Case: A Semantic System

Project A24
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Aims of the Project

- Follow up on indications that South Asian languages systematically use case to make primarily semantic distinctions.
- Investigate the relationship between originally locative expressions (postpostions, etc.) and modern structural cases like dative, ergative, accusative.

Outline

- The Ergative
- Non-Canonical Object Marking

Example: The Ergative

- The ergative case is usually taken to be an expression of a primarily **structural** arrangement.
  - Fillmore's/Dixon's structural classification of languages by how they group A (trans. Subject), S (intrans. Subj.), O (Object).
  - Marantz's Syntactic Alignment Hypothesis, by which ergative languages invert the normal Nom-Acc alignment.

Example: The Ergative

- However:
  - Crosslinguistically the ergative is often associated with the semantic features of volitionality/ control/agentivity.
  - The ergative interacts closely with the lexical semantics of verbs: agentive transitives will take an ergative, experiencer verbs will not.
  - The ergative interacts with modality (want).

Example: The Ergative

- Furthermore:
  - A close look at the diachronic data shows that the Urdu ergative is not related to an old instrumental agent (as predicted by the structural alignment hypothesis), but possibly to a dative (Butt 2001, 2007).
  - Several South Asian languages show patterns by which the ergative and the dative are expressed by the same form.

Ergative/Dative

Haryani (closely related to **Old Urdu**)

mAn=**ne** sAhAb=**ne** mar-a
Pron.1.Sg=**Acc/Dat** Sahib.M.Sg=**Erg** hit-Perf.M.Sg
'The Sahib hit me.' (Shirani 1987)

The same patten is also found in a dialect of **Balochi (Saarwari)**.

tafsir-**ara** jamil-**ara** kıtaab daat-aa
Tafseer.M.Sg-Obl Jameel.M.Sg-Obl book.Nom give-.Perf
'Tafseer gave the book to Jameel.'

Nepali Ergative History

- In Nepali, the ergative marker =*le* first appeared in 1389 in a simple transitive clause with the predicate *paa-* 'obtain'.

khidki sainya bahun=**le** paa-yo
soldier Brahmin=Erg obtain-Past.3Sg.M
'The Brahmin obtained the Khidki army.' <1389>

- It did **not** first appear on an instrumental agent in a passive, as would have been expected by the standard story on structural ergativity.
- Rather, complex lexical semantic factors seem to be involved.

Nepali Ergative History

- The language already had a *paa-* verb, which had a 'receive' sense. The subject was always in nominative case, and only occurred in parallel with a clause with a 'give-type' predicate.

upali dharali rajbar datta pasaa ki
upper sloppy land king Dutta charity do.CP

raaudu bhandari paa-i
Raudu Bhandari get-Past.F
'Raudu Bhanddari received (it), the king having given the upper sloppy land on charity,.'<1390>

- The ergative marked subject of the *paa-* 'obtain' had control over the action denoted by the verb, but the nominative subject of the *paa-* 'receive' was just a passive recipient.

Nepali Ergative History

- After the appearance of ergative, the language seems to have regularized the pattern of marking for control and the 'receive' sense of *paa-* disappeared.
- This semantic shift somehow seems to be related to a first appearance of ditransitive predicates.

rajbar=le raaudu=laai dharali daan di-yo
king=Erg Raudu=Dat sloppy land charity give-Past
'The king gave the sloppy land to Raudu on charity.'

Nepali Ergative History

- The ergative seems to have generally been associated with the feature of control and replaced the other cases in the appropriate environments.

malla=**ko** sankalpa pasaa kar-i
Malla=Gen promise charity do-Past
'Malla gave (the land) (to someone) on charity.' <1450>

kuber=**le** sankalpa pasaa kar-i
Kuber=Erg promise charity do-Past
'Kuber gave (the land) (to someone) on charity.' <1477>

Ergative Extension

- The ergative further extended to mark the instrumental.

raam=**le** caabi=**le** dhoka khol-yo
Ram=Erg key=Inst door open-Past
'Ram opened the door with the key.'

