The nuanced typology of syntactic ergativity

Insights from parasitic gaps in Samoan and West Circassian

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Syntactic ergativity

Defined broadly (Polinsky 2017:3):

"The presence of **syntactic rules** that group S and O (the absolutive) together, to the exclusion of A (the ergative)."

S = subject of intransitive verb

O = object of transitive verb

} **ABS**

A = subject of transitive verb

} **ERG**

The Ergative Extraction Constraint

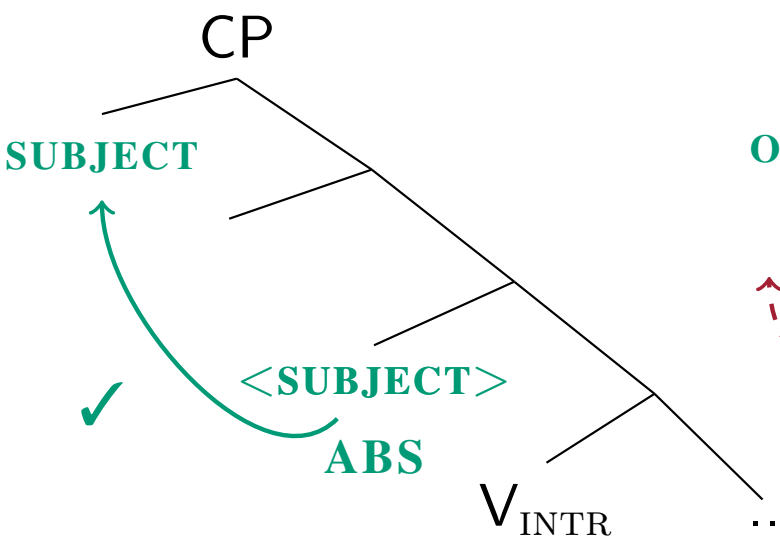
Trademark syntactic ergativity effect:

ban on the displacement of the ergative agent

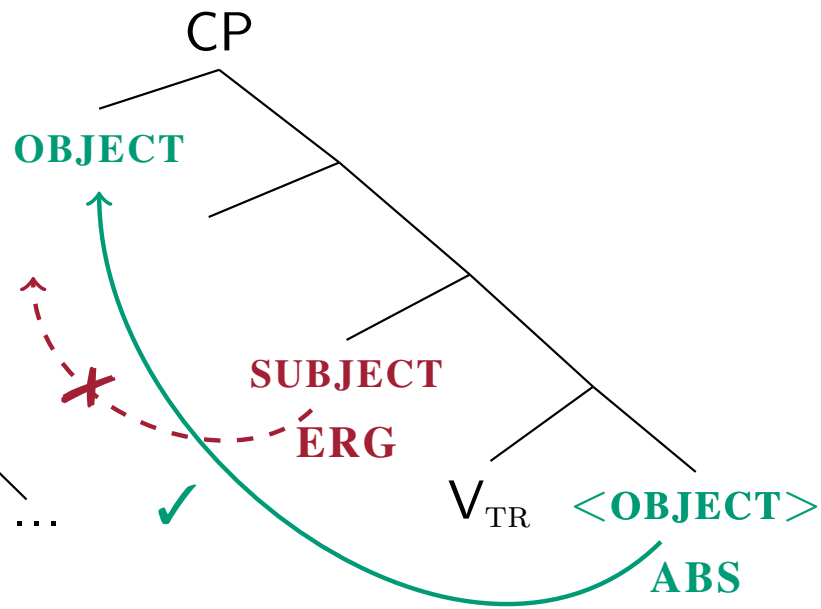
* displacement = relativization, question formation, topicalization, clefting, focus fronting, etc.

= Ā-movement

Intransitive clause:



Transitive clause:



Dixon (1994); Manning (1996); Aldridge (2004, 2008a); Coon et al. (2014, 2021); Deal (2016); Polinsky (2016, 2017); Tollan and Clemens (2022),a.o.

Example: ERG cannot move in Q'anjob'al (Mayan)

* Maktxel max y-il __ERG ix ix?
who PFV A3-see CLF woman

Intended: 'Who saw the woman?' ***ERG WH-DISPLACEMENT**

Maktxel max y-il naq winaq __ABS ?
who PFV A3-see CLF man

'Who did the man see?' **✓ABS(O) WH-DISPLACEMENT**

Maktxel max way-i __ABS ?
who PFV sleep-ITV

'Who slept?' **✓ABS(S) WH-DISPLACEMENT**

(Coon et al. 2014, 2021; Tollan and Clemens 2022)

The syntactic endeavor

Our goal: determining the fundamental building blocks at the core of all languages

Can we reduce typological diversity to the interactions between a finite set of predictable micro- and macroparameters?

(cf. Baker 2003, 2010)

The challenge of syntactic ergativity:

A large-scale typological difference* in a small set of languages, which does not have obvious analogs in non-ergative languages.

> * cf. Keenan and Comrie's (1977) **Accessibility Hierarchy**: subjects (A and S) are the most accessible for relativization

Explored through the prism of **parasitic gaps**.

The significance of parasitic gaps

Which articles did John file ☐ [*without reading* ☐$_{\textbf{PG}}$]?

Parasitic gaps are striking evidence for Universal Grammar.

(Chomsky 1982)

- long-distance dependency between empty categories
- with an intricate set of properties
- that are too marginal to be learned

And yet: their properties are stable in vastly different, unrelated languages and can be reliably used to diagnose structure!

This talk: Parasitic gaps in Samoan and West Circassian help explain the Ergative Extraction Constraint.

The empirical foundation

West Circassian: generalizations based on 12 years of fieldwork and language study inform the questions posed for **Samoan**.

August 2010, Khatazhukaj, Adygea © Peter Arkadiev

Analyses of the Ergative Extraction Constraint

- **high absolutive blocks ergative movement**

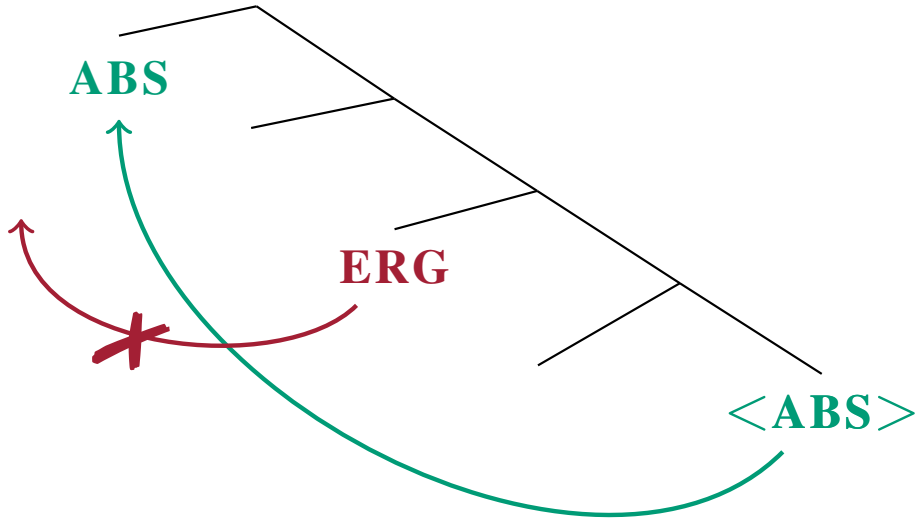
  (Aldridge 2004, 2008a; Coon et al. 2014, 2021; Tollan and Clemens 2022, a.o.)

- structural or morphological properties of the ergative DP block ergative movement

  (Otsuka 2006, 2017; Legate 2012; Deal 2016; Polinsky 2016)

High absolutive blocks ergative extraction

- ABS object is selected by the verb below ERG subject.
- In surface syntax, ABS occupies high position above ERG.
- high ABS intervenes for ERG movement.



(Aldridge 2004, 2008b; Coon et al. 2014, 2021; Tollan and Clemens 2022)

Analyses of the Ergative Extraction Constraint

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- **structural or morphological properties of the ergative DP block ergative movement**

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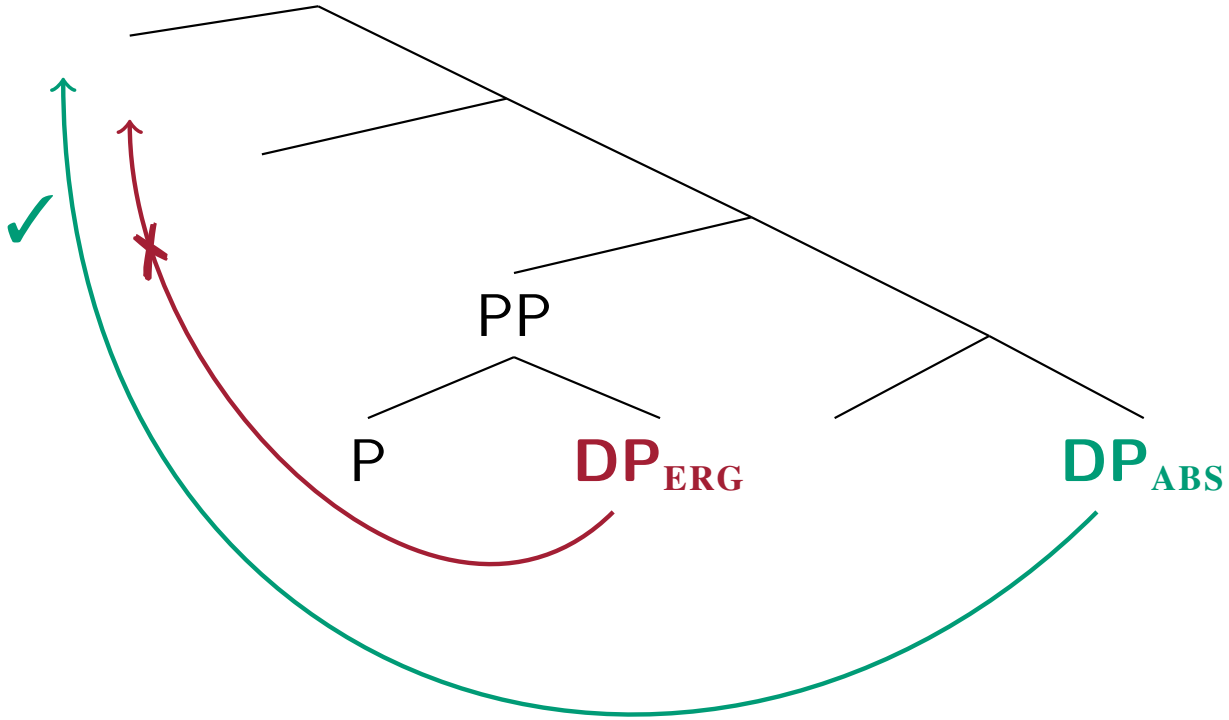
Properties of ERG block ergative extraction

Polinsky (2016):

- Position of ABS is irrelevant.
- ERG displacement blocked by additional structure.



(See also Otsuka 2006, 2017; Legate 2012; Deal 2016).

Typology of syntactic ergativity: the status quo

Two types of ergative languages:

1. **LOW ABSOLUTIVE**
   subset of low ABS languages display ERG extraction constraint
   → associated with properties of ERG

2. **HIGH ABSOLUTIVE**
   universally display ERG extraction constraint

A nuanced typology of syntactic ergativity

Samoan and **West Circassian** challenge the status quo:

1. Samoan is low ABS, with a **pocket of high ABS syntax**

> ERG extraction in 'low ABS' language is blocked by **ABS** raising.

2. West Circassian is high ABS, but **no ERG extraction constraint**

> High ABS does not universally block ERG movement.

Evidence from parasitic gaps.

