ERGATIVITY IN CHUKCHI [PART I]

1. Background

1.1. Chukchi

- Chukchi < Chukotko-Kamchatkan, ≈5100 speakers
- Previous descriptions and analyses of ergativity in Chukchi (Comrie 1979; Nedjalkov 1979; Polinskaja, Nedjalkov 1987; Bobaljik 1998; Bobaljik, Branigan 2006):
    - ergative alignment in case marking (1)
    - 'mixed' system in agreement: S/A-oriented prefixes and S/O-oriented suffixes
    - syntactic ergativity

(1) a. **kejŋ-e**   tekisɣ-ən   Ø-tuɬʔen-ni-n

         bear-ERG   meat-ABS.SG   2/3.S/A-steal-3SG.A.3.O-3SG.O

         'A bear stole the meat.' [A]

     b. qɬawəɬ-a   Ø-təm-ni-n   **kejŋ-ən**

         man-ERG   2/3.S/A-kill-3SG.A.3.O-3SG.O   bear-ABS.SG

         'A man killed a bear.' [O]

     c. **kejŋ-ən**   nə-ɬe-qin   tekem   ərə-ke-ɣjit

         bear-ABS.SG   ST-walk-ST.3SG   straight   they-OBL-ORI

         'A bear was going straight towards them.' [S]

1.2. Inherent Case Theory

- In the Standard Case theory, Cases are divided into inherent and structural ones[1]:
    - inherent Cases are assigned in connection with theta-marking
    - structural Cases are licensed in specific syntactic configurations irrespective of theta-role
- Ergative Case is assigned by $v°$/Voice° to the argument generated in its specifier (Aldridge 2008; Laka 2006; Legate 2006, 2008, 2012; Massam 1998; Nash 1996; Woolford 1997, 2006)
- Absolutive as morphological default (ABS=DEF languages) OR Absolutive as Nominative (ABS=NOM languages)[2]

Table 1. Case Assignment based on (Legate 2008)

	Case type	Case assigner	
		ABS=NOM	ABS=DEF
A	inherent	$v°$	$v°$
O	structural	T°	$v°$
S	structural	T°	T°

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[1] Woolford (2006) contrasts structural Case with nonstructural and divides the latter type into idiosyncratic lexical Case, licensed by various lexical heads, and more regular inherent Case, associated with particular theta-positions and licensed by functional heads like $v°$.

[2] This is similar to the idea of Goddard (1982), who proposed to think of absolutive in most Australian languages as a *pattern of case marking* (accusative on some nouns is unmarked, and so coincides with nominative), rather than a *true case.*

- Predictions of the ICT:
  - absolute on DPs lacking abstract Case → multiple absolutives within a clause in ABS=DEF languages
  - in non-finite environments, absolutive on S is not licensed in ABS=DEF languages, while absolutive on O is licensed
  - if the assignment of ergative is tied to theta-marking, ergative should not appear on derived subjects that moved from a thematic to a non-thematic position

  ERGATIVE CASE GENERALIZATION (Marantz 1991)
  Even when ergative case may go on the subject of an intransitive clause, ergative case will not appear on a derived subject

1.3. Dependent Case Theory

- Four types of morphological cases listed in (Marantz 1991; Bobaljik 2008; Baker, Vinokurova 2010; Baker 2014, 2015; Baker, Bobaljik 2017):
  - lexically governed case
  - dependent case (accusative and ergative)
  - unmarked case (environment-sensitive)
  - default case
- Ergative assignment through c-command:

  DEPENDENT ERGATIVE ASSIGNMENT (Baker 2015: 49)
  If there are two distinct NPs in the same spell out domain such that NP1 c-commands NP2, then value the case feature of NP1 as ergative unless NP2 has already been marked for case

(2) SHIPIBO (Baker 2014)
   a. *kokoti-ra   joshin-ke*
      fruit-PRT   ripen-PRF
      'The fruit ripened.'
   b. *bimi-n-ra   / *bimi-ra   rosa   joshin-xon-ke*
      fruit-ERG-PRT   / fruit.ABS-PRT   Rosa   ripen-APPL-PRF
      'The fruit ripened for Rosa.'

1.4. Other Proposals

- Raising to ergative + ergative as structural Case (Rezac et al. 2014 on Basque; Deal 2019 on Nez Perce)
- DP-ergative is dependent, whereas PP-ergative is inherent (Polinsky 2016)

2. Arguments form (Bobaljik, Branigan 2006; Baker, Boblajik 2017)

2.1. Ergative on Experiencers

Argument:

Bobaljik and Branigan (2006: 55) examine examples from (Nedjalkov 1976: 194) and argue that experiencers are introduced as absolutives in the intransitive construction, but take the ergative case morpheme in the construction with a transitive light verb (3). They consider this as an argument for rejecting the inherent case analysis of Chukchi ergative.

