in Chung (1978), not as a ergative DP, c-commanded by the absolutive.

- (3) ua mamago 'ofu i /*e le la:
 PERF dry D-PL clothes OBL/ *ERG D-SG sun
 'Lit: The clothes dried at the sun'

This raises an important question: Why is the expected accusative alignment, with the natural force c-commanding the theme excluded? The absolutive in (4) does not qualify as a hidden morphological realization of accusative (Legate 2006). If so, transitive structures would be expected to come out as double nominative/double “absolutive” constructions (with the highest argument mapping on the T absolutive, and the lower one in the v domain), and the natural force is expected. To block this, extra assumptions must be made, like imposing phonological distinctness (Marantz 1991, Mahajan 1993)⁵. The lack of accusative does not seem accidental. On the most general level, Samoan lacks accusative constructions. There are no *have* possessives (no surface forms like **have erg/abs John abs/obl- a house* for ‘John has a house’). Possession is expressed with an existential predicate *e iai le ta'avale a ioane* [T [EXIST [*the car* _{poss} *John*]_{abs}] ‘John’s car exists’. There are no double object constructions (i.e. no strings of the following type: **T give erg John abs Mary abs/obl DP* with the goal argument absolutive and the theme absolutive or oblique; no “have/be” alternations, no expressions like ‘have need’ (the verb ‘need’ *mana'omia* (erg>abs) is derived from ‘want’ *mana'o* (abs>obl) by a low overt passive voice suffix).

Can the absence of accusative case be derived? Stipulating Samoan *v* lacks an accusative case feature simply begs the question. Stating the relevant little *v* has an absolutive feature leaves the problem of detransitivizing *v* and provides no further insights in understanding when ergative case is available and when it is not. I will therefore pursue a purely syntactic account, which tries to explain why an accusative alignment in (3) is unavailable. This analysis relies on very general properties of the distribution of objects, an assumption about the locus of accusative, in conjunction with the particular lexicalization patterns of Samoan predicates. Importantly, the predicate in (3) looks morphologically simple, and it is incompatible with a volitional agent. The small size of the predicate is compatible with the numerous indications that it combines with a silent passive voice in Samoan (cf. (16)).

On the basis of scopal properties of objects and their interaction with predicates, Hallman (2004) establishes that there are (at least) three different object positions, with the highest object position *higher* than the lowest subject position (cf. also Travis’ (2010) outer aspect). This is an important finding as the conclusions are based on scopal interactions alone, and they are independent of accusative case or syntactic distribution. This raises the question where in the (universal) hierarchy of object positions “affected” objects are and how accusative enters into the equation. My proposal rests on the following two assumptions: first, “affected” objects must map to the high object region, higher than natural cause, for interpretive reasons, and second, this region corresponds to “high” accusative universally.

5. See note 9 for a suggestion as to how this follows under the current proposal.

From these, the absence of accusative will follow from the failure of the mapping of an object higher than the external argument in (4): (using Ramchand 2008 terminology for the simplified v/V map as *v* (INIT (initiator of the event)) and Process/Result for big V):

- (4) DP_{i(obj)} [I_{init} DP_{init} v_{INIT} [DP_i V_{PROCESS/RESULT} ...

That the mapping in (4) does not converge is entirely expected because the external argument DP_{init} intervenes (i.e. because of Minimality). The problem with (4) has always been explaining how an accusative can ever get around this intervener. How can a relevant DP ever A-move or object shift over the external argument and map onto accusative? Chomsky’s (1995) notion of Equidistance⁶ ties this in with the surface position of the verb: The verb raises higher than accusative, and thus extends the domain of object shift. In other words, the spell out form of a predicate like “give” in an accusative case marking language bundles a position higher than the accusative, allowing the object to shift past the external argument. It is also well known that object shift can never shift a regular DP object past the surface position of the verb. This means that if the predicate in Samoan does not end up high enough in the structure, the absence of accusative in Samoan will fall out from (4). If the Samoan lexical predicate remains too low in the structure (i.e. if the predicate spans too small a syntactic structure), the language must resort to other means for convergence (i.e. passivization). This explains why the object is actually absolutive (i.e. nominative). As discussed in the following sections, there is abundant Samoan internal evidence for these two factors: The Samoan predicate spells out a small VP shell structure, and the derivation of absolutive objects implicates a silent passive Voice. These basic properties set in motion a chain of events that ultimately result in ergative case marking.

