

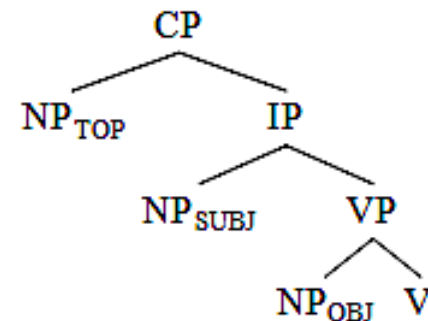
Topic as evidence for nominative case in Ma Manda

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Introduction

- “Optional ergativity” in TNG
- Basic clause types and word order variation
- Topic in Ma Manda
- Phrase-structural account leads to nominative case analysis
 - TOP=[Spec, CP]; SUBJ=[Spec, IP]
 - Topic is extra-sentential—it does not bear a grammatical relation
 - Grammatical subjects in Ma Manda are required to bear nominative case, while topics cannot bear nominative case



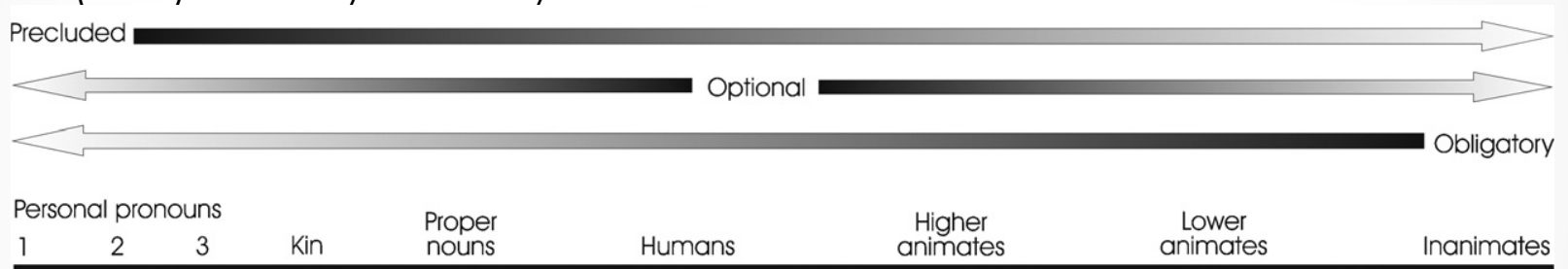
“Optional ergativity” in TNG

- Common morphological pattern in New Guinea, Australia, Tibeto-Burman
- The pattern
 - **A** typically marked, **S** occasionally marked, **P** never marked
- McGregor (2010) surveys the five primary approaches in the literature
 - Discriminative function
 - Pragmatic function
 - Semantic function
 - Global distribution approach
 - Semiotic approach

“Optional ergativity” in TNG

- Discriminative function

- Variations in obligatoriness and optionality at different levels of Silverstein's (1976) animacy hierarchy



(McGregor 2010:1617)

- Often required in atypical word order configurations (i.e. when patient NPs are fronted)

- Pragmatic function

- Patterns of case-marking vary depending on whether the clause is spoken in isolation or in a discourse context
- Associated with: focus, foregrounding, rhematicity

“Optional ergativity” in TNG

- Semantic function
 - The use of the optional ergative marker in non-standard word orders is claimed to be related to discrimination and pragmatics. In standard word orders, often related to semantic explanations
 - Associated with: Agency, force, control, intent, object-individuation, etc.
- Global distribution approach
- Semiotic approach
- Another common pattern
 - Ergative marker polysemous with instrumental case (or another peripheral case)

Basic clause types

- SOV standard word order

1) *nə-ŋkədək qu-wəŋ*
man-PL go-PRES:3PL.S
'The men are going.'

2) *nə ip təlám-gok*
man bird 3SG.O:shoot-RPST:3SG.S
'The man shot a bird.'

- S-agr/TAM suffix; O-agr prefix

3) *nə ip məməm yəlám-gok*
man bird many 3NSG.O:shoot-RPST:3SG.S
'The man shot many birds.'

4) *nə nambí-lək*
man 1SG.O:see-PRES:3SG.S
'The man sees me.'

