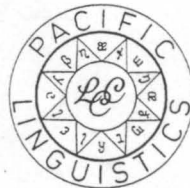


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ERGATIVITY IN ROVIANA,
SOLOMON ISLANDS

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | | | |
|-------|--|-------|---|
| * | ungrammatical form | INC | inclusive |
| 1 | first person | INDEF | indefinite |
| 2 | second person | n | number |
| 3 | third person | NEG | negative |
| ABS | absolutive | NOM | nominalising infix |
| ART | article | NSUF | nominal suffix |
| CAUS | causative | p | probability |
| COMP | complementiser | PAS | preferred argument structure |
| DEF | definite | PASS | passive |
| DEM | demonstrative | PFT | perfect |
| d.f. | degrees of freedom | PL | plural |
| DIR | directional | POSS | possessive |
| DO | direct object | PPRO | independent possessive pronoun |
| DT | downtoner | PREP | preposition |
| DUP | reduplicated | RECIP | reciprocal |
| EMPH | emphatic | REL | relativiser |
| ERG | ergative | SAY | grammaticised use of 'say' (epistemic modal) |
| EXC | exclusive | SG | singular |
| FOC | focus | T/A | tense/aspect marker |
| FUT | future | TR | transitive |
| GO | grammaticised use of 'go' (tense-aspect marker) | VAL | valency increaser |
| IMPFT | imperfective aspect | | |

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 GENERAL DETAILS CONCERNING ROVIANA

Roviana is an Austronesian language, a member of the New Georgia group of Oceanic languages spoken on the island of New Georgia, Solomon Islands, and in surrounding areas within the Solomon Islands (Ross 1988:216-217). According to the 1976 census of the Solomon Islands, there were then 5,365 native speakers, and a further 16,000 speakers of Roviana as a second language. Previously used as a lingua franca, especially for church purposes, Roviana is being displaced in this role by Solomon Islands Pijin.

1.2 PHONOLOGY AND ORTHOGRAPHY

The phonological inventory of Roviana is given in Tables 1.1 and 1.2.

TABLE 1.1: THE CONSONANTS OF ROVIANA

| | Bi-labial | Dental | Velar | Glottal |
|---------------------|-----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Voiceless stop | <i>p</i> | <i>t</i> | <i>k</i> | |
| Voiced stop | <i>b</i> | <i>d</i> | <i>g</i> | |
| Voiceless fricative | | <i>s</i> | | <i>h</i> |
| Voiced fricative | <i>β</i> | <i>z</i> | <i>ɣ</i> | |
| Nasal | <i>m</i> | <i>n</i> | <i>ŋ</i> | |
| Lateral | | <i>l</i> | | |
| Flap | | <i>r</i> | | |

TABLE 1.2: THE VOWELS OF ROVIANA

| | Front | | Central | | Back |
|------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| High | <i>i</i> | | | | <i>u</i> |
| Mid | | <i>e</i> | | <i>o</i> | |
| Low | | | <i>a</i> | | |

The orthography used here is essentially the standard orthography used for Roviana – a phonemic representation with the sound values usually associated with the International Phonetic Alphabet symbols employed, but with the following exceptions:

v denotes a voiced bilabial fricative, /β/

q denotes a voiced velar stop, /g/

g denotes a voiced velar fricative, /ɣ/

ng denotes a velar nasal, /ŋ/ (usually written with an underlined or italicised ‘n’ in the conventional orthography).

Voiced stops are prenasalised.

Vowel length is not phonemic. Long vowels occurring with paralinguistic functions are written with doubled vowels, for example *oo* (‘oh!’), *aa* (‘ah...’), *aam* (‘um’). Proper nouns are capitalised according to the conventions of English orthography. English words which occur without assimilation to Roviana phonology are spelt with the conventional British English orthography.

Roviana has a (C)V syllable structure, although with phonologically specifiable syncope in surface realisations in rapid speech, the details of which need not concern us here.

1.3 DATA

The data on which this study is based are drawn mainly from my work with Lloyd Gina, a native speaker of Roviana from the island of New Georgia, supplemented by data from Mary Johnston, another native speaker of Roviana also from New Georgia. The analysis here is predominantly based on oral monologic texts produced in an interview situation either in response to prompting (for example, in answer to requests to “Tell me about...”) or where the speaker selected topics for discussion. The texts are impromptu, that is they were not prepared in advance to be delivered in the interview situation. These texts are supplemented with elicited sentences to clarify points of grammar. At a few points in the texts, there is minimal interaction involving the language helper and myself, usually consisting of asides, or requests for clarification.

1.4 GRAMMATICAL TYPOLOGY

The canonical¹ constituent orders in Roviana are VAO² for two argument predicates and VS for single argument predicates. I shall avoid using the more familiar notations which employ S for subject (e.g. VSO, SVO) so as to avoid confusion with the label S here which denotes the sole core argument of an intransitive verb, and so as to avoid the issue of subjecthood in ergative languages, an issue which is not germane to the present discussion.

Roviana has a system of case marking which is split in two senses. Firstly, there is morphosyntactic ergativity in main clauses but not in subordinate clauses, where there is a neutral system of case marking. Secondly, within main clauses, certain kinds of NP distinguish ergative versus absolutive by the use of special particles or, in the case of

¹ By ‘canonical’ I mean statistically most frequent and semantically least marked.

² See §2.1 for definitions of A, S and O.

pronouns, by special forms. All other kinds of NP in main clauses have a neutral system of case marking. Roviana also has some ergative syntax, with the selection of relativisation strategy being sensitive to the distinction ergative versus absolutive.

1.5 SCOPE AND GOALS

As the title *Ergativity in Roviana* suggests, this study will be concerned with aspects of the structure of Roviana. The term *ergativity* will be used in two related senses to refer to the treatment of the argument or arguments of a predicate, as outlined in §2.4. The first sense involves the morphosyntactic treatment of arguments at the clausal level, while the second sense involves the distribution of arguments in discourse with respect to information status, phonological weight, and various other parameters.

The study of ergativity in Roviana has been limited to spoken discourse in an attempt to examine ‘naturally occurring’ language, and working on the assumption that spoken language is the locus of linguistic change, whereas written discourse tends to be linguistically conservative. Furthermore, the history of writing in Roviana is rather short, less than one hundred years, coinciding with Christian missionary work in the Solomon Islands. Written records are scarce, and do not provide a sufficient time-depth for the diachronic aspects of this study.

1.6 CONTEXT OF RESEARCH

Very little has been published concerning Roviana beyond individual lexical items mentioned in comparative studies.

Ray (1926) and Waterhouse (1949) contain a brief grammar of aspects of Roviana written by L.M. Jones. This sketch grammar deals mainly with morphology and some grammatical particles, but with very little information concerning clausal syntax. No mention is made of ergativity anywhere in the grammar, although this is perhaps simply a reflection of the descriptive framework of the time. Comments such as those concerning the particle *si* (which I analyse in Chapter 3 as two distinct but cognate morphemes in the synchronic grammar, namely a focus particle occurring with left-dislocated constituents, and the marker of absolutive, occurring with certain kinds of NP) provide hints that the author was at least aware of ergative structures. Jones notes that (Ray 1926:544):

The word *si* is very generally used as an article, but it cannot be translated as “the”. Its exact use is difficult to define. It is almost an expletive, and may be regarded as regulating and balancing a sentence. Often corresponds with the verb “to be”.

Waterhouse (1928, 1949) also contains a small English-Roviana dictionary.

Todd (1978) gives a brief outline of clausal syntax in Roviana, mentioning ergativity and the particle *si*. Todd, however, does not account for splits in Roviana’s morphosyntactic ergativity. I show in §3.3 that the present analysis of Roviana’s split ergativity is able to explain some of Todd’s problematic examples.

The only other published detailed examination of any aspect of the syntax of Roviana is Ross (1988:240-247). Ross puts forward the notion that Roviana has an absolutive pivot, a notion which I discuss in §3.3.1.4.

Given that the four references given above are the sole sources of published information on the grammar of Roviana, it is clear that very little is known about the language. This study is therefore intended to contribute further to the available information concerning Roviana, and to consider the possible historical development of ergativity in this language.

In Chapter 2, I give general background on ergativity, and define the terms which I employ in this study. In Chapter 3, I describe the relevant details of the synchronic grammar of Roviana concerning the morphosyntactic treatment of arguments. In Chapter 4, I examine the discourse of Roviana within the framework of Du Bois (1987), looking in particular at the distribution of information in discourse with respect to grammatical role. In Chapter 5, I suggest, based on the observed discourse tendencies, plausible internal reconstruction and comparison with related languages, how Roviana's present-day morphosyntactic ergativity may have arisen. Finally, in Chapter 6, I consider the significance of the discussion of ergativity in Roviana to diachronic and typological studies of ergativity.

CHAPTER 2

BACKGROUND ON ERGATIVITY

2.1 ERGATIVITY

For speakers of non-ergative languages, there is something peculiar about ergativity. This view is reflected in the following traditional definition of ergativity:

the subject of an intransitive verb has the same morphological marker as a direct object, and a different morphological marker from the subject of a transitive verb. (Comrie 1978:329)

Such definitions only serve to reinforce the apparent unnaturalness of ergativity, since ergativity is seen as splitting the subject into two morphological categories according to the argument frame of the verb. Furthermore such definitions rely on implicit notions of such terms as 'subject' and 'object', terms which have proven so problematic in typological research (see, for example, Keenan 1976, Johnson 1977, Schachter 1976, Anderson 1979a, 1979b).

It was precisely to avoid prejudging the status of 'subject' in ergative languages, and to avoid the bias implicit in the view of the familiar patterning as normal and ergativity as somehow not normal that both Comrie (1978) and Dixon (1979, 1987), in their cross-linguistic studies of ergativity, invoke a set of three terms, which may be grouped one way to yield an ergative pattern, and other ways to yield other patterns, the most familiar alternative being the accusative pattern (see below, this section).

Comrie (1978:330-331) defines three terms, A, S and P such that:

S refers to the single argument of an intransitive verb...A refers to that argument of a transitive verb which would be its subject in a non-ergative language like English...and P refers to the argument that would be the direct object [in a non-ergative language like English – SHC].

While this definition goes some way towards establishing an independent set of terms, it unfortunately refers to languages such as English as some kind of norm for cross-linguistic comparison, with grammatical terms in one language labelled according to the way they would be labelled in another language. Furthermore, Comrie does not give any basis for identifying 'subject' and 'direct object' in a language such as English, with the result that the identification of his terms appears to rest on the linguist's intuitions.

In contrast to Comrie, Dixon (1979:61) defines three 'core semantico-syntactic relations' viz. the terms, A, O and S as (approximately) the underlying transitive subject, underlying transitive direct object, and underlying intransitive subject respectively. While Dixon's definitions appear to be language-independent, they unfortunately rest on a theory of grammar involving some sort of underlying representation and syntactic derivations. In the

discussion below, I adopt Dixon's labels A, S, and O without committing myself to a theory that assumes more than one syntactic level.

In practice, Comrie's (1978) definitions, and Dixon's (1979) definitions identify the same arguments, with Comrie's A corresponding to Dixon's A, Comrie's S corresponding to Dixon's S, and Comrie's P corresponding to Dixon's O. In §2.4 below I shall return to a prototype definition of the terms employed here.

Both Comrie (1978) and Dixon (1979) emphasise that their labels do not simply designate semantic roles. For example, Dixon (1979:59) calls A, S and O "syntactic-semantic primitives", emphasising that they are not simply semantic labels, nor simply syntactic, but rather some composite of the two in "deep structure". Comrie (1978:331) likewise notes that

though there is a high correlation between the semantic opposition agent/patient and the syntactic opposition A/P, the two are not identical.

However, in prototypical cases there may well be a strong correlation between the arguments labelled here and certain semantic roles (see §2.4).

In terms of A, S and O, an ergative pattern is one in which S and O are treated alike, in opposition to A. An accusative pattern, on the other hand, is one in which A and S are united in opposition to O. This distinction is represented schematically in Dixon (1979:61) as follows:

| | | |
|------------|---|----------|
| | A | Ergative |
| Nominative | { | |
| | S | |
| | } | Absolute |
| Accusative | O | |

Dixon (1979:61-63) notes that in some ergative languages it is only morphology which unites {S, O} in opposition to A, whereas in other languages there may also be syntactic rules which unite {S, O} in opposition to A. All languages with syntactic ergativity have some morphological ergativity (Dixon 1979:125) although the reverse is not true, that is not all languages with morphological ergativity have syntactic ergativity. On the basis of my research in Roviana, it would appear that Roviana has morphological ergativity, but only marginal syntactic ergativity (see §3.3.1.4).

Finally, Dixon (1979:63) notes that:

It appears that there are no languages that are FULLY ergative, at either the syntactic or the morphological level. (original emphasis)

The traditional terminology, however, is to classify a language as ergative if it has *any* ergative patterning in syntax, case marking or verb indexing.

2.2 SPLIT ERGATIVITY

Dixon identifies a number of ways in which languages may exhibit split ergativity. Included amongst these are splits conditioned by the semantic content of the NP's functioning as arguments (Dixon 1979:85ff) and splits conditioned by the aspect and/or tense of a sentence (Dixon 1979:93ff). To illustrate the case of splits conditioned by the semantic

content of NP's: in Dyirbal, nouns, adjectives and third person pronouns formally distinguish absolutive versus ergative, whereas first and second person pronouns follow an accusative pattern.

Finally, Dixon (1979:98) claims that split ergativity according to a main clause versus subordinate clause distinction turns out on closer inspection to reflect a tense–aspect split. I take issue with this in Chapter 3, where I demonstrate that for Roviana subordinate clauses exhibit a neutral system of case marking whereas main clauses and complement clauses¹ exhibit morphosyntactic ergativity split according to nominal type.

2.3 VARIOUS KINDS OF ERGATIVITY

In §2.1 ergativity was defined as the union of {S, O} (absolutive) in opposition to A (ergative). In this study, the term *ergativity* is used for the union of {S, O} in opposition to A in the three domains of morphology, syntax and discourse.

There are two further senses in which the term *ergative* is sometimes employed in the linguistic literature, viz. in the lexicon and in derivational morphology.

Comrie (1978:389) mentions ergativity in derivational morphology, citing the English compounds 'fox-hunting' (where 'fox' is notionally O) and 'bird-chirping' (where 'bird' is notionally S). Whereas S and O appear to be amenable to incorporation, A resists incorporation.

Comrie (1978:391-392) also mentions the use of the term *ergative* to describe individual lexical items such as the English verb *break*, which may occur transitively, as in (a) below, or intransitively, as in (b). In both cases *the window* is semantically an undergoer. In (b) 'the window' is syntactically encoded as the subject of an intransitive; in (a) it is syntactically encoded as the direct object of a transitive.

(a) *John broke the window.*

(b) *The window broke.*

The term *ergative* will not be used in this study to identify individual lexical items, nor to refer to derivational processes or processes of incorporation.

2.4 PROTOTYPE DEFINITIONS OF THE ARGUMENTS

As mentioned in §2.1, I adopt Dixon's (1979) labels A, S and O to refer to the three core argument types, without necessarily subscribing to a theory of grammar involving underlying representations and transformational processes. Furthermore, as noted in §2.1, in practice the terms A, S, P (Comrie 1978) and A, S, O (Dixon 1979) identify the same arguments.

By applying the notions of prototype theory (Rosch 1973, 1977, 1978; Lakoff 1987), we can arrive at a working definition of the three terms A, S and O which does not require either reference to a non-ergative language (as Comrie's 1978 definitions do) nor adherence to a particular theory of underlying representations and transformations which apply to those

¹ I group complement clauses, which are formally subordinate, with main clauses because of their pragmatic possibilities. See §3.1.1 for further details.

representations (as Dixon's 1979 definitions do). What I propose, then, is to identify prototypical A, S, and O arguments in kernel clauses, and then to use those prototypes for the identification of arguments in non-kernel clauses.

The definition of kernel clauses which I employ is a composite of the notion of *kernel clause* of Finegan, Besnier, Blair and Collins (1992:117-121) and of Keenan's (1976) notion of "b[asic]sentence". Finegan et al. define kernel clauses as syntactically independent (at least potentially), structurally complete, declarative, positive, and "communicatively unmarked". This definition is largely in agreement with Keenan's definition of "b[asic]sentence", which must additionally be relatively free of presupposition and structurally unambiguous.

The kernel clauses employed in the identification of prototypical instances of A, S and O fall into two categories, viz. transitive (involving two arguments) and intransitive (involving only one argument). Hopper and Thompson (1980:251) define the traditional interpretation of *transitivity* as follows:

an activity is 'carried over' or 'transferred' from an agent to a patient. Transitivity in the traditional view thus necessarily involves at least two participants...and an action which is typically EFFECTIVE in some way.
(Original emphasis)

Hopper and Thompson then go on to study the components of transitivity, and propose that the presence of a direct object is only one such component (Hopper and Thompson 1980:251, 294-295). However, their definition of the prototypical transitive sentence according to the traditional understanding of the term *transitive* will serve as a starting point for the definition of the terms A, S and O in terms of prototype theory.

Adopting the above notions of kernel clauses and transitivity, the prototypes of the categories A, S and O may be defined. A prototypical transitive kernel clause would be one involving two arguments in a physical activity, with a transfer of action from a typically specific volitional human agent to a typically specific patient, with some effect on the patient. Within such a prototypical transitive kernel clause, the label A can be identified with the agent, and the label O with the patient. In a prototypical intransitive kernel clause, involving a single participant, and therefore no transfer of action to an overtly mentioned affected patient, the sole argument can be identified as S. Within a given language, we would first identify the grammatical roles A and O using prototypical transitive verbs such as the English 'kill'. For example, in (c), *John* is A, the human agent, and *the fly* is O.

(c) *John killed the fly.*

In (d), *John*, the sole argument involved in the semantic frame of the verb *leave*, is S.

(d) *John left.*

The prototypical instances of the categories A, S and O are thus identified according to a cluster of semantic features, with other instances of those categories identified according to the extent to which they share semantic and formal properties with the prototypical exemplars of these categories. For example, in Chapter 3 below I identify ergative morphosyntactic properties with certain kinds of A in Roviana, and absolutive morphosyntactic properties with certain kinds of S and O.

In the case of elliptical clauses with one or more non-overt arguments, the argument or arguments present may be identified according to formal evidence, such as the indexing of non-overt arguments on the verb.

This prototype definition will also be important in considering backgrounded object constructions (see §3.2.3 and §3.3.5 below), in which there are apparently two overt arguments, but in which the nominal which most closely matches the semantic aspects of A receives the morphological treatment appropriate for an S argument of the same nominal type in the same syntactic context.

CHAPTER 3

ERGATIVITY IN THE SYNCHRONIC GRAMMAR OF ROVIANA

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The object of study in this chapter is the morphosyntactic marking of the core arguments A, S and O in Roviana. In examining these arguments, I will be excluding some minor clause types, especially appellations and equative sentences, which, being non-verbal in Roviana, do not involve core arguments.

3.1.1 MAIN CLAUSES, SUBORDINATE CLAUSES, AND COMPLEMENT CLAUSES

In the discussion in this chapter, I shall primarily employ syntactic criteria to distinguish between main and subordinate clauses. In general, subordinate clauses are introduced by a subordinator and/or marked by *si* 'FOC'. Subordinate clauses may further be identified by intonation, being offset by a pause from the main clause.

A third kind of clause may be distinguished, viz. complement clauses. I consider complement clauses to be intermediate between main and subordinate clauses. Although formally subordinate, complement clauses would appear, a priori, to be similar to main clauses in terms of their pragmatic possibilities (for example, in the introduction of new material). I discuss complement clauses further in §3.4. In the interim, it must be noted that the term *subordinate clause* is not meant to include complement clauses.

3.1.2 CONSTITUENT ORDERS

As outlined in §1.4, the canonical constituent orders in Roviana are VAO for two argument predicates and VS for single argument predicates.

From these constituent orders it is not possible to claim an ergative or accusative distributional pattern. It could be argued that the system is accusative, since A and S are unified in immediately following the verb, or it could equally well be argued that the system is ergative, since S and O are unified in occurring final to the clause.

Other constituent orders are attested, especially focus constructions involving fronted constituents of various types, including but not limited to A, S and O. In addition, there is a construction which I label a 'backgrounded object construction' (§3.2.3 and §3.3.5), which appears to have two nominal arguments, but which does not have the constituent order VAO. With this construction there is no transitive morphology on the verb.

3.1.3 VERBAL MORPHOLOGY

Two classes of suffix occur on the verb. There is a transitive suffix *-i*, which has a zero allomorph which occurs under phonologically specifiable conditions, the details of which need not concern us here. There are also suffixes which index O for grammatical number and person. These suffixes are presented in Table 3.1.

TABLE 3.1: VERBAL SUFFIXES INDEXING O

| Person | Suffix |
|---------|----------------|
| 1SG | <i>-u, -au</i> |
| 2SG | <i>-go</i> |
| 3SG | <i>-a</i> |
| 1PL.INC | <i>-gita</i> |
| 1PL.EXC | <i>-gami</i> |
| 2PL | <i>-gamu</i> |
| 3PL | (zero) |

The suffixes in Table 3.1 occur in addition to *-i* 'TR'. Ample examples of their use occur throughout this chapter.

Verbal morphology operates according to an accusative pattern, indexing O but not indexing {A, S}, as illustrated in examples 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 below.

3.1 *Seke-i-a rau sa siki.*
 hit-TR-3SG.DO I.ERG DEF dog
 I hit the dog.¹

3.2 *Taloa se Zima.*
 leave ABS Zima
 Zima left.

3.3 *Mae se Zima.*
 come ABS Zima
 Zima came.

In example 3.1, O (*sa siki* 'the dog') is indexed on the verb, but A (*rau* 'I') is not. In 3.2 and 3.3, S (*se Zima* 'Zima') is not indexed on the verb (in 3.2) the verb *taloa* 'leave' is monomorphemic, and does not contain the suffix *-a* '3SG.DO'. Ross (1988:242-243) is therefore mistaken in inferring from transitive sentences (i.e. sentences with two arguments) that verbal indexing agrees with the absolutive NP. Clearly in the case of intransitive clauses, containing only an S argument, there is no verbal indexing.

¹ All examples which are marked with a textual reference are from recorded texts. All other examples are elicited data.

3.2 MAIN CLAUSES

Main clauses exhibit split-ergative patterning. Proper nouns, pronouns, and enumerated NP's distinguish absolutive versus ergative by the use of case marking particles. Third person pronouns also formally distinguish absolutive versus ergative. All other NP's have a neutral system of case marking, that is A, S and O are not formally distinguished by particles, although O's are distinguished from A and S by being indexed on the verb irrespective of their case marking (see §3.2.2).

3.2.1 ERGATIVE MORPHOLOGY

Roviana employs independent particles and special pronominal forms to mark the distinction between absolutive and ergative. Examples 3.4 to 3.7 illustrate one instance of the morphological unity of the absolutive in opposition to the ergative.

3.4 *Seke-i-a* *e* *Zima se* *Maepeza.*
hit-TR-3SG.DO ERG Zima ABS Maepeza
Zima hit Maepeza.

3.5 *Seke-i-a* *e* *Maepeza se* *Zima.*
hit-TR-3SG.DO ERG Maepeza ABS Zima
Maepeza hit Zima.

3.6 *Moho se* *Zima.*
sick ABS Zima
Zima is sick.

3.7 *Taloe se* *Zima.*
leave ABS Zima
Zima left.

As examples 3.4 to 3.7 show, for proper nouns the same particle (*se*) is used to mark O and S, while a different particle (*e*) is used to mark A. It must be stressed that the particles *e* and *se* do not just mark semantic roles. While examples 3.4 and 3.5 represent canonical 'transitive' sentences in the traditional sense of 'transitive' as involving two nominal arguments, it is not the case that, for example, *e* only marks the agent. For example, in 3.8 Zima is an experiencer and Maepeza a stimulus (to give but one characterisation of the semantic roles involved).

