

Inherent Case and symmetric voice in Eastern Polynesian

This study shows that Eastern Polynesian (EP) languages, e.g., Hawaiian and Māori, are neither accusative nor ergative, but have a symmetric voice system similar to that of western Austronesian (WAN). Across Polynesian, three patterns of dyadic constructions exist. Subjects of monadic verbs are unmarked, as are the patient (PAT) in I and the agent (AGT) in II. III is restricted to neuter verbs that are inherently passive, e.g., ‘understood’ and ‘forgotten’.

Pattern I	V(-Ci/Cia)	<i>e</i>	AGT		PAT
Pattern II	V		AGT	<i>ki/i</i>	PAT
Pattern III	V		PAT	<i>i</i>	EXP

Ample evidence shows that I is canonical transitive in Western Polynesian (WP), e.g., Tongan and Samoan, with *e* marking ergative (ERG): *e*-AGTs show properties of core arguments in terms of relativization, Equi, and nominalization (Chung 1978). II, in which PAT is marked by a preposition *ki* ‘to’ or *i* ‘in’, is restricted to semi-transitive verbs, i.e., psych verbs and verbs with PATs that are not directly affected such as ‘wait’ and ‘call’. Whether a verb occurs in I, II, or III is lexically determined in WP.

In EP, all dyadic verbs except neuter verbs may occur in both I and II, with the *-Cia* suffix obligatory in I (1). Some consider II as canonical transitive with *i* marking accusative and I as passive with *e* marking oblique (OBL) AGTs (Chung 1978; Clark 1973, 1976). There is evidence against this analysis, however: (a) *i*-PATs behave like dative PATs of semi-transitive verbs in terms of various syntactic operations such as “passivization”, relativization and Actor-Emphatic (AE) constructions (2); and (b) *e*-AGTs are not fully demoted, e.g., they can be subjects of imperatives (3). An alternative view considers EP to be ergative, with I being canonical transitive and II, antipassive, based on the higher text frequency of I and the fact that the same relativization strategy is used for *i*-PATs and OBL (Sinclair 1976, Gibson and Starosta 1990). Some facts are incompatible with this analysis, however: (a) *i*-PATs are treated differently from OBLs in terms of AE constructions and emphatic fronting (4); and (b) *e*-AGTs do not show properties of core arguments in terms of relativization, Equi, and nominalization (5).

I argue that EP differs from WP in that (a) *-Cia* is productive and (b) that *e*-AGTs receive inherent Case. I propose that EP has only one structural Case (NOM) and each verb class has designated inherent Case: neuter verbs assign OBL Case to experiencer (cf. Belletti and Rizzi’s (1988) analysis of *piacere*-type psych verbs in Italian); unaffixed verbs assign OBL Case to PAT; and *Cia* verbs assign agentive Case to AGT. Morphologically marked DPs in EP have limited accessibility to certain syntactic operations, just like inherently Case marked quirky subjects in Icelandic and Finnish fail to trigger agreement. In contrast, ERG in WP is structural and therefore ERG DPs are endowed with a full range of properties of core arguments.

The relationship between I and II in EP is reminiscent of that between PAT voice (PV) and actor voice (AV) in WAN (6); I (PV) has high text frequency, and extraction of PATs is allowed only in I (PV), but not II (AV). The present analysis that EP has inherent agentive Case is compatible with the analysis that considers WAN to be ergative with inherent ERG (e.g., Aldridge 2004). The Polynesian data examined in this study suggest that there are two kinds of ERG, shedding light on the general discussion on whether ERG is inherent or structural.

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- (1) HAWAIIAN
- a. *Ua ho'ihoi 'ia ke ka'a e ia.* <Pattern I>
 PFV return CIA DEF car AGT 3.SG
 'He returned the car' or 'The car was returned by him.'
- b. *Ua ho'ihoi 'o ia i ke ka'a.* <Pattern II>
 PFV return PERS 3.SG PAT DEF car
 'He returned the car.'
- (2) MĀORI
- a. *Ka pupuhi ia i te manu.* <Pattern II: i-PAT >
 TNS shoot 3.SG PAT DEF bird
 'He shot the bird.'
- b. *Ka pū-hia e ia te manu.* <"passive" i-PAT>
 TNS shoot-CIA AGT 3.SG DEF bird
 'The bird was shot by him.'
- c. *Ka pīrangī ia ki ngā mea katoa.* <semi-transitive: DAT-PAT>
 TNS want 3.SG to DEF.PL thing all
 'He wants all the things.'
- b. *Ka pīrangī-tia e ia ngā mea katoa.* <"passive" DAT-PAT>
 TNS want- CIA AGT 3.SG DEF.PL thing all
 'All the things are wanted by him.'
- (3) MĀORI
- a. *Ka tua-ina te rākau e te tangata.* <Pattern I declarative>
 TNS fell-CIA DEF tree AGT DEF man
 'The tree was felled by the man' or 'The man felled the tree.'
- b. *Tua-ina te rākau.* <Pattern I imperative>
 fell-CIA DEF tree
 'Fell the tree!'
- (4) HAWAIIAN
- a. *I kahakai, i 'ike ai, ke keiki i ke koholā.* <Fronting of OBL>
 at beach PST see AI the child PAT the whale
 'It was on the beach that the child saw the whale.'
- b. **I ka mo'o, i 'ike ai, ka wahine.* <Fronting of i-PAT>
 PAT the gecko PST see AI the woman
 Intended: 'It was the gecko that the woman saw.'
- (5) MĀORI
- a. *ka patu-a te tangata rā e te wahine.* <Pattern I>
 TNS hit-CIA DEF man that AGT DEF woman
 'The woman hit that man.'
- b. **Ko te wahine [i patu-a ai te tangata rā]* <*relativizatio of e-AGT>
 PRED the woman TNS hit-CIA AI the man that
 Intended: 'the woman who hit that man'
- (6) TAGALOG
- a. *B-um-ili ang=lalake ng=isda sa=tindahan* <AV>
 PRF.AV-buy NOM=man GEN=fish DAT=store
 'The man bought fish at the store.'
- b. *B-in-ili-Ø ng=lalake ang=isda sa=tindahan* <PV>
 PRF.PV-buy GEN=man NOM=fish DAT=store
 'The man bought fish at the store.'