5. LEXICALIZATION PATTERNS: BASIC PROCESS/RESULT PREDICATES

Basic result predicates in Samoan can systematically get either a process or a result reading (*mama*: ‘be clean, become clean’), but never a volitional causative one (**mama*: erg abs ‘clean something’). A volitional argument with change of state predicates requires the presence of an additional lexical item, the causative *fa’a* (*fa’a-mama*: erg. abs ‘to clean something’). A natural force initiator that combines with these predicates must appear in the oblique with the affected object in the absolutive and hierarchical superior to the oblique (4), all this without any visible morphological change. This reversal indicates that the bare predicate combines with a silent passive voice, which makes available an oblique, and which somehow plays a role in overcoming the minimality violation, and enables an affected object to get past an

6. Precursors of equidistance are Van Riemsdijk’s (1978) “Head Constraint” and Baker’s (1988) “Government Transparency Corollary”.

intervening subject and map onto the relevant domain for interpretive reasons. Why do these simple predicates not allow for active alignments? This is because they spell out a structure no bigger than V (process/result), basically the size of a passive participle. In sum, merger of a low (silent) passive voice is required because the affected theme must map to a position higher than cause or natural force, but cannot do this on its own. The language resorts to special means for convergence (using a passive voice), which attracts the process/result phrase, and thereby smuggles the object over the subject, bringing it into a position where it can reach the absolutive position (Collins 2005).



Two further questions arise. First, what happens when the external argument maps onto ergative case? After smuggling and movement to the absolutive, the absolutive now in turn *c*-commands the external argument, and creates a Minimality violation for further movement. And secondly, how does this analysis extend to simple transitive predicates like ‘ai ‘eat’? (see section 8 for evidence why even ‘ai ‘eat’ does not bundle the external argument).

6. ON ERGATIVE CASE: WHY ERGATIVE CASE IS NOT AN INHERENT CASE AND WHY IT DEPENDS ON THE PRESENCE OF A PASSIVE VOICE PROJECTION

Ergative case is not an “inherent” case. Volitional agents do not obligatorily map onto ergative. The ergative can map onto volitional agents, but *only* in the presence of an absolutive object.

Samoan ergative case is not linked to “agentivity” either, as experiencers of certain predicates (*lago-na* ‘feel’ *ilo-a* ‘know’) map onto the ergative. These predicates are visibly morphologically complex, ending in a passive voice suffix. The ergative is not linked to animacy either. Inanimate DPs can map onto the ergative with predicates that bundle an overt passive voice suffix (C(i)a) (*si’omia* ‘cover’, *si’osi’omia* ‘surround’). These predicates are compatible with either ergative *e* or oblique *i*, the latter co-occurring with “low” silent passive voice, and obligatorily marking natural forces or inanimates with “smallest” causative predicates.

- (6) ‘ua si’omia le teine i /e le palaikeke
 PERF cover.MIA ABS D.SG girl OBL/ERG D.SG blanket
 ‘The blanket covered the girl’

The syntactic behavior of these strings varies in expected ways depending on oblique marking or ergative marking. Ergative case thus looks more like a structural case

(i.e. what it combines with depends on the local syntactic configuration, not directly on thematic role).⁷ It depends on the presence of a particular (region of the) structure, which contains ergative *e*. I will refer to this region as “ergative voice” and determine when ergative voice can be merged. It turns out, quite surprisingly, that it is the class of “exceptional” (non-agentive) verbs that holds the key to the answer. Since these predicates are arguably all morphologically complex, audibly bundling the low passive voice suffix, this suggests that ergative voice only merges in the presence of a passive voice complement. Since any structure that contains an absolutive object contains passive voice, this environment can be stated in a completely general way:

- (7) Ergative voice selects for a passive voice complement.

Why would (6) hold and what is ergative voice exactly? The answer I pursue is purely syntactic: Ergative voice is a type of passive voice that must be merged to attract the predicate containing the external argument, which, by itself, cannot get over the intervening absolutive. The basic function of passive voice is thus to attract a predicate that smuggles an argument around an intervener. The ergative case *e*, just like the English *by*-phrase, reflects the merger of the particular passive voice with the properties in (7).

7. MAPPING A BASIC TRANSITIVE VERB

Let us next turn to mapping the environments of a basic transitive predicate ‘ai ‘eat’, based on the theoretical assumptions outlined above (i.e. the hierarchy of object positions, the case hierarchy Erg>abs>Obl, and a fixed configuration for absolutive) asking how to motivate and support the analysis. This will allow a gradual discovery of the derivational history and support the strongly modular syntactic analysis for the ergative patterns of Samoan outlined in the previous sections. With the theme implicit (8), “pseudo incorporated” (9), or in the “conative” construction (10), the “agent” of the predicate ‘ai ‘eat’ maps onto the absolutive.