(3) a. *ətɬəɣə-n*   *pečɣ-etə*   *Ø-korɣ-**awə**-rkən*
         father-ABS.SG   food-DAT   2/3.S/A-joy-**VB**-IPFV
     b. *ətɬəɣ-e*   *pičɣə~pič*   *korɣ-**o***   *Ø-ɬəŋə-rkə-ne-n*
         father-ERG   food.ABS.SG   joy-EQU   2/3.S/A-consider-IPFV-3SG.A>3.O-3SG.O
     'The father is happy about the food.'

Possible counterargument:

– Woolford (2006) shows that not only agents can be mapped to the external argument position, i.e. the limits of theta-relatedness and agentivity are not strictly defined

– Ergative-marked DP is an external argument introduced by $v°$
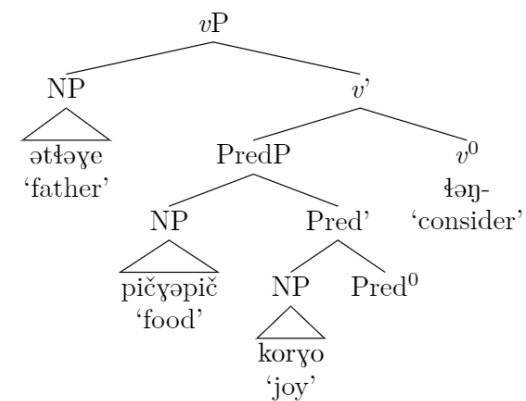
Possible counter-counterargument:

– Rafael Abramovitz (pc.) points out that similar structures from Koryak should not be analyzed as small clauses:
  ▪ weird meaning: 'father considers the food (to be) joy'
        >> better (only possible?) with *ŋawətɬəwe* 'granddaughter'
  ▪ restrictions on word order → *-u* as a head along the extended verbal projection
        >> not observed in Chukchi
  ▪ are only nouns possible in the X-u + ɬɣ- construction?
        >> yes and no (morphonology: -u vs. -nu)
  ▪ can equative survive in nominalization?
        >> dunno
– I assume, however, that any analysis in which the ergative-marked subject is introduced by a transitive light verb makes the data compatible with the ICT

2.1. Ergative in Causative-Inchoative Alternation

Argument:

According to (Baker, Bobaljik 2017), the data in (5) go against the ECG because ergative case appears on an internal argument of the verb (4).

(4) *ŋewəsqet-e*   *kuke-ŋə*   *Ø-mimɬə-jərʔen-ni-n*
     girl-ERG   pot-ABS.SG   2/3.S/A-water-fill-3SG.A>3.O-3SG.O
     'The girl filled the pot with water.'

(5) a. *ŋewəsqet-e* *kuke-ŋə* *Ø-jərʔen-ni-n* *mimɬ-e*
     girl-ERG pot-ABS.SG 2/3.S/A-fill-3SG.A>3.O-3SG.O water-INS
     'The girl filled the pot with water.' [transitive agreement]

  b. *kuke-ŋə* *Ø-jərʔet-ɣʔ-i* *mimɬ-e*
     pot-ABS.SG 2/3.S/A-fill-TH-2/3SG.S water-INS
     'The pot filled with water.' [intransitive agreement]

  c. *mimɬ-e* *kuke-ŋə* *Ø-jərʔen-ni-n*
     water-ERG pot-ABS.SG 2/3.S/A-fill-3SG.A>3.O-3SG.O
     <u>'Water filled the pot.'</u> / '(S/he) filled the pot with water.' [transitive agreement]

Proposal:

- I agree with Baker and Bobaljik (2017) that the verb *jərʔetək* 'fill' is a dyadic unaccusative (6a)
- I propose that the ergative-marked subject is an external argument introduced as a causer through unmarked causativization, as illustrated in (6b)

(6) a. Dyadic unaccusative   b. Causativized unaccusative
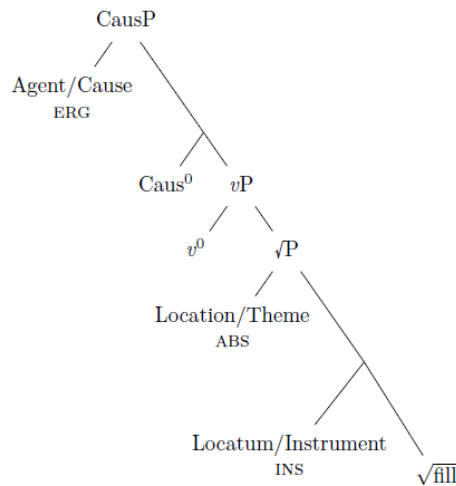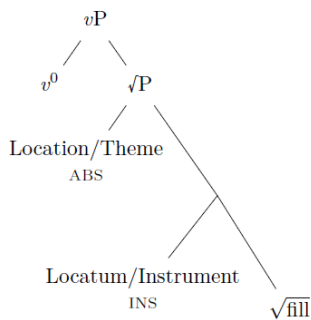
Counterargument 1   :

