

**Ergativity: Argument Structure and Grammatical Relations.** CHRISTOPHER D. MANNING. Stanford, California: CSLI Publications, 1996. Pp. xiii + 222.

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This book is a revised version of Christopher Manning's 1994 Stanford University dissertation. As a syntactician who is not an expert on ergativity I enjoyed the book, finding it clearly written and carefully argued. While a large amount of data is included to back up the empirical claims made, it is carefully presented not to overwhelm the reader. Also, while one of the central thrusts is a theoretical one, the claims are made in as theory-neutral a way as possible, making this book useful to linguists of various stripes. Part 1, *Cutting the Ergative Pie*, outlines the core claims of the book, backed up by various theoretical and empirical cross-linguistic considerations; Part 2, *Inuit (West Greenlandic)*, is an in-depth look at Inuit, a well-studied ergative language; there Manning compares his account of ergativity to others from the literature.

The basic claim is that a syntactic representation is organized into two levels of information: grammatical relations structure (gr-structure) and argument structure (a-structure) and that one locus of variation among languages is in the linking between the two levels of representation. Gr-structure corresponds roughly to a surface level of grammatical relations, like the final grammatical relations of Relational Grammar (RG), the level of f-structure in Lexical-Functional Grammar (LFG), or the level of S-structure in Government-Binding (GB) theory. His notion of a-structure is a syntactic level of representation, as in some work in LFG (Bresnan & Zaenan (1990)), and not strictly semantic, as in other LFG work (Alsina (1993:85)). He suggests that it corresponds roughly to the VP-internal relationships in recent versions of GB and Minimalist work. He notes (p. 35) that, as he sees it, gr-structure and a-structure are grammaticized representations of two different sorts of information. Gr-structure is a grammaticization of discourse roles, while a-structure is a grammaticization of notions of semantic/thematic prominence. The book focuses on (1) arguing for these two syntactic levels of representation, and (2) exploring the mapping or "linking" between these two levels.

Many languages have a case pattern that groups the single argument of an intransitive verb (called 'S') with the less patient-like argument of a transitive verb (called 'A'), marking them with one case, nominative; the more patient-like argument (called 'O') is marked differently, with accusative case. This is called an "accusative" pattern. However, a number of languages group together the single argument of an intransitive verb (S) with the more patient-like argument of a transitive verb (O), marking them with absolutive case; the less patient-like A is marked differently, with ergative case. This is called an "ergative" pattern. Manning's proposal, put simply, is that the difference between these two patterns is the linking between a-structure and gr-structure. He argues (see below) that a-structure has an essentially "accusative" organization, in that less patient-like arguments are in some sense more prominent than more patient-like arguments at this level. Thus, a fundamental difference between the two case patterns is due to two different mapping possibilities between a-structure and gr-structure. For the accusative pattern, the less patient-like argument of a transitive verb (A) maps to the subject grammatical relation in the gr-structure; and the more patient-like argument (O)

maps to the object grammatical relation in the gr-structure. For the ergative pattern, the reverse is true: the more patient-like argument (O) maps to the subject grammatical relation in the gr-structure, and the less patient-like (A) maps to the object grammatical relation. Manning terms this hypothesis the Inverse Grammatical Relations analysis.

The main arguments for the claim that two different levels of representation, a-structure and gr-structure, are needed are of the classical sort: some syntactic phenomena can best (or only) be explained with reference to a structure of a certain sort, and others require reference to a structure of a different sort. Manning claims that cross-linguistically certain phenomena are sensitive to a-structure while others are sensitive to gr-structure. Specifically he suggests, based on the work presented in this book, that constraints on imperative addressee and controllee selection, antecedent of anaphors, and the controller of certain adverbial clauses are sensitive to a-structure; but constraints on relativization, topicalization, focusing or questioning, specificity or wide scope, coreferential omission in coordination, etc., are sensitive to gr-structure.

Two specific cases cited in favor of this claim involve facts from Tagalog and Inuit. In Tagalog simple narrative sentences have an *ang*-marked NP which can bear various thematic roles depending on the verbal "voice". The *ang*-marked NP has a number of properties: it is the obligatory element of the clause, it launches floating quantifiers, it alone can be relativized and it must be specific/definite. However, other properties in the language seem to be sensitive to not (necessarily) the *ang*-marked NP, but rather the "Actor" NP. Actor is the macro-role name for the most prominent argument in a thematic sense. Some of the Actor's properties include: possible antecedent of reflexives, Equi target, and imperative addressee (Schachter (1976, 1977)). Manning argues that the *ang*-marked NP is the gr-structure subject and that those properties it has are properties in general associated with gr-structure subjects; on the other hand, he argues that the Actor NP is the a-structure subject and that its properties are properties in general associated with a-structure subjects. The choice of "voice" determines which a-structure argument links to which gr-structure argument. In Inuit, a surprisingly similar state of affairs holds: an absolutive marked NP is the subcategorized element of every clause, can be relativized and is specific/has wide scope; the Actor can be the antecedent of reflexives, an equi target and imperative addressee (Woodbury (1977), Dixon (1979)). Manning's analysis of Inuit is parallel to his analysis of Tagalog: the absolutive marked NP is the gr-structure subject while the Actor is the a-structure subject. Manning adduces facts from a number of different languages that seem to point in the general direction of this dichotomy.

While it does seem that the basic distinctions Manning points to are needed and for the most part are well-argued for, in several places things do not match up as well as expected, threatening the central claim of the book. In his discussion of Inuit on p. 15 the examples Manning uses to show that reflexive-binding is sensitive to a-structure all involve possessive reflexives, not true argument reflexives. This is a tricky issue because as is argued by Pollard & Sag (1992) and Reinhart & Reuland (1993) non-argument reflexives often have a distribution that is not solely sensitive to grammatical information but also pragmatic information as well; this does not refute Manning's argument, just weakens it a bit. Another potential problem, pointed out by Manning (p. 31), is that in Toba Batak and Balinese, which otherwise fit nicely into the analysis he has laid out, the controllee in a control construction is always the gr-subject, regardless of the voice. That

is, for these languages controllee assignment is sensitive to gr-structure and not a-structure, unlike the other languages he discusses. This weakens to some extent the claim that the list of properties associated with a-structure vs. gr-structure is universal. On the other hand, what it might point to is the general need for two levels of representation that languages can organize themselves around, some choosing a-structure for controllee assignment, and others choosing gr-structure. This would be analogous to claims in the GB literature about languages varying on what level (D-structure, S-structure, LF) certain principles such as binding theory might be determined.

Other than the minor concerns pointed out in the preceding paragraph, I find Manning's claims interesting and convincing. The Inverse Grammatical Relations analysis, namely the claim that gr-structure and a-structure are relevant to different sorts of constraints on syntax and that their linking might vary from language to language, will, I am sure, further generate productive discussion of both the theoretical and empirical issues raised by ergativity.

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