3.8 *Dogor-i-a* *e* *Zima se* *Maepeza.*
see-TR-SG.DO ERG Zima ABS Maepeza
Zima saw Maepeza.

3.2.1.1 PROPER NOUN PHRASES

Proper noun phrases in main clauses distinguish ergative versus absolutive by means of the special particles *e* 'ERG' and *se* 'ABS' respectively. Examples 3.4 to 3.8 above illustrate the use of these particles. Waterhouse (1928:228) notes, as if fact, that "Se is contracted from *si e*". Ross (1988:242) also takes this as read. See Chapter 5 below, where I also accept this etymology, but not without considering the development of the absolutive markers.

The particle *e* marks proper nouns in ergative, as in examples 3.4, 3.5 and 3.8 in §3.2.1, and elsewhere. It must be noted that for some speakers of Roviana, proper nouns may occur as A without *e*, but proper nouns as S or O require the particle *se*, and do not allow zero marking. For these speakers, the use of *e* to mark proper nouns as A is apparently still acceptable. Example 3.9 illustrates the optionality of *e* marking a proper noun in A for one speaker of Roviana.

- 3.9 *Seke-a* (*e*) *John se Bill.*
 hit-3SG.DO (ERG) John ABS Bill
 John hit Bill.

In the texts analysed for the present study, gathered from a single speaker, proper nouns occurring as A are always marked with *e*.

E also occurs with proper nouns which are not core arguments in the sense of §3.1. In these cases it seems best to gloss *e* as a personal article, which indeed is the function reconstructed by Ross (1988:98-100, 181) for Proto Western Oceanic, from which Roviana is posited to have descended (Ross 1988:217). Examples of these other uses are given in §5.2.1.2, where I develop the notion that *e* in Roviana originally functioned as a personal article, but through diachronic change has acquired a range of specialised meanings, one being the marking of ergative. Thus, in the synchronic grammar of Roviana, *e* is still a personal article, but does not occur with absolutive in main clauses. While proper nouns in A are marked by *e*, it is not the case that all proper nouns marked by *e* are A. I gloss *e* as ‘ERG’ here when it occurs with A to highlight the contrast with {S, O}.

3.2.1.2 ENUMERATED NOUN PHRASES

The term ‘enumerated noun phrases’ denotes noun phrases with a numeral or quantifier preceding the head noun. Enumerated NP’s occurring as ergative in main clauses are not marked with any special particles, as seen in 3.10, where *karua tie* ‘two men’ is A.

- 3.10 *Seke-a* *karua tie sa siki.*
 hit-3SG.DO two man DEF dog
 Two men hit the dog.

Enumerated NP’s occurring as absolutive in main clauses are marked with the particle *si* ‘ABS’, as seen in 3.11, 3.12 and 3.13.

- 3.11 *Turu si karua koburu.*
 stand ABS two child
 Two children are standing up.
- 3.12 ...*meke dogor-i-a ri si keke igana.*
 and see-TR-SG they.ERG ABS one fish
 ...and they saw a fish. (Animals, 034)
- 3.13 *Uve dogor-i gami si kaiqa barikaleqe pek-peka.*
 yes see-TR we.EXC.ERG ABS some woman DUP-dance
 Yeah, we saw some women dancing. (Dance, 002)

In example 3.11, *karua koburu* ‘two children’ is S, and marked with *si*, whereas in 3.12 and 3.13, *si* occurs marking the O arguments *keke igana* ‘one fish’ and *kaiqa barikaleqe pek-peka* ‘some women dancing’ respectively.

Roviana has another particle *si* which occurs pre-verbally after various kinds of constituent including, but not limited to, arguments. Example 3.14 shows an NP, *poko sava* ‘some kind of dress’, occurring pre-verbally, followed by *si*. As 3.15 shows, this pre-verbal *si* may occur marking constituents which are not even NP’s, in this case the adverb, *hoirana* ‘then’.

3.14 *Poko sava si sag-sage-a sa.*
 dress something FOC DUP-wear-3SG.DO s/he.ERG
 She was wearing some kind of dress. (Dance, 005)

3.15 *Hoirana si ele koata pas sia.*
 then FOC PFT quarter past nine
 It was already quarter part nine then. (Day, 007)

The fronted constituent marked by *si* ‘FOC’ has the semantic force of a cleft or contrastive focus, typically containing new information in discourse. The particle *si* ‘FOC’ is most likely cognate with *si* ‘ABS’ (see §5.2.1.1). In the synchronic grammar of Roviana, however, it seems best to distinguish between *si* ‘FOC’, which may occur pre-verbally after various kinds of constituent (which usually contain new information), and *si* ‘ABS’ which occurs postverbally before certain kinds of absolutive NP (which may be new or given in discourse).

3.2.1.3 PRONOUNS

The distinction between ergative and absolutive is made in two ways with pronouns in main clauses. Firstly, with the exception of the absolutive third person plural *sarini*, pronouns in absolutive occur with the particle *si* ‘ABS’, whereas pronouns in ergative do not occur with any particles. Secondly, there are special third person singular and plural pronouns which formally distinguish ergative versus absolutive.

Examples 3.16 and 3.17 illustrate the absence of special particles with the pronouns *ri* ‘they’ and *sa* ‘he’ in ergative.

3.16 *Tutuvi-a ri se Manue.*
 meet-3SG.DO they.ERG ABS Possum
 They met Possum. (Animals, 017)

3.17 *Mae tangin-i-u sa pa avara-qu.*
 come touch-TR-1SG.DO s/he.ERG PREP shoulder-1SG.NSUF
 He came and touched me on my shoulder.² (Fight, 020)

Examples 3.18 to 3.23 illustrate *si* marking absolutive, while examples 3.24 and 3.25 illustrate the occurrence of *sarini* ‘they ABS’ as absolutive without the particle *si* ‘ABS’ (see further in this section; see also Chapter 5, where I propose that *sarini* historically results from the phonological coalescence of *si arini*, that is *si* and the third person plural pronoun *arini*).

3.18 *La pa cafeteria si gami.*
 go PREP cafeteria ABS we.EXC
 We went to the cafeteria. (Day, 023)

² *Mae* ‘come’ in the Roviana does not have independent predication, but is simply a directional marker. the English translation is idiomatic, although a somewhat free rendering of the Roviana. In this example, the direct object, ‘me’, is not overt but is indexed on the verb.

- 3.19 *Gina ele kamo si asa.*
maybe PFT arrive ABS s/he³
Maybe s/he has arrived.
- 3.20 *Ele magogoso si asa.*
PFT rest ABS s/he
S/he has rested/recovered.
- 3.21 *Dogor-i-a rau si asa.*
see-TR-3SG.DO I ABS him/her
I saw him/her.
- 3.22 *Moho hite si rau ginoroi.*
sick small ABS I today
I was a bit sick today. (Sick, 001)
- 3.23 *La ri pusi-n⁴-au iku si rau.*
GO they tie-VAL-1SG.DO rope ABS I
They tied me up with a rope.
- 3.24 *Kote arina tie mae magu-i sarini.*
FUT DEF.FOC.PL man come carve-TR them.ABS
The men will come and carve them up. (Feast, 016) (*Sarini* 'they' denotes the pigs in a feast, not the men doing the carving.)
- 3.25 *Kote la sarini pa soloso.*
FUT go they.ABS PREP jungle
They will go into the jungle. (Feast, 003)

As mentioned above, there are special pronominal forms which distinguish ergative versus absolutive. Table 3.2 gives the pronominal paradigms.

TABLE 3.2: PRONOUNS

| Person | Absolutive | Ergative and neutral | Focal |
|----------|---------------|----------------------|--------------|
| I | <i>rau</i> | <i>rau</i> | <i>arau</i> |
| you.SG | <i>goi</i> | <i>goi</i> | <i>agoi</i> |
| s/he, it | <i>asa</i> | <i>sa</i> | <i>asa</i> |
| we.INC | <i>gita</i> | <i>gita</i> | <i>gita</i> |
| we.EXC | <i>gami</i> | <i>gami</i> | <i>gami</i> |
| you.PL | <i>gamu</i> | <i>gamu</i> | <i>gamu</i> |
| they | <i>sarini</i> | <i>ri</i> | <i>arini</i> |

I treat these pronouns as monomorphemic, although there appear to be partial regularities suggestive of morphemic complexity in some cases (for example *a-* in the singular focal

3 The pronoun *asa* 's/he' is neutral with respect to gender but for textual data is translated according to the context in which the example occurred.

4 The suffix *-n* is an allomorph of *-ni* 'VAL' which occurs with *-au* '1SG.DO'.

pronouns). While these pronouns are almost certainly complex historically, it is not clear that they are divisible in the present-day grammar of Roviana.

In main clauses, the pronouns labelled ‘Ergative and neutral’ are used only for A. In subordinate clauses, those pronouns are used for the three argument roles A, S and O (as illustrated in examples 3.69 and 3.71 in §3.3.2.1), since subordinate clauses do not morphologically distinguish ergative versus absolutive.

As Table 3.2 shows, there are four third person pronominal forms, distinguishing third person singular absolutive and ergative and third person plural absolutive and ergative. Sentences 3.26 to 3.32 give examples of the various pronouns.

- 3.26 *Pek-peka si gami.*
 DUP-dance ABS we.EXC
 We danced. (Fight, 004)
- 3.27 *Mae tangin-i-u sa pa avara-qu.*
 come touch-TR-1SG.DO s/he.ERG PREP shoulder-1SG.NSUF
 He came and touched me on my shoulder. (Fight, 020)
- 3.28 *Gina ele kamo si asa.*
 maybe PFT arrive ABS s/he
 Maybe s/he has arrived.
- 3.29 *...ke tozini-a rau.*
 so tell-3SG.DO I
 ...so I told him.⁵ (Grandpa, 010)
- 3.30 *...ke habotu si rau.*
 so sit ABS I
 ...so I sat down. (Day, 019)
- 3.31 *Tozini-u ri.*
 tell-1SG.DO they
 They told me. (Grandpa, 032)
- 3.32 *Tozini gami sarini ginua.*
 tell we.EXC them thing
 We told them the things. (Grandpa, 054)

In the case of *asa* ‘s/he.ABS’ in example 3.28 there are two markings of absolutive, viz. the pronominal form *asa*, which is not used for A in main clauses, and the presence of the article *si*.

As the following example illustrates, *si* cannot occur with *sarini* (compare to 3.32):

- 3.33 **Tozini gami si sarini ginua.*
 tell we.EXC ABS them.ABS thing
 *We told them the things.

⁵ *Rau* ‘I’ is A despite the fact that there is only a single overt argument in this sentence. The non-overt second argument ‘him’ is still recoverable from the discourse context of 3.29 as being involved in the semantic frame of this sentence and is indexed on the verb by *-a* ‘3SG.DO’. Similarly in example 3.31 below.

In addition to the pronouns used in absolutive and ergative, there are special pronouns used in clefts and contrastive focus. I term these 'focal pronouns', for example:

- 3.34 *Arau si na qua ginani si pa batu huda.*
 I.FOC FOC INDEF my.PPRO food FOC PREP head tree
 As for me, my food is in the tree-top.⁶ (Animals, 030)
- 3.35 *Agoi si rerenge.*
 you.FOC FOC fast
 You are the fastest. (Animal, 041)
- 3.36 *Arau ovia hola ginoroi.*
 I.FOC hungry extremely today
 I was really hungry today. (Day, 004)

3.2.2 NEUTRAL CASE MARKING

NP's other than pronouns, proper nouns and enumerated NP's do not formally distinguish A, S and O. Particles occurring with such NP's mark information statuses. For example, the particle *sa* marks definite NP's, irrespective of whether they are absolutive, ergative, or not even core arguments. For example, *sa siki* 'the dog' is A in examples 3.37 and 3.38, O in 3.39 and S in 3.40:

- 3.37 *Garat-i-u sa siki.*
 bite-TR-1SG.DO DEF dog
 The dog bit me.
- 3.38 *Garat-i-a sa siki se Zima.*
 bite-TR-3SG.DO DEF dog ABS Zima
 The dog bit Zima.
- 3.39 *Seke-i-a e Zima sa siki.*
 hit-TR-3SG.DO ERG Zima DEF dog
 Zima hit the dog.
- 3.40 *Taloe sa siki.*
 leave DEF dog
 The dog left.

Although clauses with two overt lexical arguments are rare (see Table 4.1, §4.2.1), examples 3.38 and 3.39 illustrate that it is possible to have two lexical NP's in a clause. If there are two overt lexical arguments in a clause, then there are three possibilities for case marking. Firstly, both of the NP's may distinguish absolutive versus ergative, for example:

- 3.41 *Seke-i-a e Zima se Maepeza.*
 hit-TR-3SG.DO ERG Zima ABS Maepeza
 Zima hit Maepeza.

Secondly, one of the NP's may distinguish absolutive versus ergative and the other may have neutral marking, as in examples 3.38 and 3.39 above. Thirdly, both arguments may have neutral marking, for example:

⁶ Roviana appears to allow two foci in cases of inclusion of multiple domains. A more literal translation here would perhaps be 'As for me, as for my food, it is in the trees'.

- 3.42 *Garat-i-a sa siki sa koburu.*
 bite-TR-3SG.DO DEF dog DEF child
 The dog bit the child.

In the case of clauses involving two neutrally marked NP's, the argument roles may still be recovered by syntactic ordering, given the constituent order VAO.

Verb indexing, which operates on an accusative basis, indexing O but not indexing {A, S} (see §3.1.3), also provides clues enabling the recovery of the grammatical relations involved. Since the verbal indexing is independent of the case marking on the nominal arguments, a main clause containing two overt arguments may simultaneously have neutral case marking on an NP, ergative-absolutive marking on the other NP, and accusative indexing on the verb (as seen in 3.38 and 3.39 above).

3.2.3 BACKGROUNDED OBJECTS

There is a grammatical construction in Roviana in which a verb appears to have two nominal arguments, yet the constituent order is not the canonical VAO. Rather, the nominal which most closely matches the semantic aspects of a prototypical O (see §2.4), typically being the affected patient, immediately follows the verb, while the nominal which most closely matches the semantic aspects of a prototypical A, typically being human and agentive, occurs next. Employing these semantic characterisations of the nominals, the constituent order of the backgrounded object construction is Verb-Patient-Agent.

The patient and agent in the backgrounded object construction do not have the formal properties associated with O and A respectively in basic sentences, nor do they have all the typical information statuses of O and A. O's are typically specific, may occur with particles and other modifiers, and are indexed on the verb. The patient in the backgrounded object construction, on the other hand, is frequently non-specific, never occurs with particles or other modifiers, and is not indexed on the verb.

The agent in a backgrounded object construction differs from the prototypical A if it is a proper NP, an enumerated NP, or a pronoun, in having the morphological marking associated with absolutive (i.e. S) rather than the marking associated with ergative (i.e. A). Other types of agent nominal in the backgrounded object construction resemble nominal arguments in VAO constructions in that they do not morphologically distinguish between absolutive and ergative.

Examples 3.43 and 3.44 below illustrate the constituent order Verb-Patient-Agent and the absence of indexing of the patient on the verb, as well as the absence of modifiers with the patient.

- 3.43 *Lopu va-mate tie si rau.*
 NEG CAUS-die person ABS I
 I didn't kill anybody. (Grandpa, 018)

- 3.44 *Raro talo si gami.*
 cook taro ABS we.EXC
 We cooked taro.

Compare 3.44 to 3.45 below, whose object is not backgrounded, and which has the canonical constituent order VAO.

- 3.45 *Raro-a gami sa talo.*
 cook-3SG.DO we.EXC DEF taro
 We cooked the taro.

I have eschewed the label *incorporated object* for this construction. Although the verb and the patient nominal form a tightly coupled unit, to the extent that it is not possible to insert material between them, there is no evidence of phonological incorporation into the verb stem (see Sadock 1980 for evidence of this in Greenlandic). Since this backgrounded object construction involves an argument which matches the semantic aspects of the A prototype, yet which is formally marked as absolutive, we must consider whether the construction ought to be labelled *antipassive*. Dixon (1987:8) defines *antipassive* thus:

ANTI-PASSIVE places the deep A NP in surface S function, and marks the deep O NP with an oblique case / preposition / etc. (this NP can then be deleted). (Original caps.)

While this backgrounded construction in Roviana does place the 'deep A' (agent) in 'surface S function', to use Dixon's terminology, the 'deep O' (patient) is not marked as oblique. It does not seem reasonable therefore to call this backgrounded object construction an antipassive. Furthermore, 'antipassive' is a term which only has meaning within an ergative-absolutive marking pattern. As I shall show in §3.3.5 below, what is arguably the same backgrounded object construction also occurs in subordinate clauses, where ergative patterning is not found. To label this construction 'antipassive' in main clauses and something else in subordinate clauses would be to miss the fact that there is a single phenomenon involved.

What appears to be involved is the expression of reduced transitivity, in the sense of Hopper and Thompson (1980). Emphasis is placed on the action of the verb rather than on the affectedness of the object. The marking of the agent as absolutive follows from the reduced transitivity of the predicate. The patient is included in the action of the verb, and the agent is now effectively the sole argument. Thus, clauses involving a backgrounded object construction notionally involve two arguments, but are syntactically intransitive. As will be shown in §3.3.5, there is syntactic evidence that the absolutive marked agent is indeed S.

3.2.4 PASSIVES

Roviana has a passive construction marked on the verb with the prefix *ta-*. Roviana has only agentless passives, unlike the closely related language Hoava, which has both agented and agentless passives (Davis n.d.). Not only is the passive in Roviana agentless, the agent appears to be anonymous, that is it is not recoverable from the texts in which the passives occur, or is generic only.

- 3.46 ...*ba sa elo edere sapu pa batu-na sa vetu*
 but DEF leaf sago.palm REF PREP head-3SG.NSUF DEF house
si lopu kaqu ta-poka gore.
 FOC NEG must PASS-nail go.down
 ...but the sago palm leaf, which is on top of the house, must not be nailed down.
 (Leaf, 051-053)

- 3.47 ...*gua asa ke kote ta-tupa hoboro.*
 SAY that so FUT PASS-punch nothing
 ...that's why you'll get punched for nothing. (Fight, 036)
- 3.48 ...*ba lopu ta-gilana.*
 but NEG PASS-know
 ...but it's not known. (Government, 019)
- 3.49 *Doduru ginua si kote ta-pusi vari-gara beto.*
 all thing FOC FUT PASS-tie RECIP-gather finish
 All the things will be tied together. (Leaf, 047)
- 3.50 ...*ke lopu ta-gilana kote koburu sia ba vineki sia.*
 so NEG PASS-know FUT boy that or girl that
 ...so it's not known if it will be a boy or a girl. (Nephews, 032)

The undergoer may be overt, occurring as the sole argument and marked as absolutive. Transitive verbal morphology does not occur with the *ta*-passive. This means that the single argument is S, being the sole argument present, rather than an O with a deleted A. Sentence 3.51 illustrates the absolutive marking in main clauses.

- 3.51 *Ta-seke si rau.*
 PASS-hit ABS I
 I was hit.

If *rau* 'I' were O in example 3.51 we would expect it to be indexed by the verbal affix *-u* '1SG.DO' occurring on the verb together with the transitive suffix *-i* 'TR'. The fact that *rau* is not indexed is evidence that it is not O, but rather S, since S is never indexed on the verb.

Ross (1988:245) considers the Roviana *ta-* to be a reflex of the Proto Oceanic "detransitivising morpheme". While this is almost certainly the case, the use of *ta-* is restricted in Roviana to prototypical transitive situations and to verbs of cognition. It does not appear to have the kinds of "anticausative" functions (Lichtenberk 1991b), in which an event which is low in transitivity may be encoded as in some sense spontaneous or uncontrolled.

3.3 SUBORDINATE CLAUSES

In terms of the case marking of NP's, subordinate clauses are morphologically neither ergative nor accusative. Instead, they follow what Comrie (1978:332) labels a "neutral" pattern of case marking; that is, A, S, and O are not morphologically distinguished, as illustrated in examples 3.52 to 3.54. Verb indexing in subordinate clauses operates on an accusative basis, as in main clauses (see §3.1.3), indexing O but not indexing {A, S}. This indexing is independent of the case-marking particles occurring with the O noun phrase.

- 3.52 *Hierana sa koreo **sapu tupa-na** e **Zone**.*⁷
 this DEF boy REL punch-3SG.NSUF ART John
 This is the boy that punched John.⁸

⁷ In the following sections of this chapter, subordinate clauses occur in bold type.

⁸ The distinction between the clausal nominalisation employed in example 3.52 (reflected in the use of *-na* '3SG.NSUF') and the clausal strategy employed in 3.53 (reflected in the verbal suffixes *-i* 'TR', and *-a* '3SG.DO') is discussed in §3.3.1 below.

- 3.53 *Hierana sa koreo sapu tupa-i-a e Zone.*
 this DEF boy REL punch-TR-3SG.DO ART John
 This is the boy that John punched.
- 3.54 *Korapa ene e Zone si tutuv-i-a sa se Bili.*
 IMPFT walk ART John FOC meet-TR-3SG.DO s/he ABS Bill
 As John was walking along, he met Bill.

In example 3.52, the personal article *e* is used to mark O, whereas in 3.53 the same article is used to mark A, and in 3.54 it is used to mark S.

In 3.55 below, *ri* ‘they’ is A, and is zero marked. However, in 3.56 below, *ri* is S, and also zero marked. In a main clause, *ri* would not be expected as S. Instead, the form *sarini* ‘they.ABS’ would have been expected.

- 3.55 *Ke beto vag-i ri sarina <in->avoso si*
 so finish gather-TR they DEF.PL <NOM->know FOC
la buna-i-a ri sa vasina asa.
 go bomb-TR-3SG.DO they.ERG DEF place that
 So after they had gathered all the information,⁹ they went and bombed that place.
 (Grandpa, 057-058)
- 3.56 *En-ene ri la hoirana si tutuvi-a ri se Manue.*
 DUP-walk they go there FOC meet-3SG.DO they.ERG ABS Possum¹⁰
 As they were walking along, they met Possum. (Animals, 016-017)

The canonical constituent orders in subordinate clauses are the same as the orders in main clauses, viz. VAO and VS. It must be noted that, in the texts gathered to date, there are few instances of subordinate clauses with two overt arguments, and no instances of subordinate clauses involving two lexical NP’s as arguments. The avoidance of two lexical arguments in a clause and other such tendencies in discourse are examined in Chapter 4.

In examining syntactically subordinate clauses, I shall focus especially on relative clauses, whose complexity warrants close examination.

The main point to note about all subordinate clauses in Roviana is that they do not contain the absolutive markers *si* or *se*, nor the absolutive forms of the third person pronouns (*asa* ‘s/he, it’ and *sarini* ‘they’; see §3.2.1.3).

Todd (1978) discusses the distribution of *si* in Roviana. Although Todd discusses the absolutive distribution of postverbal *si*, she does not explicitly distinguish between *si* ‘FOC’, occurring after fronted constituents in preverbal position, and *si* ‘ABS’, occurring postverbally before certain kinds of absolutive NP. Furthermore, Todd does not distinguish between main and subordinate clauses in discussing the distribution of *si*. As a consequence, Todd (1978) cites some sentences where *si* does not occur in the places she would have expected. In fact, in many of her problematic examples, the absence of *si* in the positions where Todd expected it actually reflects the neutral case marking of subordinate clauses.

⁹ The nominalising infix <in> is inserted before the vocalic nucleus of the first syllable of a verb, e.g. *habotu* ‘sit down’) *h<in->ambotu* ‘chair’. In the case of *inavoso*, ‘information’ yields a more idiomatic English translation than the more literal ‘After they had gathered all the knowings...’