14 consonants

/p t q b d g m n ŋ f s l w j/

7 vowels

/i i̯ u e ə o a/

All examples in IPA, except:

/q/ → k

/j/ → y

Word order variation

- *Transitive clauses (with zero or one overt argument)*

5) *u-gok*

3SG.O:hit-RPST:3SG.S

‘He/she hit him/her/it.’

(from this point forward ambiguous third person pronouns are glossed as feminine)

6) *kaudə*

stone

u-gok

3SG.O:hit-RPST:3SG.S

‘She hit the stone.’ (? ‘The stone hit her.’)

7) *nə*

man

u-gok

3SG.O:hit-RPST:3SG.S

‘She hit the man.’ (or ‘The man hit her.’)

8) ***kaudə=li***

stone=NOM

u-gok

3SG.O:hit-RPST:3SG.S

‘The stone hit her.’ (* ‘She hit the stone.’)

9) *nə = li*

man = NOM

u-gok

3SG.O:hit-RPST:3SG.S

‘The man hit her.’ (* ‘She hit the man.’)

Word order variation

- *Transitive clauses (with two overt arguments)*

10) *nə (= lɨ)* *kaudə* *u-gok*
man = NOM stone 3SG.O:hit-RPST:3SG.S
'The man hit the stone.'

11) *kaudə = lɨ* *nə* *u-gok*
stone = NOM man 3SG.O:hit-RPST:3SG.S
'The stone hit the man.'

12) ***kaudə* *nə* *u-gok***
stone man 3SG.O:hit-RPST:3SG.S
? 'The stone hit the man.' (* 'The man hit a stone.')

13) *kaudə* *nə=lɨ* *u-gok*
stone man=NOM 3SG.O:hit-RPST:3SG.S
'The stone, the man hit it.'

14) *nə* *kaudə = lɨ* *u-gok*
man stone = NOM 3SG.O:hit-RPST:3SG.S
'The man, the stone hit him.'

Evidence for topic

- *Left-fronted and optionally separated by pause*

15) nə . *bot* *yot* *floŋ* *ku-tak*
 man gathering house LOC go-NFUT:3SG.S
 ‘The man will go to the meeting house.’

16) nə . *kadip* *səŋ* *fə-lək*
 man wood timber hew-PRES:3SG.S
 ‘The man is hewing timber.’

17) səp . ***kas=li*** *səko-ŋək*
 dog trap = NOM 3SG.O:hold-NPST:3SG.S
 ‘The dog, the trap caught it.’

- Pauses are expected for topics, infelicitous after objects, and of questionable felicity after subjects

18) nə . *kadip* *səŋ (*)* *fə-lək*
 man wood timber hew-PRES:3SG.S
 ‘The man is hewing timber.’

19) **nə=li (?)** *kadip* *səŋ* *fə-lək*
 man = NOM wood timber hew-PRES:3SG.S
 ‘A man is hewing timber.’

Topic NPs underlined

Subject NPs bolded

Evidence for topic

- Topics cannot be interpreted as indefinite; rather, they must be generic or definite

20) nə bən kadip səŋ fe-lək
man a/other wood timber hew-PRES:3SG.S
'The other man is hewing timber.'

21) **nə** **bən=ti** kadip səŋ fe-lək
man a/other = NOM wood timber hew-PRES:3SG.S
'A(nother) man is hewing timber.'

- When O is topicalized, A must bear nominative case

22) nə **kaudə=li** u-gok
man stone = NOM 3SG.O:hit-RPST:3SG.S
'The man, a stone hit him.'

23) səp **kas=li** səko-ŋək
dog trap = NOM 3SG.O:hold-NPST:3SG.S
'The dog, a trap caught it.'

Evidence for topic

- The topic position is incompatible with focus

- Wh-words

24) **net=ti** *ba-k*
 who = NOM come-PRES:3SG.S
 ‘Who is coming?’

25) * net *ba-k*
 who come-PRES:3SG.S

- Answers to wh-words

26) **gələmbon=ti** *ba-k*
 Garambon = NOM come-PRES:3SG.S
 ‘Garambon is coming.’

27) # gələmbon *ba-k*
 Garambon come-PRES:3SG.S
 ‘Garambon is coming.’

- Corrective subjects (i.e. contrastively focused subjects)

- ‘Did Doyang go to the water?’