The proposal

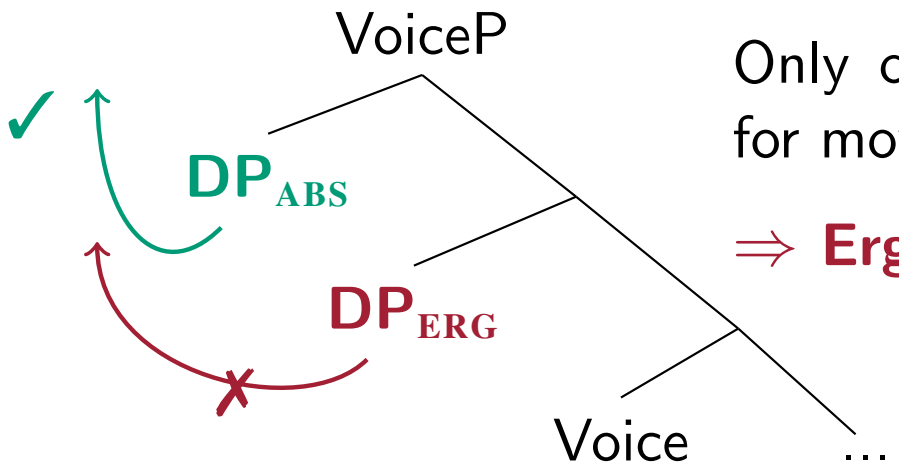
Ingredients of the Ergative Extraction Constraint:

Position of ERG:
ERG merges at phase edge*
= Spec,VoiceP

+

High ABS:
ABS raises to outer Spec,VoiceP

* **Phase** = locality domain for movement and agreement (boundary for displacement dependencies)



Only outer phase edge is accessible for movement.

⇒ **Ergative Extraction Constraint**

(cf. Aldridge 2004, 2008b; Coon et al. 2021)

Constraints on extraction are about locality

The Ergative Extraction Constraint is reduced to standard, independently established notions of locality and syntactic domains.

- VoiceP is a phase

  ≈ Chomsky's (1995) transitive *v*P

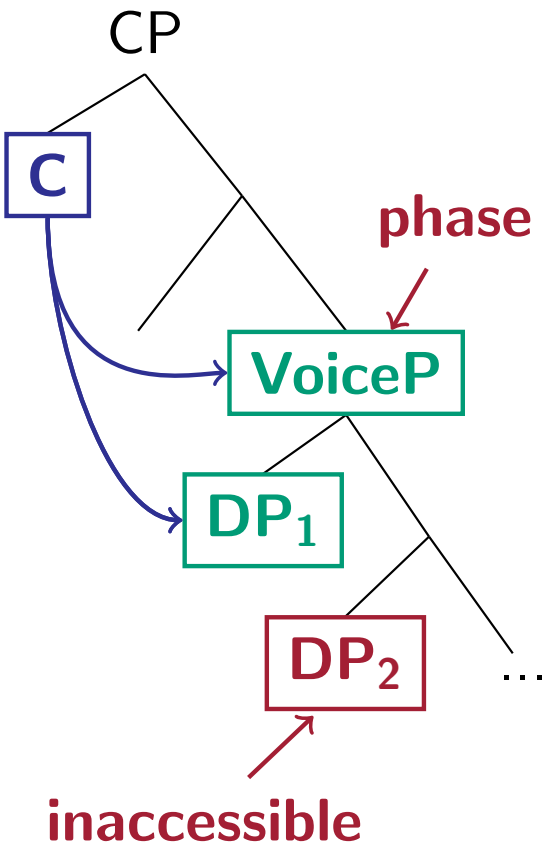
  (e.g. Harley 2014; Legate 2014)

- Only outer phase edge is accessible for movement

  (Rackowski and Richards 2005; Bošković 2016; Holmberg et al. 2019)

  ⇐ locality for Agree and Move (Rackowski and Richards 2005; Ershova to appear a)

ERG is trapped because of locality



- Movement is triggered by Agree between a **probe** and the closest **goal**
- All **phases** are potential **goals**
- DP_1 and VoiceP are both **closest goals**

because there is no XP
which c-commands DP_1,
but does not c-command VoiceP

> phase and outer phase edge are equidistant to probe

(Rackowski and Richards 2005; Pesetsky and Torrego 2000; Van Urk and Richards 2015; Halpert 2019; Ershova to appear a)

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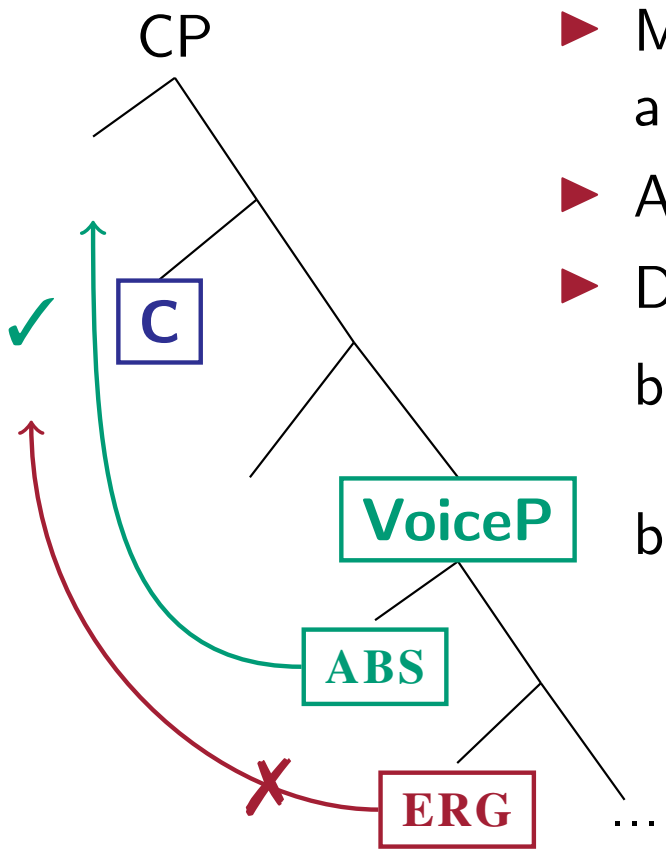

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phase and outer phase edge are equidistant to probe

ERG cannot move if ABS is in outer Spec,VoiceP.

(Rackowski and Richards 2005; Pesetsky and Torrego 2000; Van Urk and Richards 2015; Halpert 2019; Ershova to appear a)

Predictions

1. ERG can move if ABS skips outer Spec,VoiceP
2. ERG can move if ABS stays low
3. only ERG movement is blocked by high ABS

Confirmed by Samoan and West Circassian.

Evidence from parasitic gaps.

Roadmap

- **Parasitic gaps, high ABS and ergative extraction**
- **West Circassian:** high ABS, but ERG can move
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  Ergative Extraction Constraint in action!
- **Wrapping up:** a nuanced typology of syntactic ergativity

Parasitic gaps as a structural diagnostic

Parasitic gaps in English:

Who did [*a picture of* $\square_{\text{PG}}$] *surprise* $\square$?

Licensed by a **real gap**

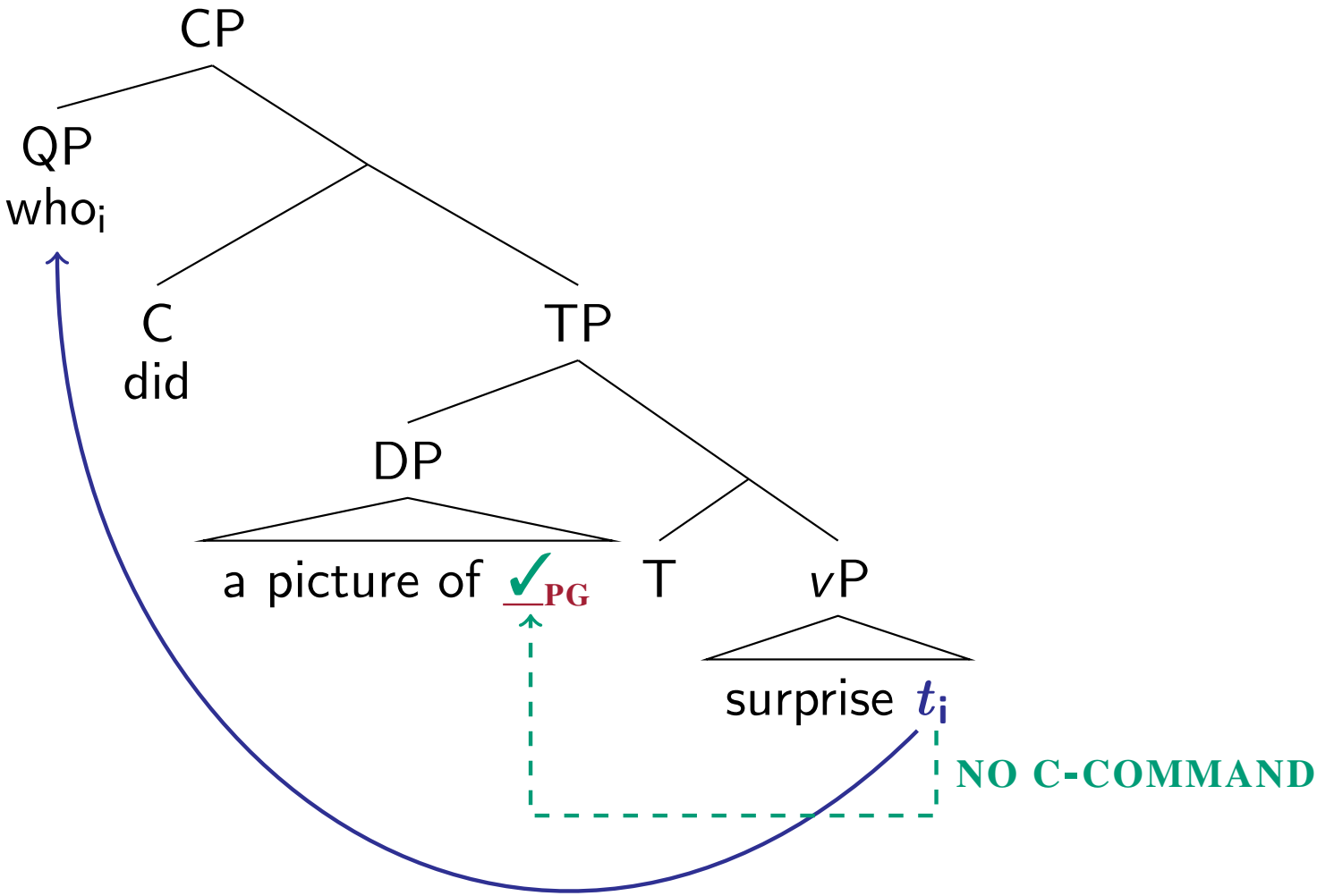
which does not c-command the **parasitic gap**.

↳ **Anti-C-Command Condition**

(Engdahl 1983 et seq.)