¹⁰ This example is taken from a folk story in which animals behave like humans, and are referred to by proper names such as ‘Possum’ and ‘Rat’. The particle *se*, used to mark proper nouns in absolutive (see §3.2.1.1), is therefore used with proper name *Manue* ‘Possum’.

Example 3.57 below, taken from Todd (1978), illustrates a subordinate clause where Todd expected *si* to occur, but where it does not. In fact, as I show in the subsections below, *si* does not occur marking absolutive in subordinate clauses. The asterisk is used by Todd to mark a position in which *si* does not occur marking absolutive as she had expected.

- 3.57 *Korapa ra-raro si asa sipu la kamo * rau pa qua vetu.*
 IMPFT DUP-cook ABS s/he when go arrive * I PREP my house
 S/he was cooking when I got home. (Todd 1978:1041)

3.3.1 RELATIVE CLAUSES

Roviana relative clauses are introduced by an invariant relative marker *sapu*.¹¹ The coreferent of the noun in the matrix clause is never overt within the relative clause. We may characterise these relative clauses according to whether the notional coreferent within the relative clause is A, S or O, in a similar fashion to the typology of Keenan and Comrie (1977). For the present purposes, however, I shall present details of relative clauses on the core arguments A, S and O, without subscribing to Keenan and Comrie's typology of relative clauses on 'subject', 'direct object', and the other grammatical relations they employ. Native speaker judgements suggest an extreme reluctance to relativise on other positions.

3.3.1.1 RELATIVE CLAUSES ON A

Relative clauses on A use clausal nominalisation. The notional A in the relative clause has no overt realisation. The O is indexed on the verb by means of the suffixes used elsewhere to index possession on nouns, or agreement with head nouns for adjectives. The O also occurs independently in the relative clause.

The nominalised verb in a relative clause on A carries a suffix 'NSUF' which is also used in a possessive construction to index the possessor. Examples 3.58 to 3.59 illustrate the use of the suffixes labelled NSUF's to index a possessor. The possessor may be overt, as in 3.58, or non-overt, as in 3.59.

- 3.58 *tama-qu rau*
 father-1SG.NSUF I
 my father

- 3.59 *nene-na*
 leg-3SG-NSUF
 his leg

As 3.60 shows, these NSUF's are also used with adjectives to index the noun being modified.

- 3.60 *sa huda noma-na*
 DEF tree big-3SG.NSUF
 the big tree

¹¹ L.M. Jones (Waterhouse 1949:235) claims that there is a number distinction with *sapu* used when the head noun is singular and *saripu* used when the head noun is plural. In the texts and elicitations I have gathered, however, there is not a single instance of *saripu*, even when the head noun is plural. Perhaps in the last two or three generations the form *saripu* has disappeared.

Examples 3.61 and 3.62 illustrate relative clauses on A, with indexing of the O by means of NSUF's.

3.61 *Hierana sa tie sapu tupa-qu rau.*
 this DEF man REL punch-1SG.NSUF I
 This is the man that punched me.

3.62 *Seke-i-a rau sa koburu sapu seke-na sa siki.*
 hit-TR-3SG.DO I.ERG DEF child REL hit-3SG.NSUF DEF dog
 I hit the child that hit the dog.

It is ungrammatical for a relative clause on A to employ the usual verbal suffixes indexing the direct object. Compare 3.63 below with 3.61 above.

3.63 **Hierana sa tie sapu tupa-i-u.*
 this DEF man REL punch-TR-1SG.DO
 *This is the man who punched me.

Compare also the independent clause 3.64 which employs the usual verbal suffixes.

3.64 *Sa tie tupa-i-u.*
 DEF man punch-TR-1SG.DO
 The man punched me.

When the O in the relative clause is a proper noun, it is marked with the article *e*, as in example 3.65. Compare example 3.65 to example 3.67 in §3.3.1.3, where the article *e* marks A.

3.65 *Hierana sa koreo sapu tupa-na e Zone.*
 this DEF boy REL punch-3SG.NSUF ART John
 This is the boy that punched John.

3.3.1.2 RELATIVE CLAUSES ON S

Given that the coreferent in the relative clause does not have overt realisation, as mentioned in §3.3.1, these relative clauses consist of the verbal predicate and no nominal arguments, for example.

3.66 *Hierana sa tie sapu kote taloa.*
 this DEF man REL FUT leave
 This is the man who is going away.

3.3.1.3 RELATIVE CLAUSES ON O

In relative clauses on O, A is overt in the relative clause, and full verbal morphology is used to index the O. The nominal suffixes are not used in relative clauses on O. For example:

3.67 *Hierana sa koreo sapu tupa-i-a e Zone.*
 this DEF boy REL punch-TR-3SG.DO ART John
 This is the boy that John punched.

Note again that here, in the context of a relative clause which is by definition subordinate, *e* is glossed simply ART, since it is used with proper nouns which are A or O. Compare 3.67 to 3.65 in §3.3.1.1.

3.3.1.4 ABSOLUTIVE PIVOTS IN RELATIVE CLAUSE STRATEGIES

Ross (1988:240-247) considers that noun phrases introduced by *si* are pragmatic pivots (following Foley and Van Valin 1984). Ross cites examples of relative clauses in Roviana from which he concludes that the clausal nominalisation mentioned above in §3.3.1.1 is an antipassive, used to ensure that what I have termed a 'relative clause on A' has an absolutive pivot, whereas relative clauses on S and O already have absolutive pivots. However, there does not seem to be any morphological evidence to support his claim that this nominalisation is an antipassive. For example, in 3.68 *rau* 'I' is the patient, and matches the semantic aspect of the O prototype.

3.68 *Hierana sa tie sapu tupa-qu rau.*
 this DEF man REL punch-1SG.NSUF I
 This is the man that punched me.

How can this clausal nominalisation be considered antipassive if it neither "places the deep A NP in surface S function" nor "marks the deep O NP with an oblique", Dixon's (1987) two criteria for antipassive? Furthermore, as I argue in this chapter, relative clauses, being subordinate, do not contain morphological ergative patterning. The term 'antipassive' is not applicable in a system which is not ergative.

While I do not agree with Ross' view of the clausal nominalisation as an antipassive, I do consider that relative clause strategies on core arguments are syntactically arranged according to an ergative pattern, despite the fact that the morphological marking in such clauses is not ergative. Relative clauses on {S, O} use finite verb strategies found in independent main clauses, with transitive suffixes and with affixes cross-referencing O, and so on. Relative clauses on A, on the other hand, employ a nominalisation strategy.

Dixon (1979:125) observes that "All languages which use an S/O pivot, to any degree, show some 'ergativity' in morphological marking". Now, this observation is true of Roviana, albeit in a peculiar sense. In Roviana, the selection of nominalisation or a full clausal strategy in relative clause formation operates according to an ergative-absolutive pattern. Furthermore, Roviana has morphological ergative patterning with proper nouns, enumerated NP's and pronouns. Interestingly, however, syntactic and morphological ergativity do not coincide in Roviana. Where Roviana operates on an S/O pivot (in relativisation), it has a neutral system of case marking. Similarly, where Roviana has any morphological ergativity, it does not operate according to an S/O pivot.

Dixon (1979) discusses intreclausal phenomena such as Equi-deletion. In languages like English, if two coordinate clauses contain a coreferential argument, the second mention may be non-overt if the referent is A in one clause and S in the other. In languages like Dyirbal, however, Equi-deletion may apply only if the referent is S in one clause and O in the other. Thus, in English, Equi-deletion works on an accusative basis, while in Dyirbal, Equi-deletion works on an ergative basis. In Roviana, however, intraclausal phenomena like Equi-deletion are pragmatically constrained, that is Equi-deletion may apply irrespective of the argument role of the referent in each of the two clauses, as long as the referent which is omitted is recoverable from semantic and local discourse clues.

3.3.2 TEMPORAL SUBORDINATE CLAUSES

We can formally distinguish three kinds of temporal subordinate clauses, or temporal adverbial clauses, in Roviana, which I label ‘when’ clauses, ‘after’ clauses, and ‘contemporaneous’ clauses.

With these temporal subordinate clauses, as with the relative clauses discussed above, there is neutral case marking of the arguments A, S and O.

3.3.2.1 ‘WHEN’ CLAUSES

‘When’ clauses, introduced by the subordinator *totoso* ‘time’ or the syncopated form *totso*, do not specify the precise nature of the temporal relation involved. Thus the events of the ‘when’ clause and of the clause to which it is subordinate may either be contemporaneous as in examples 3.69 and 3.70, or the event of the ‘when’ clause may temporally precede that of the matrix clause, as in 3.71.

- 3.69 *Totso koa goi pa korapa tropic*
 time stay you.SG PREP inside tropic
si kaqu pezaku lamo si goi.
 FOC must wash.hands always ABS you.SG
 When you stay in the tropics, you must always wash your hands. (Health, 015)

- 3.70 *...ba gina totso podalae ene sa si*
 but maybe time start walk s/he FOC
kote keke tie mari va-ososo-na sisigiti sia.
 FUT one man very CAUS-cheeky-3SG.NSUF extremely that
 ...but maybe when he starts walking he’ll be a very cheeky man. (Nephews, 018-019)

- 3.71 *Totso beto sikulu rau tani beto rau pa Carrington si*
 time finish school I here finish I PREP Carrington FOC
pule la si rau pa popoa.
 return go ABS I PREP place
 When I finish school here, [when] I finish at Carrington, I will go back home. (Polytech, 001-002)

In example 3.69, *goi* ‘you.SG’ occurs without the absolutive article *si*, although it is an S argument. In fact, as 3.69 to 3.71 above and 3.72 to 3.73 below show, there is no formal distinction for pronouns in subordinate clauses amongst the argument roles A, S and O. The same pronominal forms are used for all three argument roles, and the absolutive article *si* does not occur. The absence of *si* contrasts with its use in main clauses, where it marks pronouns occurring in absolutive (with the exception of the third person plural pronoun *sarini*).

3.3.2.2 ‘AFTER’ CLAUSES

The event of an ‘after’ clause, introduced by the subordinator *beto* ‘finish’, temporally precedes the event of the matrix clause to which it is syntactically subordinate. Examples 3.72 to 3.73 illustrate the ‘after’ clauses introduced by the subordinator *beto* ‘finish’.

- 3.72 *Ke beto vagi ri sarina <in->avoso si*
 so finish gather they DEF.PL <NOM->know FOC
la buna-i-a ri sa vasina asa.
 go bomb-TR-3SG.DO they.ERG DEF place that
 So after they had gathered all the information, they went and bombed that place.
 (Grandpa, 057-058)
- 3.73 *Beto tate-a goi sa vasina sage la pa goba-goba.*
 finish work-3SG.DO you.SG DEF place go.up go PREP DUP-wall
 After you've finished the place, go up to the walls. (Leaf house, 015, 017)

3.3.2.3 'CONTEMPORANEOUS' CLAUSES

'Contemporaneous' clauses have imperfective aspect, usually accompanied by reduplication of the verb, with the meaning 'While ...-ing' or 'As ...-ing'.

In all the naturally occurring examples, the clause to which the contemporaneous clause is subordinate is eventive and punctual, such that the activity of the main clause occurs during the time of the activity of the subordinate clause.

In example 3.74 below, the first clause is marked by intonation as being subordinate, whereas in 3.75 below there is both intonational marking and the use of the focal particle *si* to embed the clause.

- 3.74 *En-ene ri karua tutuvi-a ri kara se Noki.*
 DUP-walk they two meet-3SG.DO they.ERG two ABS Snake
 As they were walking along, they met Snake. (Animals, 004-005)
- 3.75 *En-ene ri la hoirana si tutuvi-a ri se Manue.*
 DUP-walk they go there FOC meet-3SG.DO they.ERG ABS Possum
 As they were walking along, they met Possum. (Animals, 016-017)

In the subordinate clauses in 3.74 and 3.75, *ri* ('they' is S in the subordinate clauses, being the sole nominal argument of an intransitive verb. However, the pronominal form *ri* is the same as that employed in the subordinate clause in 3.72 above, where *ri* is A, the agent in a prototypical transitive clause. Furthermore, the absolutive particle *si* does not occur marking *ri* in either 3.74 or 3.75. The absence of *si* and the lack of a formal distinction between A and S roles in subordinate clauses are both evidence of the neutral case marking system of subordinate clauses.

3.3.3 CONDITIONALS

In a conditional, the protasis is a subordinate clause. Examples 3.76 to 3.78 below illustrate conditional clauses. In these examples, as with the subordinate clauses above, there is a neutral system of case marking.

- 3.76 *Pude la goi pa popoa taqa rau pa Solomone si*
 if go you.SG PREP place POSS I PREP Solomons FOC

kaqu vagi meresina si goi.
 must gather medicine ABS you.SG

If you go to my place in the Solomons, you must get some medicine. (Health, 010-100)

- 3.77 ...*ba pude gore vura mae sa si kote taloa si rau.*
 but if go.down come.out come it FOC FUT leave ABS I
 ...but if it works out, I'll leave. (Polytech, 021-022)

- 3.78 ...*na pude ta-poka gore ri tapuru taloa dia mo*
 because if PASS-nail go.down they fly leave their DT
sarina el-elo.
 DEF.PL DUP-leaf
 ...because if they are nailed down [rather than tied], the leaves will just fly away.
 (Leaf house, 055-056)

3.3.4 PASSIVES IN SUBORDINATE CLAUSES

Passives in subordinate clauses are formally agentless, and are anonymous, as in main clauses (§3.2.4). However, whereas in passive main clauses the sole argument, the undergoer, is marked as absolutive if the NP is a proper noun, an enumerated NP, or a pronoun, in subordinate clauses there is no marking that would distinguish the undergoer from an A. This is in line with the neutral case marking of subordinate clauses. Thus example 3.79 contrasts with 3.80. Example 3.80 is an independent sentence, with the undergoer marked as S by the use of the third person plural absolutive pronoun *sarini*. In 3.79 however, the pronoun *ri* 'they' is used for S. The pronoun *ri* does not distinguish between A, S and O. (See example 3.72, where *ri* marks A.)

- 3.79 ...*na pude ta-poka gore ri tapuru taloa dia mo*
 because if PASS-nail go.down they fly leave their DT
sarina el-elo.
 DEF.PL DUP-leaf
 ...because if they are nailed down [rather than tied], the leaves will just fly away.
 (Leaf house, 055-056)
- 3.80 *Ta-poka gore sarini.*
 PASS-nail go.down they.ABS
 They are nailed down.

3.3.5 BACKGROUNDED OBJECTS WITHIN SUBORDINATE CLAUSES

The constituent order of backgrounded object constructions in subordinate clauses, as with the backgrounded object constructions in main clauses discussed in §3.2.3, is Verb-Patient-Agent, rather than the more usual VAO. However, in subordinate clauses, unlike the backgrounded object constructions which occur in main clauses, there is never morphological marking of the agent as absolutive, given that the morphological pattern of subordinate clauses is neutral. Example 3.81 illustrates both a backgrounded object construction occurring in a subordinate clause and a backgrounded object clause occurring in a main clause. The subordinate clause in 3.81 shows that the constituent order of

backgrounded clauses is Verb-Patient-Agent in subordinate clauses, with no verbal indexing of an O. Thus, the backgrounded object construction in a subordinate clause exhibits the same features as those of a backgrounded object construction in a main clause (see §3.2.3).

- 3.81 *Totso raro talo sa barikaleqe si raro luzu tugo.*
 time cook taro DEF woman FOC cook sweet.potato EMPH
 While the woman cooked taro, she also cooked sweet potato.

In the main clause in 3.81, the agent is not overt. With only the patient overt, it is not possible to demonstrate the constituent order Verb-Patient-Agent. However, the main clause lacks indexing of an O on the verb, despite the presence of a patient, showing the clause to be a backgrounded object construction.

Example 3.82 illustrates a backgrounded object construction in a relative clause.

- 3.82 *Hierana sa tie sapu hiva gani boko sisigiti.*
 this DEF man REL like eat pig extremely
 This is the man who really likes eating pork.

The relative clause in example 3.82 behaves like a relative clause on S. Although the coreferent of the matrix ‘the man’ within the relative clause is notionally the agent, and so matches the semantic aspects of the prototype definition of A, the relative clause does not employ the clausal nominalisation discussed for relative clauses on A in §3.3.1.1. Instead, the clause is verbal, with the notional coreferent of *sa tie* ‘the man’ in the relative clause, where it would be S, not overt. Thus, although there is an overt mention of a patient, the patient is backgrounded, being included in the action of the verb, and the clause effectively behaves like an intransitive clause involving only an S argument.

Example 3.83 below illustrates a backgrounded object construction occurring in a temporal subordinate clause. In 3.83 there are two overt nominals, *sikulu* ‘school’ and *rau* ‘I’. Although *sikulu* is not a prototypical patient, since there is no transfer of action to an affected entity with the verb *beto* ‘finish’, this clause is formally similar to the backgrounded object constructions discussed above. The nominal *rau* ‘I’ refers to the most agent-like argument of this clause and occurs after the other nominal, *sikulu*. Furthermore, there is no verbal indexing of an O argument in this clause, despite the appearance of two overt nominals.

- 3.83 *Totso beto sikulu rau tani... si*
 time finish school I here FOC
pule la si rau pa popoa.
 return go ABS I PREP place
 When I finish school here...I will go back home. (Polytech. 001. 003)

An important difference between 3.83 and the examples of backgrounded object constructions in main clauses (for example 3.43 in §3.2.3) is that *rau* ‘I’, which would be an S argument, as demonstrated above, is not formally marked as absolutive, but instead has the simple form *rau*, which does not distinguish A, S and O in subordinate clauses.

This absence of distinctive overt marking as an absolutive argument (S), consistent with the case marking of subordinate clauses, supports the argument in §3.2.3 that the backgrounded object construction should not be considered to be an antipassive. In main clauses, backgrounded object constructions involve the marking of certain kinds of agent NP’s as absolutive, matching part of Dixon’s (1987:8) definition of antipassive. However,

in main clauses involving backgrounded object constructions, the patient is not marked as an oblique. The backgrounded object construction in main clauses was therefore shown not to match all of Dixon's criteria for antipassives. In the case of backgrounded object constructions in subordinate clauses, there is not even distinctive marking of the agent as S. Thus, it is not appropriate to apply the label 'antipassive' in subordinate clauses, since subordinate clauses do not even involve overt morphological ergativity.

Finally, backgrounded object constructions in main and subordinate clauses are similar in that they both have the constituent order Verb-Patient-Agent (barring ellipsis of the agent) and in that they both lack verbal indexing of an O argument, despite the presence of two nominals, and they are semantically similar. Thus, although it would appear that backgrounded objects in main clauses at least partially match Dixon's (1987:8) definition of antipassive, even if backgrounded object constructions in subordinate clauses do not, it would be misleading to label the construction antipassive in main clauses but not in subordinate clauses, since this would fail to express their similarities.

3.4 COMPLEMENT CLAUSES

Complement clauses are considered in the present study to be intermediate between main and subordinate clauses. Although formally subordinate, they would appear a priori to be similar to main clauses in terms of their pragmatic possibilities.

In the texts in my corpus, complement clauses are rare. Direct quotation is more frequent than subordination to higher predicates of information, while epistemic modals (e.g. *gina* 'maybe', *tu* 'EMPH') are often used rather than subordination to higher predicates of cognition.

Examples 3.84 to 3.86 illustrate complement clauses. These three sentences are the only examples of complementation occurring in the texts studied. As 3.84 and 3.85 show, complement clauses in Roviana exhibit the same verbal strategies as other verbal clauses, with transitive verbal morphology, and with the constituent order VAO for two argument predicates.

- 3.84 *Lopu hiva-ni-a ri sapu tangin-i-a rau*
 NEG like-VAL-3SG.DO they.ERG COMP hold-TR-3SG.DO I

sa vineki.

DEF girl

They didn't like me holding the girl. (Fight, 016-017)

(lit. They didn't like it, that I was holding the girl.)

- 3.85 *Lopu ta-gilana pude tutilul-i ri kara sarina*
 NEG PASS-know whether inherit.from-TR they two DEF.PL

tatama dia sarina bugi dia.

parent their DEF.PL nephew their

It's not known if they have inherited [their habits] from their parents or their nephews.¹² (Nephews, 026-027)

¹² In discussing this example, my language helper explained that he had meant 'uncles', rather than 'nephews'.

As example 3.86 below shows, complement clauses may also involve non-verbal predicates.

- 3.86 *Lopu ta-gilana kote koburu sia ba vineki sia.*
 NEG PASS-know FUT boy DEM or girl DEM
 It's not known if it will be a boy or a girl. (Nephews, 032-033)

Unfortunately, the complement clauses which occur in the texts analysed do not provide enough evidence to determine whether complement clauses involve a neutral system of case marking like subordinate clauses, or an ergative system like main clauses. As the elicited examples 3.87 to 3.90 illustrate with complements of verbs of cognition, complement clauses have the same kind of ergative morphological marking split according to nominal type as described in §3.2 for main clauses.

- 3.87 *Bala-bala-ni-a e John sapu ele taloa se Zima.*
 DUP-think-VAL-3SG.DO ERG John COMP already leave ABS Zima
 John thinks that Zima has left.
- 3.88 *Matagutu se John sapu kote seke-i-a (e) Zima*
 fear ABS John COMP FUT hit-TR-3SG.DO (ERG) Zima
se Maepeza.
 ABS Maepeza
 John is afraid that Zima will hit Maepeza.
- 3.89 *Gila-ni-a e John sapu ele taloa sarini.*
 know-VAL-3SG.DO ERG John COMP already leave they.ABS
 John knows that they have already left.
- 3.90 *Pulepaho-ni-a e John sapu stadi maths si asa.*
 regret-VAL-3SG.DO ERG John COMP study maths ABS s/he
 John regrets studying maths.

In complement clauses, as in main clauses, the article *se* 'ABS' marks proper nouns in absolutive, marking S in example 3.87 and O in 3.88. The article *e* or zero marks proper nouns in A, as with *e Zima* 'Zima' in 3.88. In 3.89, *sarini* 'they.ABS' occurs as S in the complement clause without the article *si* 'ABS' matching the prohibition on the cooccurrence of *si* with *sarini* in main clauses discussed in §3.2.1.3. In 3.90, which has a backgrounded object in the complement clause, *si* 'ABS' occurs with *asa* 's/he.ABS' in the complement clause, again mirroring the marking of main clauses.

As the indexing by *-a* '3SG.DO' in examples 3.87, 3.89 and 3.90 indicates, the complement clause is indexed rather than the arguments of the clause. For example in 3.89 the indexing is with *-a* '3SG.DO' rather than with zero (which would occur if the plural *sarini* 'they.ABS' in the complement clause were being indexed).

As examples 3.87, 3.89 and 3.90 illustrate, the marking of the non-clausal argument of the complement-taking verb as ergative correlates with the presence of the valency increasing *-ni*, whereas 3.88 illustrates the marking of the non-clausal argument of the complement taking verb as absolutive in the absence of *-ni*.

3.5 EXCEPTIONS

In the spontaneous texts analysed, there are two clauses out of 457 (i.e. 0.44%) which do not appear to be syntactically subordinate, and yet which do not have morphological ergativity. Both of these apparent exceptions would fall within O'Dowd's (1992:58) pragmatic definition of subordinate clauses, according to which

Clausal subordination is defined as the process by which a language marks one event as somehow contributing to a second event within a proposition.

These two clauses are examined in context in examples 3.91 and 3.93.

3.91 *Ene nuquru la si rau.*
walk enter go ABS I
I walked in.

Hoirana si ele koata pas sia.
then FOC PFT quarter past nine
It was already quarter past nine then.

Ele podalae sarini...
PFT start they.ABS
They'd already started...