28) *dom* **gələmbon=ti** *mi* *floŋ* *ku-ŋək*
 NEG Garambon = NOM water to go-NPST:3SG.S
 ‘No, Garambon went to the water.’

29) # *dom* *gələmbon* *mi* *floŋ* *ku-ŋək*

Topic-prominence

- Li & Thompson (1976) identify several characteristics of topic-prominent languages
 - “Double-subject” construction
 - No passive construction
 - No dummy subjects
 - Verb-final
 - Surface encoding of topic
 - Few constraints on the topic constituent
- Ma Manda meets all of the expected tendencies of topic-prominence

Topic-prominence

- Double-subject construction

30) *ip* ***gisim*** *kaŋ* ***sowek=ki*** *yə = ŋə-gəmək-ŋəŋ*
bird bird.sp and cassowary.sp = NOM here = be-PRES:23DU.S-HAB
‘Birds, the Papuan Flowerpecker and the Dwarf Cassowary dwell here.’

- Copy pronoun construction (i.e. resumptive pronoun)

31) *nə* *kadip* *səŋ* *fə-lək*
man wood timber hew-PRES:3SG.S
‘The man is hewing timber.’

32) *nə* ***wə=li*** *kadip* *səŋ* *fə-lək*
man that = NOM wood timber hew-PRES:3SG.S
‘The man, he is hewing timber.’

33) *nə* *səŋaŋgət* ***wə=li*** *kadip* *səŋ* *fə-lək*
man slowly that = NOM wood timber hew-PRES:3SG.S
‘The man, he is slowly hewing timber.’

Topic-prominence

- Varied functions of deictics in Ma Manda

↓
i (nearest)
yə
wə
↓
u (furthest)

- *wə* & *yə*
 - Demonstrative modifiers (i.e. 'that' & 'this')
 - Third person personal pronouns (i.e. 'he', 'she', 'it', 'they')
 - Adverbial demonstratives of location/time (i.e. 'there/then' & 'here/now')
 - Resumptive pronouns
 - *wə* is the default demonstrative, serving as a definite article (i.e. 'the')
- *i* & *u*
 - Demonstrative modifiers
 - Third person personal pronouns
 - Resumptive pronouns

Topic-prominence

- Equative & attributive non-verbal clauses

- Topic-comment structure...**with demonstrative**

34) guləm u *kidə*
aibika that greens
'Those aibika (greens sp.) are greens.'

35) plit i *wagem*
passion.fruit this bad
'This passion fruit is bad.'

- ...**with resumptive pronoun**

36) guləm **u=du** *kidə*
aibika that = NOM greens
'Aibika, they are greens.'

37) plit **i=di** *wagem*
passion.fruit this = NOM bad
'Passion fruit, this one is bad.'

- ...**with demonstrative and resumptive pronoun**

38) guləm wə **u=du** *kidə*
aibika that that = NOM greens
'Those aibika, they are greens.'

39) * guləm wə **u** *kidə*
aibika that that greens

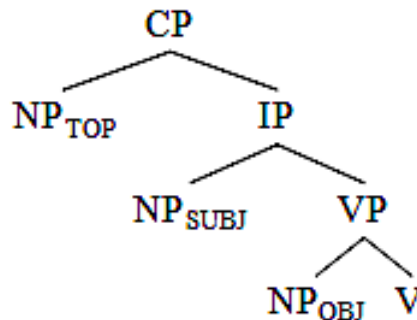
Topic-prominence

- Review:
 - The “double-subject” constructions and the use of resumptive pronouns are prevalent
 - In every case the second NP—whether a nominal or pronoun—bears the nominative case enclitic
 - This is made especially clear in non-verbal clauses: a topic NP is required, and any overt subject in the comment clause is obligatorily marked with nominative case

Phrase structure

- Phrase structure rules, adapted from Donohue (2005:195)