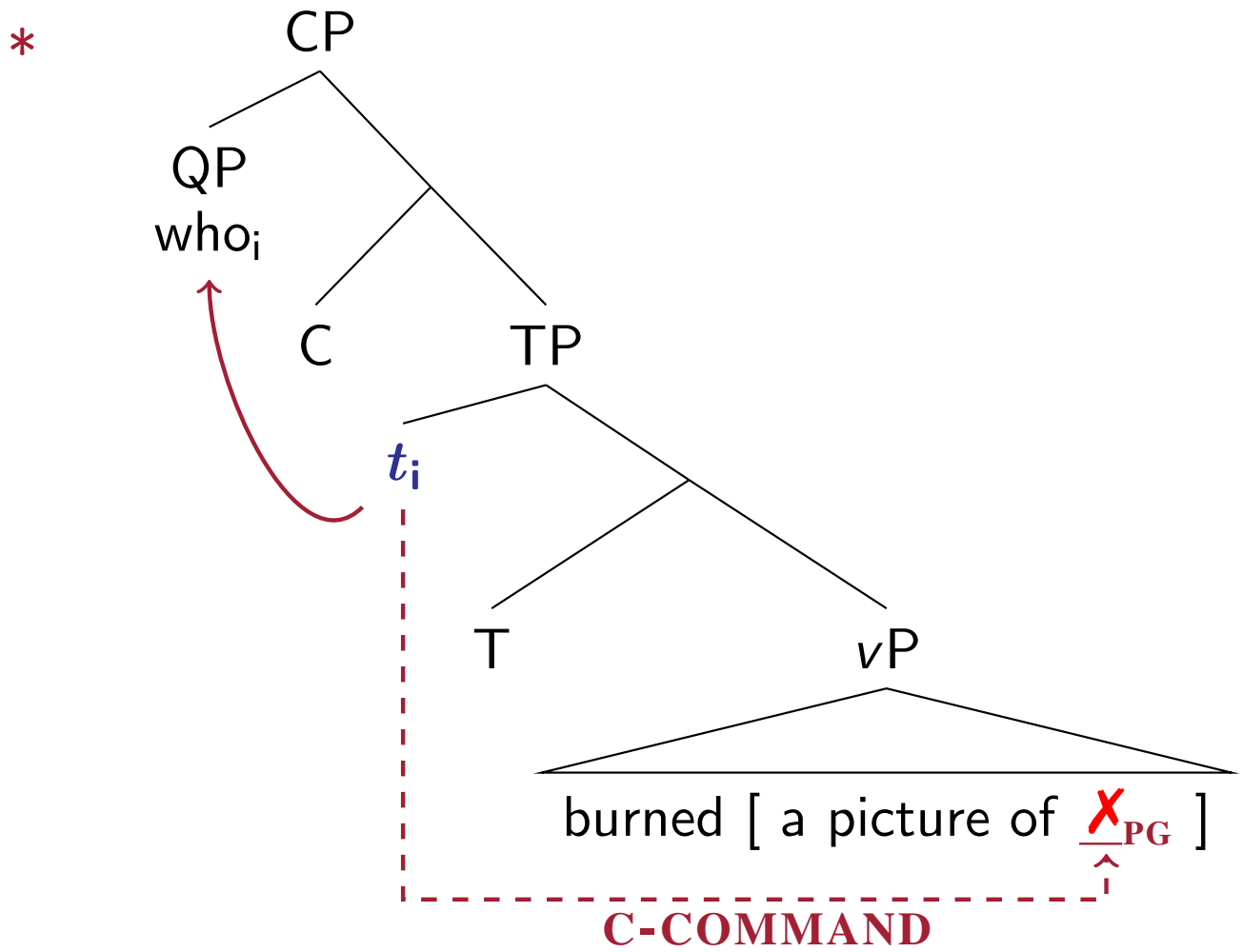
The anti-c-command condition in English

object doesn't c-command **subject** ⇒ can license parasitic gap



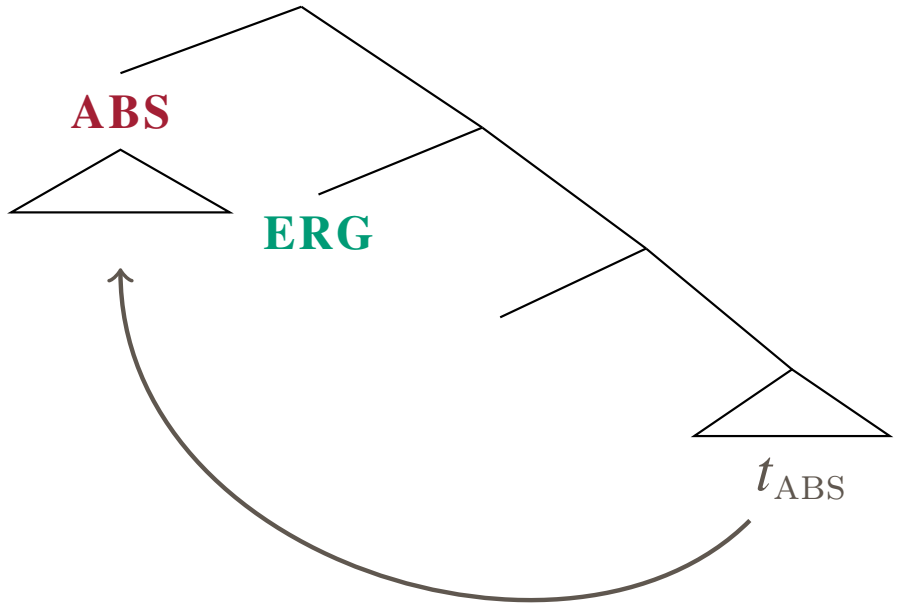
The anti-c-command condition in English

subject c-commands **object** ⇒ cannot license parasitic gap



Parasitic gaps as a diagnostic for ERG movement

- In high ABS languages, ABS raises to c-command ERG.



Parasitic gaps as a diagnostic for ERG movement

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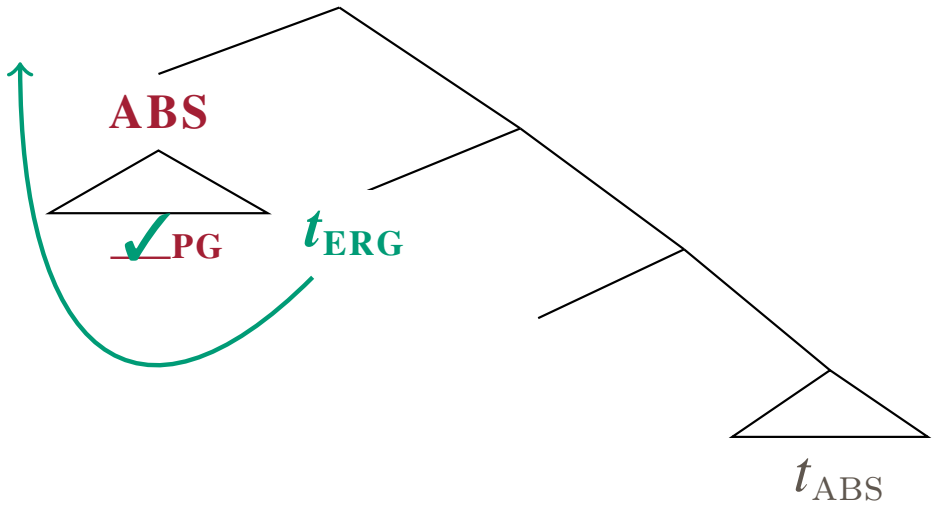
- If ERG can move, it can license PG in high ABS.

West Circassian



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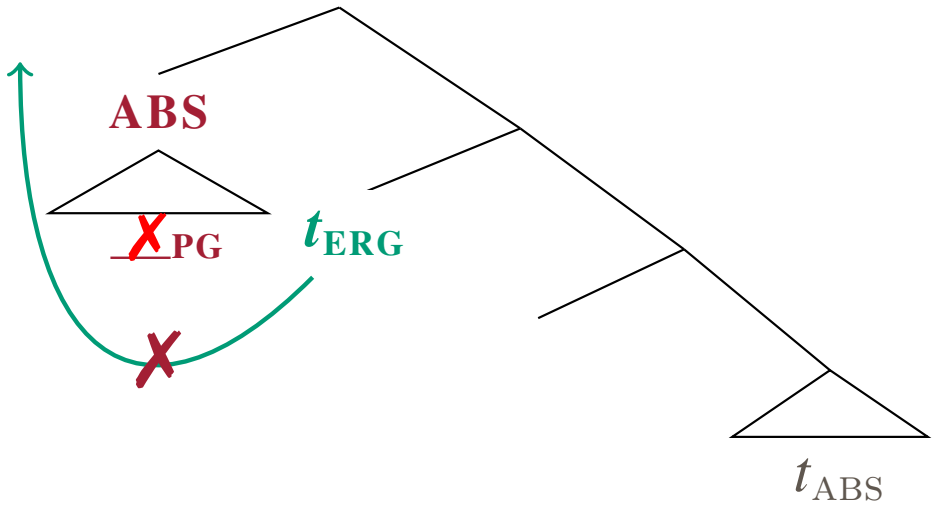


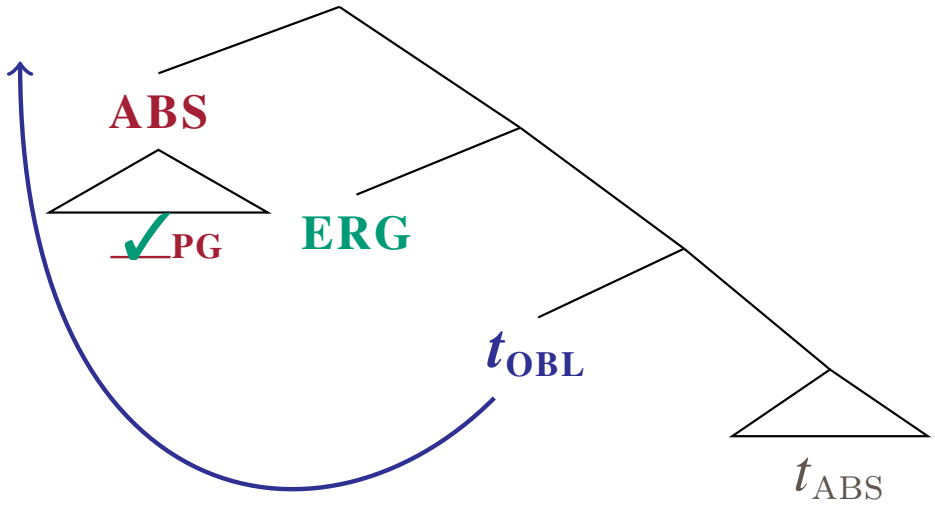
Parasitic gaps as a diagnostic for ERG movement

- In high ABS languages, ABS raises to c-command ERG.
- If ERG can move, it can license PG in high ABS.

West Circassian

- If ERG cannot move, it cannot license PG in high ABS.
- Non-ERG arguments can move and license PG in high ABS.