Nuquru la rau
enter go I
I went in

me nanasi-u sa titisa...
and ask-1SG.DO DEF teacher
and the teacher asked me... (Day, 006-011)

In 3.91, the bold clause contains a single argument, the pronoun *rau* 'I', as S. For a main clause, this pronoun would be expected to be marked as absolutive with the article *si*, as in the first clause of this example. Elsewhere, the conjunction *me* 'and' has a coordinating function, as in 3.92.

3.92 *Poko sava si sag-sage-a sa me pek-peka.*
dress something FOC DUP-wear-3SG.DO s/he.ERG and DUP-dance
She was wearing some kind of dress and dancing. (Day, 005-6)

Thus there would appear to be a clash between the marking of this clause as coordinate, and the absence of the marking of an absolutive argument which would be expected in a main clause.

As Emanatian (1991:233-234) notes, following Haiman (1980, 1985), syntactic dependency or backgroundedness and simultaneity are often expressed in a given language through polysemous morphemes (e.g. the English *-ing*). This polysemy is motivated by the fact that both simultaneity and backgrounding may have the same effect in discourse, for example removing a proposition from a narrative timeline. Now, the same instance of walking into the classroom is mentioned in the italicised clause and in the first clause of this example, that is the narrator had not left the room and walked in again later. Thus, it may be that the second mention is in some sense background, and subordinate according to O'Dowd's definition, in that it contributes to the following proposition by providing a temporal reference point for the teacher's question. A looser translation of the italicised

clause and the clause following might be ‘When I walked in, the teacher asked me...’. Thus, what might be involved is a choice of the morphological marking usually associated with subordinate clauses, which are discourse presupposed, for a clause which is syntactically a main clause, but which is also discourse presupposed (by virtue of prior mention).

The other apparent exception is 3.93 below, where the pronoun *gami* ‘we.EXC’ is not marked for absolutive.

3.93 *Pa ngati seda si habotu gami*
PREP root frangipani FOC sit we.EXC

meke vivinei si gami kara Granpapa.

and chat ABS we.EXC two Grandpa

We were sitting under a frangipani tree and Grandpa and I were having a conversation. (Grandpa, 001-002)

Prior to the commencement of this text, my language helper and I had been discussing his Grandfather. Thus the referents of *gami* ‘we.EXC’ are not strictly speaking new. The best interpretation of the italicised clause would appear to be that it is removed from the narrative timeline, and so is coded in the same way as a subordinate clause, that is the absolutive particle *si* does not occur before *gami* ‘we.EXC’. If the italicised clause is altered so that there is ergative morphology, an eventive interpretation is forced, as in example 3.94.

3.94 *Pa ngati seda si habotu si gami*
PREP root frangipani FOC sit ABS we.EXC

meke vivinei si gami kara Granpapa.

and chat ABS we.EXC two Grandpa

We sat down under a frangipani tree and had a chat/were chatting.

Apparently, however, removal from the narrative timeline does not per se determine the morphological marking employed, since the second clause in example 3.93 is also removed from the time line, being non-eventive and having imperfective aspect, yet it has morphologically ergative marking. Rather, the first clause in 3.93 encodes the setting of the activity of the second clause, and so fits within O’Dowd’s (1992) pragmatic definition of subordination.

In spite of these two apparent exceptions, the generalisation made in this chapter that Roviana has a split-ergative system of morphological marking in main clauses and a neutral system of marking in subordinate clauses appears sound. This small number of exceptions should possibly be interpreted as evidence that the diachronic development to be discussed in Chapter 5 has been taken almost to completion. Given that there are so few exceptions, it does not seem possible to decide between a pragmatic subordinate explanation, as per O’Dowd (1992), a background explanation as per Emanatian (1991) or simply a statistically insignificant vestige of an earlier pattern of morphological marking. Grammatical change is often gradual, with the result that an old and a new form may coexist for a time, with the new form gradually ousting the old form (Lichtenberk 1991a). Perhaps with more data we will be able to decide between these options.

3.6 CONCLUSION

Roviana has a system of case marking which is split-ergative in two senses, and has a small degree of ergative syntax.

The first sense in which case marking is split-ergative in Roviana concerns nominal status. In main clauses, proper nouns, enumerated NP's, and pronouns formally distinguish absolutive versus ergative, whereas all other kinds of NP in main clauses have a neutral system of case marking; that is, they are not organised according to an ergative nor according to an accusative pattern.

The second sense in which case marking is split-ergative in Roviana concerns the distinction between main and subordinate clauses. There is some ergative morphological patterning in main clauses, whereas in subordinate clauses, there is only a neutral system of morphological marking.

In syntax, relative clauses, one kind of subordinate clause, distinguish between ergative and absolutive in the selection of relativisation strategy.

The indexing of arguments on the verb operates according to an accusative pattern, with O being indexed but {A, S} not being indexed.

Finally, complement clauses contain the same morphosyntactic ergativity as main clauses.

CHAPTER 4

PREFERRED ARGUMENT STRUCTURE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Du Bois (1987) has demonstrated significant patterns in discourse which mirror ergative morphosyntactic patterning. While the tendencies noted by Du Bois are drawn from Sacapultec Mayan, an ergative language, it has been shown in various other studies (for example, those cited in Du Bois 1987) that these discourse patterns are not peculiar to that language, but occur in other typologically diverse languages, including languages which do not exhibit morphosyntactic ergativity.

In the present study, I shall examine discourse patterns in Roviana following Du Bois (1987) as an analytical model. In applying this model, I shall of necessity follow the details of Du Bois (1987) rather closely. I hope that by examining the discourse of yet another language, the generalisability of the tendencies observed by Du Bois may be clarified. This examination is of interest in considering how morphosyntactic ergativity might have arisen in Roviana.

Du Bois proposes that the observed discourse tendencies motivate morphosyntactic ergativity. In Chapter 5, I propose that Roviana is an example of a language where such discourse tendencies have motivated morphosyntactic ergativity. Thus, the etymology and distribution of the forms associated with the marking of absolutive can be seen to reflect their source in discourse.

First, I shall clarify the domain of study and the relevant details of the grammar of Roviana.

4.1.1 THE CORPUS

The Roviana corpus analysed here consists of 457 clauses of oral discourse. The corpus contains small texts of different types, most being monologues. There are narratives from personal experience, stories in folktale genres, procedural texts, discussions of plans for the future, and so on. Some of the texts develop topics spontaneously initiated by the language helper, some are discussions following on from informal discussion in English, Solomon Islands Pijin or Roviana, while others are texts elicited by questions of the 'Tell me about...' type. In all cases the discourse was impromptu.

The data has been transcribed and broken down into smaller units. These units usually correspond to clauses, the exceptions being false starts, appellations, and other fragments occurring with separate intonation.

In §4.2.3 I return to a consideration of the nature of the data, especially as it affects comparison of the tendencies observed in Roviana with the tendencies noted by Du Bois (1987).

4.1.2 INFORMATION FLOW

In presenting information in discourse, a speaker makes morphosyntactic and phonological choices taking account of previously transmitted information, as well as making assumptions about the addressee's state of consciousness.

In applying the analytical model of Du Bois (1987), I have applied his grammatical, semantic and pragmatic features, while necessarily adopting operational definitions specific to Roviana. I detail the following features and the operational definitions below:

- (a) morphological type
- (b) inherent semantic class of referent
- (c) grammatical role
- (d) information status (activation state)

4.1.2.1 MORPHOLOGICAL TYPE

Du Bois (1987:814) identifies three morphological types of overt mention in Sacapultec, as follows:

- (1) A lexical mention, defined as a full overt NP occurring with cross-referencing affixes on the verb.
- (2) A pronominal mention, defined as an independent pronoun occurring with cross-referencing on the verb.
- (3) An affixal mention, defined as a verbal affix with no corresponding NP or independent pronoun.

Now, whereas Sacapultec cross-references A, and {S, O} on the verb, Roviana cross-references only O's (see §3.1.3 for further details). The cross-referencing of core arguments on the verb in Roviana therefore reflects an accusative pattern: O is cross-referenced, but the set {A, S} is not. This must be taken into consideration when considering correlations between grammatical role and morphological type, as in Table 4.3 in §4.2.1. Taking account of the fact that only O's are cross-referenced by verbal affixes, we get the following three types of overt mention which hold for Roviana:

- (1) A lexical mention, defined as a full overt NP, occurring with cross-referencing affixes on the verb if the NP is O.
- (2) A pronominal mention, defined as an independent pronoun, occurring with cross-referencing on the verb if the pronoun is O.
- (3) An affixal mention, defined as a verbal affix with no corresponding NP or independent pronoun.

In addition to the three morphological types identified above for Roviana, there is a regular pattern in Roviana which is intermediate between an independent pronominal mention and a lexical mention. This type is illustrated in example 4.1.

- 4.1 ...*meke vivinei si gami kara Granpapa.*
 and chat ABS we.EXC two Grandpa
 ...and Grandpa and I were having a chat. (Grandpa, 002)

This coordination of a first person plural pronoun with a proper noun has the meaning of the speaker and the person named, that is 'X and I', or the speaker and one or more others including the person named, that is 'X and we (inclusive or exclusive)'. There are only three such examples in the corpus, which are treated as both pronominal and lexical for the text counts.

4.1.2.2 INHERENT SEMANTIC CLASS OF REFERENT

Du Bois (1987) distinguishes only human and inanimate mentions, there being no instances of non-human animate mentions in his data. In the Roviana data analysed here, however, there are mentions of non-human animates. I therefore make a three-way distinction for the referents of mentions between human, non-human animate, and inanimate. This three-way distinction is also reflected in Tables 4.12 and 4.13, where I discuss correlations between 'human-ness' and grammatical role. In these tables, the category 'human' corresponds to Du Bois' category 'animate', but the category 'non-human' includes both inanimates and non-human animates, whereas Du Bois' 'inanimate' does not include non-human animates. I follow Du Bois in classifying body parts as inanimate.

One of the texts in the Roviana corpus is a story told in a folktale genre about several animals. The animals, however, are referred to by proper nouns (e.g. 'Snake' rather than 'the snake') and act like humans, conversing and behaving in a human manner. Such noun phrases are treated as human mentions for the present study.

4.1.2.3 GRAMMATICAL ROLE

Du Bois (1987) distinguishes the grammatical roles A, S, O, oblique, possessor and other (such as marked topics). The few possessor mentions in the Roviana data have been grouped with obliques, from which they are formally indistinguishable, for the purpose of text counts.

I have made a binary distinction between 'transitive' and 'intransitive' clauses based strictly on morphology, rather than distinguishing degrees of transitivity according to morphology and semantics (see Hopper and Thompson 1980 for a multifactor approach to transitivity). A clause containing a verb marked with the transitive suffix *-i* and indexed for O has been classified as transitive, regardless of whether or not it actually contains both an independent overt A and O. In this I follow Du Bois' comment that:

This adherence to surface grammar, while no doubt mechanical, has the advantage of avoiding the uncertainty which may attend investigator judgments of such things as degrees of agency or even degrees of transitivity, when these are not directly marked as such. (Du Bois 1987:815)

In main clauses identified as transitive by the formal criteria above, A and O may be distinguished according to morphological marking and relative order (A precedes O) as outlined in §3.1.2. In subordinate clauses, the relative order of arguments is employed as one identification criterion, with the prototype definition of §2.1 employed to identify A and O in difficult cases. Clauses containing a verb without the transitive and cross-referencing

affixes are classified as intransitive, and the single argument as S. Clauses containing backgrounded objects (as outlined in §3.2.3 and §3.3.5) have thus been treated as intransitive. As well as transitive and intransitive clauses, Roviana has non-verbal predicates.

Obliques are defined as NP's introduced by prepositions, and form a syntactic class in Roviana, with no single semantic characterisation.

All NP's which are neither A, S, O, nor oblique are termed 'other'. This includes NP's which occur as the focus of the sentence. Although a mention which matches the semantic aspects of a prototypical A, S or O within the clause may appear as the focus, a mention in focus position is not considered to be an instance of an argument role. A mention in focus position is structurally, intonationally and morphologically offset from the clause. Furthermore, mentions in focus position do not participate in ergative morphosyntactic patterning. The term 'other' also includes vocatives and miscellaneous mentions.

Du Bois distinguishes a third clause type, viz. 'equational', which apparently may contain a maximum of one argument. While Roviana has a minor sentence type which might be classified as equational, consisting of two NP's, I have not included instances of these clauses in the discussions of transitivity for two reasons. Firstly, there are few of these clauses in the Roviana corpus (11 out of 457 clauses). Secondly, it is not clear at this stage in my analysis how these clauses ought to be analysed, especially whether the NP predicated on ought to be treated as an argument. If it ought to be treated as an argument, it is not yet clear which of the NP's ought to be considered to be the NP being predicated on. These equational clauses do not participate in the ergative morphosyntactic patterning with which this study is concerned. Since it is not clear that these clauses contain arguments in the strictest sense, I have excluded them from the discussions of transitivity, and have included the NP's under 'other' for the purpose of the text counts.

Following Du Bois, I term A, S, and O 'arguments' in opposition to obliques and 'other' NP's.

4.1.2.4 INFORMATION STATUS

Chafe (1976) makes a three-way distinction in information status (what Du Bois calls "concept activation state"). The three statuses are 'given', 'new', and the intermediate 'accessible'.

'Given' or 'old' information is defined as:

that knowledge which the speaker assumes to be in the consciousness of the addressee at the time of the utterance. (Chafe 1976:30)

The speaker and addressee are always given, as are objects in the environment of the speech act (Chafe 1976:31-32). For example, mentions such as the house at which the Roviana data was recorded are counted as given. Thus, a mention may be considered to be given by virtue of prior mention in discourse, or by extra-linguistic criteria.

'New' information is defined as something that is introduced into the addressee's consciousness for the first time (Chafe 1976:30-31). This is not to say that it is information which was previously unknown to the addressee, but simply that it is information which the addressee was not thinking about prior to the mention.

'Accessible' information is defined by Du Bois (1987:816) in two ways. Firstly, information may be accessible if it is "part of a previously evoked, entity-based frame". Secondly, information may be accessible if it "had been mentioned previously, but more than 20 intonation units previously".

In the Roviana data, there was only one mention which would be classified as accessible by the second criterion. This single mention was counted as given, according to the observation that "accessible mentions seem to pattern most like given mentions in the matters investigated here" (Du Bois 1987:816). There are no mentions in the Roviana corpus which are 'accessible' in the sense of being evoked by a previous mention of an entity-based frame.

In identifying the information statuses, I have distinguished only given and new. Given mentions are those where the referent has been mentioned previously, or is part of the extralinguistic context of the discourse. All other mentions have been classified as new.

4.2 PREFERRED ARGUMENT STRUCTURE IN ROVIANA

Du Bois (1987:817) poses the following question:

Among the various structural configurations of arguments which are grammatically possible in surface syntax, is there one which is statistically preferred in discourse?

It is this question which I shall attempt to answer, in looking at tendencies in Roviana grammar and in the flow of information.

4.2.1 TENDENCIES IN THE GRAMMAR

Du Bois first examines the frequency of clauses containing zero, one and two lexical arguments. Figure 4.1, based on Table 4.1 further below, presents the relevant figures for Roviana, combining transitive and intransitive clauses.

As in Sacapultec, clauses with two overt lexical arguments are rare in Roviana. The figures in Du Bois (1987:818) suggest an even distribution in Sacapultec between clauses containing one lexical argument and clauses containing zero lexical arguments (51.2% and 47.6% respectively for his corpus). The figures for Roviana, however, seem to suggest a strong preference for no lexical arguments, although this may be an artifact of the corpus, reflecting the large component of ego-centric monologue in the data (see §4.2.3), which has resulted in a high proportion of first person pronouns.

Since intransitive clauses cannot by definition contain two arguments, and therefore cannot contain two lexical arguments, it is important to consider whether the rarity of clauses with two lexical arguments simply reflects the rarity of transitive clauses. As Table 4.1 shows, 139 of the 339 clauses (41.0%) in Figure 4.1 are transitive. Transitive clauses can therefore hardly be said to be rare. Now, of the transitive clauses, only 6 out of the 139 (4.3%) contain two lexical arguments.

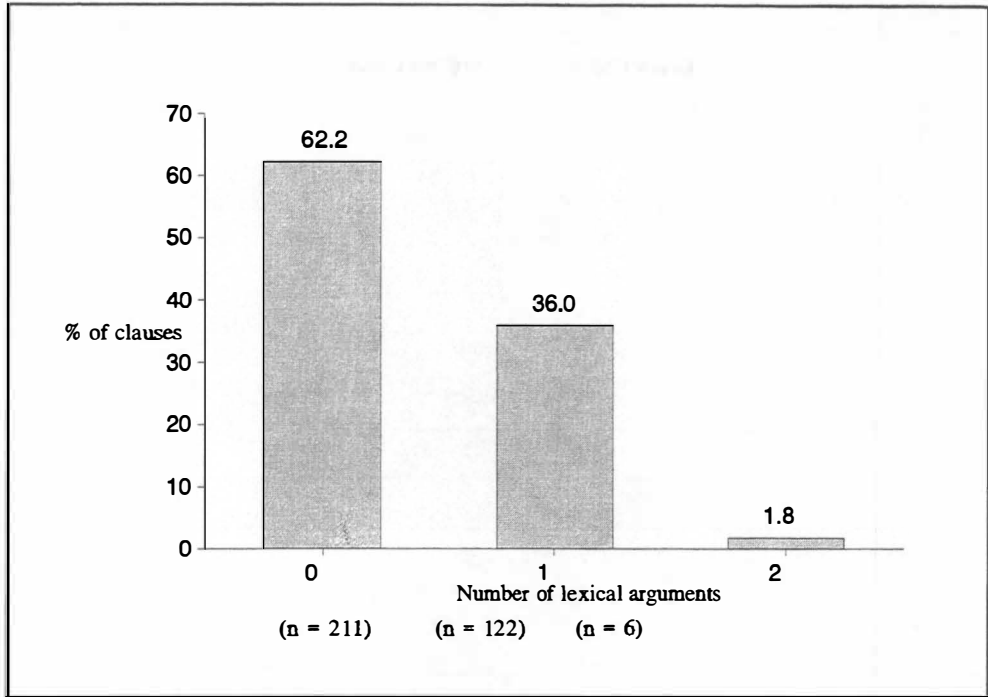


FIGURE 4.1: FREQUENCY OF CLAUSES WITH ZERO, ONE OR TWO LEXICAL ARGUMENTS (TRANSITIVE AND INTRANSITIVE CLAUSES COMBINED) (n = 339)
 $(\chi^2 = 187.03, d.f. = 2, p < 0.001)$

TABLE 4.1: TRANSITIVITY AND NUMBER OF LEXICAL ARGUMENTS IN CLAUSE

| | 0 Lex Arg | | 1 Lex Arg | | 2 Lex Arg | | Total |
|--------------|-----------|------|-----------|------|-----------|-----|------------------|
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | n |
| Transitive | 61 | 43.9 | 72 | 51.8 | 6 | 4.3 | 139 |
| Intransitive | 150 | 75.0 | 50 | 25.0 | – | – | 200 |
| Total | 211 | 62.2 | 122 | 36.0 | 6 | 1.8 | 339 ¹ |

Just as Du Bois (1987:819ff) observes for his data, if lexical mentions were distributed randomly across argument positions, there would be more clauses containing two lexical arguments than are attested, given that in the Roviana corpus 220 of the 488 mentions are lexical (45.1% compared to Du Bois' 44.2%). Roviana is therefore seen to conform to Du Bois' (1987:819) *One Lexical Argument Constraint*:

Avoid more than one lexical argument per clause.

¹

The remaining 118 clauses in the corpus contain non-verbal predicates.

As Du Bois notes, this constraint is a tendency only, since there are some clauses containing two lexical arguments.

Now, while the Roviana data conform to this constraint, Du Bois' formulation makes only a minor claim for intransitive clauses, given that they cannot contain more than one argument in any case. However, Du Bois' data apparently indicate an equal preference for zero or one lexical argument in transitive or intransitive clauses in Sacapultec, as can be seen in Table 4.2, based on Table 1 in Du Bois (1987:819).

TABLE 4.2: TRANSITIVITY AND NUMBER OF LEXICAL ARGUMENTS IN CLAUSE IN SACAPULTEC MAYAN
(Based on Du Bois 1987:819)

| | 0 Lex Arg | | 1 Lex Arg | | 2 Lex Arg | | Total |
|--------------|-----------|------|-----------|------|-----------|-----|-------|
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | n |
| Transitive | 84 | 46.9 | 90 | 50.3 | 5 | 2.8 | 179 |
| Intransitive | 127 | 48.1 | 137 | 51.9 | – | – | 264 |
| Total | 211 | 46.3 | 240 | 52.6 | 5 | 1.1 | 456 |

From the Roviana data in Table 4.1, illustrated in Figure 4.2 below, it can be seen that precisely 75.0% of the intransitive clauses have less than the maximum possible one lexical argument, while 95.7% of the transitive clauses have less than the maximum possible two lexical arguments. Thus, the restriction on quantity could perhaps be stated more strongly as:

Avoid filling all possible argument positions with lexical mentions.

Obviously further empirical testing is necessary to determine the extent to which this stronger constraint is upheld in Roviana discourse, and in the discourse of other languages. For now, it is sufficient to observe that Roviana conforms to Du Bois' *One Lexical Argument Constraint*, "Avoid more than one lexical argument per clause".

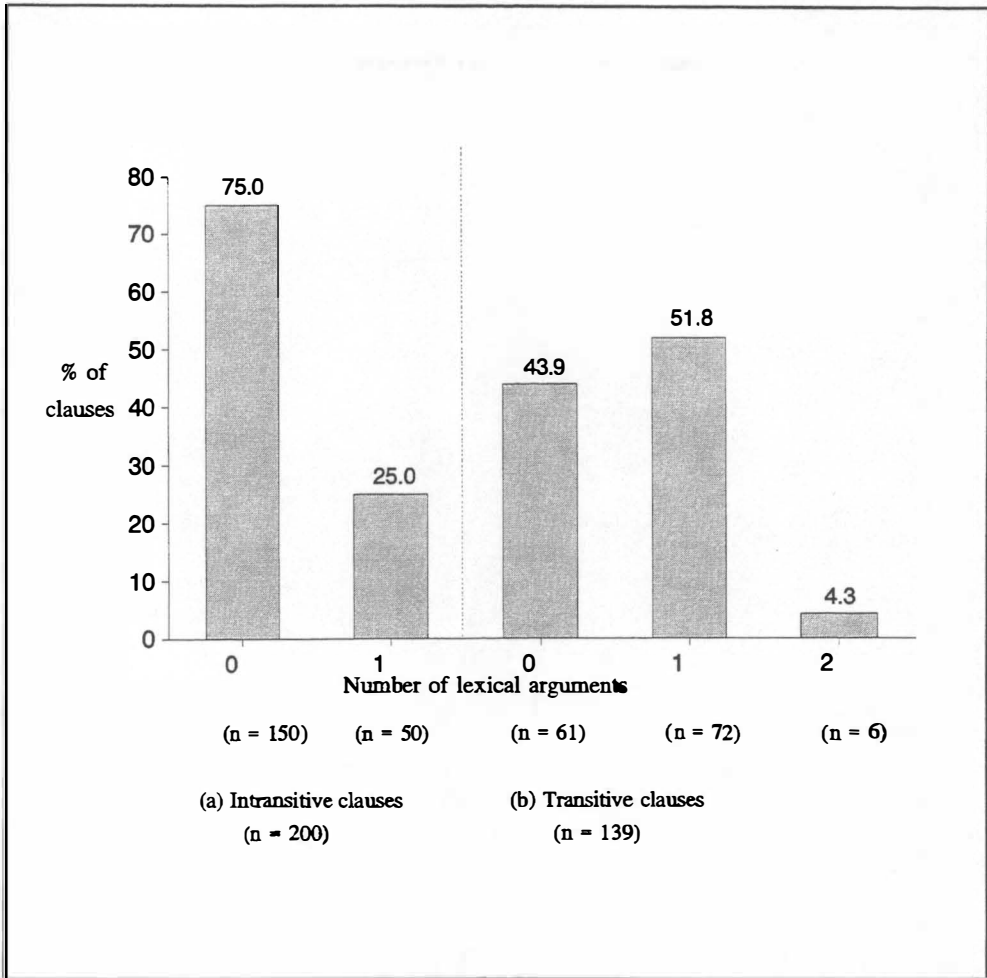


FIGURE 4.2: FREQUENCY OF CLAUSES WITH ZERO, ONE AND TWO LEXICAL ARGUMENTS IN ROVIANA (TRANSITIVE AND INTRANSITIVE CLAUSES) (n = 339)

Du Bois (1987:821ff) turns to considering where among the grammatical roles the single lexical argument occurs. Figure 4.3, based on Table 4.3 below, presents the distribution of lexical mentions by grammatical role. For example, the graph shows the number of lexical mentions in A as a percentage of the total number of lexical mentions in all positions (17 out of 220, i.e. 7.7%).

