

chapter 2

Accusative case and ‘nominative’ agreement

1 Introduction

In this chapter, I will investigate the morphological realization of subjects and direct objects in nominative/Accusative systems. That is, I will primarily focus on non-ergative languages and discuss how case and agreement distinguish between subjects and objects. The main claim will be that if both mechanisms are available in a particular language, they are complementarily distributed over subject and object. In fact, case marking is only available for the licensing of the O-argument. Subjects are licensed by agreement, never by case. Following Bittner & Hale (1996a,b) and Neeleman & Weerman (1999), among others, I assume that case and agreement are complementary devices. Nominatives are considered to be caseless, and verbs agree with a caseless argument only. This pattern is universal and hence is found in ergative languages as well. The complementary distribution of case and agreement is shown in (1).

(1) Main hypothesis: universal licensing of arguments (preliminary version)

Intransitive:	[_{IP} DP _{S,φ} V+I _φ]
Transitive:	[_{IP} DP _{A,φ} V+I _φ DP _{O,Acc}]

As can be seen in (1), arguments in s-function are universally licensed by agreement (ϕ). In transitive clauses, A-arguments are also licensed by agreement (ϕ), whereas O-arguments are licensed by structural Accusative case (Acc). I take this difference between subjects (S/A) and objects (O) to be responsible for the universal subject/object asymmetries discussed in the previous chapter. Hence, (1) applies to non-ergative and ergative languages alike.¹

In section 2, I will argue that structural Accusative case is always present, even if it is not visible. Languages with so-called differential object marking (cf. Aissen (2003)) seem to reserve the overt Accusative marker for a particular type of objects, for instance definite objects. Objects that are outside this class appear without overt Accusative morphology, and often have a more restricted distribution in the sentence. Cross-linguistic data suggest that in these languages, the apparently caseless object does bear an (empty) Accusative morpheme, which contrasts with the overt one marking the direct object for nominal features like specificity or definiteness. I propose that the checking of the Accusative case feature takes place in situ, and does not involve agreement. Subjects, on the other hand, do not carry a case feature, but these move to Spec,IP in order to check their ϕ -features. In my proposal, licensing by case marking compares to Agree in the latest version of the minimalist program (Chomsky 2000, 2001a,b), whereas licensing by agreement compares to spec-head agreement in the minimalist program (Chomsky 1995).

In section 3, we will see that evidence from languages like Amharic (Afro-Asiatic), as well as many Bantu (Niger-Congo) and various Austronesian languages suggests that a verb may agree with both the subject and the object, which at first sight contradicts my proposal. Data from

¹ In chapter 4, I will show that incorporation may function as an alternative to syntactic licensing, giving rise to ergative patterns that include verbal marking. This is still compatible with those subject/object asymmetries that are considered to be universal.

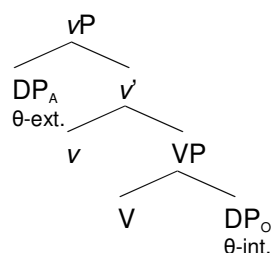
Amharic, however, shows that whenever the direct object DP is indefinite, object agreement is dropped. In those cases, the position of the direct object is more fixed. Although there are obvious similarities with differential object marking, I will argue that the agreement morphemes are actually pronouns that are base-generated in argument position and subsequently cliticize. What seems to be the direct object is actually an adjoined DP doubling the clitic. The adjunct status of such DPs explains their relatively free distribution. A similar claim has been made with respect to 'object agreement' in Bantu languages, although these languages are different. Not only do they obligatorily realize the object as a clitic pronoun, but the same happens with the subject. In section 4, I will argue that this process optionally takes place in *Tukang Besi* (Austronesian). When it does, case marking in this language patterns ergatively. I will claim that this can only be explained by the fact that independent subject nouns and pronouns are adjunct-doubles of clitic pronouns. This will prepare us for chapter 3, where I deal with ergativity in nonconfigurational languages.

Section 5, finally, sums up the main findings of this chapter.

2 Grammatical licensing of core arguments

In this section, I will first focus on the licensing of direct objects by Accusative case (2.1). The phenomenon of differential object marking will predominantly be illustrated with data from *Sakha*, an Altaic language from Siberia. Next, I will briefly discuss agreement as a licensing mechanism for subjects (2.2). The following structure shows how theta role assignment takes place in transitive sentences. I take this structure to be universal.

- (2) Universal assignment of theta roles in transitive clauses (cf. Chomsky (1995, 2000, 2001a,b))



As I have discussed in section 3.1 (chapter 1), V assigns a theme role to its complement, DP_O. The functional head *v* assigns the agent role to its specifier, DP_A.²

2.1 Direct objects (o) and case

An overwhelming majority of Nominative/Accusative case patterns show that the Accusative is morphologically more marked than the Nominative. Accusative is commonly realized by the presence of an overt affix or particle which is absent from the Nominative (cf. Dixon (1994:62-63)). Consider the following examples from Sakha (cf. Vinokurova (2005)):

- (3) **Sakha** (Altaic, Turkic, Northern)

- a. *bihigi khaam-a-byt*
1PL.NOM walk-PRS-1PL
'We are walking.'
- b. *ehigi khaam-a-qyt*
2PL.NOM walk-PRS-2PL
'You (pl) are walking.'
- c. *bihigi ehigi-ni suuj-a-byt*
1PL.NOM 2PL-ACC wash-PRS-1PL

² By assuming *v* I am merely following the most recent analysis of verbal projections. It is not crucial for my analysis of ergativity.

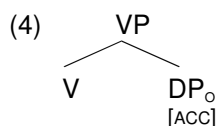
'We are washing you (pl).'

- d. *ehigi* *bihigi-ni* *suuj-a-qyt*
 2PL.NOM 1PL-ACC wash-PRS-2PL

'You (pl) are washing us.'

(Nadya Vinokurova)

In (3), Nominative *bihigi* ('1PL') contrasts with Accusative *bihigini*, and in the same vein, *ehigi* ('1SG') contrasts with *ehigini*. In Sakha, then, direct object pronouns bear an overt case suffix.³ This suffix is absent from subjects, which is the reason why we analyze *-ni* as a marker of Accusative case. In accordance with standard practice in minimalism, I assume that the direct object is base-generated together with its Accusative marker, as originally proposed by Chomsky (1993). The case marker is an overt reflection of the fact that the DP carries a formal case feature with the value [ACC].



The functional head *v* that takes VP as its complement is responsible for assigning the external theta role to the subject DP. In addition to that, Chomsky's (1995) version of minimalism assumes that *v* carries a case feature, which has the same value as the case feature of the object (Accusative), implying that only the object can check it.⁴ Recall from section 3.1 (chapter 1) that formal features need to be checked in a spec-head configuration. In order to establish such a configuration, the direct object moves to Spec,*v*P. This movement is similar to the one made by the subject

³ Accusative marking of first and second person singular apparently involves a stem change as well: *miiginn* ('1SG.ACC') derives from Nominative *min*, the Nominative form of *ejigini* ('2SG.ACC') is *en*.

⁴ Modulo exceptional case marking constructions.

in order to check its ϕ -features and Nominative case. Subjects move to Spec,IP. The idea behind all this is that the ϕ -features of the object are checked as well, which in languages like Georgian spells out as object agreement on the verb, as I have illustrated in the previous chapter (subsection 2.4). In the most recent version of minimalism, the relation Agree does not require the probe and the goal to be brought into a spec-head configuration. The functional categories v and I only need to *c-command* an argument in order to establish feature valuation.⁵ From this, it becomes clear that both versions of Chomsky's theory assume that every verbal argument is essentially licensed by the same mechanism. In section 3.3 of chapter 1, I have presented two analyses of ergativity that implement such a (minimalist) view on case and agreement, Murasugi (1992) and Bobaljik (1993).