Samoan



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  Ergative Extraction Constraint in action!
- **Wrapping up:** a nuanced typology of syntactic ergativity

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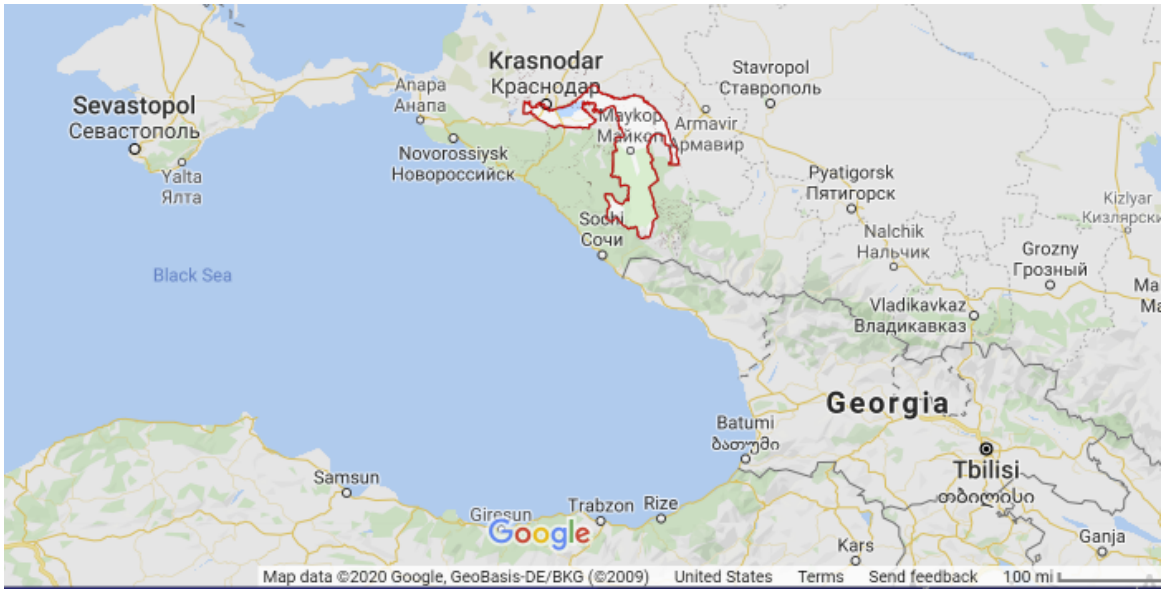
West Circassian

West Circassian (or Adyghe):

- Northwest Caucasian
- primarily spoken in the Republic of Adygea, Russia



Data from fieldwork on **Temirgoy dialect** in the Shovgenovsky district of Adygea, collected during three trips in 2017-2019.

West Circassian is polysynthetic

Head marking and pro-drop:

səqəpfarjəʁeλeʁʷəʁ

me **for your sake** **to them** **he**

sə-	qə-	p-f-	a-r-	jə-	ʁe-	λeʁʷə	-ʁ
1SG.ABS-	DIR-	2SG.IO-BEN-	3PL.IO-DAT-	3SG.ERG-	CAUS-	see	-PST

'He showed me to them for your sake.'

(Korotkova and Lander 2010:301)

Agreement order: **ABS-** **IO+APPL-** **ERG-**

Head marking on nominals

Possessor agreement:

s-	šəpχ^{w}əxer
1sg.poss-	sister.pl.abs

‘**my** sisters’

Case marking is ergative

	S		
mə	pŝaŝe-**r**	daxew	qaŝ^{w}e
this	girl-**ABS**	well	dances

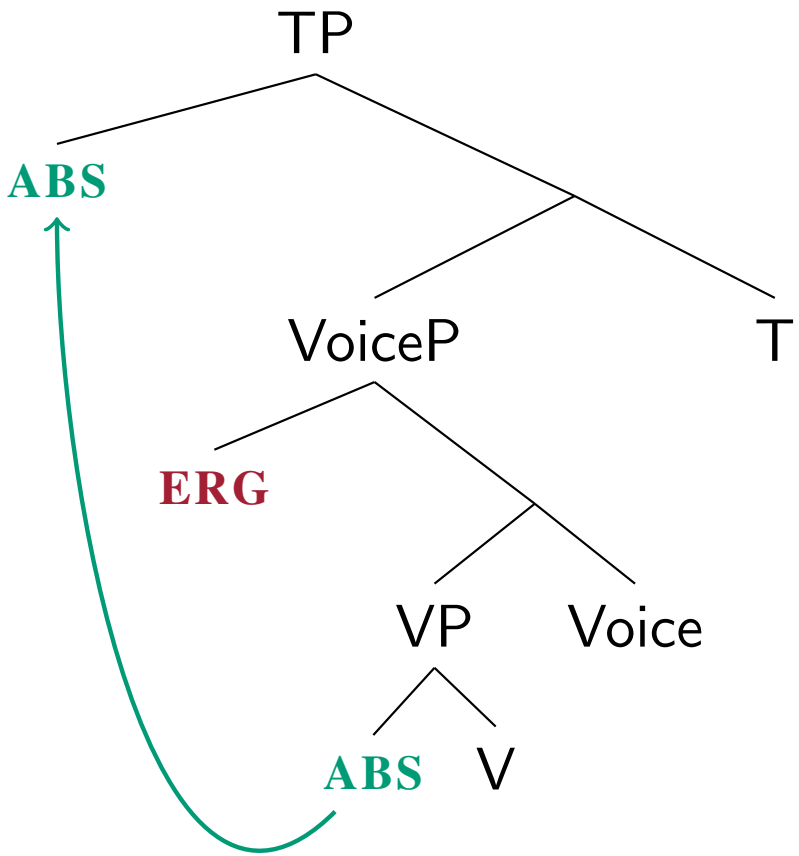
'This girl dances well.'

A	**O**	
sabəjxe-**m**	haxe-**r**	qaλeʁ^{w}əʁ
children-**ERG**	dogs-**ABS**	saw

'The children saw the dogs.'

West Circassian is high absolutive

ABS object obligatorily raises to Spec,TP.



Evidence: reciprocal binding

(Ershova 2019, to appear b)

Reciprocal binding in West Circassian

Reciprocals are covert and trigger **reciprocal agreement** on the predicate:

- correlates with syntactic position of the reciprocal
- does not affect transitivity ⇒ not a de-transitivizing operator

Reciprocals are subject to Condition A

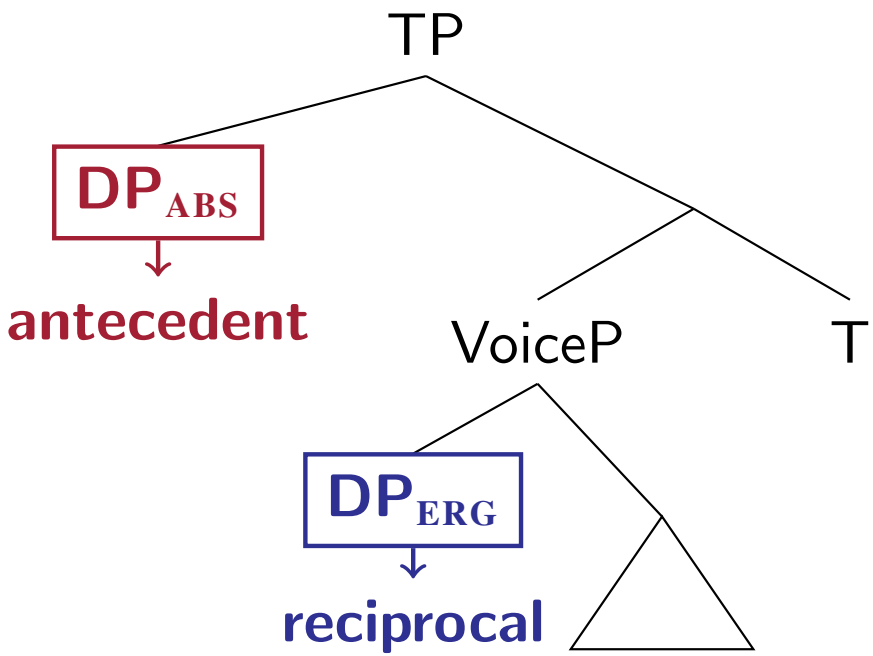
= must be bound by a local c-commanding antecedent

(see Appendix)

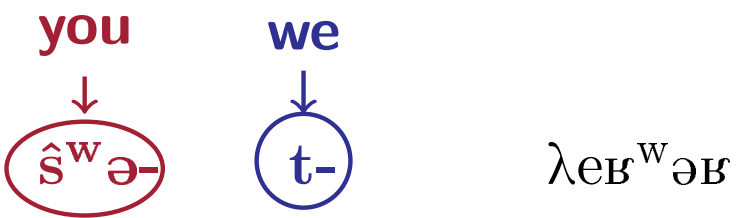
(Ershova 2019, to appear b)

Reciprocal binding provides evidence for high ABS

ABS can bind reciprocal in ERG position.



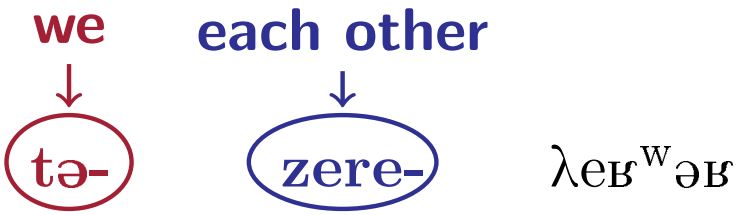
High ABS binds ERG



‘We saw you(pl).’

BASELINE

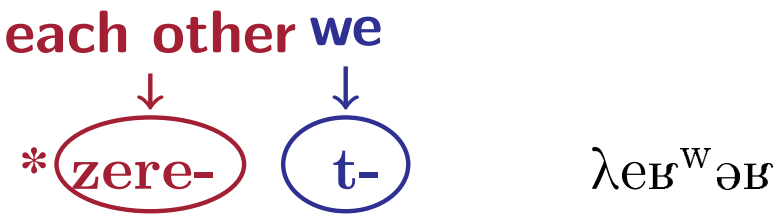
High ABS binds ERG



‘We saw each other.’

RECIPROCAL

Obligatory high ABS: ERG cannot bind ABS



***ABS = REC**

Intended: ‘We saw each other.’

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- **Wrapping up:** a nuanced typology of syntactic ergativity

Structure of relative clauses

(Caponigro and Polinsky 2011; Lander 2012; Ershova 2021)

Finite clause:

a-š’	txəλə-r	[mə	ç̣əfə-m	]
that-ERG	book-ABS		this person-OBL	

Ø-	Ø-	r-	jə-	tə-ʁ
3ABS-	3SG.IO-	DAT-	3SG.ERG-	give-PST

‘S/he gave a book to this person.’

Relative clause:

WH-AGREEMENT

WH-MOVEMENT

[Op	txəλə-r	__IO	Ø-	ze-	r-	jə-	tə-ʁe	]
	book-ABS		3ABS-	WH.IO-	DAT-	3SG.ERG-	give-PST	

ç̣əfə-r

person-ABS

‘the person to whom s/he gave the book’ (Lander 2012:276)

No ergative extraction constraint

χərbəzew	[	**__ABS**	a-š’	**Ø-**	ə-	bzə-ʁe-r	]
watermelon			that-ERG	**WH.ABS-**	3SG.ERG-	cut-PST-ABS	

‘the watermelon that he cut’ **✓ABS REL**

[txəλə-r	**__IO**	Ø-	**ze-**	r-	jə-	tə-ʁe	]	ç̣əfə-r
book-ABS		3ABS-	**WH.IO-**	DAT-	3SG.ERG-	give-PST		person-ABS

‘the person to whom s/he gave the book’ **✓IO REL**

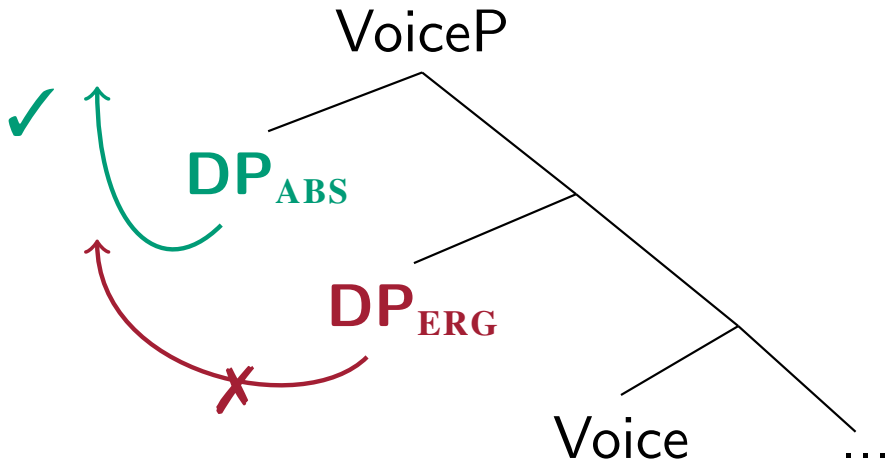
č̣’alew	[	apč’ə-r	**__ERG**	Ø-	**zə-**	q^{w}əta-ʁe-m	]
boy		glass-ABS		3ABS-	**WH.ERG-**	break-PST-OBL	

‘the boy that broke the glass’ **✓ERG REL**

(Lander 2012:274-276)

Why no ergative extraction constraint?