- (8) na ‘ai le teine
 PAST eat ABS D.SG girl
 ‘The/a girl ate’
- (9) e [‘ai i’a] le teine
 GEN eat fish ABS D.SG girl
 ‘The girl eats fish’

7. MH (1992, 765) write “most of them (the ergative noun phrase) refer to participants (in the broadest sense) which initiate the event through some inherently given energy”. It is unclear how this description covers experiencers exactly. Note that MH is quite compatible with my proposal according to which ergative voice attracts the InitP to get around the absolutive. My proposal has the added advantage that it also can smuggle an ExpP around an intervener (i.e. since what counts is the general structural configuration).

- (10) na 'ai le teine i le i'a
 PAST eat ABS D.SG girl OBL D.SG fish
 'The/a girl ate from the fish/the/a girl ate away at the fish'

The implicit theme in (8), if represented at all, is arguably very low in the structure, or at least there is no reason to believe it is higher than the external argument. "Pseudo incorporated" objects are below the external argument at all points in the derivation (they front with the predicate), and do not have a D nor are they case marked. Pronominal binding and subject cliticization in contexts like (9) show that a postverbal absolutive c-commands the oblique (hence ABS>OBL). Thus the external argument is always higher than any of these objects. It can map onto the absolutive unhindered.

- (11) C_{low} > DP_i > T_{abs} > DP_i INIT > (OBL objects > incorporated objects > implicit objects)

With "affected" themes, however, and expressed agents, the theme must map onto the absolutive, and the agent onto the ergative, with Pred-ergative- absolutive as unmarked linear order:

- (12) na 'ai e le teine le i'a
 PAST eat ERG D.SG girl ABS D.SG fish
 'The girl ate a/the fish'

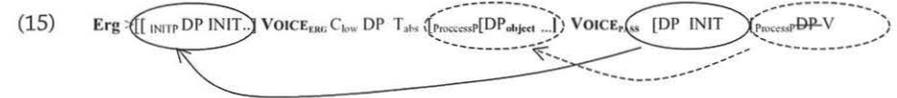
Given Minimality, direct movement over the external argument (Init) is blocked. The derivation in (12) thus requires a step in which the affected object is smuggled over the initiator, which I argued is achieved by (a silent) Passive voice, yielding the following derivational step:

- (13) C_{low} [DP_i e i'a fish]_i > T_{abs} > [NP [DP_i e i'a fish]_i, 'ai_{ch}]_i] VOICE_{PASS} > DP_{init} INIT > **DP_{object}** fish 'ai_{cat} > ...

The presence of the silent passive Voice is empirically supported (see (16)). The intuition that there is a deep connection between ergativity and passive has of course been present since the earliest works on ergativity, but the problem has always been how to make it work exactly. Samoan ergative absolutive structures are not equivalent to English passive structures. The absolutive object does not show the behavior of the highest argument, the agent/initiator does. Only the ergative DP can correspond to a subject clitic (Chung 1978), and a postverbal ergative QP binds a pronoun inside the absolutive. This must yield a partial "derivational" history for (12), with an instance of the external argument of 'ai 'eat' both *below* and *above* the absolutive. If these are associated with a single (A) chain, a minimality problem arises again, since now the affected absolutive object (boldfaced in (14)) intervenes:

- (14) (to be revised) Erg > ..DP_{INIT} > C_{low} DP_o > T_{abs} > DP_{oi} Abs > DP_{INIT} INIT > ...

The derivations for the ergative thus encounters the same problem as the derivation for the affected object: The very solution that brought the "affected" object over the initiator without incurring a minimality violation, recreated the same problem all over again: How now can the external argument initiator get around the intervening absolutive? The general solution to this problem is the same: A smuggler (a silent passive voice) merges at different locations and ensures convergence. The "low" passive voice merges with InitP and attracts a ProcessP/ResultP (and comes with a *i-* (by) phrase that can only mark inanimate DPs); the higher "ergative" passive voice merges with a passive voice complement, attracts InitP, and comes with the *P e* (just like passive comes with the *by*-phrase). The fundamental function of passive voice then is to attract a predicate that "smuggles" the affected object over the initiator or the initiator predicate in (14) over the absolutive (Collins 2005). Linear order aside, the derivation of (12) must contain thus two "passive" voice heads, in order to license the ergative.



As (15) shows, the ergative voice merges with a low "CP" that contains a passive voice (i.e. it merges with a passive voice complement in accordance with (7)). In this sense, the traditional intuitions were right: Its proper understanding however only comes within reach with a better understanding of the finely grained nature of syntactic structure.