My own proposal abandons this view, because I believe that it suffers from unnecessary overgeneration. As I have already stated in the previous section, I will claim that apparent object agreement is best analyzed as involving clitic-doubling.⁶ The analysis to be presented in the following chapters assumes that subject/object asymmetries are reflected in the way subjects and objects are commonly licensed. Licensing by case takes place in situ. The functional head v carries an Accusative case feature, and so does the direct object. Thus far, I follow Chomsky (1995). However, I believe that movement of the object is not required in order to check Accusative case. Although Chomsky (2000, 2001a,b) assumes that v does *not* have a case feature, my view on the relation between v and the direct object is more or less similar to Agree. I differ from both versions of minimalism in assuming that ϕ -features do *not* play a role in the licensing of the direct object. Hence, an additional assumption is that v does not contain any ϕ -features. This way of checking Accusative case may resemble case *assignment* in the

⁵ Usually, the label T is used for the probe that is present in every verbal clause. As I have noted in chapter 1, I will use the more neutral term I.

⁶ Although I will not discuss data from Georgian in this chapter, I will show in chapter 5 that the clitic-doubling analysis carries over to this language.

government & binding approach, but there is a crucial difference. According to the proposed analysis, case is not assigned, because the case feature is already present on the noun when it enters the syntactic derivation. In situ licensing is also proposed by Ura (2000), but he parameterizes it in order to account for the difference between accusative and ergative patterns.⁷

The idea that a direct object needs Accusative case in order to be licensed leads to the prediction that this holds true across languages. There are, however, languages where direct objects never show overt Accusative case morphology. Balinese, as discussed in 3.2 (chapter 1), is a case in point. Indonesian is another example of a language without a morphological distinction between subjects and objects.

(5) **Indonesian** (Austronesian, Malayo-Polynesian, Malayic, Malayan, Local Malay)

- a. *saya* *berjalan*
1SG(.NOM) walk
'I am walking.'
- b. [*pria* *itu*] *berjalan*
man the (NOM) walk
'The man is walking.'
- c. *saya*_i *me*_i-*mandi-kan* [*pria* *itu*]
1SG(.NOM) A-wash-APPL man the (.ACC)
'I am washing the man'
- d. [*pria* *itu*]_i *me*_i-*mandi-kan* *saya*
man the (NOM) A-wash-APPL 1SG(.ACC)
'The man is washing me.'

(Zahroh Nuria)

Like Balinese, Indonesian does not distinguish between S, A and O in terms of case marking. The form *saya* ('1SG') is used as S in (5a), A in (5c) and O in

⁷ I will touch upon the main idea of Ura's proposal in chapter 4.

(5d).⁸ Similarly, noun phrases like *pria itu* (the man) may also fulfill every grammatical function without any morphological changes. In the absence of overt case (and agreement) morphology, constituent order in Indonesian is as strict as it is in Balinese. The O-argument is invariably postverbal in sentences like (5c/d), whereas the A-argument usually appears before (and marginally after) the verb (cf. Verhaar (1988:349)). I assume that the direct object in these sentences carries a formal case feature with Accusative value, which happens to lack any overt realization. Whereas Indonesian and Balinese never have overt Accusative morphology, languages like German always do, as we will see below.

The present proposal states that every direct object with Accusative case will be licensed in situ, irrespective of the question whether a language is ergative or not. This does not mean, of course, that a direct object never moves. It may scramble or leave its base position in *wh*-questions, relativization or topicalization constructions. The latter type of movement has A'-status, and is by definition not related to licensing by case. The former type, scrambling, is often considered to be the result of the need to check Accusative case. In the remainder of this subsection, I will argue that scrambling does not have anything to do with case licensing of the object, although it is true that direct objects with overt Accusative case often scramble, whereas seemingly caseless objects have a more restricted distribution.

In languages such as Sakha, for instance, overt Accusative morphology is not always present.

⁸ Again, like Balinese, Indonesian uses a nasal prefix in sentences where A is the syntactic pivot. Recall from the discussion of 'syntactic ergativity' in Balinese that I propose to analyze the nasal prefix as the actual A-argument, which can be doubled by an adjunct DP in preverbal position.

(6) **Sakha**

- a. *beqehee, bihigi xahyat-y aax-ty-byt*
 yesterday 1PL.NOM newspaper-ACC read-PST-1PL

'Yesterday, we read the newspaper.' / 'Yesterday, we read a (specific) newspaper.'

- b. *kūn aajy , bihigi xahyat aaq-a-byt*
 day DISTR.PRT 1PL.NOM newspaper read-PRS-1PL

'Every day, we read a (nonspecific) newspaper.'

(Nadya Vinokurova)

The examples in (6) show that direct objects only seem to carry Accusative case when they are specific.⁹ In (6a), *xahyat-y* ('newspaper-ACC') is interpreted either as a definite or as a specific indefinite DP ('the newspaper', 'a (specific) newspaper'). When the Accusative case marker - (*n*)*l* is lacking, the direct object receives a nonspecific interpretation: *xahyat* is interpreted as 'one newspaper or other' (cf. Vinokurova 2005:195).¹⁰ The same condition is also found in other languages. Turkish, genetically related to Sakha (cf. Enç (1991)), and Persian, an Indo-Aryan (Indo-European) language (cf. Lazard (1982)) are two well-known examples.

Cross-linguistically, it is quite common to divide direct object DPs into two classes with respect to (overt) case marking.¹¹ This phenomenon has been termed 'differential object marking' by Bossong (1985). Aissen

⁹ Sentential complements are also marked with Accusative case:

(i) **Sakha**

Masha [Ujbaan utuj-ar-∅]-yn bil-er-∅
 Mary John sleep-PRS-3SG -ACC know-PRS-3SG

'Mary knows that John is sleeping.'

(Nadya Vinokurova)

Accusative case marking of sentential complements is always overt.

¹⁰ Note that -*n**l* subsumes several allomorphs.

¹¹ Recall the examples from Tongan in chapter 1 (subsection 2.3).

describes the picture that emerges from the functional/typological literature as follows: “the higher in prominence a direct object, the more likely it is to be overtly case-marked” (2003:436). Prominence is assessed along two scales, an animacy scale and a definiteness scale.

(7) Differential object marking: prominence scales

animacy scale: human > animate > inanimate

definiteness scale: personal pronoun > proper name > definite NP >
indefinite specific NP > non-specific NP

(Aissen 2003:437)

The scales given in (7) are clearly related to Silverstein’s (1976) person/animacy hierarchy, presented in subsection 2.4 of the previous chapter. Differential object marking in Sakha, Turkish and Persian is determined by the definiteness scale. Nonspecific direct objects do not carry an overt Accusative marker, but more prominent ones do.

In Sakha, as in many other languages, the lack of an overt case marker on the direct object restricts its distribution in the sentence. For instance, when Accusative case is overtly present, the following orders are allowed:

(8) **Sakha**

a. *kini jabloko-nu sii-r-∅*
3SG.NOM apple-ACC eat-PRS-3SG

‘S/he is eating the/a (particular) apple.’

b. *jabloko-nu kini sii-r-∅*

c. *kini sii-r-∅ jabloko-nu*

d. *kini jabloko-nu bŭgŭn sii-r-∅*
3SG.NOM apple-ACC today eat-PRS-3SG

‘S/he is eating the/a (particular) apple today.’

(Nadya Vinokurova)

The sentence in (8a) is comparable to the one in (6a), since it contains a direct object that is interpreted as either definite or specific indefinite. The b-

sentence shows that this constituent can be topicalized, and according to the c-sentence it may also follow the verb. Furthermore, an adverb can intervene between direct object and verb in the canonical AOV order. Now compare these sentences with the ones in (9).

(9) **Sakha**

- a. *kini jabloko sii-r-∅*
 3sg.nom apple eat-prs-3sg
 'S/he is eating some apple or other.'
- b. * *jabloko kini sii-r-∅*
 c. * *kini sii-r-∅ jabloko*
 d. ?* *kini jabloko bŭgŭn sii-r-∅*
 3SG.NOM apple today eat-PRS-3SG
 'S/he is eating some apple or other today.'