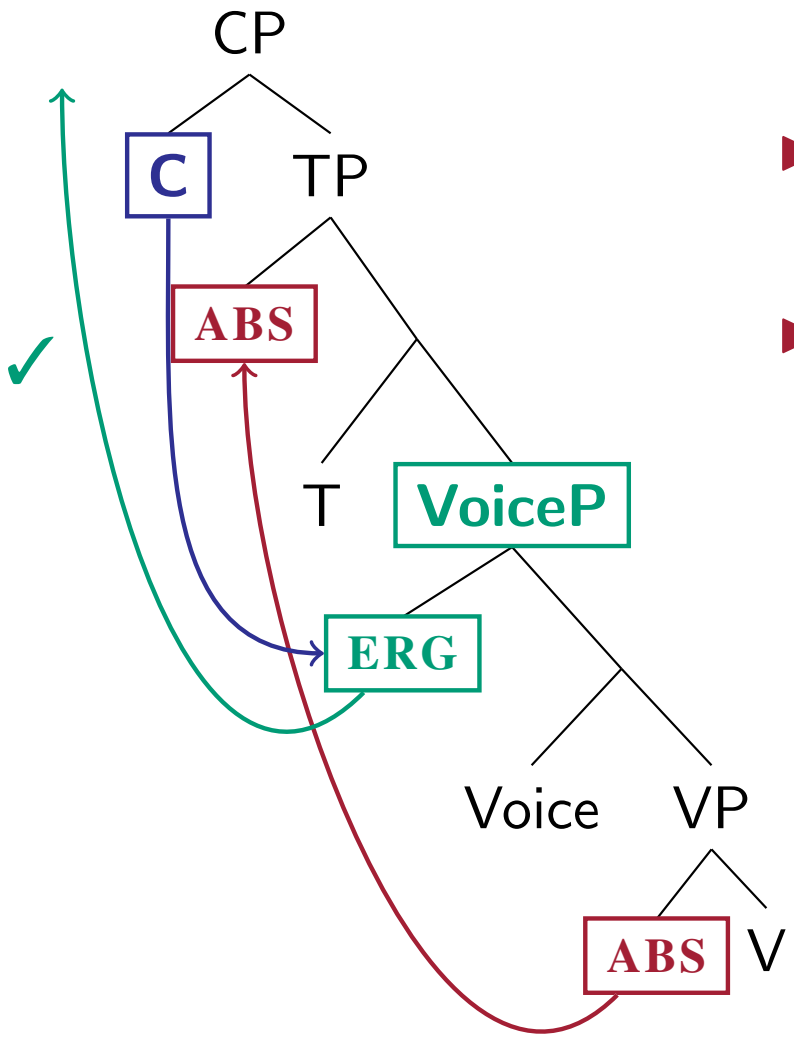
ERG extraction is blocked if ABS moves to Spec,VoiceP:



Prediction: If high ABS skips Spec,VoiceP, ERG can move.

This is what happens in West Circassian!

Prediction confirmed: high ABS ≠ ERG can't move



- ABS raises without stopping in Spec,VoiceP (see Appendix)
- ERG is in outer Spec,VoiceP

⇒ ERG can move (despite high ABS)

ERG cannot move
⇑
ABS intervention

Confirmed in West Circassian!

Summary: high ABS and ERG extraction

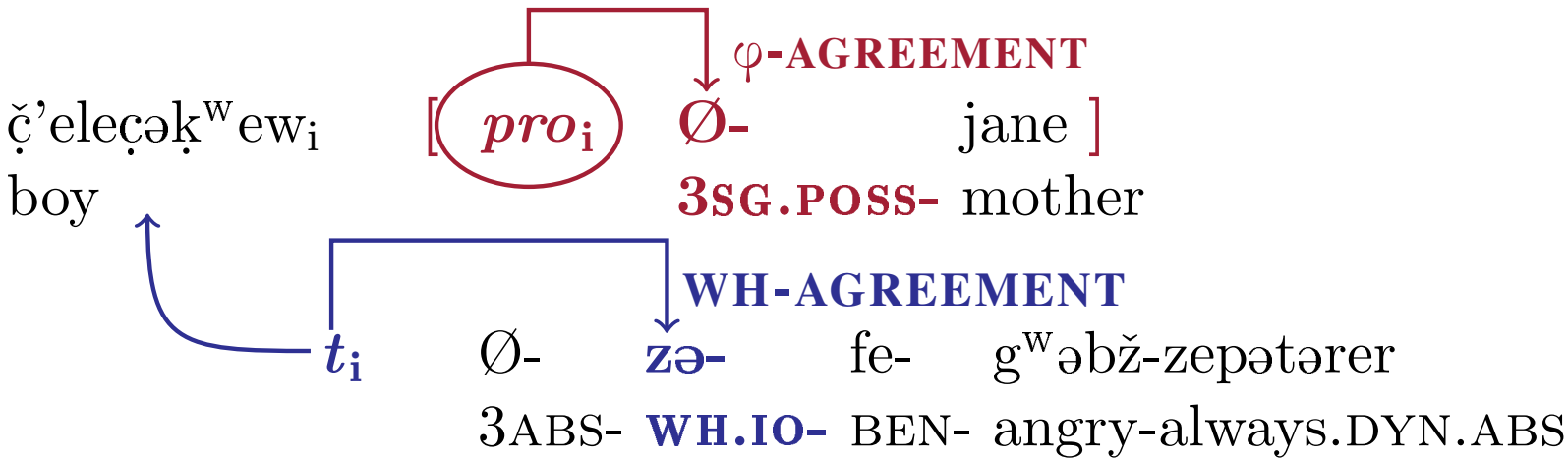
In West Circassian, ABS raises without stopping in Spec,VoiceP

$\Rightarrow$ no Ergative Extraction Constraint!

Confirmed by parasitic gaps.

Parasitic gaps in West Circassian

- A pronoun that is bound by relativized participant may be replaced by a parasitic gap

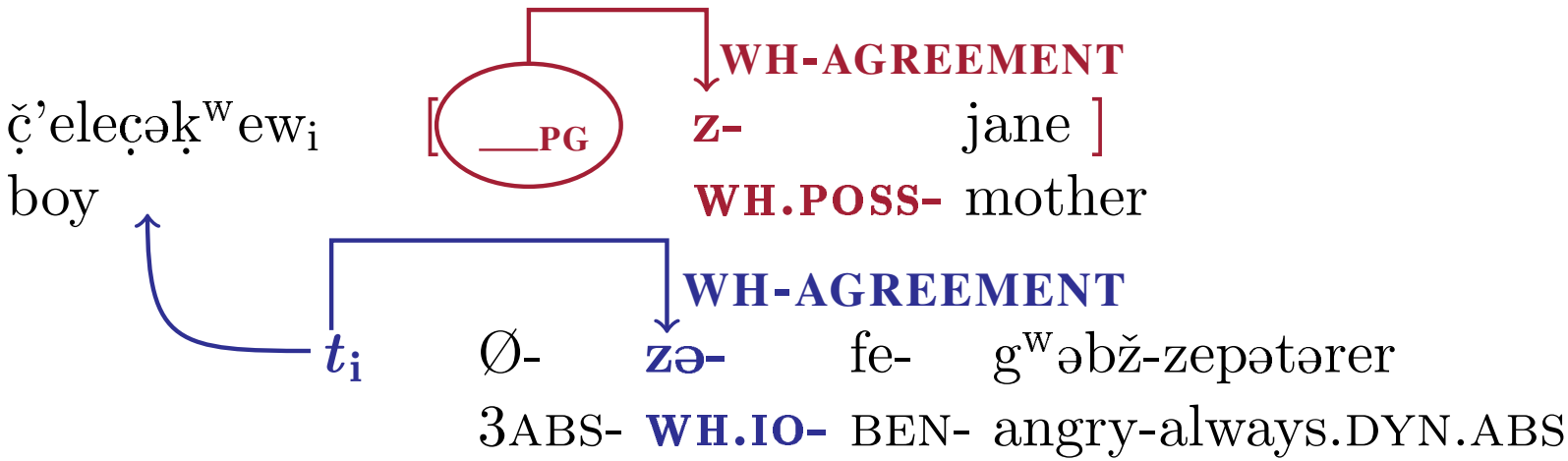


‘the boy whom his mother is always angry at’

(Ershova 2021)

Parasitic gaps in West Circassian

- A pronoun that is bound by relativized participant may be replaced by a parasitic gap
- the parasitic gap triggers **parasitic wh-agreement**



‘the boy whom [the mother of __] is always angry at’

(Ershova 2021)

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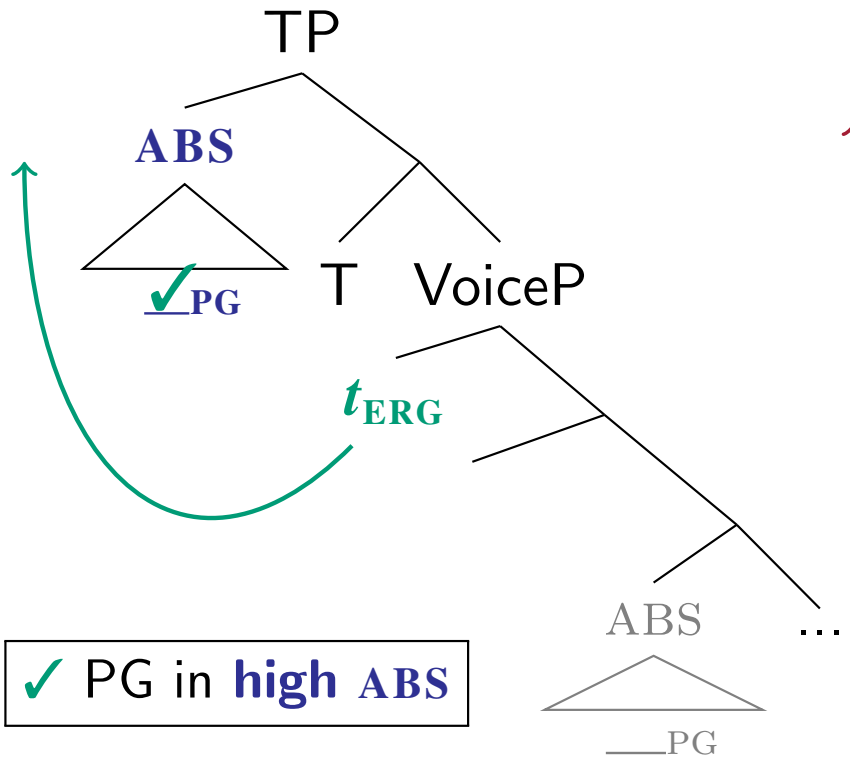
  Ergative Extraction Constraint in action!
- **Wrapping up:** a nuanced typology of syntactic ergativity

