

Split-S systems and unaccusativity

J.S. Baker, University of Cambridge

LangUE

Thursday 12th June 2014

Introducing split-S systems

S, A, P

- Possible to identify three basic grammatical roles in any language:
 - **S**, the only argument of a single-argument clause
 - *Mary goes*
 - **A**, the most agent-like argument of a multi-argument clause
 - *Mary loves John*
 - **P**, the most patient-like argument of a multi-argument clause
 - *John loves Mary*

(Payne 1997:133)

Alignment

- *Nominative-accusative* system:
 - S associated with same marking (e.g. case, agreement) as A
 - Separate marking for P
- *Ergative-absolutive* system:
 - S associated with same marking as P
 - Separate marking for A

“Split-S” languages

- *split-S, active(-inactive), active-stative, agentive(-patientive), split intransitive* (Dixon 1994:83)
- Two types of S distinguished, typically:
 - S_a , associated with the same marking as A
 - S_p , associated with the same marking as P

Split-S languages

- Here:
 - S_a (and A) case/agreement: *agentive*
 - S_p (and P) case/agreement: *patientive*

Central Pomo

- *ʔa· q^hadé·č'*
1SG.AGT fight
“I (S_a) fight”
- *ʔa· mú·tu ʔé·čyad^w*
1SG.AGT 3SG.PAT chased_away
“I (A) chased him (P) away”
- *t^wo· ló·ya*
1SG.PAT fell
“I (S_p) fell”
- *mu·l t^wo· ʔé·čyad^w*
3SG.AGT 1SG.PAT chased_away
“He (A) chased me (P) away”

(Mithun 1991:518-9)

“Fluid-S” languages

- Can be considered a subtype of split-S
- A significant number of intransitive verbs may be associated with either S_a or S_p marking

Eastern Pomo

- *há· ba·téčki·*
1SG.AGT got_bumped
“I (S_a) got bumped (on purpose)”
- *wí ba·téčki·*
1SG.PAT got_bumped
“I (S_p) got bumped (accidentally)”

(McLendon 1978:3)

Introducing unaccusativity

Unaccusativity

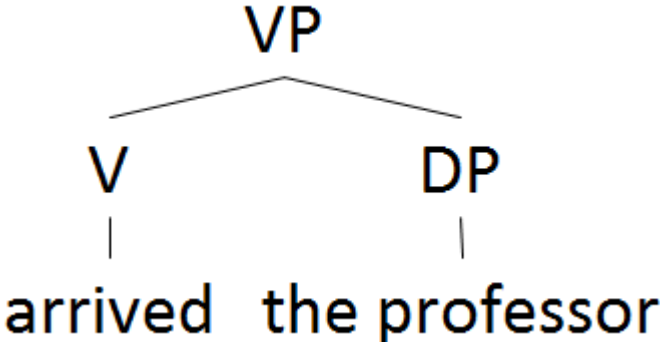
- Perlmutter (1978) – Relational Grammar
- Burzio (1986) and others later reformulate in standard generative terms ...

Unaccusativity

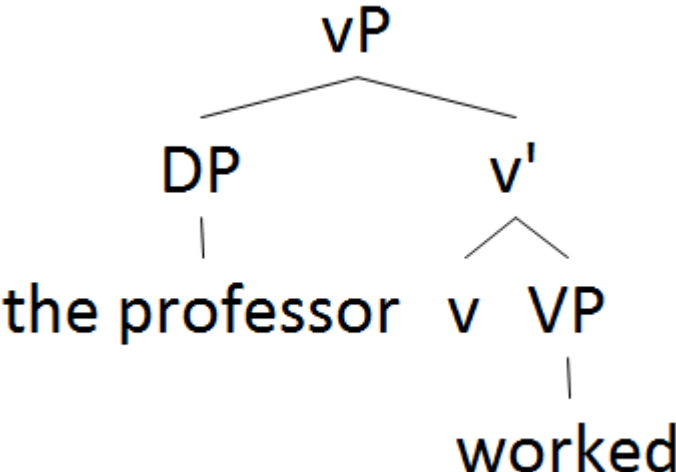
- Two types of intransitive:
- *Unaccusatives*: S is base-generated as complement of VP [“internal argument”]
- *Unergatives*: S is base-generated outside VP [“external argument”]

Unaccusativity

Unaccusative:




Unergative:



Semantic classification of unaccusativity

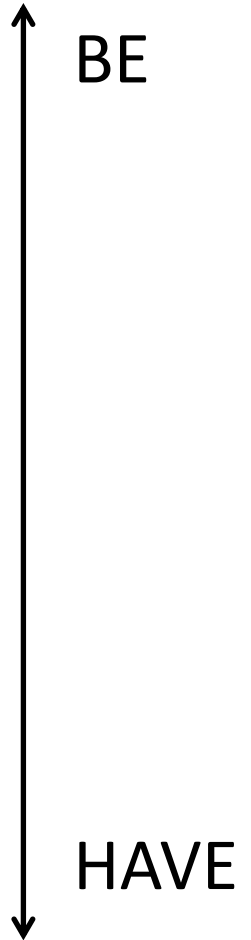
- Sorace (2000): Auxiliary Selection Hierarchy (ASH)
- Auxiliary use in compound past tenses diagnostic of unaccusativity in many European languages
- Variation between BE and HAVE
- E.g. German:
 - *sie ist gegangen* “she has gone” (*sein*, “to be”)
 - *sie hat gearbeitet* “she has worked” (*haben*, “to have”)

Auxiliary Selection Hierarchy

- Verbs nearer top more likely to employ auxiliary BE:
 - Change of location
 - Change of state
 - Continuation of a pre-existing state
 - Existence of state
 - Uncontrolled process
 - Controlled process (motional)
 - Controlled process (non-motional)
- 

Auxiliary Selection Hierarchy

- Change of location: *come, arrive, leave, fall ...*
- Change of state: *rise, become, be born, happen ...*
- Continuation of a pre-existing state: *stay, remain, survive, persist ...*
- Existence of state: *be, belong, sit, seem ...*
- Uncontrolled process: *tremble, skid, cough, rain ...*
- Controlled process (motional): *swim, run, walk ...*
- Controlled process (non-motional): *work, play, talk ...*



Wider applicability of the ASH

- Sorace (2004:263-4): ASH plausibly applicable to other unaccusativity diagnostics:
 - *ne*-cliticisation in Italian
 - quantifier floating in Japanese?
 - diagnostics other than auxiliary selection in French?

Universal Alignment Hypothesis (UAH)

- “There exist principles of universal grammar which predict the initial relation borne by each nominal [= the position at which the nominal is base-generated] in a given clause from the meaning of the clause”

(Perlmutter & Postal 1984:97)

Universal Alignment Hypothesis

- Entailment:
 - semantic equivalents of the unergative verbs in one language will be unergative in all other languages
 - semantic equivalents of the unaccusative verbs in one language will be unaccusative in all other languages

Unaccusativity mismatches

- In some languages unaccusativity diagnostics do pick out separate sets of verbs
- E.g. Dutch:
 - Unergatives: disallow prenominal past participles
 - Unaccusatives: auxiliary BE, do not permit passivisation
 - Verbs like *blijven* “stay” and *bloeden* “bleed” share all these properties

(Alexiadou, Anagnostopoulou & Everaert 2004:9)

Unaccusativity mismatches

- But not all proposed diagnostics are valid?
 - Kiparsky (2010:4-5): passivisation is not in fact a diagnostic of unaccusativity in Dutch
- Only a small number of mismatches in any given language?

Universal Alignment Hypothesis

- What about cross-linguistic variation such as that captured by the ASH?
 - e.g. “run” selects BE in German, HAVE in French/Dutch/Italian (Sorace 2000:875)

Universal Alignment Hypothesis

- However, it may still be possible to defend a weaker version of the UAH
- Variation is possible but constrained (e.g. by Sorace's hierarchy)

Split-S systems and unaccusativity

Prediction (1)

- Split-S patterns are a reflex of unaccusativity:
 - S_a arguments are *unergative*
 - S_p arguments are *unaccusative*
- Existing literature making this claim:
 - Harris (1981:235ff.) – Georgian
 - Harris (1982:292) – Laz, Eastern Pomo, Hidatsa, Dakota, Mohawk ...
 - Rice (1991) – Slave
 - Legendre & Rood (1992) – Lakota

Prediction (2)

- If the UAH holds (if only weakly), then Sorace's ASH should capture S_a / S_p patterning in split/fluid-S systems

Georgian

	Agentive	Patientive
Change of location		<i>fall, go</i>
Change of state		<i>grow, happen, be born</i>
Continuation of a pre-existing state		<i>remain</i>
Existence of state		<i>be</i>
Uncontrolled process	cough	
Controlled process (motional)	swim, run, walk	
Controlled process (non-motional)	play, talk	

Georgian

- Split-S patterning does seem to line up with the ASH
- This seems to be confirmed when many more verbs considered (data from Harris 1981:261-267)
- In other languages, however ...