(Nadya Vinokurova)

When the direct object is nonspecific, as is the case in (9), it obligatorily precedes the verb directly, and any alternative ordering is out.¹² If we were to assume that Accusative case is checked by moving the direct object to Spec,vP, these different types of behaviour with respect to scrambling could be explained by the absence or presence of Accusative case. The different constituent orders shown by the sentences in (8) could then be argued to be the result of movement of the direct object to Spec,vP. The fact that there are

¹² Note that it is not very likely that the direct object is incorporated in the verb in sentences like (9a), assuming that incorporation is an instance of head movement (cf. Baker (1988)). For instance, it is perfectly possible to have a nonspecific direct object consisting of a coordinate structure, which is a phrasal constituent:

(i) **Sakha**

min kuruusa uonna jabloko sii-∅-bin
 1SG.NOM pear and apple eat-PRS-1SG

'I am eating pears and apples.'

(Nadya Vinokurova)

different orders might point to the fact that this movement may take place before or after Spell Out. The order of (9a) is more fixed, which would be explained by the fact that the nonspecific direct object does not have a case feature at all. This is rather unlikely, since the same scrambling restrictions appear to be present in languages like German, in which Accusative case is always overt on arguments with masculine gender.

(10) **German** (Indo-European, Germanic, West, High German, German, Middle German, East Middle German)¹³

- a. ... *dass der Mann sein-em Sohn den Apfel*
 that the.M.NOM man his-M.DAT son the.M.ACC apple

gib-t
 give-3SG

‘... that the man gives the apple to his son.’

- b. ... *dass der Mann den Apfel seinem Sohn gibt*

- c. ... *dass der Mann jed-en Tag sein-em*
 that the.M.NOM man every-M.ACC day his-DAT

Sohn ein-en Apfel gib-t
 son a-M.ACC apple give-3SG

‘... that the man gives his son an apple every day.’

- d. * ... *dass der Mann jeden Tag einen Apfel*
seinem Sohn gibt

(Jenny Audring)

The sentences in (10) show that scrambling of the definite direct object *den Apfel* (‘the.M.ACC apple’) over *sein-em Sohn* (‘his-M.DAT son’) is allowed, but a nonspecific indefinite direct object may not scramble (cf. *ein-en Apfel* ‘a-M.ACC apple’) over that same indirect object (cf. Lenerz (1977)). Nevertheless, both types of direct object are overtly marked for Accusative case. Hence, assuming that nonspecific indefinite direct objects lack a case

¹³ The labels ‘High German’ and ‘Middle German’ represent sub-branches of Germanic, and should not be confused with the same labels representing dialects in stages preceding present-day Standard German.

feature is not a viable way to go. There is a vast literature on scrambling, starting with Ross (1967), ranging from proposals assuming that scrambled word orders are derived by movement to proposals assuming that every scrambled order is base-generated (see Corver & Van Riemsdijk (1994) or Van Gelderen (2003) for an overview). Movement proposals, in turn, differ with respect to the type of movement that is involved: A-movement or A'-movement. Even within a single language like German, scrambling may feature both A-properties and A'-properties. Since scrambling in non-ergative languages will not play any role of importance in this thesis, I will take no particular stand in this debate. Whatever causes scrambled word orders, I take it that the data presented above indicate that it does not have anything to do with the checking of Accusative case by the direct object. That way, I will be able to maintain my hypothesis that Accusative case is checked in situ, as explained above.

It will be clear that a key assumption in my proposal is that in languages with differential object marking, every direct object bears Accusative case. This case may be realized by overt or covert morphology. Objects lacking overt case morphology are accompanied by a covert case marker, which is an allomorph of the overt one(s). Specifically, I argue that the Sakha examples in (9a) and (6b) are best glossed as follows:

(11) **Sakha**

- a. *kini jabloko-∅ sii-r-∅*
 3SG.NOM apple-NSPEC.ACC eat-PRS-3SG

'S/he is eating some apple or other.'

- b. *kūn aajy, bihigi xahyat-∅*
 day DISTR.PRT 1PL.NOM newspaper-NSPEC.ACC
aaq-a-byt
 read-PRS-1PL

'Every day, we read a (nonspecific) newspaper.'

(Nadya Vinokurova)

The main function of differential object marking in languages like Sakha, then, seems to be to morphologically distinguish specific and nonspecific direct objects. As Sakha does not have articles encoding definiteness or specificity, we could analyze the Accusative case allomorphs as a combination of case and specificity features. Overt allomorphs correspond to specific direct objects (either definite or indefinite, glossed as 'SPEC.ACC'), whereas zero allomorphs correspond to nonspecific direct objects (glossed as 'NSPEC.ACC') (cf. (11)). Under such an analysis, it would be reasonable to assume that features related to specificity are the sole driving force behind scrambling (as proposed by Delfitto & Corver (1998), Diesing (1992), De Hoop (1992) and others). Alternatively, in a theory like Bittner & Hale's, which assumes that case-marked DPs project to KP ((1996a,b), cf. subsection 3.4 (chapter 1)), an overt Accusative marker corresponds to a filled K-head, whereas the covert marker corresponds to an empty K. Such an approach predicts that the distribution of empty-headed KPs is limited by a condition like the empty category principle (cf. Chomsky (1981:250)). Neeleman & Weerman (1999) have developed an elaborate analysis of scrambling that follows this line of reasoning. Their main idea is that the empty category principle puts restrictions on the distribution of the empty case marker. In order to account for the German facts presented in (10), Neeleman & Weerman rely on the concept of specificity as well (as most other theoretical approaches to scrambling). A minor question is why differential object marking always seems to apply to Accusative case only, and not to Dative or other cases.¹⁴ Obviously, this is a problem for any kind of analysis discussed here, and it is beyond the scope of this study to solve it.

Assuming that direct objects are universally licensed by in situ checking of an abstract Accusative case feature, we can conclude that differential

¹⁴ In chapter 4, we will see that Kabardian and Adyghe (North Caucasian) seem to apply differential case marking to Ergative subjects.

object marking links the two extreme situations described at the beginning of this subsection.

(12) Continuum of Accusative case marking

always overt	partly overt/partly covert (differential object marking)				always covert
German Icelandic	Sakha Turkish Persian	Spanish Hindi	Hebrew	Norwegian English Dutch	Balinese Indonesian

If we conflate the two scales in (7) for the moment into one (inverse) Silverstein-like hierarchy, we end up with a continuum of Accusative case marking as shown in (12). Between languages like German and Icelandic, where every direct object bears overt Accusative case, and languages like Balinese and Indonesian where Accusative case is never overt, we find various degrees of differential object marking. Languages more to the left extreme have overt Accusative case marking on most types of DP, whereas languages more to the right end have empty Accusative on most DP types.

As I have argued above, Sakha, as well as Turkish and Persian, only have an empty Accusative case morpheme on *nonspecific indefinite* direct objects. Spanish is famous for overt marking of *animate* direct objects only, having an empty Accusative marker on non-animates (Torrego 1998:16).

(13) **Spanish** (Indo-European, Italic, Romance, Italo-Western, Western, Gallo-Iberian, Ibero-Romance, West Iberian, Castilian)

- a. *nosotros esta-mos andando*
1PL.NOM be.PRS-1PL walk.GER

'We are walking.'

- b. *el niño / el perro está-∅ andando*
the child the dog be.PRS-3SG walk.GER

'The child/dog is walking.'

- c. *el tomate está-∅ creciendo*
 the tomato be.PRS-3SG grow.GER
 'The tomato is growing.'
- d. *nosotros esta-mos lavando al niño /*
 1PL.NOM be.PRS-1PL wash.GER the.ACC child
al perro / el tomate
 the.ACC dog the.ACC tomato
 'We are washing the child/dog/tomato.'
- e. *nosotros esta-mos lavando a un niño /*
 1PL.NOM be-1PL wash-GER ACC a child
a un perro / ∅ un tomate
 ACC a dog ACC a tomato
 'We are washing a ((non)specific) child/dog/tomato.'
- f. *el niño nos está-∅ lavando*
 the child 1PL.ACC be.PRS-3SG wash.GER
 'The child is washing us.'