- And, typologically completely unexpectedly, it seems to be used to mark subjects of *individual-level predications*.
- This could be an areal feature because it is also found in some Tibeto-Burman languages.

Ergative Extension

- **Individual-level** predicates encode permanent properties of the referents --- these are **ergative**.

ima=**naa** (*ngasi) (*caaksang=daa) caak thong-i
mother=Erg (today) (kitchen=Loc) food cook-Real
'Mother cooks food (*in the kitchen)) (*today). <Manipuri>

raaute=**le** jangal=ko kandamul khaan-chan
raute=Erg forest=Gen edibles eat-NonPast.3Pl
'Rautes eat the edibles of forest.'<Nepali>

Ergative Extension

- **Stage-level predicates** encode temporary properties of the referents --- these are **nominative/unmarked**.

ima ngasi caaksang=daa caak thong-i
mother today kitchen=Loc food cook-Real
'Mother is cooking food in the kitchen today.' <Manipuri>

raaute aaja jangal=ko kandamul khaan-chan
Raute today forest=Loc edibles eat-NonPast.3Pl
'Rautes will eat edibles from from the forest today.' <Nepali>

ima=**naa** (*ngasi) (*caaksang=daa) caak thong-i
mother=Erg (today) (kitchen=Loc) food cook-Real
'Mother cooks food (*in the kitchen)) (*today). <Manipuri>

raaute=**le** jangal=ko kandamul khaan-chan
raute=Erg forest=Gen edibles eat-NonPast.3Pl
'Rautes eat the edibles of forest.'<Nepali>

Individual/Stage Level

- In Manipuri this distinction is also found with intransitives.

angaang**=naa** cong-i
child=Erg jump-Real
'Children jump.'

angaang cong-i
child jump-Real
'The child/children is/are jumping.'

- The unergative/unaccusative distinction is not relevant.

nauna pokpa angaang**=naa** yaam tum-i
newly born baby=Erg much sleep-Real
'Newly born babies sleep much.'

nauna pokpa angaang ama tum-i
newly born baby one sleep-Real
'A newly born baby is sleeping.'

Individual/Stage Level

- In Manipuri individual vs. stage level coding overrides other well-known semantic factors such as animacy, volitionality,

sing=**naa** mai caak-i
firewood=Erg fire eat-Real
'Firewood burns.'

sing asi mai caak-i
firewood this fire eat-Real
'This firewood is burning.'

Summary

- Case on core arguments systematically codes semantic distinctions, some of them unexpected given the current state of the art in the case literature.
- **Next**: systematic semantics with non-canonical case marking, deriving from spatial/locative expressions.

Non-Canonical Case

- A look at case marking patterns on 2nd Arguments within any single South Asian language conveys the impression of *idiosyncrasy*:
  - there are canonical dative/accusative/nominative patterns
  - **but** also ablatives, instrumentals, comitatives, various types of locatives
- **Nevertheless**, a crosslinguistic comparison of the patterns across different South Asian language families reveals:
  - a systematic semantic usage
  - a classification by verb types

Non-Canonical Case

- Range of languages investigated so far:
  - Indo-Aryan (Urdu/Hindi, Nepali, Sindhi, Punjabi, Siraiki)
  - Indo-Iranian (Balochi, Pashto)
  - Dravidian (Malyalam)
  - Tibeto-Burman (Manipuri)
- The selection of the appropriate oblique marker for the 2nd argument depends on semantic factors:
  - source/stimulus
  - impinged (Beaver 2006)
  - attached/involved

Non Canonical 2nd Argument Verb Classes Across Languages

	Subj marking	**2nd Arg marking**	**Examples**
I	canonical, dative *experiencer*	ablative *stimulus/source*	fear
II	canonical, dative *experiencer*	locative, (canonical) *impinged*	trust, suspect
III	canonical	locative, (canonical) *impinged*	attack, govern
IV	canonical, dative *experiencer*	comitative *attached/involved*	love, hate
V	canonical	comitative *attached/involved*	fight, marry
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Class I: Ablative Distinctions