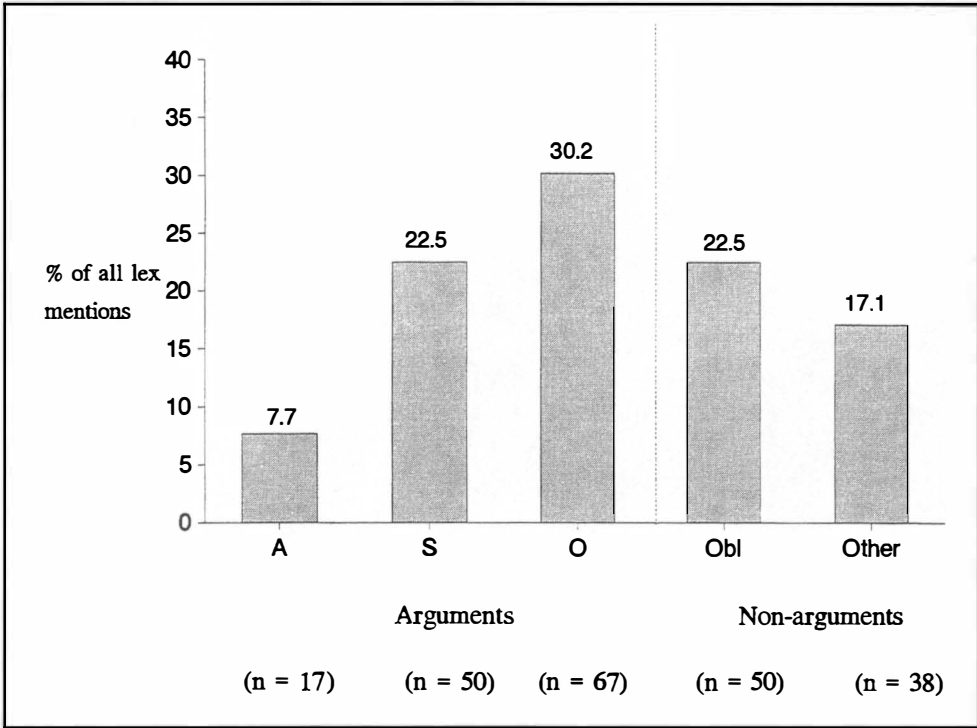


FIGURE 4.3: WHERE DO LEXICAL MENTIONS GO?
 DISTRIBUTION OF LEXICAL MENTIONS AMONG GRAMMATICAL ROLES (n = 222)
 $(\chi^2 = 30.75, \text{d.f.} = 4, p < 0.001)$

Figure 4.3 shows, in accordance with Du Bois' study, that a small proportion of lexical mentions occur in A as opposed to S and O or the non-argument positions. As with Du Bois' data, the low incidence of lexical A's is not merely a reflection of the low incidence of A's overall. As seen in Table 4.3, A's occur with about the same frequency as O's (112 mentions of A versus 128 mentions of O), and so cannot be considered rare.

TABLE 4.3: GRAMMATICAL ROLE AND MORPHOLOGICAL TYPE OF EACH MENTION

| | Lexical | | Pronominal | | Affixal | | Total |
|---------|---------|-------|------------|------|---------|------|-------|
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | n |
| A | 17 | 15.2 | 95 | 84.8 | - | - | 112 |
| S | 50 | 33.1 | 101 | 66.9 | - | - | 151 |
| O | 67 | 52.3 | 7 | 5.5 | 54 | 42.2 | 128 |
| Oblique | 50 | 100.0 | 0 | 0.0 | - | - | 50 |
| Other | 38 | 80.9 | 9 | 19.1 | - | - | 47 |
| Total | 220 | 45.1 | 212 | 43.4 | 54 | 11.1 | 488 |

Given that A's occur about as frequently as O's, Du Bois (1987:822) asks "What proportion of each argument position is lexical?". Figure 4.4 below, based on Table 4.3, presents the data to answer this question for Roviana.

In Du Bois' corpus, 48.1% of S mentions, 45.8% of O mentions, and 6.1% of A mentions are lexical, suggesting an equal preference for {S, O} as opposed to A. As Figure 4.4 shows, A is the least likely of the arguments to contain lexical mentions in Roviana. If lexical mentions were randomly distributed across grammatical roles, there would be a greater number of lexical A's than the observed 17. However, as Table 4.4 below shows, lexical mentions tend to occur in non-A positions more than in A positions. The Yates corrected χ^2 test indicates that there is an extremely low probability ($p < 0.001$) that this patterning is due to chance.

TABLE 4.4: MORPHOLOGICAL TYPE AND GRAMMATICAL ROLE (ALL ROLES)
(based on Table 4.3 above)

(Yates corrected $\chi^2 = 51.62$, d.f. = 1, $p < 0.001$)

| | Lexical | Non-lexical |
|-------|---------|-------------|
| A | 17 | 95 |
| Non-A | 203 | 171 |

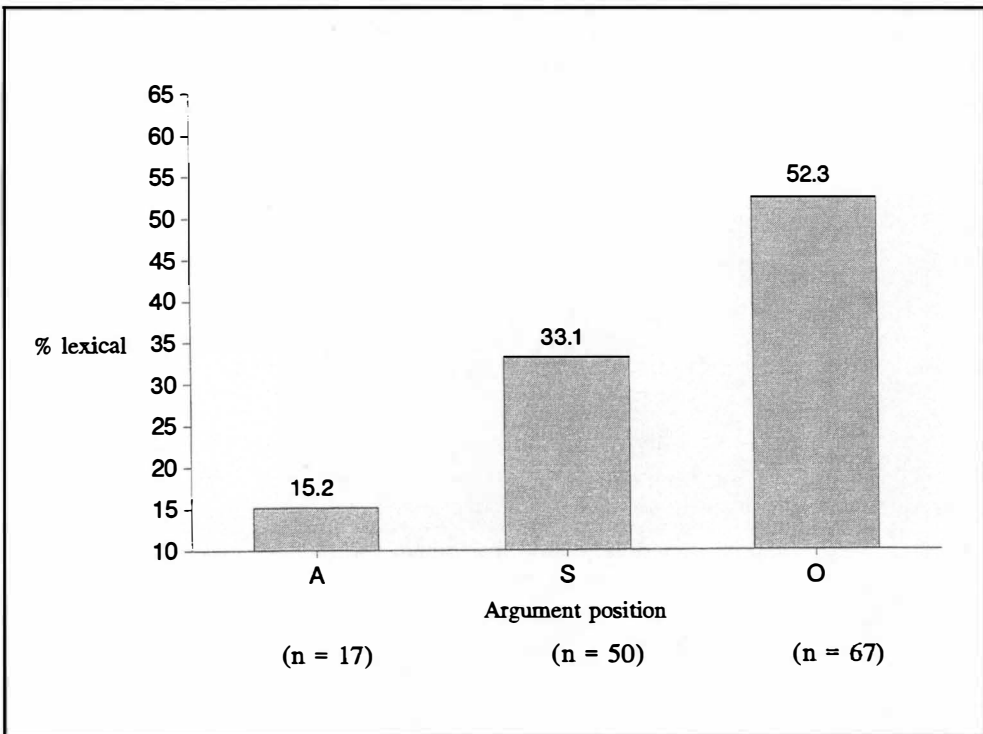


FIGURE 4.4: WHAT PROPORTION OF EACH ARGUMENT POSITION IS LEXICAL? (n = 134)

Furthermore, as Table 4.5 shows, of the arguments, S and O are more likely than A to contain lexical mentions. Again, the Yates corrected χ^2 test indicates that this patterning is not likely to be random ($p < 0.001$).

TABLE 4.5: MORPHOLOGICAL TYPE AND GRAMMATICAL ROLE (ARGUMENTS ONLY)
(based on Table 4.3 above)

(Yates corrected $\chi^2 = 24.23$, d.f. = 1, $p < 0.001$)

| | Lexical | Non-lexical |
|-----|---------|-------------|
| A | 17 | 95 |
| S+O | 117 | 162 |

From the statistically significant patterns seen above in Tables 4.4 and 4.5 and in Figures 4.3 and 4.4 above, which demonstrate a strong tendency for A not to contain lexical mentions, Roviana is seen to conform to Du Bois' (1987:823) *Non-lexical A Constraint* which states:

Avoid lexical A's.

The above discussion has demonstrated that Roviana discourse adheres to the grammatical aspects of Preferred Argument Structure (PAS). In Roviana discourse, there is a preference for not more than one overt lexical argument in a clause. While Roviana exhibits this preference, which has been demonstrated for other languages (see, for example, Du Bois 1987), the data from Roviana suggest that in Roviana there is a preference for not filling all available argument positions with lexical mentions. The single lexical argument which may occur favours the set {S, O} in opposition to A.

4.2.2 TENDENCIES IN PRAGMATICS

Du Bois (1987:824) notes that:

...differences between argument positions extend to the pragmatic dimension as well [as the grammatical dimension: SHC]. Argument positions differ not only in their occupants' morphological type, but in their pragmatic (information flow) type as well.

As noted in §4.1.2.4 above, I distinguish only two information statuses in the Roviana data, viz. given and new. In this section, I examine the distribution of new and given mentions in the discourse of Roviana.

As Figure 4.5 below, based on Table 4.6 below, shows so strikingly, not a single transitive clause in the Roviana corpus contains two new arguments. Now, it may be that the absence of any transitive clauses in the Roviana data with two new arguments simply reflects the rarity of transitive clauses. However, as shown above in §4.2.1, 139 out of the 339 clauses examined (41.0%) are transitive. Transitive clauses can therefore not be said to be rare.

Perhaps the absence of clauses with two new arguments reflects the fact that there are only five clauses with two lexical mentions (see Table 4.2 above) in the Roviana corpus. However, while new mentions are usually made with lexical NP's, there is not a one-to-one correlation between the information status new and lexical NP's. As Du Bois (1987:830) notes, new mentions usually occur in lexical NP's, but not all lexical NP's contain new mentions.

In view of the above, Roviana supports Du Bois' (1987:826) *One New Argument Constraint*,

Avoid more than one new argument per clause.

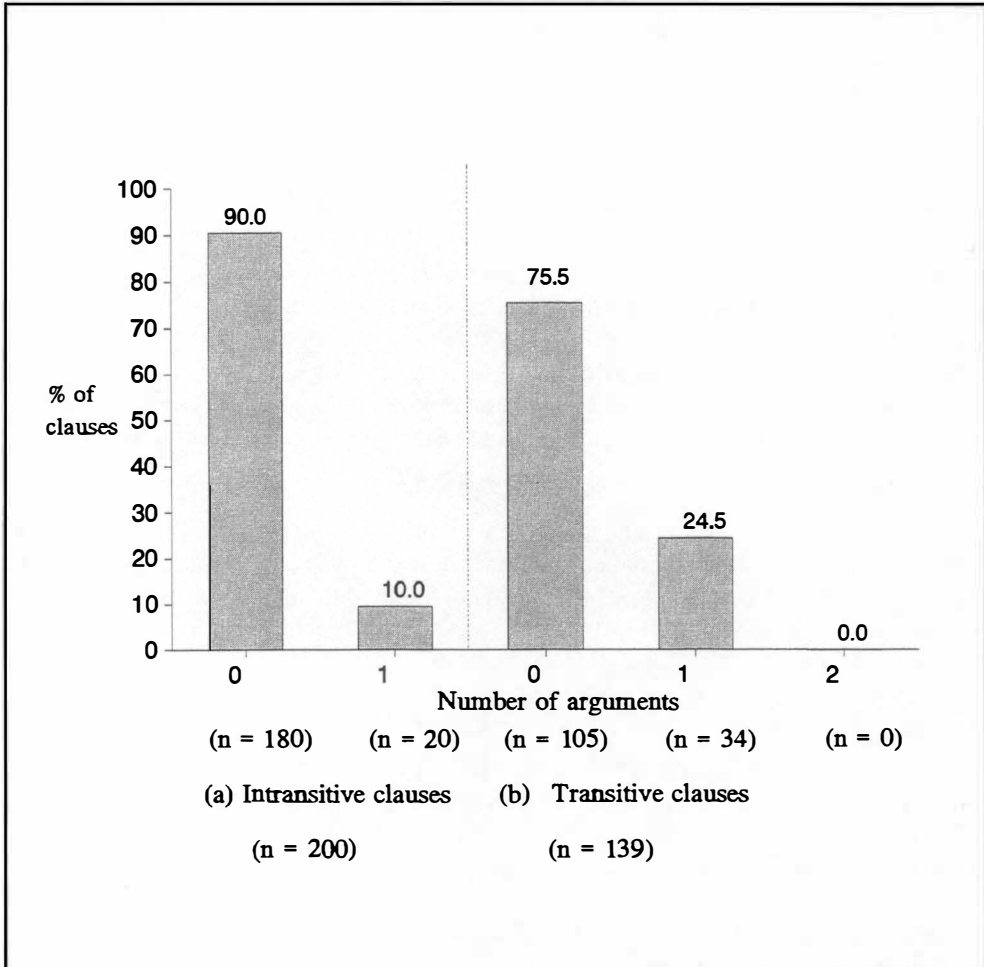


FIGURE 4.5: FREQUENCY OF CLAUSES WITH ZERO, ONE, AND TWO NEW ARGUMENTS (INTRANSITIVE VERSUS TRANSITIVE CLAUSES)

As can be seen in Table 4.6 below, both transitive and intransitive clauses in the Roviana corpus show an apparent tendency towards not having any new arguments in a clause; 75.5% of transitive clauses (105 out of 139) contain no new arguments, while 90% of intransitive clauses (180 out of 200) contain no new arguments. Of course, new arguments are necessary for normal human discourse to proceed. The relatively small number of clauses with new arguments in the corpus perhaps reflects the preponderance of first person monologues, favouring pronominal mentions of the narrator.

TABLE 4.6: TRANSITIVITY AND NUMBER OF NEW ARGUMENTS IN CLAUSE

| | 0 new args | | 1 new arg | | 2 new args | | Total |
|--------------|------------|------|-----------|------|------------|-----|-------|
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | n |
| Transitive | 105 | 75.5 | 34 | 24.5 | 0 | 0.0 | 139 |
| Intransitive | 180 | 90.0 | 20 | 10.0 | – | – | 200 |
| Total | 285 | 84.4 | 54 | 15.6 | 0 | 0.0 | 339 |

Now, Du Bois' formulation of the *One New Argument Constraint* makes little more than a minor claim in the case of intransitive clauses, which, by definition, cannot contain two arguments. Furthermore, an examination of Table 4.6 reveals that 100% of the transitive clauses contain less than the maximum possible two new arguments, while 90% of the intransitive clause contain less than the maximum possible one new argument. As was the case in §4.2.1, I suggest a stronger claim than Du Bois', formulated as follows:

Avoid filling all the available argument positions with new arguments.

Du Bois' (1987:825) data would appear to support this stronger claim, since 73.1% of his intransitive clauses (n = 260) contain less than the maximum one possible new argument, while 100% of his transitive clauses (n = 185) contain less than the maximum two possible new arguments. However, for now I merely note this possible constraint. It may be that future study of the discourse of other languages will demonstrate the extent to which this stronger constraint can be upheld. The issue to which I turn next, is a consideration of the distribution of the single new argument which may occur.

As Table 4.7 below shows, 109 out of 483 mentions (22.6%) are new. If the new mentions were distributed randomly across the five grammatical roles identified here, there would be approximately 22 mentions in each grammatical role. Thus, by random distribution, we would expect a non-zero number of clauses with both new A and new O. In fact, the data do not show an equal distribution of new mentions across argument and non-argument positions. Furthermore, as the χ^2 test ($\chi^2 = 98.17$; d.f. = 4; $p < 0.001$) indicates, there is an extremely low probability that the observed distribution of new mentions is due to chance.

TABLE 4.7: GRAMMATICAL ROLE AND INFORMATION STATUS OF MENTIONS

 $(\chi^2 = 98.17, \text{d.f.} = 4, p < 0.001)$

| | New | | Given | | Total |
|---------|-----|------|-------|------|-------|
| | n | % | n | % | n |
| A | 5 | 4.5 | 107 | 95.5 | 112 |
| S | 20 | 13.8 | 125 | 86.2 | 145 |
| O | 29 | 22.3 | 101 | 77.7 | 130 |
| Oblique | 33 | 66.0 | 17 | 34.0 | 50 |
| Other | 22 | 47.8 | 24 | 52.2 | 46 |
| Total | 109 | 22.6 | 374 | 77.4 | 483 |

Now, given that the χ^2 test indicates a statistical significance to the distribution of new mentions, the question that arises is where those new mentions occur. The answer to this question is graphically represented in Figure 4.6.

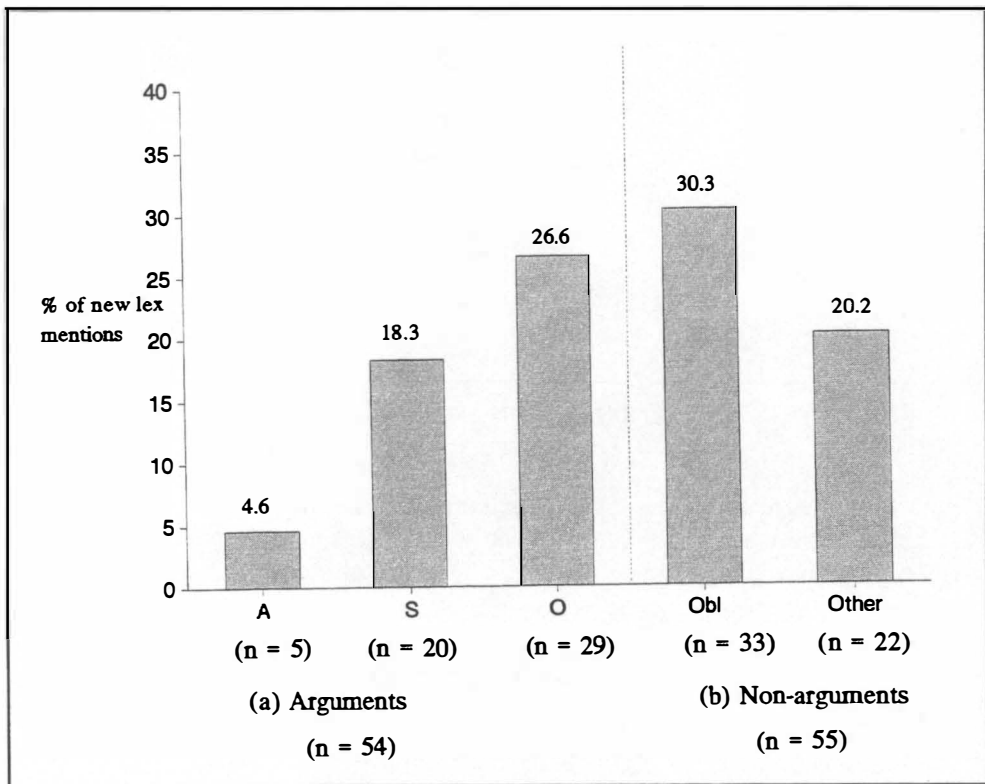


FIGURE 4.6: WHERE DO NEW MENTIONS GO?
DISTRIBUTION OF NEW MENTIONS AMONG GRAMMATICAL ROLES (n = 109)

As Figure 4.6 shows, new mentions appear to be relatively frequent in all grammatical roles except A. New mentions are approximately four times less likely to go in A than in S or O. Furthermore, as illustrated by Figure 4.7, based on Table 4.7 above, S and O are the argument roles most likely to contain new mentions, whereas A is the argument role least likely to contain new mentions. Roviana thus follows Du Bois' (1987:827) *Given A Constraint*, formulated as:

Avoid new A's.

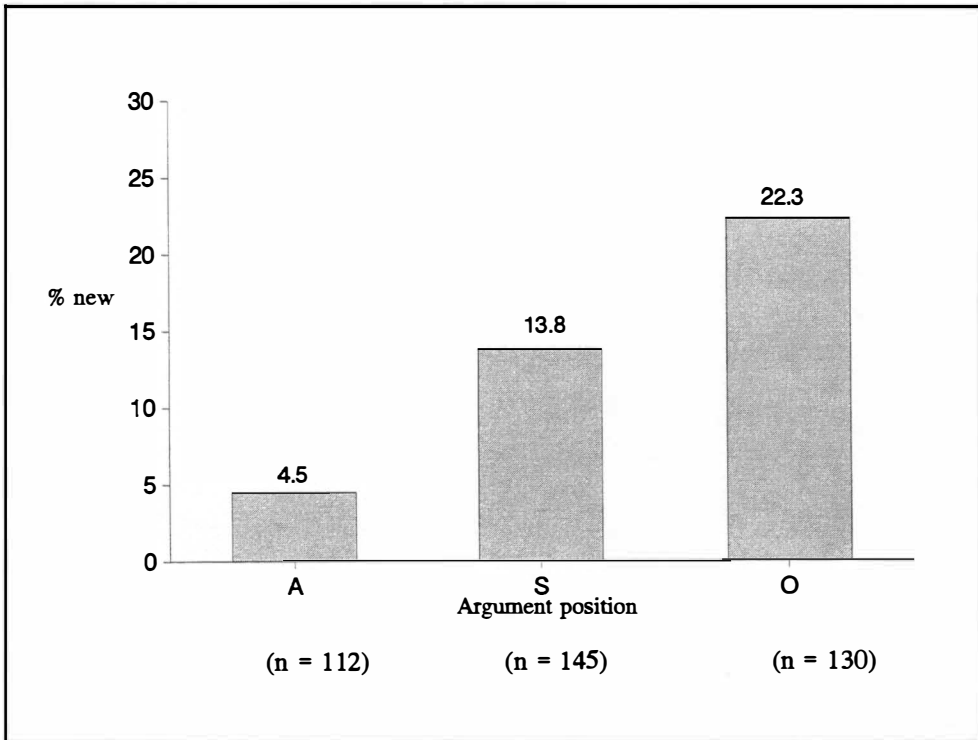


FIGURE 4.7: WHAT PROPORTION OF EACH ARGUMENT POSITION IS NEW? (n = 387)

Table 4.8 shows that the preference for grammatical roles other than A for new mentions is statistically significant, while Table 4.9 shows that of the arguments, there is a statistical preference for new arguments to occur in S and O in opposition to A.