(Luis Vicente)

Direct object DPs in Spanish cooccur with the directional preposition *a* ('to'), which I analyze as the Accusative case. This marker never appears with subjects (cf. (13a-c)). Its presence on direct objects does not depend on definiteness or specificity. Every nominal direct object co-occurs with *a*, as long as it is animate (cf. (13d,e)). Inanimate direct objects, like *un/el tomate* ('a/the tomato') never co-occur with overt Accusative case, no matter how specific they are. Hence I assume that they carry an empty Accusative case marker (cf. Torrego (1998) for a minimalist implementation of this idea).¹⁵ Pronominal direct objects are realized by clitics, which I take to be

¹⁵ According to my informant, there are speakers who restrict the use of *a* to human direct objects. This means that in their speech, *un/el perro* ('a/the dog') would also appear without *a*. For some people this is optional, for others it is obligatory. As Torrego (1998) points out, there is a lot more to say about the exact factors causing differential object marking in Spanish, but this is irrelevant for my purposes here.

Accusative forms of the full pronouns (cf. (13f)).¹⁶

The animacy feature also appears to play a role in differential object marking in Sakha. Recall that direct objects in Sakha carry covert Accusative case when they are nonspecific. This restriction, however, only applies to inanimate direct objects. Animate direct objects are always marked by overt Accusative case.¹⁷

(14) **Sakha**

- a. *beqehee, medsestra yaryhaq-y suuj-d-a*
 yesterday nurse.NOM patient-ACC wash-PST-3SG
 'Yesterday, the nurse washed a/the patient.'
- b. *kün aajy medsestra yaryhaq*(-y) suuj-d-a*
 every day nurse.NOM patient-ACC wash-PST-3SG
 'Every day, the nurse washed a (nonspecific) patient.'

(Nadya Vinokurova)

These sentences show that a human direct object with overt Accusative case (*yaryhaq-y* 'patient-ACC') can be interpreted as either specific (definite or indefinite) or nonspecific. As indicated in (14b), the sentence becomes ungrammatical when the Accusative morpheme is empty. Aissen (2003:468), citing Lazard (1984), notes that this humanness effect is also found in Persian and Hindi (both Indo-Aryan, and hence Indo-European), but not in Turkish. Persian differs from Sakha in that the Accusative marker on human, nonspecific direct objects is not obligatorily present (Aissen 2003:468-469).

Differential object marking in Hebrew appears to impose empty Accusative case on both nonspecific and specific indefinite direct objects (cf.

¹⁶ Clitics may be doubled by a full noun or pronoun that is marked by *a* when animate. In those cases, the double either follows the verb or it occurs sentence initially. I will argue in the following sections that in such cases, only the clitic is licensed by structural Accusative case.

¹⁷ Vinokurova points out that there are verbs where nonhuman animate direct objects may appear without the overt Accusative case (when nonspecific) (pc.).

Givón (1978)).

(15) **Hebrew** (Afro-Asiatic, Semitic, Central, South, Canaanite)

- a. *anaxnu halax-nu*
1PL.NOM go.PST-1PL
'We went.'
- b. *ha-qelev halax-∅*
DEF-dog.NOM go.PST-3SG.M
'The dog went.'
- c. *anaxnu raxac-nu et ha-qelev*
1PL.NOM wash.PST-1PL ACC DEF-dog
'We washed the dog.'
- d. *ha-qelev raxac-∅ otanu*
DEF-dog.NOM wash.PST-3SG.M 1PL.ACC
'The dog washed us.'
- e. *anaxnu raxac-nu ∅ qelev*
1PL.NOM wash.PST-1PL ACC dog
'We washed a nonspecific/specific dog.'

(Oren Sadeh-Leicht, Yoad Winter)

The sentences in (15a-d) show that subjects can be considered to bear no special case marker, whereas objects surface in a distinct Accusative case. Pronouns come in suppletive forms (*anaxnu* '1PL' versus *otanu* '1PL.ACC') and full DPs are preceded by *et* (cf. 15c), which I assume marks Accusative case. The sentence in (15e) shows that ((non)specific) indefinite direct objects do not cooccur with *et*. Hence I assume an empty Accusative marker. Definite and indefinite DPs are further distinguished by presence or absence of the nominal determiner prefix *ha-*.

Germanic languages like English and Dutch, as well as most of the Romance languages, have covert Accusative morphology on every nominal direct object, irrespective of specificity, animacy or definiteness. Only pronouns have overt Accusative morphology. Consider the following Norwegian examples:

(16) **Norwegian** (Indo-European, Germanic, North, West Scandinavian)

- a. *vi* *går*
 1PL.NOM walk.PRS
 'We are walking.'
- b. *hund-en* *går*
 dog-SG.M.DEF.NOM walk.PRS
 'The dog is walking.'
- c. *vi* *vasker* *hund-en*
 1PL.NOM wash.PRS dog-SG.M.DEF.ACC
 'We are washing the dog.'
- d. *hund-en* *vasker* *oss*
 dog-SG.M.DEF.NOM wash.PRS 1PL.ACC
 'The dog is washing us.'

(Mai Tungseth)

In Norwegian, Nominative pronouns like *vi* ('1PL') alternate with Accusative pronouns like *oss* ('1PL.ACC') as can be seen in (16a,c-d), but a full nominal direct object does not distinguish overtly between these cases. This system of differential object marking comes closest to total absence of overt Accusative morphology, as is found in Balinese and Indonesian.

According to the analysis proposed above, Accusative markers in Sakha contain a specificity feature. If this turns out to be correct, we have to make the additional assumption that they contain an animacy feature as well (cf. (14)). The Spanish Accusative markers also contain this animacy feature, but they lack the specificity feature. Accusative marking in Hebrew encodes definiteness, in addition to the language's determiner system. Overt Accusative morphology in Norwegian probably means that pronominal objects spell out a higher projection than its unmarked form.¹⁸

¹⁸ Weerman & Evers-Vermeul (2002), implementing Neeleman & Weerman's (1999) theory of argument licensing, argue that Accusative pronouns in languages like English spell out KP, whereas Nominative forms spell out DP. Although they argue

As I have mentioned before, Accusative case will be the only structural case available in my proposal. Accusative case can be checked because of the presence of *v*. It is an abstract feature, which is sometimes morphologically visible. Other cases, such as Dative and Ergative, are semantic cases tied to particular thematic roles, like recipient/benefactive or agentive. Nominative and Absolutive, I will argue in the following subsection and in the chapters to follow, represent total absence of case.

2.2 Subjects (S/A) and agreement

In Nominative/Accusative languages, subjects are typically in the unmarked case, called Nominative. Following authors like Jakobson (1936), Andrews (1982), Bittner & Hale (1996) and Neeleman & Weerman (1999), I treat subjects as caseless DPs. Therefore, this case will not be represented in the glosses of the linguistic examples to follow. As I have already mentioned in chapter 1 (subsection 3.4), I will use the term ‘nominative’, without capital, for the combination of the syntactic functions S and A, as in ‘a nominative/Accusative pattern’.¹⁹ It should be noted, however, that although treating the nominative as a caseless category is straightforward in many languages, some problematic cases remain. Languages like Latin and Icelandic, for example, seem to possess nominative case suffixes. Neeleman & Weerman (1999:64-67) argue convincingly that the ‘nominative’ suffixes in these languages encode other features (like gender and number), without bringing in an additional nominative case feature. This analysis is based on the fact that Latin and Icelandic morphology is quite fusional. For

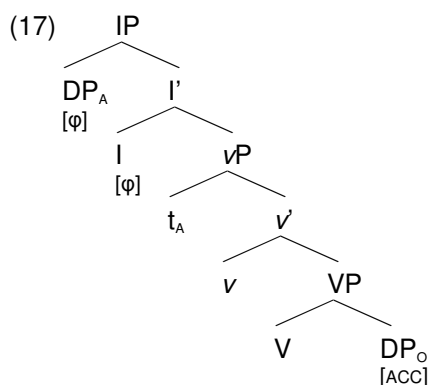
that this is different from Nominative/Accusative case marking in languages with morphological case, they assume that full nominal direct objects have an empty case shell. This corresponds to my assumption that there is an empty Accusative case marker in these cases.