8. ON THE OPTIONALITY OF THE ERGATIVE

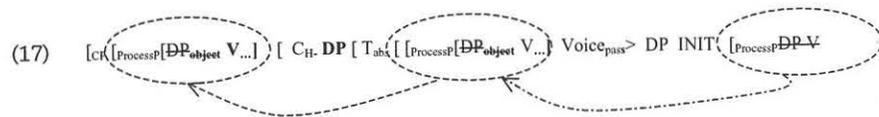
A (third-person) ergative DP is never required in the context of a transitive verb like 'ai 'eat' with an affected object. This is consistent with the presence of the low passive which leads to convergence, and the optional merger of the ergative voice region. Predicates like 'ai 'eat' by themselves do not "bundle" the ergative.⁸ 'Ai 'eat' happily survives as a short passive (as indicated, and irrelevant for the discussion, the example is structurally ambiguous because of third-person pro-drop).

- (16) na 'ai le i'a
 PAST eat ABS D.SG fish
 'a/the fish got eaten/ someone ate a/the fish' (also: 's/he ate the/a fish' or 'a/the fish ate something')

8. Samoan disposes of another way to "avoid" the expression of the ergative case marked DP: bundling the external argument of the verb (the initiator) as a possessor of the theme Durant (1990), Durant and Ochs (1996), Mosel and Hovdhaugen (1992, 547), Homer (2009).

- (i) na 'ai [le i'a a le teine]
 PAST eat ABS [D.SG fish POSS D.SG girl]
 'The girl ate her fish (lit: ate the fish of the girl)'

The typical “passive” type reading (‘the fish got eaten’) suggests the presence of a hidden silent (passive) Voice. Support for its presence comes from the fact that the absolutive object can always behave as the highest argument (e.g. it can be controlled) (see MH 1992 and Homer 2009). Thus low silent passive Voice can be merged with Init_v, yielding short passives. To account for the word order in (16), a constituent containing the predicate raises to the left of the absolutive (i.e. the remnant ProcessP moves to the edge of the C_{low} level, which will be realized at spell out as H-) yielding the surface VS order:



This derivation shows that the constituent that contains the spell out form ‘ai’ ‘eat’ does not sit in INIT/v (cf. Collins’ 2005 proposal the passive participle correspond to VP, not vP). The Samoan bare predicate in absolutive environments is thus entirely comparable to an English passive participle.

The structure in (17) has independent syntactic existence and can merge with the finite C-T region, yielding the surface string in (16), or with the ergative passive voice region, since the complement is “passive” voiced (7). Ergative Passive Voice attracts the InitP over the absolutive, thereby smuggling the Initiator over the absolutive and bringing it local to the ergative *e*. The (remnant) ProcessP, containing the lexical predicate raises around the ergative to yield the unmarked *Pred erg DP abs DP* linear order; this structure eventually merges with the finite C-T domain:



In a most literal sense then, clauses with ergative absolutive case markings are double passive structures: The low passive voice lifts a predicate containing an affected object over an intervening Initiator; the ergative passive voice lifts a predicate containing the external argument over an intervening absolutive.⁹

This example is structurally ambiguous in many ways, (someone ate [a fish of the girl’s], h/ she ate the girl’s fish, the girl’s fish got eaten, or [the girl’s fish ate something]). What is relevant is that it *can* have a reading where the possessor is understood as the initiator of the event (“the girl’s fish was eaten by the girl”). This construction (dubbed backwards raising by Homer) is a completely normal way of dealing both with transitivity and double object constructions. Kayne’s (2005a) merger of *of* and *de* with VP attracting the postnominal possessor suggest a derivation where the possessor actually raises to INIT and then to POSS merged with INITP with the DP raising around, giving the appearance of underlying constituency.

9. Minimality ensures such constructions can never lead to double nominative constructions: Even if the higher finite nominative were available, the external argument could NOT map onto it. At best then such constructions will converge to ABS ERG ABS, given (2c). Daniel Buring asks why INITP does not create a minimality violation for the movement of PROCESSP. This might follow if the direct complement of Voice cannot move (Abels 2003, Kayne 2005b) (Chris Collins, personal communication).

9. HOW TO EVER GET ACCUSATIVE

Ken Hale (1968) observed that some Australian languages are accusative and others are ergative. The accusative types differ from those that are ergative in that they have active-passive distinctions marked overtly. Samoan fits into this pattern as it does not seem to mark active-non active distinctions in ways so typical of other Austronesian languages (Hohepa 1969), where languages with active voice prefixes have accusative case alignment. My proposal will have to answer the questions how an accusative object can ever map onto the position higher than Init and what the role of active voice is in this respect. However we explain the accusative configuration eventually, it is clear that predicate movements (movement of vP and VP shells) will figure prominently in the explanation. What Samoan ergativity suggests is that lexicalization patterns (i.e. English ‘give’ vs. Samoan ‘give’), the presence/absence of active voice prefixes, the form of simple possessive constructions (absence or presence of *have* possessives (Kayne 1993)) or have-be alternations (Mahajan 1993), and smallest causatives (natural force-causatives how to say ‘the sun melted the ice’) all cluster together.

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