TABLE 4.8: INFORMATION STATUS AND GRAMMATICAL ROLE (ALL ROLES)
(based on Table 4.7 above)
(Yates corrected $\chi^2 = 26.01$, d.f. = 1, $p < 0.001$)

| | New | Non-new |
|-------|-----|---------|
| A | 5 | 107 |
| Non-A | 104 | 267 |

TABLE 4.9: INFORMATION STATUS AND GRAMMATICAL ROLE (ARGUMENTS ONLY)
 (based on Table 4.7 above)
 (Yates corrected $\chi^2 = 10.73$, d.f. = 1, $p < 0.005$)

| | New | Non-new |
|-----|-----|---------|
| A | 5 | 107 |
| S+O | 49 | 226 |

It must be noted that although a χ^2 test of the grouping S versus A+O according to the new versus non-new distinction is not statistically significant, the grouping O versus A+S does appear to be statistically significant, as shown in Table 4.10.

TABLE 4.10: INFORMATION STATUS AND GRAMMATICAL ROLE (ARGUMENTS ONLY)
 (based on Table 4.7 above)
 (Yates corrected $\chi^2 = 10.36$, d.f. = 1, $p < 0.005$)

| | New | Non-new |
|-----|-----|---------|
| O | 29 | 101 |
| A+S | 25 | 232 |

The statistical significance of the grouping in Table 4.10 above does not, however, contradict the significance of the grouping in Table 4.9. The figures in Table 4.9 suggest a tendency for new mentions to go in S and O rather than A. What Table 4.10 shows is that new mentions favour O. Thus, new mentions favour {S, O}, especially O.

In conclusion, it has been shown that there is a parallel in information flow in Roviana discourse to the morpho-syntactic union of {S, O} in opposition to A, and to the preference for certain grammatical configurations organised according to the same opposition. There is a strong avoidance in Roviana discourse of clauses involving two new arguments. The single new argument which may occur in a clause does not occur in random grammatical positions, but rather disfavours A. Out of the argument positions, this single argument favours the set {S, O} in opposition to A.

4.2.3 INFORMATION PRESSURE

Du Bois (1987) discusses an *Information Pressure Quotient*, defined as the number of new mentions of human referents as a proportion of the number of clauses. He claims that the various tendencies adduced above are clearest under situations of high information pressure, since it is only as this pressure increases that the differing roles of {S, O} and A in discourse become clear.

Now, the corpus on which Du Bois' study is based has 70 new mentions of human referents in 458 clauses, giving an Information Pressure Quotient of 0.153, that is one new human referent approximately every six and a half clauses. In the Roviana corpus examined

here, there are 31 new human mentions out of 457 clauses, giving an Information Pressure Quotient of 0.068, or approximately one new human mention per fifteen clauses. The information pressure in the Roviana corpus is thus much less than that of Du Bois' corpus. Unfortunately, Du Bois does not give any indication of what constitutes high pressure on any absolute scale, so it is somewhat difficult to calibrate the present study with his.

Du Bois also points out that different genres of discourse will have different information pressures. Third person narrative of the type on which his study is based is likely to have the highest information pressure, whereas conversation involving first and second person referents is likely to have much lower information pressure. Now, the corpus examined in the present study consists of many different genres, as outlined in §4.1.1, ranging from ego-centric discussions of plans for the future, to third person narratives told in folk-genres.

If it were the case that only studies matched for information pressure and genre could meaningfully be studied for Preferred Argument Structure, or that only retellings of films (which comprise Du Bois' 1987 corpus) provided sufficient information pressure to make these discourse tendencies clear, then Du Bois' findings would carry less weight. However, as the present study has demonstrated, even in a corpus which has a much lower Information Pressure Quotient, and which consists of a mixture of discourse genres, Du Bois' observed tendencies still hold, and are therefore all the more significant.

Given that the interests of Du Bois' study and of the present study are in patterns in discourse as they motivate morphosyntactic patterns, it is important that the observed tendencies be seen to hold for all genres, especially discourse oriented around first and second person referents. Thus, while the tendencies observed by Du Bois may be clearest in a homogeneous corpus of third person narratives, the present study demonstrates that such tendencies also hold in a corpus consisting of a variety of genres.

4.3 COMPETING TENDENCIES IN DISCOURSE

Du Bois asks why all languages are not ergative, given the tendencies observed in discourse which motivate ergative patterning. The answer to this question, he suggests, lies in competing motivations which unite S and A in opposition to O. One factor uniting S and A in discourse is human mentions.

As Figure 4.8, based on Table 4.11, shows for Roviana, human mentions favour argument roles. Amongst the argument roles, A and S are more likely than O to contain human mentions.

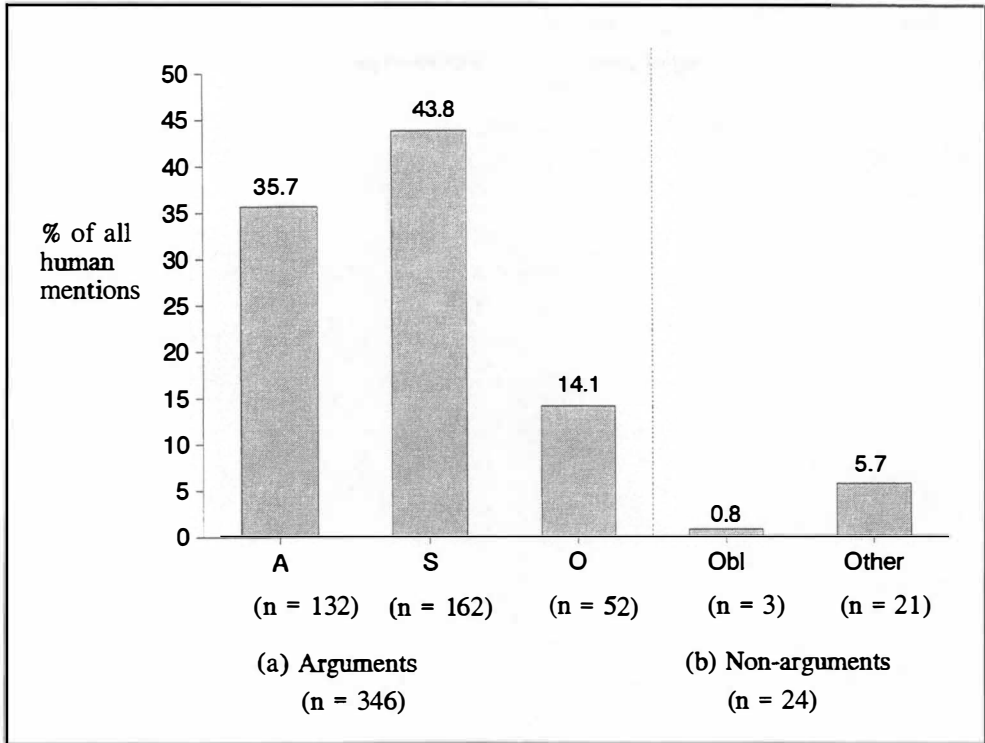


FIGURE 4.8: WHERE DO HUMAN MENTIONS GO?

DISTRIBUTION OF HUMAN MENTIONS AMONG GRAMMATICAL ROLES (n = 370)

Table 4.11 below shows that in Roviana the overwhelming majority of mentions in A and S are human (93.6% of A (n = 132) and 83.1% of S (n = 162)), whereas the majority of mentions in O and oblique are non-humans. Animate non-humans are few, and do not show any clear distributional preference. The tendency for human mentions to occur in {A, S} perhaps reflects the anthropocentric bias of the narratives in the Roviana corpus, a bias which is widespread in the discourse of all languages.

TABLE 4.11: GRAMMATICAL ROLE AND ANIMACY
(INHERENT SEMANTIC CLASS) OF MENTION

| | Human | | Inanimate | | Animate (non-human) | | Total |
|---------|-------|------|-----------|------|---------------------|-----|-------|
| | n | % | n | % | n | % | n |
| A | 132 | 93.6 | 7 | 5.0 | 2 | 1.4 | 141 |
| S | 162 | 83.1 | 31 | 15.9 | 2 | 1.0 | 195 |
| O | 52 | 39.4 | 77 | 58.3 | 3 | 2.3 | 132 |
| Oblique | 3 | 6.1 | 46 | 93.9 | 0 | 0 | 49 |
| Other | 21 | 53.8 | 17 | 43.6 | 1 | 2.6 | 39 |
| Total | 370 | 66.5 | 178 | 32.0 | 8 | 1.4 | 556 |

Interestingly, 39.4% of all O mentions in Roviana are human, compared to 10% for Du Bois' corpus. Nonetheless, Roviana still supports Du Bois' observation that A and S are united as the preferred locus for human mentions in opposition to O. As shown in Table 4.12, out of the arguments, A and S are the preferred locus for human mentions. Furthermore, as shown in Table 4.13, {S, A} is preferred for human mentions as opposed to O, oblique, and other combined.

TABLE 4.12: HUMAN-NESS AND GRAMMATICAL ROLE (ARGUMENTS ONLY)

(based on Table 4.11)

(Yates corrected $\chi^2 = 111.31$, d.f. = 1, $p < 0.001$)

| | Human | Non-human |
|-----|-------|-----------|
| S+A | 294 | 42 |
| O | 52 | 80 |

TABLE 4.13: HUMAN-NESS AND GRAMMATICAL ROLE (ALL ROLES)

(based on Table 4.11)

(Yates corrected $\chi^2 = 165.10$, d.f. = 1, $p < 0.001$)

| | Human | Non-human |
|-----------|-------|-----------|
| S+A | 294 | 42 |
| All other | 76 | 144 |

In conclusion, Roviana not only displays tendencies in discourse which motivate ergative grammar, but it also displays tendencies which could motivate other patternings. Since both kinds of tendencies can occur in the discourse of a single language, it is clearly not the case that there is a deterministic relationship between the existence of ergative patterning in discourse and the existence of ergative grammar, nor between the existence of accusative patterning in discourse (linking S and A) and accusative grammar. As Du Bois points out, ergative patterning in discourse is not an effect of ergative grammar, given that ergative patterning in discourse is manifested in languages which do not have morphosyntactic ergativity (English being one such language). Neither is it the case that ergative patterning in discourse necessarily results in ergative grammar, given that there exist languages with ergative patterning in discourse, but without ergative grammar. Although tendencies in discourse may be said to *motivate* the form of grammars, it is not the case that such tendencies *determine* the form of grammars.

4.4 CONCLUSION

Roviana has been shown to conform to Du Bois' (1987) *Preferred Argument Structure* with respect to grammar and pragmatics.

In grammar, there is a preference for no more than a single lexical argument occurring within the clause, with Roviana exhibiting a preference for not filling all available argument positions with lexical mentions. The single argument which may occur favours the arguments {S, O} in opposition to A, mirroring the ergative-absolutive distinction in grammar.

In pragmatics, Roviana demonstrates a preference for not more than one new argument within a clause, with an apparent preference for not filling all available argument positions with new mentions. The one new argument which may occur favours A in opposition to {S, O}, again mirroring the morphosyntactic distinction between ergative and absolutive.

In terms of information pressure, that is the number of new human mentions as a proportion of the total number of clauses examined, the Roviana data has less pressure than Du Bois' (1987) study of Sacapultec, but still exhibits the same tendencies in discourse.

Finally, in competition with ergative patterns in grammar and pragmatics, there is an accusative pattern. Human mentions tend to occur in {A, S} in opposition to O.

In the next chapter, I shall consider the relationship between these observed tendencies in the discourse of Roviana and the grammatical features of the language, as outlined in Chapter 3.

CHAPTER 5

DIACHRONIC DEVELOPMENTS

There is evidence to suggest that Roviana's morphosyntactic ergativity has developed from a system which was not previously ergative. In this chapter I will consider how the present patterning might have arisen, taking into consideration comparative evidence as well as plausible internal reconstructions.

5.1 THE SITUATION IN RELATED LANGUAGES

Ross (1988) postulates two chains of Oceanic languages derived from Proto New Georgia/Ysabel, the proto-language from which Roviana is descended. He labels these chains the "New Georgia chain", consisting of Roviana, Ghanongga, Lungga, Simbo, Nduke, Ughele, Hoava, Marovo and Vangunu, and the "Ysabel chain", consisting of Kia (Zabana), Kokota, Laghu, Zazao, Blablanga, Maringe and Gao. In the following subsections I shall examine the data from those languages for which I have sufficient information to compare their morphological systems of case marking with the system of Roviana. The glosses given are tentative only, given the paucity of data available to me. Some of the languages have morphosyntactic ergativity, while other languages do not have morphosyntactic ergativity, but nonetheless have cognates of the forms used in Roviana to mark the ergative-absolutive distinction.

5.1.1 NEW GEORGIA CHAIN

Within the New Georgia Chain, for Simbo, Nduke and Ughele I either have no data at all on clausal syntax or lack sufficient data to determine whether there is ergative morphosyntax or some other system of case marking. In the case of Ghanongga, Lungga, Hoava, Marovo and Vangunu, it is possible, based on the data to hand, to make some tentative comments about the morpho-syntax of the case-marking of the core arguments.

5.1.1.1 KUBOKOTA

Since I do not have data for Ghanongga, I have drawn from Grace's (1955a) questionnaire for Kubokota, a dialect closely related to Ghanongga.

From the available data, there is no evidence of morphological ergativity in Kubokota. Rather, morphological marking would appear to be neutral, as illustrated by the use of *aza* 's/he' in examples 5.1 and 5.2 for A, S and O roles.

- 5.1 *Za* *dogori-a* *aza aza pa* *noro.*
 s/he.FOC see-3SG.DO s/he s/he PREP yesterday
 He₁ saw him₂ yesterday. (Grace 1955a)
- 5.2 *Za* *abutu keni* *aza.*
 s/he.FOC run leave s/he
 He ran away. (Grace 1955a)

5.1.1.2 LUNGGA

Lungga apparently has morphological ergativity (Grace 1955b). Pronouns in absolutive are marked by the article *si*, which I gloss 'ABS', whereas pronouns in A are not marked with any special articles. Unlike Roviana, there do not appear to be any special pronominal forms which distinguish absolutive versus ergative, although there are special forms used for fronted NP's. Examples 5.3 and 5.4 illustrate the use of *si* marking absolutive, compared to the zero marking of A in the case of pronouns.

- 5.3 *Sa* *bati-a* *si sa pa* *nioro.*
 s/he.ERG see-3SG.DO ABS s/he PREP yesterday
 He₁ saw him₂ yesterday. (Grace 1955b)
- 5.4 *Abutu riu* *si sa.*
 run leave ABS s/he
 He ran away. (Grace 1955b)

The data are insufficient to determine whether Lungga has morphological ergativity for NP's other than pronouns, or whether it has any syntactic ergativity.

5.1.1.3 HOAVA

Davis (n.d. and pers. comm.) reports some morphological ergativity in Hoava. The article *se* is used to mark proper nouns in absolutive¹, whereas proper nouns as A are not marked by any article. Proper nouns elsewhere are marked by the personal article *e*. Davis also reports a particle *sagi* which occurs after fronted NP's. She suggests that, by a phonological correspondence attested with certain lexical items, whereby Hoava *agi* > Roviana *i/e*, there is a possible cognacy between Hoava *sagi* and Roviana *si*, which also occurs marking fronted constituents in focus constructions (see §5.2.1.1).

Another particle, *ba*, is used in Hoava with an ergative distribution, marking pronouns in absolutive, whereas pronouns in ergative are not marked with any special particles. *Ba* also marks fronted NP's. There does not appear to be any cognate of this particle in Roviana. Example 5.5 illustrates the use of *ba* marking absolutive, in this case S (unfortunately there are no examples of *ba* 'ABS' marking O in Davis n.d.). Examples 5.6 and 5.7 illustrate the use of *ba* 'FOC' to mark fronted constituents.

¹ Karen Davis (pers. comm.) has suggested, since many speakers of Hoava are also proficient in Roviana, that Hoava *se* may have been borrowed from Roviana.

- 5.5 *Hiva puta ba rao ni.*
 want sleep ABS I DEM²
 I really want to sleep. (Davis n.d.)
- 5.6 *Tavola ba koni atu rau na.*
 tomorrow FOC FUT DIR I DEM
 Tomorrow I will come to you. (Davis n.d.)
- 5.7 *Na voku qa ba kabo na.*
 ART voku only FOC cry DEM
 It's only a voku [k.o. bird] crying. (Davis n.d.)

5.1.1.4 MAROVO

Karen Davis (pers. comm.) reports that Marovo has morphological ergativity, although it is not clear from her data if there is also syntactic ergativity.

The particle *ie* ('ABS' and 'FOC') occurs before pronouns and proper nouns in absolutive, and after left-dislocated focus NP's, as illustrated in examples 5.8 and 5.9 (I owe these examples to Karen Davis pers. comm.)

Example 5.8 illustrates the marking of *ia* 's/he' as absolutive (in this case O) with the particle *ie* 'ABS'. In example 5.9, a backgrounded object construction analogous to the ones discussed for Roviana in §3.2.3 and §3.3.5, *ie* marks *ia* 's/he' as absolutive, in this case S.

- 5.8 *Omi-a ia ie Nanisi.*
 see-3SG.DO s/he ABS Nancy
 She sees Nancy.
- 5.9 *Tavete vanua ie ia.*
 build house ABS s/he
 S/he is house-building.

Example 5.10 below illustrates the use of *ie* 'FOC' to mark an NP in focus position, apparently with some contrastive connotation judging by the context in which the example was elicited.

- 5.10 *E Nanisi ie ni tavete vanua.*
 ART Nancy FOC ??³ build house
 It was Nancy who built a house.

It must be noted that for Marovo the use of *ie* is not obligatory for marking absolutive, as seen in examples 5.11 and 5.12.

- 5.11 *Mate muca raka.*
 want sleep I
 I want to sleep.
- 5.12 *Ka la hani.*
 T/A? go we.EXC
 We went.

² Apparently some kind of a demonstrative, based on Davis' notes (Davis n.d.).

³ It is not clear how to gloss *ni* from the available data.

In 5.11, *mate* 'want' is a desiderative marker modifying the verb *muca* 'sleep'. *Raka* 'I', which is S, is not marked with *ie* 'ABS'. In 5.12, *hani* 'we.EXC' is S, but is not marked with the absolutive marker *ie* either. Examples 5.11 and 5.12 suggest that *ie* could be analysed as an emphatic particle which occurs only absolutely, that is *ie* never occurs with A. The distinction between the use of *ie* to mark a focus NP, where it occurs preverbally but after the NP it marks, and the use of *ie* to emphatically mark absolutive, where it occurs post-verbally before the NP it marks, appears valid from the data to hand.

5.1.1.5 VANGUNU

Frank Lichtenberk (pers. comm.) has informed me that Vangunu does not have morphological ergativity.

5.1.2 YSABEL CHAIN

For the Ysabel chain, I do not have sufficient data on Kokota, Laghu, Zazao, Blablanga and Gao to be able to determine the morphosyntactic patterns of case marking for the core arguments. In the case of Kia (Zabana) and Maringe, however, there is sufficient information to determine these patterns.

5.1.2.1 KIA (ZABANA)

From Fitzsimons (1989), it would appear that Zabana has a neutral system of case marking. Furthermore, Fitzsimons (1989:10) specifically mentions that there is no cognate in Zabana of the Roviana *si* 'FOC'.

5.1.2.2 MARINGE

Ross (1988:240-247) discusses the article *si* in Maringe, which he says functions as a topic marker. Maringe does not have any morphosyntactic ergativity.

I shall return to Maringe in §5.2.1.1, where I consider what Ross means by 'topic marker' (which I choose instead to label 'focus' marker) and the implications of this for the development of ergativity in Roviana.

5.1.3 CONCLUSIONS ABOUT RELATED LANGUAGES

As this brief examination of languages in the New Georgia chain (to which Roviana belongs) and the closely related Ysabel chain, for some of the languages for which we have sufficient data, there appear to be split ergative systems of case marking, while for other languages there appear to be fully neutral case-marking systems.

In some languages (Hoava, Lungga, Maringe), there are cognates of the Roviana particle *si* ('ABS' and 'FOC'). In other languages, as for example with Hoava *ba* and Marovo *ie*, both of which occur with focus constructions and with absolutive, the development of ergative marking would at first appear to be independent of the process postulated below for Roviana. Rather than being a mere chance coincidence however, it is likely (Frank Lichtenberk, pers. comm.) that particles like the Hoava *ba* and Marovo *ie* which mirror the

function and distribution of Roviana *si* ('FOC' and 'ABS'), are not independent of Roviana given that the languages are all relatively closely related. Rather, it is possible that the grammaticisation outlined in §5.2 occurred once in a language from which various of the contemporary languages are derived, but that the functions of focus marking and marking absolutive have been relexified, now being marked by a particle which is not cognate with the Roviana *si*.

In §5.2.1.1, I consider the argument put forward by Ross (1988) that Roviana's ergative morpho-syntax and Maringe's topic marking derive from the same source.

5.2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF ERGATIVITY IN ROVIANA

5.2.1 ETYMOLOGIES

5.2.1.1 THE ETYMOLOGY OF *si*

In examining the etymology of *si* I shall consider the arguments of Ross (1988), who compares Roviana to the related language Maringe.

Ross classifies Roviana and Maringe as topic-final languages. While this is not true of the synchronic grammar of Roviana, he claims that comparison with Maringe suggests that Roviana was once topic-final.

According to Ross, in Maringe there are two kinds of topicalisation: a preverbal strategy and a clause-final strategy. In the clause-final strategy the topicalised constituent is preceded by the topic marker *si*. Ross (1988:241) notes that:

Almost all cases of both kinds of topic are the subjects of their clauses. However, the occurrence of a few cases of non-subject topic indicates that there is a distinction between subject and topic.

Ross cites examples of objects and adverbial phrases occurring as clause-final topics preceded by *si*, as evidence that the topic is not necessarily the same as the subject (i.e. {A, S}). Ross' definition of the notion 'topic' requires clarification. He briefly remarks on the two kinds of topic (preverbal and sentence final) in Maringe, saying that:

it is clear that they both serve to (re)introduce referents into discourse. (Ross 1988:241)

Similarly, Ross (1988:421, endnote 81) briefly mentions, that in Mono-Alu (spoken on the Shortland Islands, Solomon Islands), '*ga* marks topics (newly introduced referents).' This definition of 'topic' is the opposite of the more usual definition, in which topic is equated with old information (e.g. the Prague School definitions of 'theme' as old information and 'rheme' as new information, subsequently identified with 'topic' and 'comment' respectively) and also differs from the definition of theme as the first constituent of the sentence (Halliday 1967), or Chafe's (1976:50) definition of the topic as an element which:

sets a spatial, temporal, or individual framework within which the main predication holds.

I will term the type of constituent Ross refers to a 'focus', this being a more usual term for newly presented information.

Ross argues that the constituent introduced by *si* in Roviana used to be a focus constituent in a precursor of modern-day Roviana. However, he claims that, in modern-day Roviana, the constituent introduced by *si* is a pragmatic pivot. Ross gives three reasons for considering this constituent to be a pragmatic pivot in Roviana. He also observes that this constituent is absolutive.

Ross' first reason for considering the phrase introduced by *si* to be a pragmatic pivot in modern-day Roviana is that this phrase is always a core argument. While this is true, Ross claims that it is the pragmatic pivot which is indexed on the verb. In fact, as shown in §3.1.3 above, and as is clear even from Ross' own examples, not all absolutive NP's are indexed on the verb. Instead, it is only O's which are indexed on the verb.

Ross' second reason for considering the phrase introduced by *si* to be a pragmatic pivot in modern-day Roviana is that this constituent is the one which is always coreferential with the head of a relative clause. Now, since *si* does not occur in subordinate clauses, and therefore is never used to mark absolutive in a relative clause, this claim needs some explanation. What Ross appears to mean, based on the data he gives, is that in a kernel clause from which the relative clause could be said to be derived in a theory involving transformations, the NP coreferential with the head of the relative clause would be marked with *si*. In Maringe relativisation is apparently sensitive to focus-hood.