¹⁹ I will incidentally refer to the combination of S and A as ‘the nominative relation’. Likewise, the combination of S and O will be called ‘the absolutive relation’. Both terms refer to a particular grouping of syntactic functions that are not licensed by case.

languages with more agglutinative morphology, such as Japanese and Arabic, Neeleman & Weeman (1999:201-208) argue that 'nominative' markers are genuine and hence should be explained by the theory of argument licensing. This explanation is incompatible with my analysis. Since I have no alternative solution at present, Japanese and Arabic are problematic for my proposal. I consider the overt nominative in these languages to be a topic for future research.

Arguments lacking a case feature must be licensed in an alternative way. I assume that agreement is one such alternative, in view of the fact that the verb at least agrees with the argument in the unmarked case in languages with overt verbal agreement (cf. Moravcsik (1974), (1978), Nichols (1986), Croft (1990:105-107), Bittner (1994:9), Bittner & Hale (1996), Neeleman & Weerman (1999:192)). Put differently, if a language has overt agreement, then the minimum is agreement with the caseless argument of a clause. The standard assumption within generative grammar has always been that subjects are moved to the specifier of a functional projection where agreement morphology is realized. According to Chomsky (1995), the functional head I carries ϕ -features matching those of the subject. In order to check these features, the subject moves to Spec,IP, leaving a trace in its base position.²⁰ The tree given in (2) is thus extended to the one in (17).

²⁰ Under the copy theory of movement, reintroduced by Chomsky (1993), two copies of the subject DP are inserted into the derivation, and only one of them is pronounced.



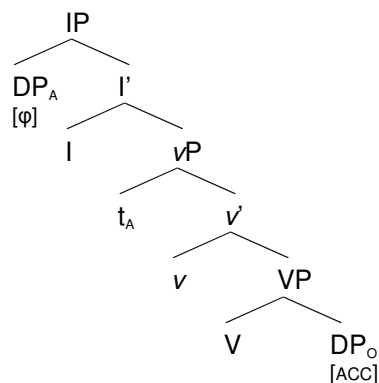
According to my proposal, I is unable to check case since it does not contain a case feature. Inserting a DP with an Accusative case feature in Spec,vP would cause the derivation to crash since the DP's case feature cannot be checked.²¹ This is in accordance with Chomsky (1993, 1995), but different from Chomsky (2000, 2001a,b). The most recent version of the minimalist program assumes that both I and v lack a case feature, although valuation of the arguments' case features is somehow possible under Agree. Also, this operation always requires the argument to have an uninterpretable case feature in order to turn it into an active goal. An inactive goal is not able to enter into an agreement relation in this approach. As this is incompatible with the view that nominatives are caseless, I choose to assume Chomsky (1995) throughout this study, when it comes to agreement. As I have indicated in the previous subsection, Accusatively marked direct objects are not licensed in a spec-head configuration. This yields a fundamental asymmetry between subjects and objects. The former are licensed by head marking (agreement), whereas the latter are licensed by dependent marking (case). This was schematized in (1) as the main hypothesis of this study.

²¹ This does not mean that a DP with an inherent case like Dative may not be inserted in Spec,vP. This happens in constructions with quirky case marking, found in Icelandic and older stages of other Germanic languages. Under those circumstances, agreement is neutralized, suggesting that agreement is not used in order to license the quirky subject.

(18)	Main hypothesis: universal licensing of arguments (preliminary version)		
Intransitive:	[_{IP} DP _{S,φ}	V+I _φ]
Transitive:	[_{IP} DP _{A,φ}	V+I _φ	DP _{O,Acc}]

In this scheme, I use the more general functional head I instead of T, because languages may code aspect or mood instead of tense. The scheme allows for two licensing mechanisms, case marking and agreement. In the chapters to follow, incorporation will be added as a morphological alternative to syntactic licensing. Together, these three mechanisms will be able to account for the patterns of case and verbal marking that were discussed in chapter 1. At the same time, they will be insightful with respect to the marked status of ergativity. Throughout this study, I will assume the following tree structure:²²

(19) Universal projection of a transitive verb



In this tree, I have omitted the φ-features of I and DP_O. The notational

²² I will leave open the possibility that DP_O is base-generated to the left of the verb, in order to account for languages like Sakha, in which AO_V seems to be the basic word order.

convention underlying this is that overtly represented features show how a DP is licensed. The symbol ϕ indicates that a DP is licensed through agreement, and implies that I has matching ϕ -features. It also implies that the DP is caseless. The symbol ACC indicates that a DP is licensed through Accusative case marking, and that the case feature is checked by *v*. The ϕ -features of that DP are irrelevant with respect to its licensing.

Agreement, I propose, is possible with only one argument per clause. This means that, since subjects are not licensed by case, the (active) verb may never agree with DP_o.²³ However, there are lots of languages where the verb seems to agree with both subjects and objects. In the next two sections, I will explain how data from these languages can be explained.

3 Object agreement: clitic-doubling

Recall from chapter 1 that my analysis of (seemingly) syntactically ergative constructions in Balinese makes use of clitic-doubling. This is a well-known phenomenon that has been studied for a range of languages, notably Romance, Slavic and Greek. Compare the following examples from Spanish with the ones in (13):

(20) **Spanish:** clitic-doubling

- a. *a nosotros el niño nos está-∅ lavando*
 ACC 1PL the child 1PL.ACC be.PRS-3SG wash.GER
 'Us, the child is washing us.'
- b. *al niño nosotros lo esta-mos lavando*
 the.ACC child 1PL 3SG.M.ACC be.PRS-1PL wash.GER
 'The child, we are washing it.'

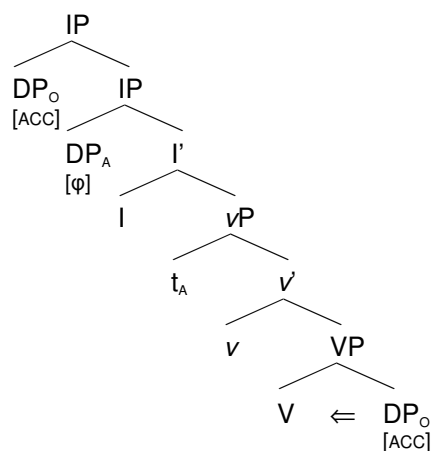
²³ A passive verb, on the other hand, does agree with DP_o. Passivization will not be discussed until chapter 4.

- c. *a un niño nosotros lo esta-mos lavando*
 ACC a child 1PL 3SG.M.ACC be.PRS-1PL wash.GER
 'A child, we are washing it.'

(Luis Vicente)

These sentences differ from the ones in (13) in that they seem to have the direct object in sentence-initial position, instead of postverbal. In addition, the sentence contains a clitic pronoun referring to the direct object, *nos* ('1PL.ACC') in (20a), *lo* ('3SG.M.ACC') in (20b,c).²⁴ Following Rizzi (1986a, 1997), Cinque (1990) and many others, I assume that the sentence-initial DP is adjoined to the clause, doubling the clitic, which is the real direct object argument. I will assume the following structure for these cases of clitic-doubling:

(21) Clitic-doubling the direct object



Compare this tree with the one in (19). Both trees have in common that the direct object is base-generated as the complement of V, and both of them are licensed in situ by Accusative case, which is checked by *v*. The direct

²⁴ Instead of appearing after the subject, these pronouns may also follow the main verb (Luis Vicente (p.c.), see also Torrego (1998)).

object in (21), however, is realized by a pronoun that cliticizes to the predicate, represented by the symbol ‘←’.²⁵ The subject is base-generated in Spec,vP, and subsequently raised to Spec,IP in order to be licensed by agreement. An additional DP is added to IP, which is interpreted as being coreferent with the clitic. This DP-double is analyzed as an adjunct, since it is not obligatorily present and it orders freely with respect to the rest of the sentence.

(22) **Spanish**

- a. *nosotros lo esta-mos lavando*
 1PL 3SG.M.ACC be.PRS-1PL wash.GER
 ‘We are washing it.’
- b. *nosotros lo esta-mos lavando al niño*
 1PL 3SG.M.ACC be.PRS-1PL wash.GER the.ACC child
 ‘We are washing it, the child.’