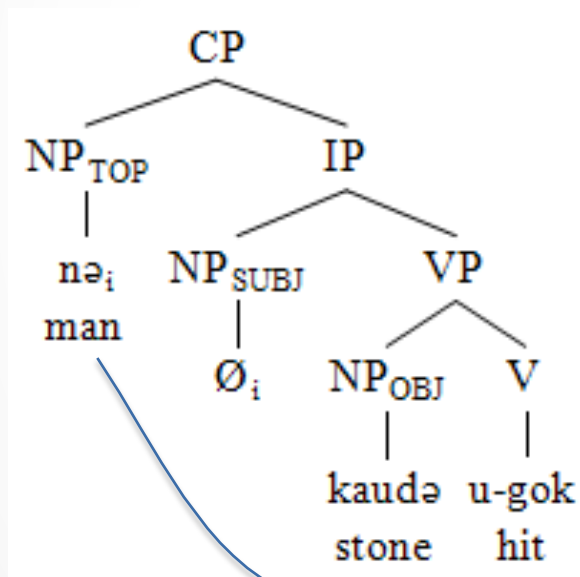
- CP → (NP_{TOP}) IP
- IP → (NP_{SUBJ}) VP
- VP → (NP_{OBJ}) V



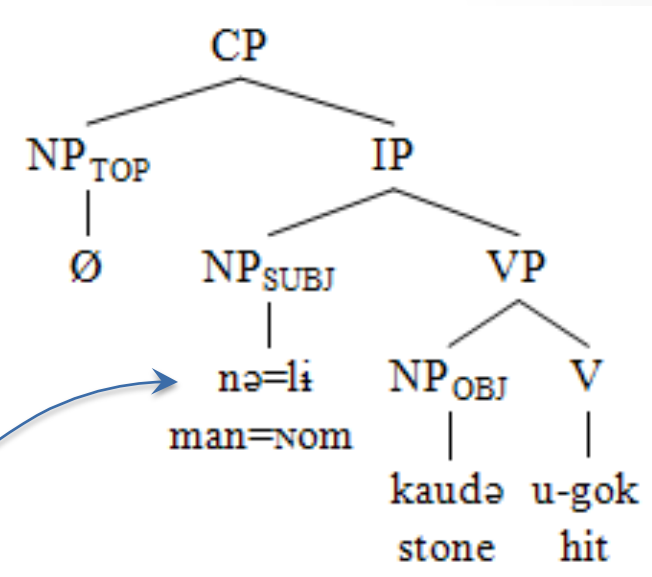
- An NP that occurs in [Spec, CP] is extra-sentential: it does not bear a grammatical relation
- An NP that occurs in [Spec, IP] is the grammatical subject and is required to bear nominative case

Phrase structure

40) 'The man hit the stone.' (=10)

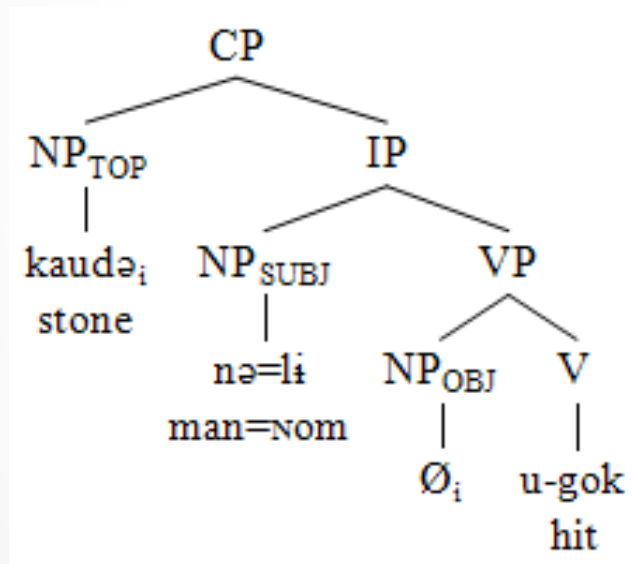


41) 'The man hit the stone.' (=10)