- Nepali has two ablatives, *dekʰi* and *baaTa*.
- It turns out that these are in complementary distribution:
  - *dekʰi* encodes the starting point of the path
  - *baaTa* encodes the whole path

us=le dilli=**dekʰi** kathmandu=samma baaTo banaa-yo
3P=Erg Delhi=**Abl** Kathmandu=Loc.till street make-Perf
'He built a street from Delhi to Kathmandu.' <Nepali(IA)> **(Point)**

u dilli=**baaTa** kathmanDu=samma kud-yo
3P Delhi=**Abl** Kathmandu=Loc-to ran-Perf
'He ran from Delhi to Kathmandu.' <Nepali(IA)> **(Path)**

Class I: Ablative Distinctions

- So a stimulus in an experiencer predication is marked by the starting point ablative (and not the path ablative).

*u sarpa=**dekʰi** DarauuN-cha*
3P snake=**Abl** fear-NonPast
'He fears snakes.' <Nepali(IA)> **(Stimulus)**

Class II: Agentivity

- In Nepali within class II (impinged 2nd argument), agentive verbs mark their 2nd argument with the canonical object marker *laai*.

*mai=le raam=**laai** viswaas gar-eN*
1P=Erg Ram=**Acc** trust do-Past.1Sg
'I trusted Ram.' <Nepali(IA)>

- Non-agentive verbs mark their 2nd argument with a non-canonical locative marker.

*ma=laai raam=**maa** viswaas thyo*
1P-Dat Ram=**Loc** trust be.Past
'I trusted Ram.' <Nepali(IA)>

Class II: And Animacy

- Furthermore, in Nepali verbs of class II the animate object is marked with the canonical object marker *-laai* .

*mai=le raam=**laai** viswaas gar-eN*
1P=Erg Ram=**Acc** trust do-Past.1Sg
'I trusted Ram.' <Nepali(IA)>

- The inanimate 2nd argument is marked with locative marker.

*mai=le Tren=**maa** viswaas gar-eN*
1P=Erg Train=**Loc** trust do-Past.1Sg
'I trusted the train.' <Nepali(IA)>

3rd Argument – Addressee

Language	**Tell/Say to**	**Ask (a question)**
Punjabi (IA)	nuuN (Dat-Acc)	nuuN (Dat-Acc)
Nepali (IA)	laai (Dat-Acc)	laai (Dat-Acc)
Manipuri (TB)	daa (Loc-Dat)	daa (Loc-Dat)
Pashto (Ir)	taa (Loc-Dat)	na (Abl)
Balochi (Ir)	*oblique* (Dat-Acc)	ca (Abl)
Sindhi (IA)	saaN (Com-Inst)	khaaN (Abl)
Malayalam (D)	ooDə (Com)	ooDə (Com)
Urdu/Hindi (IA)	se (Com-Abl-Inst)	se (Com-Abl-Inst)

Locative (including comitative) = endpoint, recipient
Ablative = oriented towards subject, potential source

Urdu/Hindi se and equivalents

	Nepali (IA)	**Pashto (Ir)**	**Manipuri (TB)**
Source of Motion	baaTa (Abl)	na (Abl)	dagi (Abl)
Causee	baaTa (Abl)	pa (Loc-Inst)	daa (Loc-Dat)
Stimulus (fear)	dekhi (Abl)	na (Abl)	Ø (Nom)
Manner		pa (Loc-Inst)	naa (Inst)
Reason	le (Inst)	pa (Loc-Inst)	naa (Inst)
Instrument	le (Inst)	pa (Loc-Inst)	naa (Inst)
Reciprocal Obj (fight)	sanga (Com)	sara (Com)	gaa (Com)
Emotion Obj (love)	sanga (Com)	sara (Com)	Ø (Nom)

Conclusion

- South Asian languages systematically use case to make primarily semantic distinctions.
- There is a complex interplay between lexical semantics and clausal semantics mediated by case-marking.
- Much more crosslinguistic comparative (synchronice and diachronic) work needs to be done.