(Luis Vicente)

The adjunct *al niño* (‘the.ACC child’) that appears sentence-initial in (20b), is absent in (22a), and sentence-final in (22b). In order to account for the latter, I will assume that adjuncts may be attached to the right hand side of the clause.

In order to maintain my analysis of case and agreement, it is important that agreement is only available for one (caseless) argument per clause. If a language has additional agreement with Accusative direct objects, I need to assume that the object agreement morpheme is a cliticized (or incorporated) direct object pronoun. In other words, the analysis of clitic-doubling (or clitic-left dislocation (CLLD)) in Spanish is supposed to account for all cases of so-called ‘object agreement’. Support for my analysis comes from an interesting observation on the grammaticalization of agreement markers. Whereas

²⁵ As we will see in the next chapter, cliticization is often an instance of incorporation, which means that head movement is involved. See also footnote 12.

these markers often fully grammaticalize when they are associated with subjects, this is never so in the case of objects (Siewierska 1999). This can be understood by looking at the development of agreement markers. Siewierska, basing her arguments on Givón (1976) and Bresnan & Mchombo (1986, 1987), describes how agreement may develop out of anaphoric pronouns diachronically (see also Ariel (2000)).

The first stage of such a development, called *anaphoric* agreement (cf. Siewierska (1999:226), arises when apparent agreement markers are in complementary distribution with pronouns or full DPs. The following sentences from Indonesian exemplify this stage:

(23) **Indonesian**

- a. *kamu_i me_i-mandi-kan Mary*
 2SG A-wash-APPL Mary
 'You are washing Mary.'
- b. *kamu_i me_i-mandi-kan dia*
 2SG A-wash-APPL 3SG
 'You are washing her.'
- c. *kamu_i me_i-mandi-kan-nya*
 2SG A-wash-APPL-3SG
 'You are washing her.'
- d. * *kamu_i me_i-mandi-kan-nya Mary / dia*

(Zahroh Nuria)

What is of interest here is the realization of the direct object. As was pointed out with respect to Balinese in the previous section, the direct object always follows the verb in constructions with a nasal prefix-verb, whether it is a full DP (*Mary* in (23a)) or a pronoun (*dia* ('3SG') in (23b)). Alternatively, a verbal enclitic may represent the direct object (*-nya* ('-3SG') in (23c)), like in Spanish, but this suffix may not be doubled by an independent noun or pronoun (cf. (23d)).

The next developmental stage is called *ambiguous* agreement. This stage is attested when agreement markers are obligatorily present, even

when a pronoun or a full DP is present as well. Sakha is a case in point.

(24) **Sakha**

- a. *kyrgyt-tar xaam-al-lar*
 girl-PL walk-PRS-3PL
 'The girls are walking.'
- b. *kini-ler xaam-al-lar*
 3-PL walk-PRS-3PL
 'They are walking.'
- c. *xaam-al-lar*
 walk-PRS-3PL
 'They are walking.'

(Nadya Vinokurova)

The agreement suffix *-lar* ('-3PL') is obligatorily present in the context of a third person plural subject, whether there is an additional pronoun (*kini-ler* ('3-PL') in (24b)) or full DP (*kyrgyt-tar* ('girl-PL') in (24b)). This additional noun or pronoun is not required for the sentence to be grammatical, as is shown by (24c). Ambiguous agreement is basically the type of agreement found in what have been termed 'null subject languages' (cf. Jaeggli & Safir (1989)). In these languages, subjects are often omitted when they can be deduced from the context in which a sentence is uttered. For the time being, I will follow the generative tradition and assume that overt subjects alternate with an empty pronominal category, called *pro* (cf. Chomsky (1981)).

Finally, anaphoric pronouns may develop into *grammatical* agreement. This is the familiar type of agreement encountered in present-day stages of languages like English, Dutch, German and French, where agreement markers are always obligatorily present and subjects are not commonly omitted. In sum, Siewierska suggests the following tripartite typology of agreement markers, which is inspired by the typology elaborated in Bresnan & Mchombo (1986, 1987):

(25) Grammaticalization cline of person markers²⁶

anaphoric > ambiguous > grammatical

(Siewierska 1999:227)

What generative grammarians have been calling 'canonical subject agreement' appears to reflect the final stage of a development from anaphoric pronoun to grammatical agreement marker. In Siewierska's sample of 272 languages, 230 display agreement to a certain extent. Only two of these languages exhibit grammatical agreement, which is somewhat unexpected. According to Siewierska, this might be explained by the idea that "languages tend to evolve new agreement markers once the old ones lose or start losing their referential potential due to, for instance, syncretism of some of the forms (...)." (1999:239). This means that null subject languages are much more common than languages like English which require an overt subject in almost every finite clause.

Regarding so-called 'object agreement', Siewierska (1999) makes the following important observation: whereas subject agreement markers may eventually reach the status of grammatical agreement, object agreement markers never do. That is, whereas in a language like English every clause is required to have an overt subject, this will never apply to objects in languages where there is agreement with objects. Unlike subject agreement, object agreement markers are always anaphoric or ambiguous. As explained above, ambiguous object markers allow for empty objects, just like subject agreement markers in null subject languages. Anaphoric object markers only occur when an object pronoun or full DP is lacking. I propose to link this asymmetry between subject and object markers to the tree in (21). Subject markers can be real agreement markers, whereas object markers can only be pronouns that are cliticized from the complement position. Hence, full

²⁶ Although the examples I have presented cover person and number marking, Siewierska's paper focuses primarily on person markers.

(pro)nominal direct object DPs in languages with ‘object agreement’ are necessarily adjuncts that are attached to IP. By analyzing ‘object agreement’ as clitic-doubling, we will be able to maintain the main hypothesis of this thesis, as presented in (18).

Clitic-doubling in languages like Spanish is an optional construction, alternating with constructions that lack a cliticized direct object (compare the sentences in (20) to those in (13d-f)). The main discourse function of clitic-doubling involves topicalization, which can be deduced from the fact that certain quantified direct objects cannot be clitic-left dislocated. The theoretical motivation for this will be discussed in section 3 of chapter 3. For the moment, it suffices to observe that indefinite direct objects in Spanish may only be clitic-left dislocated when they are specific.

(26) **Spanish**

a un niño nosotros lo esta-mos lavando
 ACC a child 1PL 3SG.M.ACC be.PRS-1PL wash.GER
 ‘A (specific) child, we are washing it.’
 * ‘One child or other, we are washing it.’

(Luis Vicente)

The sentence in (20c), repeated here as (26), can only be interpreted as having a specific direct object. Similar restrictions are found in languages which are thought to display object agreement, such as the Bantu branch of Niger-Congo and various Austronesian languages. The examples in (27) are from Amharic, an Afro-Asiatic language from Ethiopia.

(27) **Amharic** (Afro-Asiatic, Semitic, South, Ethiopian, South, Transversal, Amharic-Argobba)

- a. *Ləmma hed-ə*
 Lemma go.PF-3SG.M
 ‘Lemma came.’
- b. *Ləmma t’ərmus-u-n səbbər-ə*
 Lemma bottle-DEF-ACC break.PF-3SG.M

'Lemma broke the bottle.'

- c. *Lemma and t'ərmus-∅ səbbər-ə*
 Lemma one bottle-ACC break.PF-3SG.M
 'Lemma broke one bottle.'

(Amberber (2005:298-299), p.c.)

First of all, the sentences in (27a-c) show that Amharic is an accusative language. The verb carries an agreement suffix showing person, number and gender of the subject (cf. *-ə* ('-3SG.M') in (27)). Subjects are caseless, and direct objects are marked by Accusative case (cf. *-n/-∅* ('-ACC') in (27b,c)). Like in Hebrew (cf. (15)), the overt Accusative marker *-n* co-occurs with a definiteness marker (cf. *-u* ('-DEF') in the b-sentence), whereas the empty Accusative morpheme applies to indefinite direct objects, as shown in the c-sentence. Unlike Sakha, Amharic does not allow direct objects with overt case to order more freely with respect to the rest of the clause, in comparison to direct objects with the empty Accusative marker. 'Object agreement' is optional with definite direct objects, and impossible with indefinite direct objects.