Mohawk

	Agentive	Patientive
Change of location		<i>go away</i>
Change of state	grow, appear, die	<i>appear</i>
Continuation of a pre-existing state		
Existence of state	be strong, be tall, be ugly	<i>be sick, be full, be tired</i>
Uncontrolled process	cough	<i>sneeze, tremble</i>
Controlled process (motional)	swim	
Controlled process (non-motional)	talk	<i>work</i>

Data from Mithun (1991:529-536) and Baker (1996:197, 212-3)

Central Pomo

	Agentive	Patientive
Change of location	arrive, go	<i>fall</i>
Change of state		<i>die</i>
Continuation of a pre-existing state		
Existence of state	be alive, be careful	<i>be cold, be sick</i>
Uncontrolled process		<i>sneeze, tremble</i>
Controlled process (motional)	swim	
Controlled process (non-motional)	play, talk	

Other languages

- Similar results for other split-S languages: use of S_a / S_p does not correlate with ASH
- Caddo, Yawa, Lakhota, Guaraní ...
[based on data from Mithun (1991) (Caddo, Lakhota and Guaraní), Jones (1986:41-3) (Yawa), and Legendre & Rood (1992:383-4) (Lakhota)]
- Note that semantic factors conditioning split-S vary between languages
 - see e.g. Mithun (1991)

Other evidence

- Baker (1996:212-3): other unaccusativity diagnostics in Mohawk do not pick out the agentive/patientive classes

	Unaccusative	Unergative
Agentive	fall, grow, break, appear, stink, be big, be lazy, be black	plant, cry, eat, sing, sit down
Patientive	appear, be jealous, be heavy, be angry, be healthy, be wet, be hard	work, yell, eat one's fill, laugh

Fluid-S languages

- Similar results: some languages seem to fit the pattern quite well, others not so much

Acehnese

	Agentive	Variable	Patientive
Change of location			<i>fall</i>
Change of state			<i>explode</i>
Continuation of a pre-existing state			
Existence of state		<i>be disgusted</i>	
Uncontrolled process	cough, vomit, dream, like	<i>suspect, be obedient</i>	
Controlled process (motional)	get up		
Controlled process (non-motional)	think		

Data from Dixon (1994:80)

Tsova-Tush

	Always/mostly agentive	Equally agentive/patientive	Always/mostly patientive
Change of location	come, rise up	fall	
Change of state		lose weight, get fat, hide	die, drown, get tired, burn, grow
Continuation of a pre-existing state			freeze
Existence of state	live		be confused, be ripe, be afraid
Uncontrolled process		fall over, roll, slip/slide	
Controlled process (motional)	run, walk/wander, run very fast, sneak up on	[“controlled processes” when used with the agentive,	
Controlled process (non-motional)	talk, play, say/swear/bark, gather, wash, prepare	“uncontrolled processes” with the patientive]	Data from Holisky (1987)

Conclusions

- In many (though not all) split/fluid-S languages, pattern of variation is not that predicted by the ASH

Conclusions

- Therefore:
 - Split-S patterning does not always reflect unaccusativity?
 - (some independent evidence)
 - *And/or*: We need a better understanding of unaccusativity
 - What are the constraints on variation in “unaccusative” patterns across (and within) languages?

Thank you

References

- Alexiadou, A., Anagnostopoulou, E., & Everaert, M. (2004). Introduction. In: A. Alexiadou, E. Anagnostopoulou & M. Everaert (eds.), *The Unaccusativity Puzzle: Explorations of the Syntax-Lexicon Interface*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Baker, M.C. (1996). *The Polysynthesis Parameter*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Burzio, L. (1986). *Italian Syntax: a government-binding approach*. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- Dixon, R.M.W. (1994). *Ergativity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Harris, A.C. (1981). *Georgian Syntax*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Harris, A.C. (1982). Georgian and the Unaccusative Hypothesis. *Language*, vol. 58, no. 2, pp. 290-306.
- Holisky, D.A. (1987). The case of the intransitive subject in Tsova-Tush (Batsbi). *Lingua* vol. 71, nos. 1-4, pp. 103-32.
- Jones, L.K. (1986). The question of ergativity in Yawa, a Papuan language. *Australian Journal of Linguistics*, vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 37-55.
- Legendre, G., & Rood, D.S. (1992). The Interaction of Grammar Components in Lakhóta: Evidence from Split Intransitivity. *Proceedings of the Eighteenth Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society: General Session and Parasession on The Place of Morphology in a Grammar*, pp. 380-94.
- Mithun, M. (1991). Active/agentive Case Marking and Its Motivations. *Language*, vol. 67, no. 3, pp. 510-46.
- Payne, T.E. (1997). *Describing Morphosyntax*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Perlmutter, D.M. (1978). Impersonal Passives and the Unaccusative Hypothesis. In: *Proceedings of the 4th Annual Meeting of the Berkeley Linguistics Society*, pp. 157-90.
- Perlmutter, D.M., & Postal, P.M. (1984). The 1-Advancement Exclusiveness Law. In: D.M. Perlmutter & C.G. Rosen (eds.), *Studies in Relational Grammar 2*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Rice, K. (1991). Intransitives in Slave (Northern Athapaskan): Arguments for Unaccusatives. *International Journal of American Linguistics*, vol. 57, no. 1, pp. 51-69.