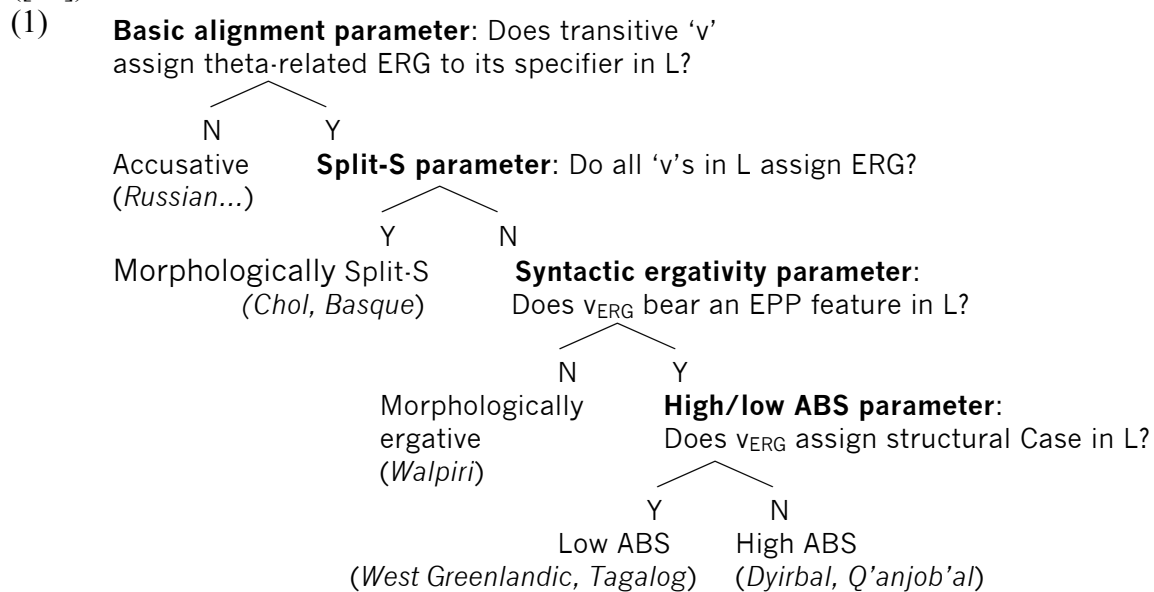


## A parameter hierarchy approach to alignment

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Following the format in [1], this paper presents an attempt to characterize the general parameter hierarchy governing case/agreement alignment in (i) clauses and (ii) ditransitives, arguing that a unified approach has rich empirical support as well as conceptual appeal. It has long been noted that there is no single ‘ergativity parameter’ regulating alignment in transitive clauses ([2], [3]). While split-ergativity (whereby a language is accusative in some contexts and ergative in others at the clausal level) may not exist (cf. [4]), various different alignments are fairly uncontroversially attested: morphological ergativity ([5]), split-S and fluid-S systems ([3], [6], [7]), syntactic ergativity ([3], [8]), which can be subdivided into High ABS and Low ABS ([9], [10], [11], [12]). The alignment hierarchy in (1) provides a new perspective on these patterns, building on the insight that ERG is a theta-related case/Case ([13]):



(1) predicts that there will be classes of progressively more ergative alignments as we move down the hierarchy. Split-S languages are the least ergative and are predicted never to be syntactically ergative. As in such languages ERG functions as a quirky case in an underlyingly accusative system, agreement morphology can be either ACC or ERG, as is the case in morphologically ergative languages. In syntactically ergative languages, the presence of an EPP feature on v serves to attract DP<sub>ABS</sub> to spec vP, trapping DP<sub>ERG</sub> inside the lower phase ([9], [10], [11]). Only in high ABS languages, though, is ABS really equivalent to NOM, meaning that it is suppressed in non-finite contexts ([12]). This captures the fact that there are languages which ban extraction of DP<sub>ERG</sub> in which ABS is not NOM ([8]), but (apparently) no languages in which ABS=NOM which allow A-bar extraction of DP<sub>ERG</sub>. Not only does (1) provide a coherent minimal description of attested alignments, it also explains certain important gaps and one-way implications, notably the non-existence of languages which ERG-mark only unergative subjects, the lack of syntactically ergative split-S languages ([7]) and the fact that apparently no language has ergative agreement and accusative case alignment, though the reverse is possible ([14], [15]). This follows because, according to (1), ERG can be quirky whereas ACC, a structural Case cannot, following [13].

We propose that a variant of (1) also regulates alignment in ditransitives. Assuming, following [20], that goals are base generated above themes, the ‘ergative’ pattern inside VP is

one where goals receive a theta-related case (DAT), and themes get structural ACC by agreeing with v (as in French, simplified in (2)):

(2) [<sub>VP</sub> ... V [<sub>VP</sub> DP<sub>ACC</sub> [<sub>VP</sub> DP<sub>DAT</sub> [<sub>V</sub> V DP<sub>ACC</sub>]]]]

As such, DAT can be quirky (Japanese) or inherent (French), as reflected in passivization patterns: Japanese, unlike French allows passivization of DAT DPs. The 'accusative' pattern is instantiated in *secundative* languages in which the goal gets structural ACC, as in Yoruba ([21]).

The format of (1) makes the prediction that there will be no languages with secundative morphology (in terms of case or agreement) which allow passivisation only of the Theme, and [18] claim this to be the case. Likewise, as DAT can be quirky (like ERG), it is predicted that there will be languages with indirective case marking and secundative agreement, but not vice versa. Again [19]'s 100 language survey supports this prediction. Word order is something else which correlates strongly with alignment in both the clausal and ditransitive context. Syntactically ergative languages permit O>S and, in the ditransitive context, with ergative (indirective) alignment the order is invariably Theme > Goal.

In both cases, the hierarchies themselves are emergent, rather than prespecified by UG and based on very generic parameters of the following kind: Does the most prominent instantiation of X have property P? Is this generalised to all Xs? Is P associated with EPP? Is P associated with phi-features, etc. The structure of (1) partially follows from plausible acquisition pressures such as [22]'s *input generalisation*. In other cases system-internal pressures are the defining factor. The split-S parameter being above the syntactic ergativity parameter avoids the creation of split-S syntactically ergative languages, where the EPP associated with unergative 'v's could never be satisfied. Likewise, the high/low ABS parameter is forced low because if higher, it would create the possibility of languages which lack ACC but nonetheless require objects to remain inside vP. Again, this would create derivations where object DPs have no means to receive Case, in apparent violation of the Case Filter.

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