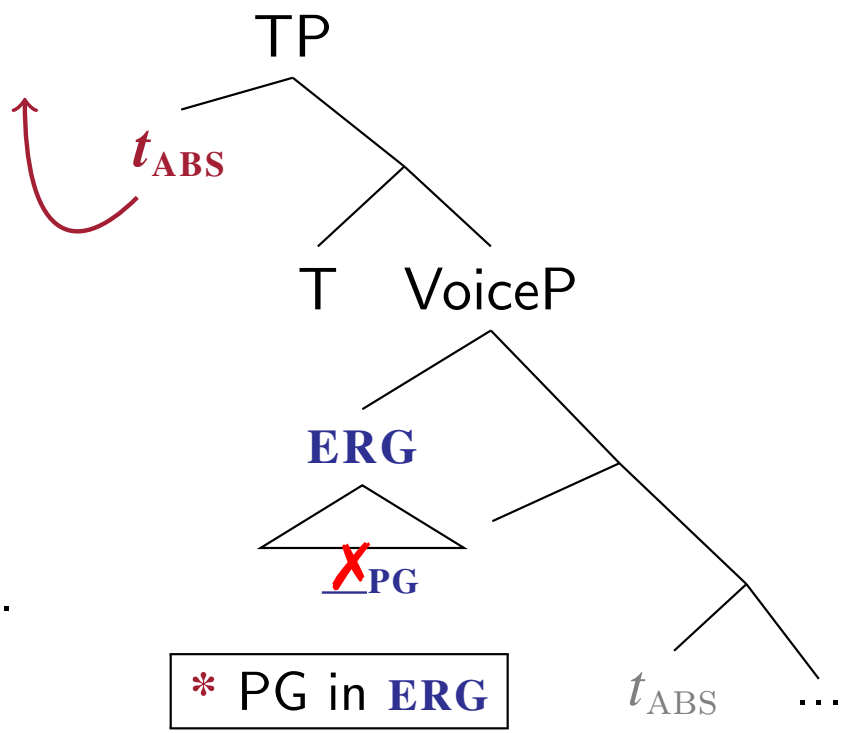
ABS raising feeds and bleeds parasitic gap licensing

ABS raises to c-command ERG

- ERG trace can license PG in ABS DP
- ABS trace cannot license PG in ERG DP

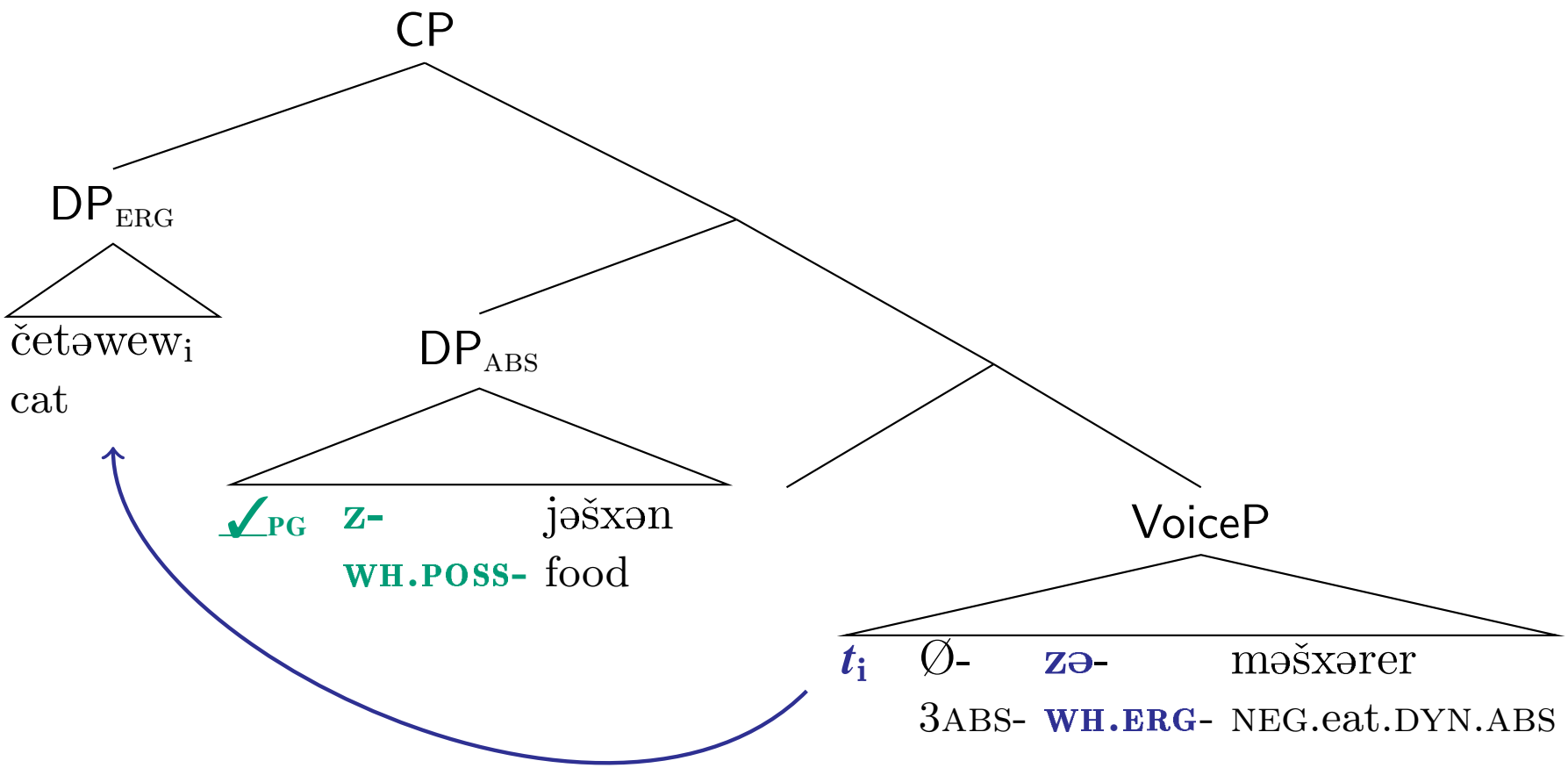
ANTI-C-COMMAND CONDITION





ABS raising feeds parasitic gap licensing

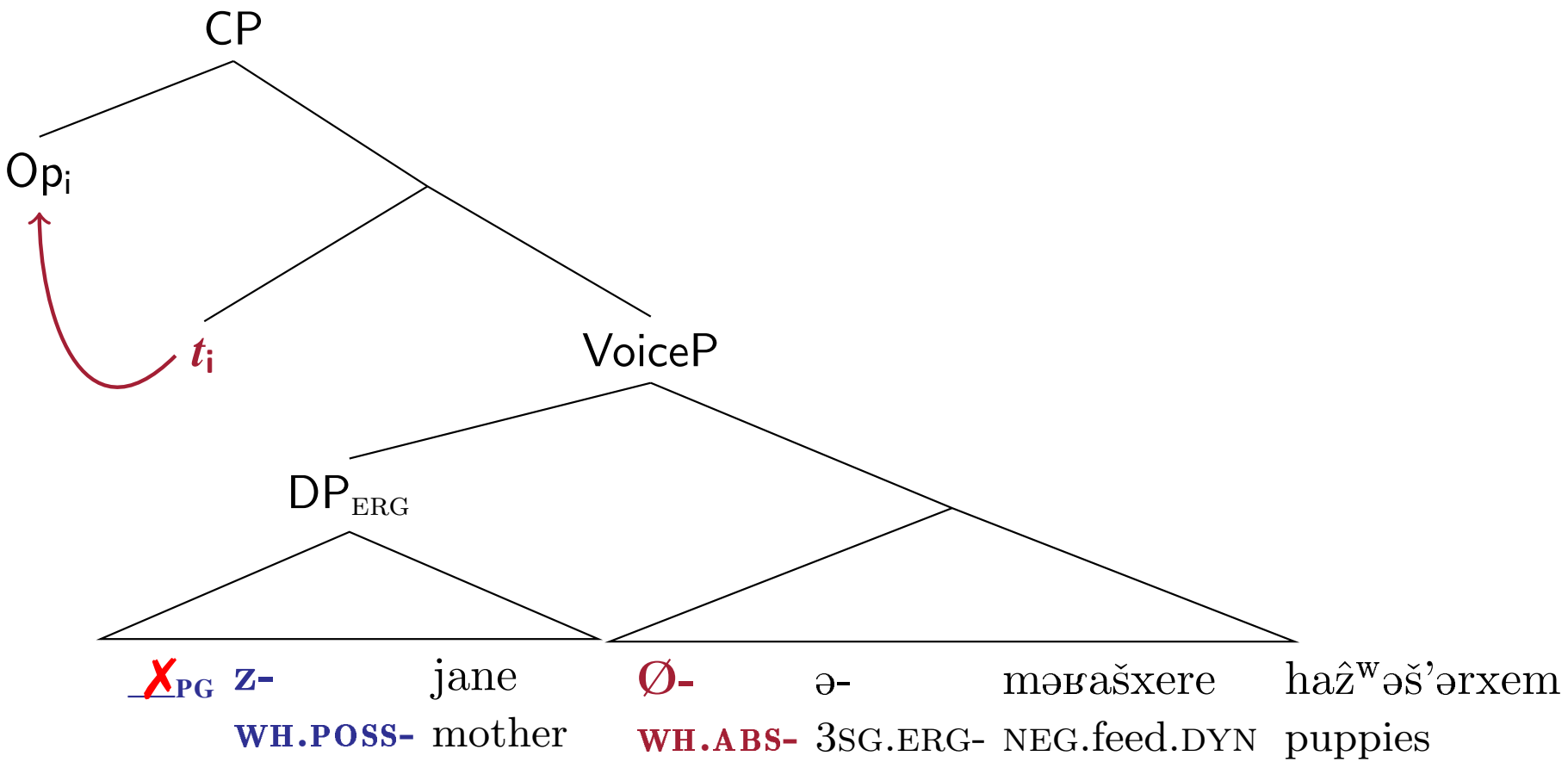
ERG trace licenses parasitic gap in high ABS:



lit. 'the cat who __ doesn't eat the food of __'

ABS raising bleeds parasitic gap licensing

High ABS cannot license parasitic gap in ERG DP:



Intended: 'the puppies whom [the mother of __] doesn't feed __'

Summary: high ABS and parasitic gaps in West Circassian

Obligatory high ABS

- moves to Spec,TP
- without stopping in Spec,VoiceP

$\Rightarrow$ **No Ergative Extraction Constraint!**

High ABS feeds and bleeds parasitic gap licensing:

- ERG can license PGs in high ABS
- high ABS cannot license PGs in ERG

Parasitic gaps confirm: ERG can move in high ABS language

If high ABS does not stop in Spec,VoiceP, ERG can move.

$\Rightarrow$ ERG can license PG in ABS DP.

Expanding the high ABS typology

Lesson from West Circassian parasitic gaps:

- high ABS, but ERG can move
- ERG can license PG in ABS DP

Prediction: No PG if high ABS blocks ERG extraction

If high ABS moves to Spec,VoiceP, ERG cannot move.

$\Rightarrow$ ERG cannot license PG in ABS DP.

Confirmed in Samoan!