- asymmetric relationship between the two internal arguments:
  - incorporation of the locatum, as in (4) or (7a), is judged grammatical by all speakers, while incorporation of the location is sometimes rejected (7b) [[OK]6, *3, [?]2]

    (7) a. *kuke-ŋə* *Ø-mimɬə-jərʔet-ɣʔ-i*
         pot-ABS.SG 2/3.S/A-water-fill-TH-2/3SG.S
         'The pot filled with water.'

      b. [#]*ŋewəsqet* *Ø-kuke-jərʔet-ɣʔ-i* *mimɬ-e*
         girl.ABS.SG 2/3.S/A-pot-fill-TH-2/3SG.S water-INS
         'The girl's pot filled with water.' [possessor raising]
   Expected meaning: 'The girl filled the pot with water.'

  - the locatum incorporates prior to the incorporation of the location in (8a), whereas the opposite order (8b) seems to be only marginally accepted under the relevant interpretation

    (8) a. *ŋewəsqet* *Ø-kuke-mimɬə-jərʔet-ɣʔ-i*
         girl.ABS.SG 2/3.S/A-pot-water-fill-TH-2/3SG.S
         'The girl's pot filled with water.'

b. $^{?/\#}$ *ŋewəsqet*   *Ø-mimɬə-kuke-jərʔet-ɣʔi*
   girl.ABS.SG   2/3.S/A-water-pot-fill-TH-2/3SG.S
   'The girl's water pot filled (with water).'
   Expected meaning: 'The girl's pot filled with water.'

c. *ŋewəsqet*   *Ø-mimɬə-kuke-jərʔet-ɣʔi*   *əpa-ta*
   girl.ABS.SG   2/3.S/A-water-pot-fill-TH-2/3SG.S   soup-INS
   'The girl's water pot filled with soup.'[3]

- the locatum in the instrumental is lower than the absolutive-marked location → it is not clear how it can receive ergative case in (5c) → Movement (9)? What is the motivation? Violation of Relativized Minimality.

(9)
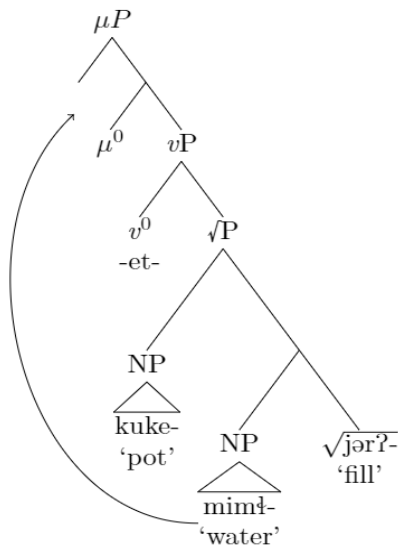
Counterargument 2   :

- the argument presented in (Baker, Bobaljik 2017) is built on the example (5c), which speakers of Chukchi do not find acceptable [*9, ^{OK}2]
- 2 speakers noted that water is not animate and thus cannot perform any action
- if the context triggers the interpretation of *mimɬe* 'water' as a natural force, bringing in an agentive component, acceptability seems to increase (10)

(10) a. *ʔeɬ-an-ma*   *mimɬ-e*   *kuke-ŋə*   *Ø-jərʔen-ni-n*
        rain-VB-SIM.CVB   water-ERG   pot-ABS.SG   2/3.S/A-fill-3SG.A>3.O-3SG.O
        'Water filled the pot while it was raining.'

   b. *iɬ-e*   *kuke-ŋə*   *Ø-jərʔen-ni-n*   (*mimɬ-e*)
      rain-ERG   pot-ABS.SG   2/3.S/A-fill-3SG.A>3.O-3SG.O   water-INS
      'The rain filled the pot with water.'

- Inanimate natural causes marked by the ergative case are acceptable for the majority of consultants (10b). The locatum can be added to the sentence, suggesting that the structures for (5a) and (10b) are similar. This is exactly what I am trying to achieve in (6b)

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[3] Context: a bowl of soup was on the table and a water pot was standing under it; someone accidentally pushed the bowl off the table, so the soup spilled into the water pot.

3. Conclusion to [PART 1]

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