(28) **Amharic:** 'object agreement'

- a. *Lemma t'ərmus-u-n səbbər-ə-w*
 Lemma bottle-DEF-ACC break.PF-3SG.M-3SG.M.O
 'Lemma broke the bottle.'
- b. *Lemma and t'ərmus səbbər-ə(*-w)*
 Lemma one bottle break.PF-3SG.M-3SG.M.O
 'Lemma broke one bottle.'
- c. *t'ərmus-u-n Lemma səbbər-ə-w*
 bottle-DEF-ACC Lemma break.PF-3SG.M-3SG.M.O
 'Lemma broke the bottle.'

(Amberber (2005:299), (p.c.))

The verbal affix *-w* ('-3SG.M.O') is allowed with *t'ərmus-u-n* ('bottle-DEF-ACC'),

but not with *and t'ərmus* ('one bottle'). Notice that I analyze this affix as the O-argument. According to the clitic-doubling approach, this suffix is an object pronoun that is licensed by Accusative case and subsequently cliticizes to the verb (cf. Mullen (1986)). The direct object-double may appear either between the subject and the verb, as in (28b), or sentence-initially, as in (28c) (cf. Givón (1976), Leslau (2000)). Assuming that this DP adjoins to IP, we can account for the latter option. The former option is unexpected, but might be explained by assuming that the subject is raised to Spec,CP or, if we assume that adjunction to I' is also possible, to Spec,IP, in which case the object-double 'tucks in' between DP_A in Spec,IP and I. At present, sufficient data are lacking in order to test either of these hypotheses in Amharic.

There is, however, a third alternative that should be considered. The subject is itself left dislocated, doubling the actual subject argument in Spec,IP. This argument could be a pronoun that has been cliticized to the predicate.²⁷ Exactly this analysis has been given for Chicheŵa (Niger-Congo, Bantu sub-branch). This language is like Amharic in having strict AVO constituent order. When there is 'object agreement', all six permutations of A, V and O are possible. Bresnan & Mchombo (1987) explain this by assigning a hybrid status to subject agreement markers. These markers function as grammatical agreement in the absence of object 'agreement' markers, but they function as cliticized pronouns when object 'agreement' is present (see also Mchombo (2002); Mchombo & Morimoto (2004)). Baker (in preparation) applies a similar analysis to Kinande, another Bantu language. This is an interesting proposal, and I will return to it in section 4. Moreover, most of chapter 3 is devoted to languages that apply CLLD to every verbal argument.

²⁷ Alternatively, in the case of a null subject language, we could assume that the subject-double is associated with an empty *pro* in Spec,IP. Ordoñez & Treviño (1999) contains a proposal based on this idea for Spanish (cf. Rigau (1988) for Catalan, Cardinaletti (1996) for Italian, Barbosa (1996) for Portuguese; Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou (1998) for Greek and other languages).

Apart from Chicheŵa and Kinande, the type of object 'agreement' discussed here is present in other Bantu languages like Swahili and Zulu (Givón 1976).²⁸ Within the Malayo-Polynesian branch of Austronesian, the following languages have been reported to show object agreement: Muna (Van den Berg 1989) and Selayarese (Finer 1994, 1997), both belonging to the Sulawesi sub-branch; Kambera (Klamer 1994, 1998, p.c.), a member of the Central-Eastern sub-branch, and Palauan (Georgopoulos 1991, 1992, 1998), from the Palauan sub-branch. In each of these languages, indefiniteness of the direct object blocks object 'agreement', which would be expected under a clitic-doubling approach.²⁹ Within Europe, Hungarian (Uralic) has marginal object 'agreement' morphology. In this language, subject agreement has a separate paradigm for certain combinations of a subject and a *definite* direct object (cf. Kiss (2002:49-55)).

Morphologically speaking, a clitic-doubling analysis seems to be inappropriate in the case of Hungarian, since the object marker is an affix, rather than a clitic. However, as Siewierska (1999:231) points out, there is no absolute one-to-one correspondence between stages in the grammaticalization cline of person markers and their morphological form. Nevertheless, there is a parallel between (25) and the so-called 'grammatical bondedness cline' presented in (29).

(29) Grammatical bondedness cline

independent pronoun > unstressed pronoun > clitic > affix

(Siewierska 1999:231)

²⁸ Givón actually claims that every Bantu language he knows displays this behaviour (1976:157).

²⁹ More specifically, one would expect that nonspecificity would be the determining factor, since indefinites can still be specific, and hence clitic-left dislocated, as we saw in the Spanish example in (26). However, 'indefiniteness' in these languages is not used in the canonical sense, as the cited authors observe. For instance, human direct objects tend to belong to the class of definite direct objects, and hence always trigger 'agreement'. I admit that this might be a problem for my theory and consider a precise analysis along the lines of my proposal a topic for further research.

Naturally, anaphoric agreement markers are likely to be realized by independent pronouns, rather than affixes, whereas grammatical agreement markers will be represented by an affix rather than an independent pronoun. Ambiguous markers reflect an intermediate stage between anaphoric and grammatical agreement, but we know from many null subject languages that this type of agreement is often realized by an affix, as far as subject agreement is concerned.³⁰ If Siewierska is correct in her observation that object ‘agreement’ markers never become fully grammaticalized, then the fact that they are realized by affixes in Hungarian does not come as a surprise anymore.

Notice that I am connecting Siewierska’s conclusion to a CLLD-analysis, arguing that real object agreement does not exist (in languages that already have subject agreement). If subject agreement markers are ambiguous (or anaphoric), they are not commonly argued to show CLLD (but see footnote 27). However, as I have pointed out above, they *are* associated with clitic-doubling in several Bantu languages, so the option should not be ruled out in principle. Null subject languages are not the real topic of this dissertation, so I will leave this issue for future research. In the next section, I will discuss data from *Tukang Besi*, showing that in certain constructions, a clitic-doubling analysis is suitable for every verbal argument. In the next chapter I will argue that this option may give rise to ergative case marking.

4 Ergative case marking: *Tukang Besi*

In anticipation of the following chapter, I will now discuss an example of how ergative case marking may arise in my proposal. The analysis presented here will be elaborated in chapter 3, where I will present my Second Pattern

³⁰ Romance, Slavic and Greek languages illustrate this abundantly.

Hypothesis (SPH).

Tukang Besi, an Austronesian language spoken in the archipelago that bears the same name (Indonesia, Sulawesi province), has constructions that can be analyzed along the lines of (19). Subjects are licensed by agreement, and objects bear Accusative case.

(30) **Tukang Besi** (Austronesian, Malayo-Polynesian, Sulawesi, Muna-Buton, Tukangbesi-Bonerate)

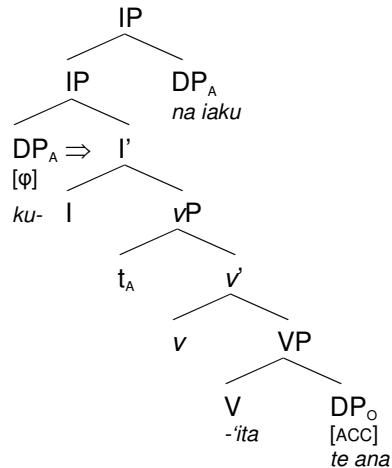
- a. *no-tinti na ana*
3S.R-run ART child
'The child is running.'
- b. *ku-ita te ana (na iaku)*
1SG.A-see ACC child ART 1SG
'I saw a child.'
- c. * *ku'ita na iaku te ana*

(Donohue 1999:51; 2002:83; 2004:74)

As is shown in (30b), *Tukang Besi* appears to display typical characteristics of a null subject language: overt subjects can be dropped. Subject agreement is prefixal, *no-* ('3S.R-') licenses an S-argument in the a-sentence *ku-* ('1SG-') an A-argument in the b-sentence. If we assume that the agreement marker licenses *pro* in Spec,IP, we would expect that an overt subject would appear in preverbal position. This is not the case, as is shown in (30b/c). The phrase *na iaku* ('ART 1SG') may only follow the direct object, *te ana* ('ACC child').³¹ I take this as evidence that the overt subject is adjoined to the right of IP, where it clitic-doubles the actual subject in Spec,IP. Theoretically speaking, the subject could be either *pro* or the verbal prefix itself. Although nothing hinges on it, I will henceforth assume the latter, and analyze a transitive sentence like (30b) as follows:

³¹ It should be noted that Donohue does not actually use the term Accusative in his glosses. He distinguishes a nominative marker (*na*) and a non-nominative marker (*te*) (2002:81). The reason for this is that *te* is not always used for internal arguments, as we will see shortly.