Roadmap

- Parasitic gaps, high ABS and ergative extraction
- **West Circassian:** high ABS, but ERG can move
  - Background
  - Relativization and parasitic gaps
  - ABS raising feeds PG licensing
- **Samoan:** high ABS blocks ERG movement
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  Ergative Extraction Constraint in action!
- **Wrapping up:** a nuanced typology of syntactic ergativity

Roadmap

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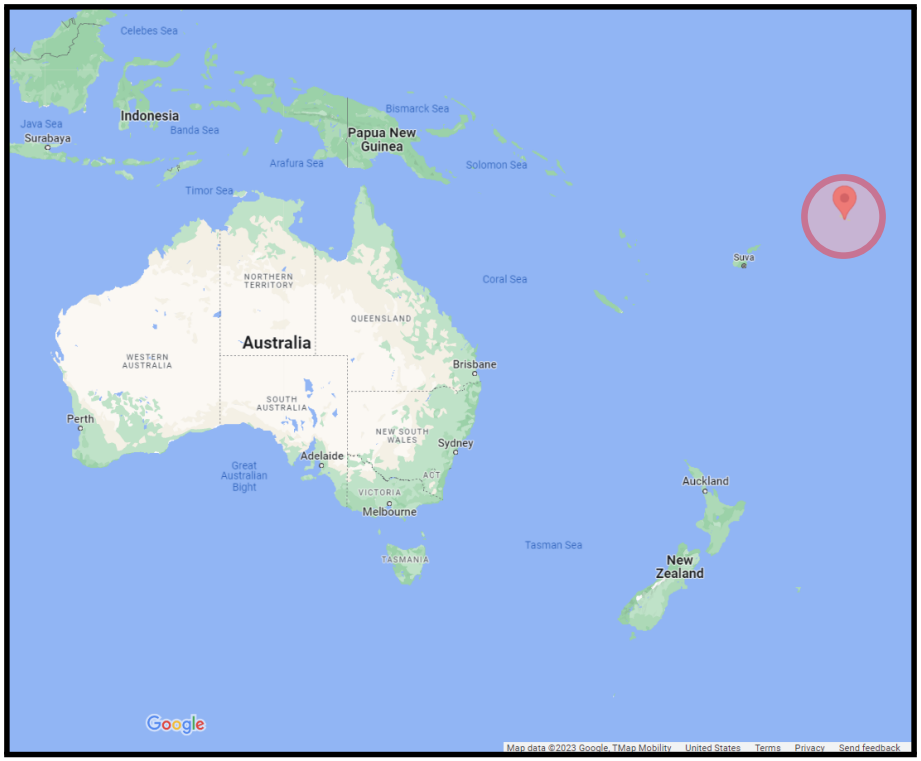
  Ergative Extraction Constraint in action!
- **Wrapping up:** a nuanced typology of syntactic ergativity

Samoan

- Polynesian $<$ Austronesian
- $\sim$500000 speakers; $\sim$50% of them in the Samoan Islands
- **Data** from elicitations with one speaker from Apia, Samoa.



Verb initiality

	VERB			SUBJ			OBJ
E	tausi	e	le	tinā	o	Natia	ia.
PRS	care	ERG	the	mother	GEN	Natia	s/he

'Natia's mother takes care of her.'

	VERB	OBJ			SUBJ		
E	tausi	ia	e	le	tinā	o	Natia.
PRS	care	s/he	ERG	the	mother	GEN	Natia

'Natia's mother takes care of her.'

Ergative case marking

			ERG				ABS				
Na	tanu	[	e	le	maile]	[le	pogāīvi]	i	le	oneone.
PST	bury		ERG	the	dog	the	bone	OBL	the	sand

'The dog buried the bone in the sand.' **transitive**

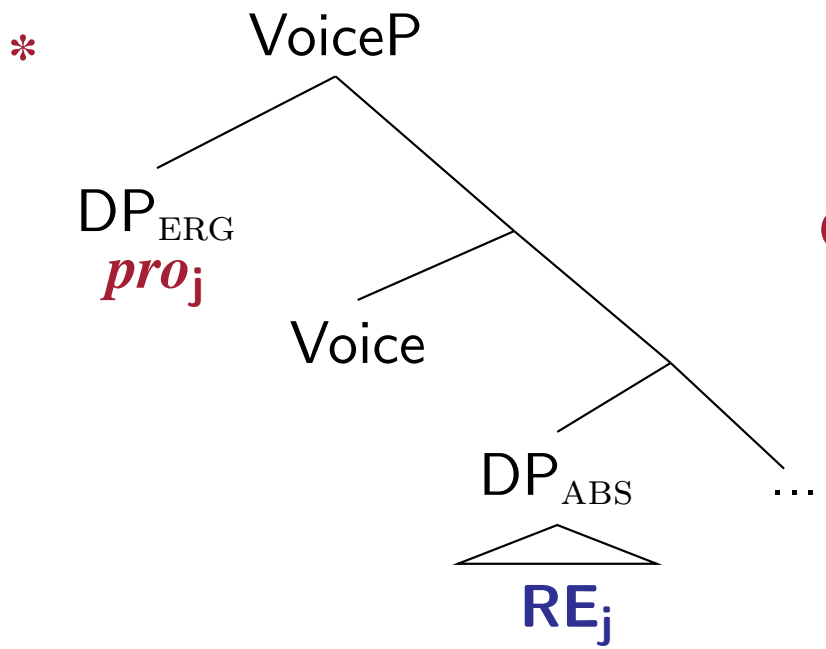
			ABS			
E	moe	[l-a'u	maile]	i	ī.
PRS	sleep	the-my	dog	OBL	here

'My dog sleeps in here.' **intransitive**

ERG subject c-commands ABS object

Na	fafaga	**e**	**ia$_{i/*j}$**	[	le	maile	a	Lulu$_j$].
PST	feed	ERG	s/he		the	dog	GEN	Lulu

'S/he$_{i/*j}$ fed Lulu's$_j$ dog.'

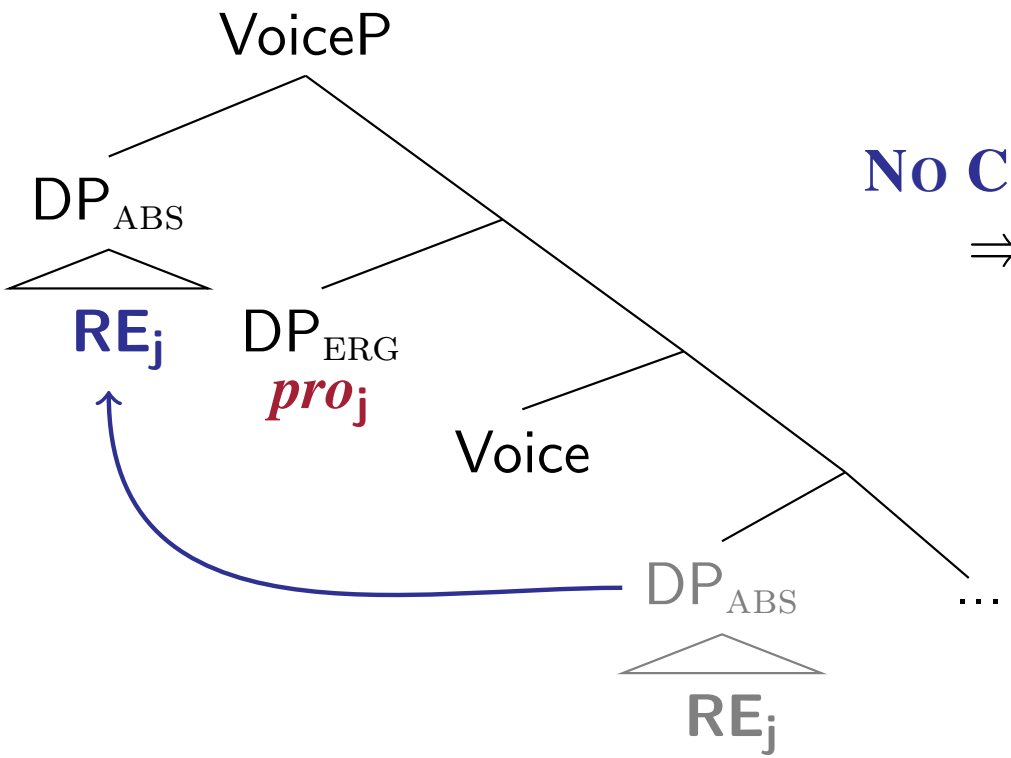


CONDITION C VIOLATION

Optional high ABS: ABS A-scrambles above ERG

			ABS				**ERG**		
Na	fafaga	[le	maile	a	Lulu$_j$]		**e**	**ia$_{i/j}$**	***t*$_{ABS}$**.
PST	feed	the	dog	GEN	Lulu		ERG	s/he	

'S/he$_{i/j}$ fed Lulu's$_j$ dog.'



NO CONDITION C VIOLATION

$\Rightarrow$ ABS does not reconstruct

= A-SCRAMBLING

ABS A-scrambling: summary

- ERG c-commands low ABS ← Condition C
- ABS optionally moves above ERG ← ameliorates Condition C

Next: How ABS raising interacts with parasitic gap licensing.

But first: Background on topicalization.

Roadmap

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  Ergative Extraction Constraint in action!
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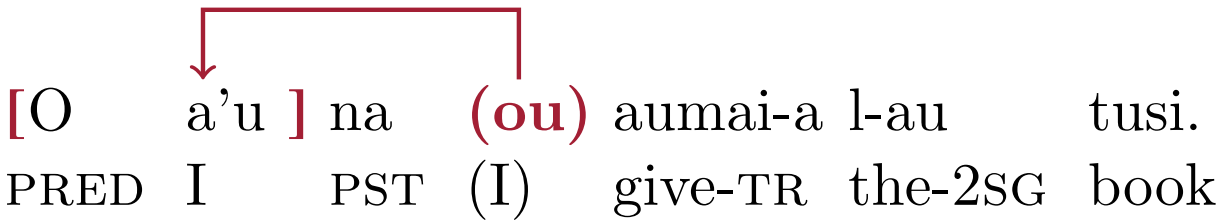
Topicalization

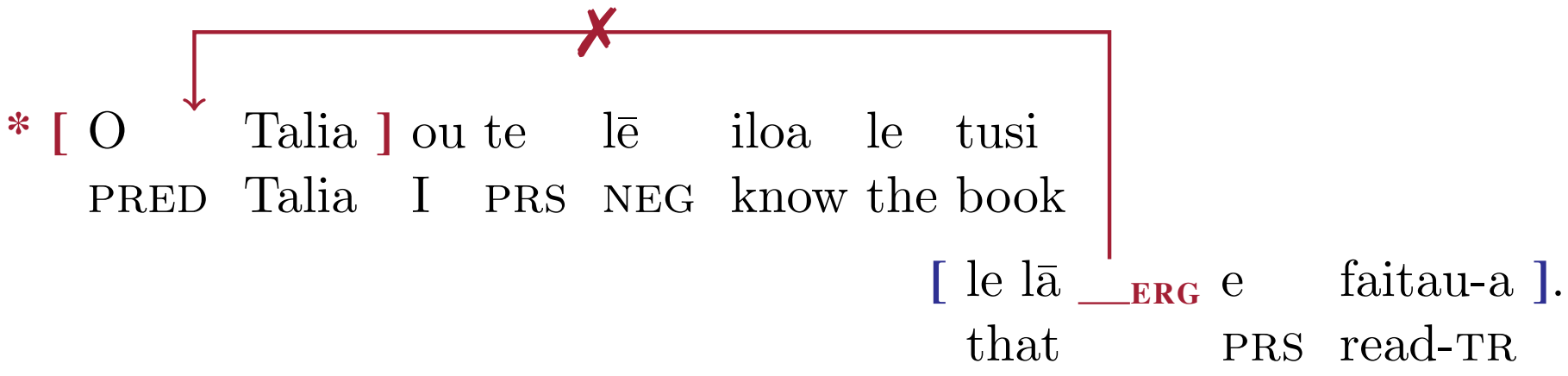
- Topicalized XP appears preverbally with predicative *o*.
- ABS and **ERG** optionally resumed with φ-agreeing pronoun.



'It was me who brought your book.'

No Ergative Extraction Constraint

ERG topicalization is movement-derived: cannot cross island boundary.