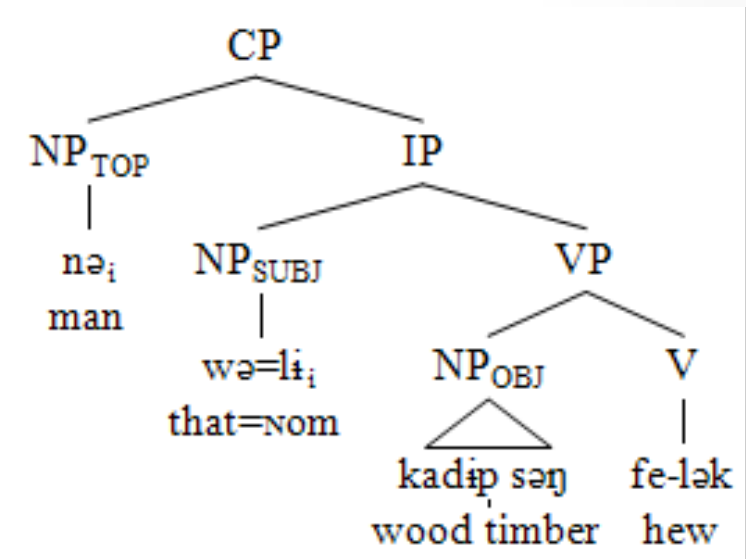


Phrase structure

42) 'The stone, the man hit it.' (=13)



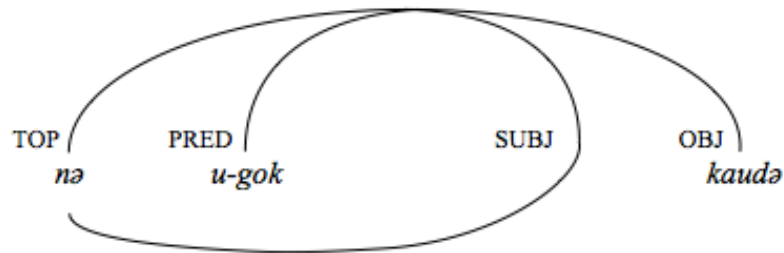
43) 'The man, he is hewing timber.' (=32)



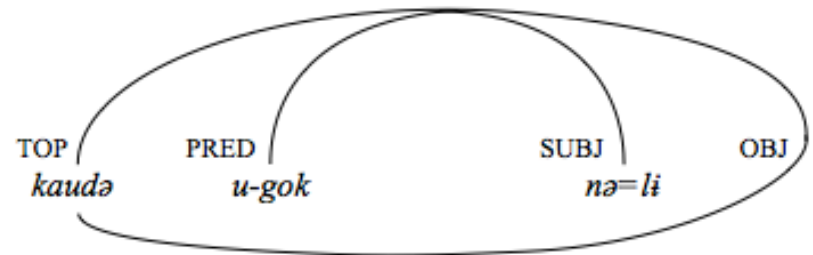
Phrase structure

- Gap strategy

44) 'The man hit the stone.' (=10) (=40)



45) 'The stone, the man hit it.' (=13), (=42)



- Resumptive pronoun strategy

46) 'The man, he is hewing timber.' (=32) (=43)



Gap vs. resumptive pronoun

- The surface pattern of case-marking:
 - Intransitive subjects (S) are prototypically topical—that is, they do not typically bear nominative case
 - Transitive subjects (A) are more likely to be marked with nominative case
- The underlying pattern:
 - The gap strategy is preferred with intransitive subjects (S)
 - The resumptive pronoun strategy is preferred with transitive subjects (A)
- Why should this be so?

Gap vs. resumptive pronoun

- Hypothesis: Preference for resumptive pronouns in transitive clauses is a natural consequence of the interaction between morphological ergativity & topic-prominence
 - “Given A Constraint” (Du Bois 1987) causes A to be prototypically topical in topic-prominent languages
 - Morphological ergativity requires A to be marked
 - Ergative case-marking is ungrammatical in topic slot, so resumptive pronouns are inserted in order to carry the case marker
 - Absolutive case is unmarked, so the economical choice in intrans. clauses is the gap strategy

Conclusion

- Many TNG languages are in fact ergative—never allowing S to bear the case-marker (e.g. Enga)
- In languages where the case enclitic is allowed to mark S, then a nominative analysis may fit the facts
 - Yongkom, Korafe, Kâte, Numanggang, Ma Manda
- Resumptive pronoun strategy preferred for A; Gap strategy preferred for S
- Final comments
 - Many linguists have based their analyses on a combination of isolated utterances and clauses pulled from discourse
 - Please take the time to note the discourse environment when collecting data, along with as much information as possible concerning shared background information among speech act participants