Ross claims that, if the position to be relativised on is not absolutive, it must be made absolutive by the use of clausal nominalisation, a process which he calls 'antipassive'. I, however, do not consider clausal nominalisation to be antipassive. Relative clauses, being subordinate clauses, do not have ergative morpho-syntax. It is therefore not appropriate to talk of antipassives in a system which is not even ergative. Furthermore, the patient in such clauses is not marked as oblique, and the construction therefore does not satisfy one of Dixon's (1987:8) criteria for antipassives. Effectively, Ross argues that relative clause formation operates on an ergative-absolutive pivot. This is what I have demonstrated in §3.3.1, although I do not subscribe to a theory of transformations.

Ross' third reason for labelling the constituent introduced by *si* as a pragmatic pivot is that the constituent order of Roviana is:

PRED/VP [+ErgNP] + *si* + PIVOT.

Ross claims that if the constituent introduced by *si* were a focus, then he would expect Roviana to have an unmarked clause order without a focus. In fact, the 'pivot' is obligatory in a complete clause in Roviana.

Ross suggests that the preverbal topicalisation strategy of Roviana is a relatively recent development, arising after the postverbal constituent marked by *si* had been reanalysed as a pivot rather than a focus.

Based on the formal identity of the Roviana *si* and the Maringe *si*, and given that aspects of the syntax of Roviana which are sensitive to the constituent introduced by *si* mirror aspects of the syntax of Maringe (and various other Oceanic languages) which are sensitive to focus-hood Ross concludes that in Roviana, the constituent introduced by *si* represents the historical reanalysis of an erstwhile topic (i.e. focus) construction.

Now, Ross argues that although Roviana and Maringe both once had a focus construction employing *si*, the two languages have developed differently. Ross suggests that in Maringe, which tends to have subjects (i.e. A and S) as foci rather than other constituents, the

si-marked constituent is in the process of being reanalysed as a pivot marker, in this case a subject marker. Unfortunately, Ross does not offer any quantitative justification for his claim that subjects occur more frequently than other constituents as foci in Maringe.

In the case of Roviana, Ross argues that the precursor of modern-day Roviana tended to contain more objects as foci than did the precursor to modern-day Maringe. The reanalysis of the focus constituent introduced by *si* in Roviana as an absolute pragmatic pivot was facilitated by the fact that the verbal indexing of objects in Roviana enabled recovery of the grammatical role of the constituent introduced by *si*. There are two major problems with this part of Ross' argument. Firstly, Ross does not produce any quantitative evidence of the frequency of subjects and objects as foci in Roviana. Secondly, since Ross does not explicitly distinguish A and S, it is difficult to see why the reanalysis of the focus construction as a marker of subjects (A and S) and objects (O) did not result in a neutral marking, with A, S and O all marked by *si*. What seems to be implicit in Ross' argument is that, given the constituent order

PRED/VP [+ErgNP] + *si* + PIVOT

if the use of *si* were extended to clause-final constituents in general, then in clauses containing two overt arguments, with a VAO constituent order, O would be marked with *si*, while in clauses involving only a single argument, with a VS constituent order, S would be marked with *si*. This implicit argument assumes that the reanalysis of the *si*-marked constituent as a pragmatic pivot would have already begun before it was extended to apply to unmarked constituent orders. The issue of the motivation of the initial reanalysis is not addressed.

In the discussion below I accept Ross' arguments based on the formal identity of Roviana's and Maringe's *si*, and based on the functional equivalence of *si* in the grammar of Roviana to focus markers in the grammar of Maringe and other languages, that the Roviana *si* is etymologically related to an erstwhile focus marker.

Now, accepting that post-verbal *si* is an erstwhile focus marker, it would not be surprising that more instances of S and O should occur as foci, given the patterns observed in the discourse of Roviana (see Chapter 4). As shown in Figure 4.6, new mentions tend not occur in A position. Furthermore, as illustrated in Figure 4.7, amongst the argument roles, S and O are the preferred locus for new mentions. Although oblique and other roles (such as vocatives) also contain a large number of new mentions, these two categories, which are not core arguments, are not potential candidates for reanalysis as pivots according to Ross' criteria.

The second pattern in discourse which is relevant to the development of ergativity in Roviana is the tendency to avoid lexical A's. As Figures 4.3 and 4.4 show, lexical mentions tend not to occur in A, but, out of the core argument positions, favour S and O. This ergative patterning of lexical mentions is important in considering the use of the *se* (incorporating the erstwhile *si* focus marker) to mark one kind of lexical phrase as absolute, viz. proper nouns (see §5.2.1.2 below).

Unfortunately, the discourse explanations postulated here do not explain why *si* occurs marking enumerated NP's in absolute in main and complement clauses. Perhaps it was the case when *si* was a focus marker in post-verbal position that NP's tended to occur only with quantifiers when the referent of the NP was being introduced for the first time.

In conclusion, Ross argues that *si* 'ABS' in Roviana is an absolutive pivot marker derived from an erstwhile focus marker. As evidence, he points to cognates of this particle in other languages, such as Maringe, which function as focus markers. As further evidence, he notes similarities in the function of *si*-marked constituents in the grammar of Roviana, and focus-marked constituents in the grammar of languages like Maringe. The phrase introduced by *si* in Roviana differs from the focus constituent of other Oceanic languages in always being a core argument (either S or O). Now, although Ross' arguments for postulating a focus marking source for the modern-day Roviana *si* are essentially sound, I have taken issue with his argument concerning the way in which *si* was reanalysed as a pivot marker in Roviana. I have suggested that the development of the absolutive marking function of *si* in Roviana represents the grammaticisation of tendencies in discourse. In §5.2.1.2 below, I look at how this discourse-based approach serves to illuminate the distribution of the two particles *e* and *se* in Roviana. In §5.2.1.3, I suggest that the absolutive forms of certain pronouns are explicable according to similar discourse principles. In §5.2.2, I suggest that the split in Roviana's case marking according to the main clause versus subordinate clause distinction is also founded in discourse tendencies.

5.2.1.2 THE ETYMOLOGY OF *e*, *se* AND *sa*

Ross, in his reconstructions of Proto Western Oceanic, reconstructs *e* as a personal article (Ross 1988:98-100, 181). This interpretation would accord well with the uses of *e* in Roviana, since *e* occurs only with proper nouns. As examples 5.13 to 5.15 show, *e* in the synchronic grammar of Roviana has a range of functions other than marking A, especially as a personal article used with NP's which are not verbal arguments, and therefore are not A, S, or O. However, *e* does not occur marking absolutive. I therefore gloss *e* as 'ERG' when it occurs with A in main and complement clauses to highlight the ergative versus absolutive distinction for arguments, but gloss *e* as 'ART' when it occurs with non-arguments or in subordinate clauses.

- 5.13 *Arau si e Loedi Gina poza-qu.*
 I.FOC FOC ART Lloyd Gina name-1SG.NSUF
 I am called Lloyd Gina.
- 5.14 *E Zima si hie.*
 ART Zima FOC this
 This is Zima.
- 5.15 *Nana boko e Zima.*
 3SG.PPRO pig ART Zima
 Zima's pig.

Waterhouse (1949:228) notes, as if were a clear fact, that 'Se is contracted from *si e*'. This etymology is intuitively attractive, and in fact accords well with the arguments put forward in this chapter. If proper nouns were marked with the personal article *e* and could occur as focus constituents marked with *si*, then it is quite plausible that, with the reanalysis of *si* as an absolutive marker, there might have been a phonological coalescence of the sequence *si e* 'FOC + ART' to *si e* 'ABS + ART' to *se* 'ABS'. It must be noted that this phonological coalescence is not simply a reflection of some other phonological principle at work in Roviana. As 5.13 above shows, the sequence *si e* is still possible marking constituents which are not core arguments.

The fact that the sequence *si e* 'FOC + ART' became *se*, the particle which occurs marking proper nouns in absolutive, rather than, say, a marker of ergative is perhaps attributable to a convergence of two tendencies in discourse. Firstly, in Roviana discourse, lexical mentions tend to occur in S and O rather than A (§4.2.1). Secondly, in Roviana, new mentions tend to be S and O rather than A (see §4.2.2). These two discourse tendencies would therefore combine to make new lexical mentions in A extremely unlikely. Thus, while new lexical mentions may have occasionally occurred in S or O in the erstwhile focus construction, and been marked with the sequence *si e*, new lexical mentions in A would have occurred in this construction, and been marked with the sequence *si e*, rarely, if ever.

For now, I can only make a tentative suggestion as to why it should have been proper nouns which received special marking. Perhaps the anthropocentric bias of discourse is a significant factor.

Ross (1988:244) suggests that *sa* is the phonological coalescence of the sequence *si a* where *a* is a common article reconstructed for Proto Western Oceanic, the branch of Oceanic from which Roviana is descended. Unfortunately, Ross is then at a loss to explain the distribution of *sa*, the definite article which occurs with common noun phrases in modern-day Roviana, since *sa* is not restricted to occurring with absolutive NP's as he would have expected according to his suggestions concerning the reanalysis of the erstwhile focus marker *si* as an absolutive pivot marker. I am similarly puzzled, and suggest that *sa* may have arisen from the sequence *si a* as Ross suggests, and so would have initially occurred only with absolutive common NP's. By whatever means, it would appear to have been generalised to common NP's in all grammatical positions.

5.2.1.3 THE ETYMOLOGY OF THE ABSOLUTIVE FORMS OF THE PRONOUNS

The pronominal paradigms have been given in Table 3.2. The absolutive and ergative/neutral pronominal paradigms differ only in the third person singular and plural. The absolutive third person singular *asa* contrasts with the ergative/neutral third person singular *sa*, while the absolutive third person plural *sarini* contrasts with the ergative/neutral third person plural *ri*.

I suggest that *sarini*, the third person plural absolutive pronoun, derives from the sequence *si arini* 'FOC + they', where the third person plural pronoun *arini* is attested in Roviana as the modern-day focal form of the third person plural and has cognates in related languages. This derivation would account for the fact that the article *si* which usually occurs with pronouns in absolutive cannot occur with *sarini*, since historically *sarini* already includes *si*.

Now, it is interesting to note that *sarini* includes the focal pronoun *arini* rather than the ergative/neutral form *ri*. This is not surprising if the absolutive constituent introduced by *si* in modern-day Roviana is derived from an erstwhile focus construction. Furthermore, the use of a phonologically heavier form for a new mention is to be expected according to Givón's (1983:18) observations that information which is cognitively difficult to process tends to receive more coding material in discourse. New mentions are one instance of Givón's "more discontinuous/inaccessible [discourse] topics", and so would be expected to receive more phonological weight than given mentions.

The use of a phonologically heavier pronominal form in a focus construction possibly also serves to explain why the third person singular pronominal form *asa* should be the same as the focal form, but different from the ergative/neutral *sa*.

Unfortunately, an explanation of the form of the absolutive pronouns in terms of additional phonological weight reflecting their origin as focal pronouns does not hold for the first and second person singular absolutive pronouns *rau* and *goi* respectively, which have less phonological weight than the corresponding first and second person singular focal forms *arau* and *agoi*. Thus, it is not possible to make the generalisation that the absolutive pronominal forms are phonologically heavier than the corresponding ergative/neutral forms. However, it is possible to formulate a weaker generalisation that some of the absolutive pronominal forms are phonologically heavier than the corresponding ergative/neutral forms, but none of the absolutive pronominal forms have less phonological weight than the corresponding ergative/neutral forms. This observation is important in the discussion in Chapter 6 of the relative markedness of ergative and absolutive.

5.2.2 MAIN CLAUSES VERSUS SUBORDINATE CLAUSES: A DISCOURSE DISTINCTION

The fact that main clauses in Roviana have morphological ergativity while subordinate clauses have a neutral system of morphological marking actually adds weight to the developments postulated above if patterns in discourse are taken to motivate grammatical form according to Du Bois' (1987:851) maxim "Grammars code best what speakers do most."

Of the 457 clauses in the Roviana corpus, 53 are subordinate clauses (11.6%). As Table 5.1 shows, there are only four new mentions in these subordinate clauses, all in oblique roles. While given mentions occur in argument roles, with A about half as likely as either S or O to contain a given mention, new mentions never occur in argument roles in subordinate clauses.

TABLE 5.1: GRAMMATICAL ROLE AND INFORMATION STATUS OF MENTIONS IN SUBORDINATE CLAUSES

| | New | | Given | | Total |
|---------|-----|------|-------|-------|-------|
| | n | % | n | % | n |
| A | 0 | 0.0 | 13 | 100.0 | 13 |
| S | 0 | 0.0 | 26 | 100.0 | 26 |
| O | 0 | 0.0 | 23 | 100.0 | 23 |
| Oblique | 4 | 50.0 | 4 | 50.0 | 8 |
| Other | 0 | 0.0 | 2 | 100.0 | 2 |
| Total | 4 | 5.6 | 68 | 94.4 | 72 |

It is not possible to perform a χ^2 test on the data in Table 5.1, since so many of the expected cells have an expected frequency of less than five. However, the correlation of

subordinate clauses with given mentions, and the apparent avoidance of new mentions in argument positions in subordinate clauses, is fairly obvious.

Assuming that the forms which are used to mark absolutive in main clauses in Roviana are etymologically related to an erstwhile marker of newly introduced referents, the absence of ergative morphological marking in subordinate clauses can be explained by the fact that such clauses tend to contain discourse presupposed material (Givón 1979). Thus, *si* 'ABS', a reflex of the erstwhile focus marker, *se* 'ABS', used with proper nouns and postulated in §5.2.1.2 to be the phonological coalescence of *si e* 'FOC + ART', and *sarini* 'they.ABS', postulated in §5.2.1.3 to be the phonological coalescence of *si arini* 'FOC + they', are all absent from subordinate clauses, where new referents marked by the erstwhile *si* 'FOC' could not have occurred at an earlier stage in Roviana due to constraints on information flow in discourse. The neutral case marking of subordinate clauses in Roviana is thus conservative, reflecting the older morphological marking. The occurrence of a handful of new mentions in oblique role in subordinate clauses in no way undermines this observation, since obliques, which are not arguments, do not participate in the ergative-absolutive distinction. As Du Bois (1987:832-833) notes, the formulation of Preferred Argument Structure is based on arguments only. He proposes that obliques might provide a "safety valve for extra information in the clause".

Furthermore, the fact that complement clauses exhibit the same morphosyntactically ergative marking as main clauses (see Chapter 3) is to be expected according to the diachronic developments postulated above, since complement clauses exhibit the same range of pragmatic possibilities as main clauses (see §3.1.1).

What the above discussion points to is a functional explanation for the restriction of ergativity in Roviana to main clauses motivated by discourse factors. Since subordinate clauses cannot contain focal material, the neutral case-marking system discussed in subordinate clauses reflects what was probably the previous function of *e*, simply a personal article. The development of *e* as a marker of ergative in main clauses in opposition to *se*, the marker of absolutive used with proper nouns, would then have been a later development.

Finally, Comrie (1978) suggests that a possible function of morphological marking is facilitating the recovery from surface forms of the syntactic relations involved in a clause. This raises the question of how two proper nouns occurring as arguments would be distinguished in a subordinate clause – for example, would they both be marked with the personal article *e*? In fact, no such clauses are attested in the data gathered to date, suggesting that subordinate clauses in Roviana strongly conform to another of Du Bois' discourse tendencies, the *One Lexical Argument Constraint* (see §4.2.1).

5.3 CONCLUSION

The posited development of morphosyntactic ergativity in Roviana from the grammaticisation of tendencies connected with the flow of information in discourse illuminates the main clause/subordinate clause dichotomy in present-day Roviana.

The finding that contemporary Roviana conforms to Preferred Argument Structure contributes to the growing evidence that Preferred Argument Structure is a widespread, if not universal, characteristic of discourse.

In the absence of historical records, it is not possible to demonstrate that Roviana conformed to Preferred Argument Structure at an earlier stage in its history. However, although the situation in the ancestor of Roviana cannot be known for certain, contemporary Roviana at least conforms to Preferred Argument Structure. Given the widespread occurrence of Preferred Argument Structure, and given the fact that Preferred Argument Structure is attested in at least one stage in the history of Roviana, it is not unreasonable to assume that the ancestor of Roviana also conformed to Preferred Argument Structure, a structure which might have provided a strong motivation for the development of morphosyntactic ergativity.

Finally, it must be emphasised that there is not necessarily a deterministic relationship between the existence of the tendencies outlined here in the discourse of Roviana and the development of morphosyntactic ergativity. From the comments of Ross (1988:241) that the sentence-final constituent marked by *si* in Maringe tends to be a subject, it is possible that Maringe illustrates the grammaticisation of the competing tendency in discourse discussed in §4.3 to place human mentions in A and S.

In Chapter 6 below I shall consider the significance of the postulated development of ergativity in Roviana to theories of the development of ergative systems, and to theories about the distinction between main and subordinate clauses in grammatical change.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUDING REMARKS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this, the final chapter, I shall consider the significance of Roviana's morphosyntactic ergativity and the putative diachronic developments which have resulted in the present-day system to typological and diachronic studies of ergativity.

It must first be noted that discussions in the literature concerning ergativity often focus on a contrast between ergative and accusative systems as if the two were somehow binary opposites. However, as this study shows, it is not the case that all languages or linguistic structures which are not ergative are accusative. Rather, ergativity involves the unification of S and O in opposition to A, while accusativity involves the unification of A and S in opposition to O. There are a great many possible grammatical configurations, with ergative and accusative configurations being but two possibilities. Kibrik (1979), for example, gives fifteen possible configurations involving marking distinctions for agents and patients, although apparently only seven of these configurations are attested. In the discussion below, I shall focus mainly on ergative, accusative and neutral marking systems, the former two being the most commonly discussed, the latter being applicable to Roviana.

6.2 THEORIES ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF ERGATIVITY

The widespread focus on ergative and accusative configurations is reflected in discussions on the development of ergative systems. Li (1977:xiv-xv) for example, discussing syntactic change involving ergative languages, notes:

Two questions immediately come to mind: (1) how does an accusative language become ergative? (2) how does an ergative language become accusative?

Both of Li's questions actually represent two separate issues. Using the expression 'accusative languages' to denote languages which are wholly accusative, these questions (which are perhaps instances of the more general question still 'How do languages change their grammatical configurations?') may be formulated as follows:

- (1a) How do accusative languages lose their accusativity, and develop other configurations.
- (1b) How do languages which do not have ergativity develop ergativity.
- (2a) How do languages which are not accusative become accusative?
- (2b) How do languages with ergativity lose their ergativity, and develop other configurations?

I shall not consider (1a), (2a) or (2b) here. Since I have postulated a neutral case-marking system as providing the historical source of Roviana's development of ergativity, I shall focus on (1b), considering the general question of how ergativity might develop in a language which does not have ergativity. Languages with accusative configurations are included in the scope of this question, as are languages with other non-ergative configurations.

6.2.1 PASSIVE ORIGINS

There are many discussions in the literature on the development of ergativity in which passive constructions have been reanalysed as ergative. This course of development is attested or has been postulated in a range of typologically diverse languages, for example Chung (1978), Hale (1968) and Hohepa (1969) for ergative Polynesian languages; Bynon (1980) for Kurdish; S.R. Anderson (1977), Allen (1951) and Bloch (1965) for Hindi; and Hale (1970) for ergative Australian languages.

Not only have passive constructions been postulated as diachronic sources of ergativity in various languages, but the synchronic grammars of various ergative languages have even been analysed as involving obligatory rules of passivisation (e.g. Pott 1873 and George 1974). By this formal sleight of hand, ergative languages have been claimed to be no different in essence from accusative languages, having the same underlying structure and grammatical processes, but involving the obligatory application of certain rules. Unfortunately, this approach founders on several points; for example, many, if not most, ergative constructions do not appear to differ semantically from active constructions in terms of voice. (See also Anderson 1979a for a criticism of this approach.)

Secondly, although some linguists (e.g. Trask 1979:390) have noted that ergative languages seldom have passives, it is not the case that ergativity precludes passive constructions. There are ergative languages with passive constructions contrasting with the ergative constructions, showing the ergative constructions to be active in structure. In those ergative languages which lack an ergative-passive contrast, there is no basis for calling a construction passive, since passive is a term which only has meaning in opposition to at least one other voice, such as active or middle.

6.2.1.1 HINDI: AN EXAMPLE OF A PASSIVE-TO-ERGATIVE REANALYSIS

S.R. Anderson (1977) discusses the development of ergativity in Hindi, a language for which there are extensive written records. Present-day Hindi has an ergative system which is split according to aspect. Clauses with imperfective aspect have an accusative system of case-marking, while clauses with perfective aspect have an ergative system. The textual evidence shows that Hindi used to have an inflectional perfective verbal form and a periphrastic passive construction. Clauses with perfective aspect used to have an accusative configuration, with an active-passive voice contrast.

In the erstwhile passive construction, the nominal which would be O in the corresponding active clause (typically being a patient), was given the same marking as a subject (A or S), while the nominal which would be A in the corresponding active construction (typically being an agent) was marked as oblique. Effectively, the S and O arguments were now morphologically united in opposition to A. The inflectional perfective was subsequently lost,

and the periphrastic passive, which still occurred with perfective aspect, was reanalysed as an active construction with ergative patterning.

6.2.1.2 THE UNIVERSALITY OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF ERGATIVITY FROM PASSIVES

The reanalysis of a passive construction as an ergative construction has been postulated for a number of languages, and has even been claimed to be the universal means by which languages become ergative. Estival and Myhill (1988:445), for example, have formulated a strong hypothesis as follows:

We propose here the hypothesis that in fact all ergative constructions have developed from passives...

However, there is considerable debate as to whether some ergative systems have developed from erstwhile passives, or from other sources (see for example §6.2.2 for a discussion of possessive origins). In the case of Roviana, however, there is nothing to suggest the involvement of a passive construction either in an intermediate stage between focal marking and ergative reanalysis or prior to focal marking. Estival and Myhill's hypothesis can therefore not be upheld.

Estival and Myhill (1988:443) claim that:

...in all ergative systems, the ergative case-marker on A, like the adposition marking the passive agent in an accusative system, is homophonous with, or can be shown to be diachronically derived from, an independently existing oblique NP marker, e.g. instrumental, genitive or dative.

This observation, if true, would be expected from Estival and Myhill's claim above that ergative systems always and only develop from passive constructions. However, there are other putative sources of ergativity, with different morphological reflexes (see for example §6.2.2) in the marking of A. Furthermore, given that at least one language, Roviana, can be argued to have developed ergativity without the involvement of a passive construction, we might suspect the possibility of markers of A which are not cognate with erstwhile oblique markers. In fact, in Roviana there does not appear to be any diachronic or synchronic relationship between the marker of A and the markers associated with oblique or genitive cases. As shown in §5.2.1.2, the particle marking a proper noun occurring in A (*e*, alternating with zero) is simply an erstwhile personal article, while no special particle is used to mark other kinds of noun phrases occurring as ergative. The two oblique markers in Roviana, *pa* (a directional and locational preposition) and *koa* (a benefactive marker), do not appear to have been involved in the development of ergativity in Roviana. Similarly, the possessive marker *te* and the possessive suffixes of Roviana do not appear to have been involved in this development.

6.2.2 POSSESSIVE ORIGINS

Within the Indo-Iranian language family, there are some languages with ergativity, usually split according to tense-aspect. The development of ergativity in Hindi, discussed in §6.2.1.1 above, is relatively uncontroversial: the textual evidence unequivocally supports a passive-to-ergative reanalysis. However, in the case of some other Indic languages which have, or have had, ergativity, there is some debate. Some linguists (e.g. Bynon 1980 and Cardona 1970) have argued for a passive origin for the ergative constructions in some of

these languages, others (e.g. Benveniste 1952 and S.R. Anderson 1977) have argued that a possessive construction was the source, while still others (e.g. Pirejko 1979) have claimed that the possessive and passive analyses are not incompatible. The data, and the formal properties of the construction from which ergativity has developed in these languages, are not controversial. Rather, what is debated is the semantic import of the source construction.