(31) *Tukang Besi*: canonical tree (cf. (30b))



The direct object, *te ana*, is base-generated in the complement of V and licensed by Accusative case. The subject is base-generated as a pronoun in Spec,vP, and raises to Spec,IP where it is licensed by agreement. Afterwards, it cliticizes to the predicate, shown by '⇒' in order to indicate that this is proclisis, rather than enclisis. The cliticized subject is doubled by *na iaku*, a DP that right-attaches to IP. Apparently, left-adjunction is not possible in *Tukang Besi*, since the order found in (30b) is the only one possible.³² Although subjects are assumed to be caseless, the subject double does contain an element which Donohue (1999:63) analyzes as 'nominative article'. I will assume here that *na* only licenses adjunct nouns, like *by* in English passive *by*-phrases. As we will see below, bare nouns are simply not allowed in *Tukang Besi* adjuncts. Importantly, *na* never accompanies a subject clitic, suggesting that it is not a case marker that licenses the subject argument, which would run counter to my theory, but an oblique case marker licensing the subject-double. The clitic-doubling analysis is supported by the

³² In intransitive clauses, the independent subject noun or pronoun equally follows the verb, always accompanied by *na*. Hence, A and s behave similarly.

fact that these subjects are clearly interpreted as topics. In Donohue's words: "Givenness, definiteness and referentiality are all pragmatic notions that are bound up in the specification that is part of a nominative argument's pragmatic representation" (1999:63). Conversely, a direct object like *te ana* ('ART.ACC child') is typically interpreted as indefinite (cf. (30b)). Definite direct objects typically occur in constructions with object 'agreement'.

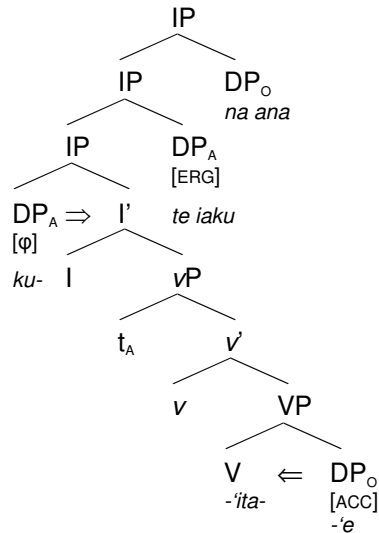
(32) **Tukang Besi**

- a. *ku-ita-ʼe na ana (te iaku)*
 1SG.A-see-3.O ART child ART.ERG 1SG
 'I saw the child.'
- b. *ku'ita'e (te iaku) na ana*

(Donohue 2004:74)

Again, as I have done with respect to object 'agreement' in the languages cited in the previous section, I analyze the verbal suffix *-e* (3.O) as a cliticized object pronoun. This means that the phrase *na ana* ('ART child') is an adjunct doubling this clitic. Evidence for this comes from the fact that in the object 'agreement' construction, the order of the postverbal phrases is flexible (cf. (32)). Moreover, there is a further difference: *te*, which functions as an Accusative marker in the canonical construction (cf. (30b)), appears on the transitive subject double *te iaku* ('ART.ERG 1SG') when the object is clitic-doubled (cf. (32)). As intransitive subject-doubles are always marked by *na* (cf. (30a)), we observe that constructions with clitic-doubled objects display an *ergative* case pattern: Ergative *te* versus unmarked *na*.³³ This pattern is only found on the adjuncts doubling the cliticized arguments. The clitics still pattern accusatively, since subjects are consistently realized by a prefix, and objects by a suffix. The tree in (33) shows the syntactic structure of what I will term the ergative construction.

³³ In this construction, *na* is what most people would call an absolutive marker.

(33) *Tukang Besi*: ergative construction

In this tree, the subject double is adjoined first, and finally the (object) double is right-attached to IP. This ordering is not strict, as is shown in (32), and the explanation for that comes from the fact that both verbal arguments are actually clitic-doubled.³⁴

Under the analysis given in (31) and (33), the apparently exotic syntax of *Tukang Besi* is compared to the more familiar syntax of a null subject language which also has clitic-doubling. By assuming that ‘null subjects’ in this language actually mean that the subjects are realized by cliticizing pronouns, which may be doubled by an adjunct, we can account for the

³⁴ Donohue’s remark with respect to the givenness, definiteness and referentiality of *na*-marked phrases carries over to clitic-doubled direct objects. With respect to *te*-marked phrases, Donohue remarks that *te* has a wider range of functions than *na*, which is plausible under my analysis for Accusative *te*, but not for Ergative *te*. The former applies to an argument, but the latter applies to an adjunct doubling the transitive subject clitic. However, Donohue includes other uses of *te*, notably as a pragmatic marker on constituents that appear in preverbal position, so it is not clear at all whether Ergative *te* really behaves similarly to Accusative *te*. In the next chapter, I will discuss the pragmatic use of *te*.

syntactic behaviour of postverbal DPs. When the internal argument is indefinite, it is licensed by Accusative case in the complement of V. Hence, it must follow the verb immediately. Transitive constructions with a definite internal argument apply object clitic-doubling, in which case both postverbal DPs are adjuncts. In order to associate these adjuncts with the correct clitic, an ergative case pattern is used.

5 Universal argument licensing in syntax: the main hypothesis

In this chapter I have defended the main hypothesis of this study, repeated below.

(34)	Main hypothesis: universal licensing of arguments (preliminary version, repeated from (18))		
Intransitive:	[_{IP} DP _{S,φ}	V+I _φ]
Transitive:	[_{IP} DP _{A,φ}	V+I _φ	DP _{O,Acc}]

According to this hypothesis, UG provides two syntactic mechanisms that can be used for the licensing of verbal arguments: Accusative case marking and agreement. Accusative case is checked in situ by v , and therefore it can only be used for the licensing of an O-argument in a transitive clause. The case feature is abstract: languages without overt case marking are supposed to use it as well. Differential object marking is encountered when the morphological realization of Accusative case is restricted to a subclass of O-arguments, determined by the person/animacy hierarchy. Subjects (S/A) are caseless arguments, which means that they cannot be licensed by structural case. Instead, they move to Spec,IP in order to check the ϕ -features of I.

Although it is common to believe that objects are able to trigger agreement, I reject this possibility on the basis of the observation that 'object

agreement' markers never become fully grammaticalized (cf. Siewierska 1999). If a language seems to display verbal agreement with objects, the agreement markers can be analyzed as clitics that are optionally doubled by nominal adjuncts, at least in the languages that I have been able to look at so far. Well-known clitic-doubling languages such as Spanish, as well as languages like Amharic and *Tukang Besi*, where 'object agreement' is optional, confirm this analysis.

The structures in (34) are pervasive, and hence supposed to be present in every natural language, even the ergative ones. The examples from *Tukang Besi*, cited in the previous subsection, suggest that it is possible for ergative patterns to occur in a language that behaves as predicted by the main hypothesis. True as this may be, (34) does not yet answer the question why ergativity should appear at all in a language like *Tukang Besi*, and why it is dependent on object clitic-doubling. These questions will be answered in the next chapter, where I will discuss examples from *Warlpiri*, a language in which direct objects are always clitic-doubled. This results in a situation where independent nouns and pronouns are always adjuncts, for which it may be desirable to distinguish consistently between the two arguments of a transitive clause by the means of morphological case. Some languages may use an ergative pattern there, but an accusative pattern is also possible.