The construction in question is a periphrastic past tense form involving two nominals in which one, corresponding to O in a non-periphrastic construction, is marked in the nominative case, typical of subjects, while the other nominal, corresponding to A in a non-periphrastic construction, is marked with an oblique case. Different oblique cases were used in different sub-branches of Indo-Iranian to mark the latter nominal. Old Indic used the instrumental case, which was also used in a synthetic passive to mark the nominal corresponding to A. Within Old Iranian, Old Persian used the genitive case, a syncretistic case subsuming an erstwhile genitive and an erstwhile dative, to mark this nominal, but used a prepositional phrase to mark the corresponding nominal with a synthetic passive. Also within Old Iranian, in Avestan the genitive or dative cases were used to mark the nominal corresponding to A, whereas the instrumental case was used to mark the corresponding nominal with a synthetic passive.

The traditional view (reiterated in Bynon 1980) was that the periphrastic construction in question was a passive, although the marking of the agent nominal differed in some sub-branches of Indo-Iranian from the marking of agent nominals in synthetic passives.

Opposed to the view of this construction as a passive were Benveniste (1952) and later S.R. Anderson (1977), both of whom argued from morphological evidence that this construction in Old Indic, in which the marking of the agent nominal was the same as the marking of the agent nominal in a synthetic passive, was passive in meaning, whereas the Old Persian and Avestan constructions, whose marking of the agent nominal differed from the marking of the agent nominal in synthetic passives, was not passive in meaning, but was instead a possessive construction involving a participial.

Cardona (1970) produced examples of synthetic passives in old Persian involving the marking of the agent nominal as genitive, showing that there was morphological evidence for considering the Old Persian and Avestan constructions to be passive. Furthermore, Cardona argued that the periphrastic construction in Old Persian and Avestan had several properties typical of passives, including the topicalisation of a logical object, the presence of a stative-existential verb 'to be', and the possibility of omitting the agent. Cardona, while arguing for the passive character of this construction, denied a possessive meaning.

Pirejko (1979), however, argued that the perfect participle involved in the periphrastic construction had some nominal properties, meaning that a nominal possessor could be an agent, and the construction could be analysed as 'passive-possessive'. Pirejko (1979:483) notes:

It seems...impossible to deny the passive semantics of this participial structure merely because the genitive is used in it...I fail to see a contradiction in the coincidence of passive and possessive meanings of the participial construction. Such a coincidence would rather seem to be an automatic consequence of the dual nature of the participle of a transitive verb, which has both some properties of a transitive verb (it can have a subject and a direct object) and of a noun (it can enter into possessive relations).

Trask (1979:397) takes the view that the Indo-Iranian periphrastic construction may look like a passive, but is actually a possessive construction, a “nominalised deverbal form with stative force”, with semantic similarities to a perfect construction. The semantic similarities allowed for the reanalysis of the periphrastic construction as an ergative in the environment in which the synthetic perfect had declined.

Thus, although the formal aspects of the development of ergativity in various Indo-Iranian languages are clear, there has been considerable debate as to the nature of the source construction. This debate is by no means resolved. Estival and Myhill’s claims (§6.2.1.2 above) that ergativity always and only develops from a passive source therefore involve casting their lot (Estival and Myhill 1988:479-480) against those who argue that the source construction was possessive in meaning, but not passive (e.g. Benveniste 1952). For Estival and Myhill’s claims to be upheld, the fact that this periphrastic construction in Indo-Iranian has been reanalysed as an ergative structure must mean that that construction was formerly a passive. Without wanting to cast my own vote in the Indo-Iranian debate, the fact that Roviana appears to have developed ergativity from a non-passive source at least allows the possibility that the development of ergativity from Old Persian and Avestan periphrastic constructions might not hinge on those constructions being passive. The possibility remains that possessive constructions may be a source amenable to reanalysis as ergative configurations, independent of whether they do or do not have passive semantics.

6.2.3 FOCUS ORIGINS

In Chapter 5, I outlined the way in which ergativity in Roviana probably arose as the reanalysis of a focus-marking construction. The unification of S and O as the preferred locus of new mentions in opposition to A motivated the subsequent reanalysis of the erstwhile focus-marking strategy as absolutive-marking. Furthermore, Marovo and Hoava, languages closely related to Roviana, have particles which appear to mirror the distribution and development of Roviana *si*, although they do not appear to be cognate with Roviana *si*.

The putative focus-marking origin of ergativity in Roviana not only serves to explain the forms associated with ergative and absolutive in modern-day Roviana, but also to explain the distribution of those forms according to the main clause versus subordinate clause distinction. Ergativity has developed in Roviana as the reanalysis of an erstwhile focus construction, but only in those syntactic environments in which the erstwhile focus marking construction could have occurred in discourse, viz. main and complement clauses. In subordinate clauses, which contain discourse-presupposed material, the erstwhile focus-marking construction would not have occurred. This non-occurrence is reflected in the fact that subordinate clauses do not have morphological ergativity, but rather reflect the earlier neutral case-marking system of the precursor of modern-day Roviana. Thus, subordinate clauses in Roviana are morphologically conservative, whereas main clauses and complement clauses are innovative.

In §6.3.2, I discuss the implications of the development of ergativity in Roviana to typological studies of the relative markedness of ergative and absolutive markers.

6.2.4 DEMONSTRATIVE AND TOPIC ORIGINS

Chinook (Sapir 1926, cited in S.R. Anderson 1977) has a morpheme /-k-/ which occurs with pronominal A's with the exception of first and second person singular forms. This morpheme is apparently a reflex of an erstwhile demonstrative marker used to topicalise or emphasise an A argument in a transitive clause. This would appear to be an example of the role of case marking to distinguish arguments when there is the potential for confusion of grammatical relations. Comrie (1978) suggests that S does not require special marking, since it occurs as the sole argument of a verb. In a transitive clause, which involves two arguments, A and O, there is in some languages the possibility of confusing the two. Rather than overtly marking both arguments, however, it is only necessary to mark one and to leave the other argument unmarked in order to distinguish between the two. If A is marked, then O and S will be morphologically united in having no marker, resulting in an absolutive system of case marking. If, on the other hand, O is marked, then A and S will be morphologically united in lacking a special marker, resulting in an accusative system of case marking.

A similar system would appear to underlie Kâte, a non-Austronesian language of Papua New Guinea (Pilhofer 1933, cited in S.R. Anderson 1979). Although the data for Kâte are unclear, it would appear that a special marker occurs with any A. The same marker may also occur with S, but with the effect of giving special emphasis to the S, reflecting the origin of the marker as an erstwhile demonstrative or topicalising marker.

Although it is difficult to generalise from Chinook and Kâte, perhaps demonstrative or topic markers used to distinguish A and O in transitive clauses may develop into ergative markers. A possible motivation for this development would be distinguishing A and O in cases where there is the potential for confusion. This kind of development would appear to be independent of passive marking, just as the focus-marking source of ergativity in Roviana is independent of passive marking, and so would constitute another counter-example to the claims of Estival and Myhill (1988) that passives represent the sole source for reanalysis as ergatives. In §6.3.2 below, I shall consider the development of ergativity in Chinook and Kâte in terms of typological studies of the relative markedness of ergative and absolutive.

6.2.5 GENERAL PRINCIPLES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF ERGATIVITY

The data presented in this section suggest several possible sources of ergativity. It must be stressed that, in showing that Roviana does not conform to Estival and Myhill's (1988) claim that passive constructions are always the source of ergativity¹, I do not wish to suggest that the various passive-to-ergative reanalyses proposed in the literature on the development of ergative systems are incorrect. Clearly, there is compelling evidence, in the form of textual data or plausible internal reconstructions, to suggest that some languages have followed a passive-to-ergative reanalysis.

As Roviana clearly shows, there are languages where a strong argument can be made that an ergative configuration has developed from a source other than a passive construction, in this case an erstwhile focus-marking strategy. Given that there appear to be a number of possible sources amenable to reanalysis as ergative configurations, the question arises as to whether there is a general principle which underlies the development of ergativity from the various sources discussed above.

¹ Note that in claiming that ergative structures always develop from the reanalysis of passives, Estival and Myhill do not mean that all agented passives will necessarily develop into ergative structures.

Estival and Myhill (1988) adopt Dixon's (1979) definitions of A as logical transitive subject, O as logical transitive object, and S as intransitive subject. Using these terms, Estival and Myhill claim that passives are used in discourse 'when A represents new information and O represents old information' (Estival and Myhill 1988:456). At first, this analysis of the function of passives appears to offer a parallel to Roviana's focus-marking source for ergativity. Passives are used for new A's, with A receiving special marking as oblique, but with O receiving the subject marking typical of S. The source of Roviana's ergativity was also a strategy for marking new referents. This strategy tended to be used with S and O arguments, which received special marking in opposition to A. Unfortunately, however, Estival and Myhill's statistics do not directly bear out their analysis of the function of passives in discourse. They observe that passives tend to be used more for nominal A's than pronominal A's, more for non-human A's than human A's, and more for indefinite A's than definite A's. They claim that nominal, non-human and indefinite A's are more likely to represent new information than pronominal, human, or definite A's. Similarly, Givón (1979:60) notes that the majority of agents in passive constructions are indefinite, from which he also concludes that passives are used to introduce new referents in discourse. Neither Estival and Myhill nor Givón directly test the A arguments in their corpora for the nominal statuses new versus given.

Unlike Estival and Myhill (1988) or Givón (1979), Thompson (1987) does directly examine this information status, and finds that, in the various English texts she examines, not a single agent in a passive construction is new. In her discourse study Thompson distinguishes between agentless and agented passives. Agentless passives are used when the agent is not to be mentioned, because it is not known or is not important. This analysis of agentless passives is relatively uncontroversial (see for example Jespersen 1965 and Givón 1979 for the same view). If an agent is to be mentioned, an agented passive is used only when a non-agent is more closely related to the local discourse 'theme' or to a participant in the immediately preceding clause (Thompson 1987:497). Thompson argues that agent nominals tend to be indefinite in passive constructions not because a new A is being introduced, but because the A has lost in a (metaphorical) competition with a non-agent nominal in terms of thematicity and cohesiveness in discourse. The indefiniteness of agent nominals therefore reflects their relative insignificance in the discourse.

It is only agented passives which are amenable to reanalysis as ergative structures, since agentless passives involve only a single argument, and so cannot be reanalysed as active transitive structures. According to Thompson's (1987) analysis, passives involve the marking of non-agent nominals as subject. In many languages, it is only "logical transitive objects" (to use Estival and Myhill's (1988) expression, or the argument most closely corresponding to the semantic aspects of O), which can appear as the subject in a passive structure. When the arguments corresponding to O appear as subject, they receive the same marking as S, but O and S have different marking from 'A' occurring in a passive structure. Even in languages which allow other kinds of passivisation, it is the alignment of the arguments S and the arguments corresponding to O which is crucial to reanalysis of the passive as an ergative configuration.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of the passive-to-ergative analysis is that it ever happens. Passives do not occur frequently in all genres of most languages. For example, Hopper and Thompson (1980) find for English that 12% of backgrounded clauses are passive, while 4% of foregrounded clauses are passive. Furthermore, Svartvik (1966) and Thompson (1987) note that approximately 80% of all passives are agentless.

On the basis of Thompson's analysis of passives, I offer a tentative suggestion of a common principle underlying passive-to-ergative reanalysis and the reanalysis of a focus construction as ergative in Roviana. Perhaps, in an intuitive sense requiring more precise formulation, agented passives and focus-marking constructions are used when S and 'O' are more 'important' in discourse. In the case of agented passives, this 'importance' is determined by discourse thematicity and/or cohesiveness. In the case of Roviana's erstwhile focus marking, this 'importance' is determined by the newness of the arguments being introduced. I leave this tentative suggestion for further research and a less intuitive formulation.

The Kâte and Chinook cases discussed in §6.2.4 illustrate the marking of one of A or O where there might be difficulty in distinguishing the two. If A is marked and O and S are unmarked, then there is a morphological pattern amenable to reanalysis as an ergative configuration. Although overt marking to distinguish A and O may only be necessary in those cases where pragmatics and the local discourse context do not provide enough clues to ensure the correct recovery of the argument roles involved, the use of overt marking to distinguish the two may be generalised, eventually becoming an obligatory part of the grammar. It may be that the cases in which overt marking of A is needed have something in common with the use of agented passives and focus constructions. Perhaps less 'important' agents, or agents which are less thematic or less cohesive in discourse, are more likely to require overt marking to distinguish them from 'O' arguments. Again, I leave this tentative suggestion for future research.

6.3 TYPOLOGICAL FEATURES OF ERGATIVITY

Various typological studies have been made of ergativity (e.g. Trask 1979, Dixon 1979 and Comrie 1978). In this section I shall examine the extent to which the generalisations made in these studies apply to Roviana.

6.3.1 SYNTACTIC AND MORPHOLOGICAL ERGATIVITY

In §3.3.1.4, I discussed Dixon's (1979:125) observation that "[a]ll languages which use an S/O pivot, to any degree, show some 'ergativity' in morphological marking". I showed that this observation is true of Roviana, in that Roviana has both an S/O pivot (in the choice of relativisation strategy) and morphological ergativity (in main clauses, with the ergativity split according to NP type). Interestingly, however, Roviana's ergative pivot and its morphological ergativity do not coincide. Where Roviana operates on an S/O pivot (in relativisation), it has a neutral system of case marking, but where Roviana has any morphological ergativity (in main clauses), it does not operate according to an S/O pivot. Thus, while Roviana appears to conform to the letter of Dixon's observation, it does not seem to conform to the spirit of that observation. Dixon's observation is presumably intended to establish a correlation between the presence of syntactic ergativity and morphological ergativity, rather than simply to state two unrelated facts. Indeed, Dixon (1977) even goes so far as to suggest that syntactic change may take place in a language to bring syntactic rules and constraints into alignment with ergative morphology. At present, I do not have any explanation for the cross-linguistically anomalous situation of Roviana's lack of convergence with respect to ergative syntax and ergative morphology.

6.3.2 THE RELATIVE MARKEDNESS OF ERGATIVE AND ABSOLUTIVE

Trask (1979) remarks that:

In languages with ergative case-marking, the ergative case is always overtly marked, while the absolutive case is usually morphologically unmarked.

Dixon (1979:71-72) makes a similar claim, suggesting that, in an ergative-absolutive system, ergative is always marked, whereas absolutive is always unmarked. Dixon claims that S is always unmarked, and that one of A or O will be marked to distinguish between the two. If O is marked and A is unmarked, the result is an accusative configuration, whereas if A is marked and O is unmarked, the result is an ergative configuration.

The above claims of the relative markedness of ergative and absolutive do not obtain for Roviana. In Roviana, absolutive is marked, whereas ergative is unmarked. Evidence for this claim is to be found in the phonological weight of pronouns, the obligatory use of particles to mark absolutive for certain kinds of NP compared to the zero marking or optional marking of those kinds of NP when they occur as ergative.

Firstly, special pronominal forms are used in Roviana to distinguish ergative versus absolutive for the third person singular and plural (see §3.2.1.3 for discussion of the pronouns). In the singular, the absolutive *asa* 's/he.ABS' contrasts with the ergative form *sa* 's/he.ERG', while in the plural, the absolutive *sarini* 'they.ABS' contrasts with the ergative *ri* 'they.ERG'. For first and second person singular and plural pronouns, there is no contrast in pronominal form between ergative and absolutive. It can be seen that the third person absolutive pronouns have more phonological weight than their ergative counterparts. It is thus possible to state the relative markedness of the absolutive and ergative pronominal paradigms in negative terms: in Roviana, the absolutive pronouns never have less phonological weight than their ergative counterparts. In §5.2.1.3 I argued that the relative markedness of the third person absolutive pronouns may be explained in terms of their origin as focal pronouns. As focal pronouns, introducing new referents into discourse, the fact that they had more phonological weight would have been a reflection of correlations between phonological weight and cognitive processing difficulties, as suggested by Givón (1983).

The second sense in which absolutive can be said to be marked in Roviana in opposition to ergative is in the presence or absence of special particles. Proper noun phrases, pronouns (with the exception of the third person plural absolutive form *sarini*) and enumerated noun phrases occurring as absolutive are obligatorily marked by special absolutive particles in main and complement clauses. In contrast to the markedness of absolutive, pronouns and enumerated noun phrases occurring as ergative are not marked by any special particle. With proper noun phrases, as mentioned in §3.2.1.1, the particle *e* 'ERG' used to mark ergative is optional. Throughout this study, the majority of the examples of proper nouns in ergative have occurred with *e*. However, most of this data was gathered from a single native speaker of Roviana. Another speaker consulted tended to produce forms without *e*. All speakers accept forms with or without *e* marking proper noun phrases occurring as ergative. Furthermore, for all speakers, *e* as personal article, occurring in subordinate clauses and with proper nouns in non-argument roles, is also optional.

Now, if it were the case that all ergative languages resulted from the reanalysis of an agentive passive construction, as Estival and Myhill (1988) claim (see above, §6.2.1.2), then Dixon's (1979) and Trask's (1979) claims would follow naturally from the formal properties of the passive source. In a passive-to-ergative reanalysis, the nominal corresponding to A in

an active structure receives oblique marking, while the nominal corresponding to O receives the same marking as S, which is typically unmarked. With the reanalysis of such a construction as ergative, A has a special marker, while S and O have no marking. However, as I have shown above, Roviana, constitutes a strong counter-example to the claim that ergativity always and only results from the reanalysis of a passive construction. What I suggest then is that the claim that ergative is always the marked case, while absolutive is always (Dixon 1979) or usually (Trask 1979) unmarked reflects the postulated passive or passive-possessive origins of the majority of ergative languages involved in typological studies of ergativity to date. However, what has been formulated as a typological feature of ergative languages, is not a feature of ergativity per se, but rather a consequence of the formal properties of the source from which ergativity has developed in those languages. Viewed in this light, it is not surprising that Roviana has a marked absolutive and unmarked ergative, since the erstwhile focus-marking strategy from which Roviana's ergativity has developed has been shown to have favoured S and O according to discourse principles, and to have employed more phonological weight in the marking of S and O as a reflection of correlations between phonological weight and cognitive processing (Givón 1983).

6.3.3 THE FORMAL SIMILARITY OF PASSIVE AND ERGATIVE CONSTRUCTIONS

Estival and Myhill (1988) base their claim that ergativity always results from the reanalysis of passive constructions on textual data from languages which have clearly followed this path, and on plausible internal reconstructions based on the formal similarity of ergative constructions in many languages to passive constructions, with such evidence as the formal similarity of the marker of A in an ergative construction to a reconstructed or independently attested oblique marker such as an instrumental. However, as I have argued above, Roviana's ergativity does not bear any formal similarities to a passive construction, but can instead be traced back to an erstwhile focus-marking strategy.

The fact that Roviana's ergativity does not bear formal similarities to a passive construction also provides a serious counter-argument to those who have attempted to argue that ergative languages are to be analysed as involving obligatory passivisation rules even in synchronic grammars (for example Pott 1873 and George 1974).

6.3.4 THE MARKEDNESS OF ERGATIVE SYSTEMS

Trask (1979:386-388) claims that:

for a grammatical system as a whole, **ergativity is marked and accusativity is unmarked.** (Original emphasis.)

By this claim, Trask does not appear to mean simply that ergativity is much rarer cross-linguistically than accusativity. Indeed, given the relatively small number of languages for which we have adequate in-depth descriptions, such a claim would really be a reflection of the historical bias of linguistics towards Indo-European languages, which generally have accusativity as a familial feature, rather than a substantive claim about the languages of the world.

Rather, Trask makes this claim to explicitly refute the belief that accusativity and ergativity are simply alternative grammatical configurations, with neither one being inherently superior. Trask's claim seems to rest on the observation that:

examination of the literature reveals that there are very many languages which are completely accusative in both syntax and morphology, whereas there are few or no languages which are ergative to a comparable degree...Even among ergative languages there are few which are consistently so – most exhibit ergative morphology only in certain definable circumstances, and accusative morphology elsewhere. (Trask 1979:387)

Thus, Trask employs the term 'marked' to mean 'unusual'. The term 'unmarked' he employs to mean 'normal', or the default value. This usage of the term 'marked' differs from that of §6.3.2, where 'marked' was employed with the meaning 'having a mark'. Trask claims that some languages have ergativity in certain environments, but that they revert to the default grammatical configuration elsewhere, viz. accusativity.

From the evidence presented in Chapter 3, Roviana can be seen to be ergative, although not consistently so, in accordance with Trask's claim. In saying that Roviana is not consistently ergative, I do not mean that ergativity in Roviana is haphazard, but rather that Roviana does not have ergative case marking of all NP's in all syntactic environments.

Now, it may be the case that there are few known languages which consistently display ergative morphology and/or syntax, whereas there are many known languages which exhibit consistently accusative morphology and syntax. However, it is not necessarily the case that ergative languages exhibit ergative characteristics in certain definable contexts and exhibit unmarked accusative patterning elsewhere. As I showed in the introduction to this section, it is not the case that ergativity and accusativity are binary opposites. Roviana, for example, operates according to a neutral case-marking system in those environments in which it does not have morphological ergativity. Thus, although it may well be the case that consistently ergative morphological and syntactic systems are cross-linguistically uncommon, based on currently described languages, it does not necessarily follow that accusativity is cross-linguistically unmarked. A substantive cross-linguistic study of ergative languages, accusative languages, and languages with other grammatical configurations would be necessary to determine the relative markedness of the various configurations. Perhaps languages with ergativity in certain areas and another grammatical configuration elsewhere may have one of several configurations, not simply accusative, in the unmarked state.

Furthermore, where is the line to be drawn between morphological, grammatical and discourse patterns? For example, Comrie (1978:339) shows that derivational processes of incorporation operate on an ergative basis, even in an otherwise resolutely accusative language like English, as illustrated by the incorporation of S in 'bird-chirping' and the incorporation of O in 'fox-hunting', compared to the resistance of A to incorporation. In the domain of syntax, Dixon's (1972) description of Equi-NP deletion operating according to an S/O pivot in Dyirbal is surely very nearly in the domain of discourse (see §2.3 for further discussion). Du Bois (1987) claims that ergative patterning in discourse is independent of grammatical configuration, so that even accusative languages may exhibit such patterning in discourse.

6.4 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this case study of ergativity in Roviana will hopefully serve to broaden our understanding of ergativity, in synchronic, diachronic and typological areas.

The passive-to-ergative analysis has been proposed as a common, or even universal, source of ergativity. While there is clear textual evidence of the validity of this analysis in some cases (such as Hindi), there is considerable controversy in other cases (§6.2.2) as to whether the source was passive or possessive. If it were the case that passives were the only constructions which were ever reanalysed as ergative, then this would constitute a useful heuristic in diachronic reconstruction. Instrumental or other oblique markers could be reconstructed on the basis of the marker of A in an ergative language, and whole passive constructions could be reconstructed on the basis of modern-day ergative configurations. Unfortunately, however, as the development of ergativity in Roviana shows, there is at least one language in which there is absolutely no basis for postulating a passive-to-ergative reanalysis.

In typological studies of ergativity, some features which have been claimed to be characteristic of ergativity, such as the supposed markedness of the ergative case, can be seen to be reflections of the passive origins of ergativity in the majority of ergative languages included in typological studies. Roviana, whose ergativity has not developed from a passive source, provides counter-examples to several of the typological features of ergativity which have been proposed.

Perhaps future study will illuminate any commonalities between the typological and diachronic aspects of ergativity in Roviana and those of other ergative languages.

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