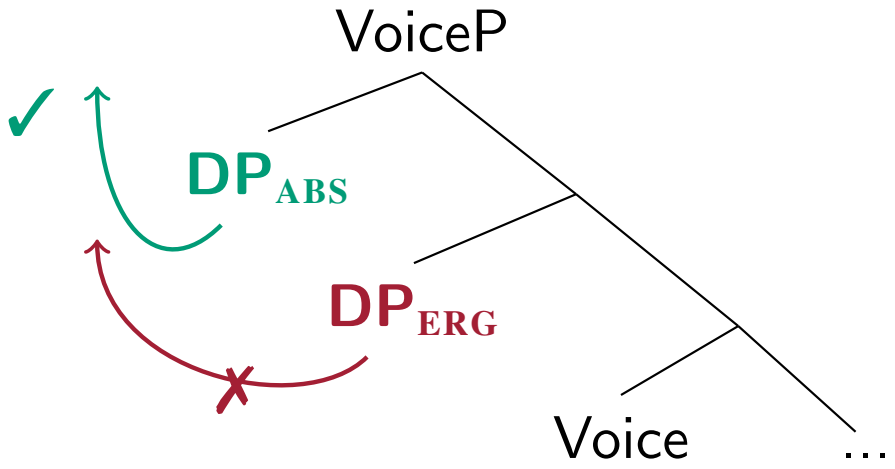


Intended: 'It is Talia, I don't know the book that __ is reading.'

⇒ **no Ergative Extraction Constraint!**

Why no ergative extraction constraint?

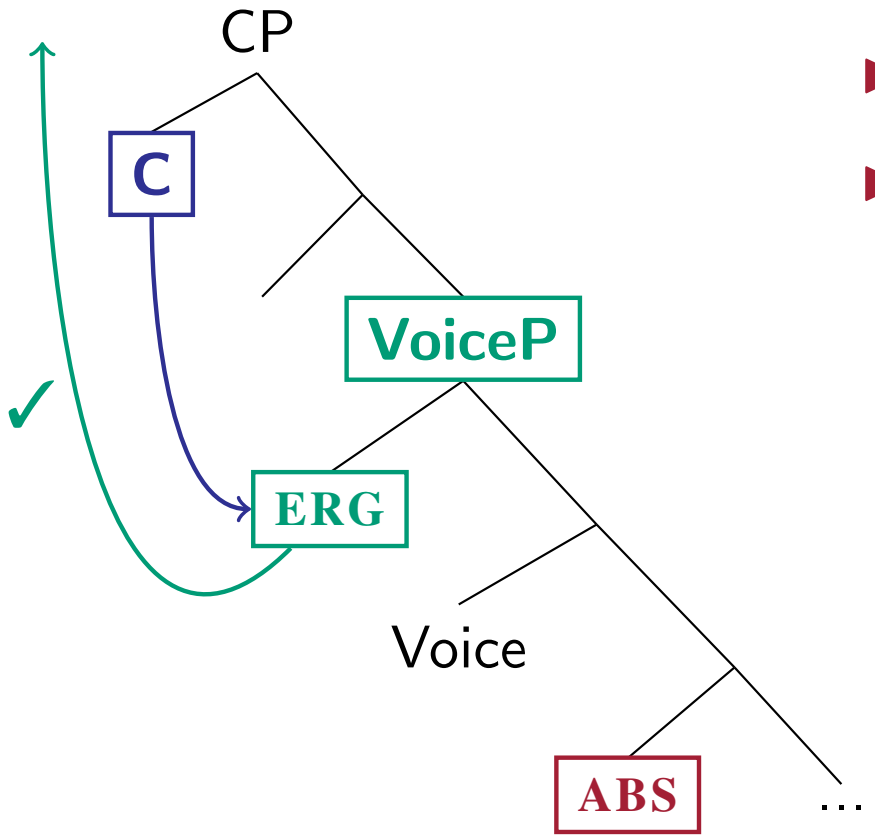
ERG extraction is blocked if ABS moves to Spec,VoiceP:



In Samoan, ABS raising is optional.

⇒ ERG can move when ABS stays low.

Prediction confirmed: ERG can move if ABS stays low



- ABS stays low
- ERG is in outer Spec,VoiceP
  $\Rightarrow$ ERG can move

connection between ABS raising and ERG extraction

Confirmed in Samoan:

If ABS does not raise, ERG can move.

φ-deficient resumptives

GEN and OBL DPs are obligatorily resumed with 3SG pronoun regardless of φ-features

E moe l-**a'u** maile i ī.
PRS sleep the-**1SG** dog OBL here

'My dog sleeps here.'

[O a'u] e moe l-**ana** maile i ī.
PRED I PRS sleep the-**3SG** dog OBL here

'It is me whose dog sleeps here.'

φ-deficient resumptives

GEN and **OBL** DPs are resumed with inanimate 3SG pronoun regardless of φ-features

Na	togi	[iā	te	a'u]	e	le	tama	le polo.
PST	throw	OBL	**I**		ERG	the	boy	the ball

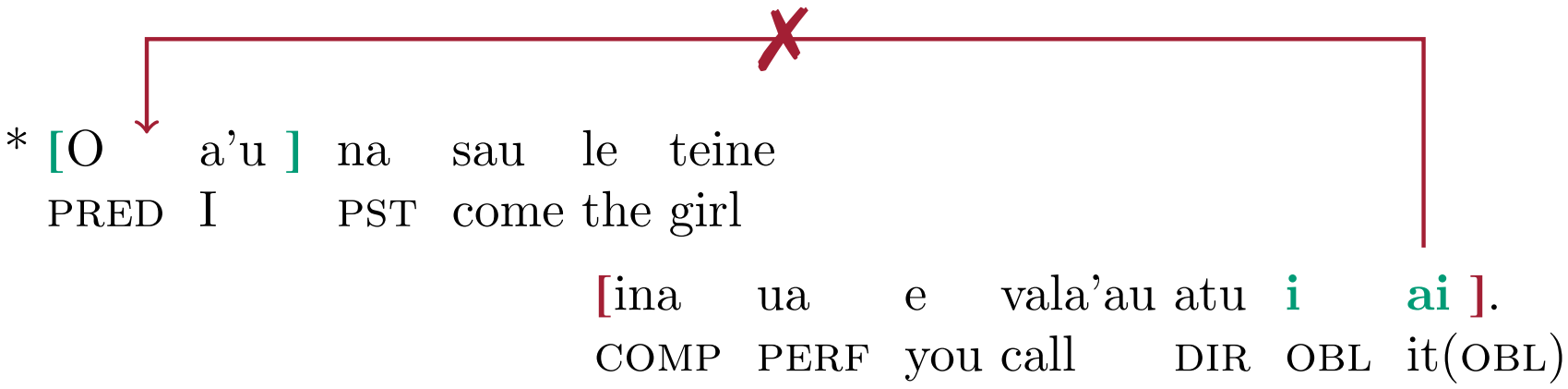
'The boy threw the ball to me.'

[O	a'u]	na	togi	**i**	**ai**	e	le	tama	le polo.
PRED	I	PST	throw	OBL	**it(OBL)**	ERG	the	boy	the ball

'It was to me the boy threw the ball.'

Resumptive pronouns are movement-derived

φ-deficient resumptives cannot appear in islands:

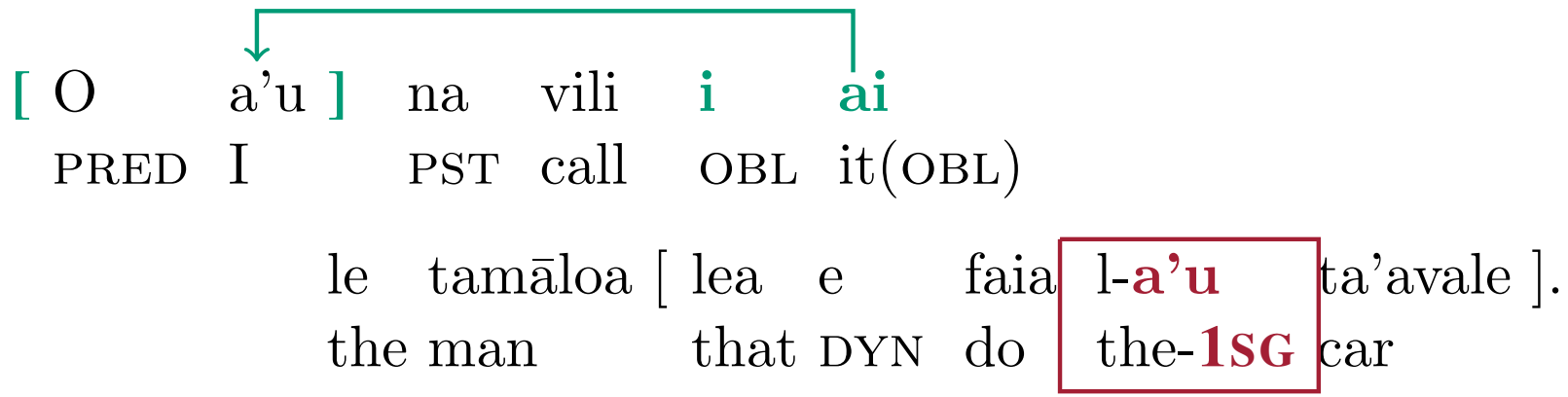


lit. 'It was me who the girl came when you called __.'

φ-deficient resumptives spell out an Ā-trace.

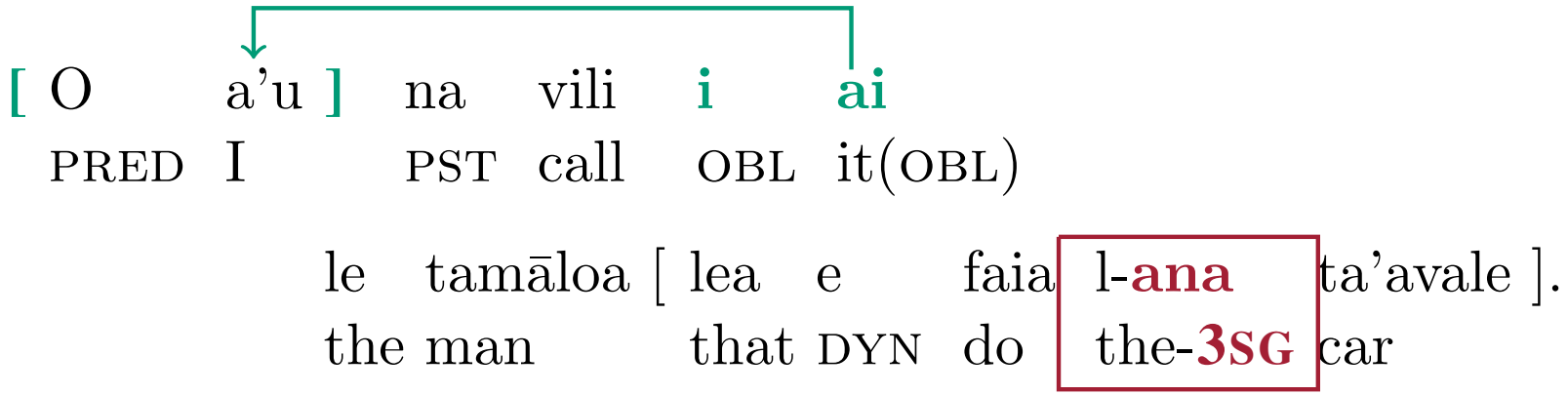
⇒ can be used as a diagnostic for Ā-movement.

φ-deficient resumptives can be parasitic



'It was me the man [who is fixing my car] called __.'

φ-deficient resumptives can be parasitic



'It was me the man [who is fixing the car of __] called __.'

Parasitic φ-deficient resumptives = **parasitic gaps** (see Appendix)

Next: interaction between ABS raising and parasitic resumptives

Roadmap

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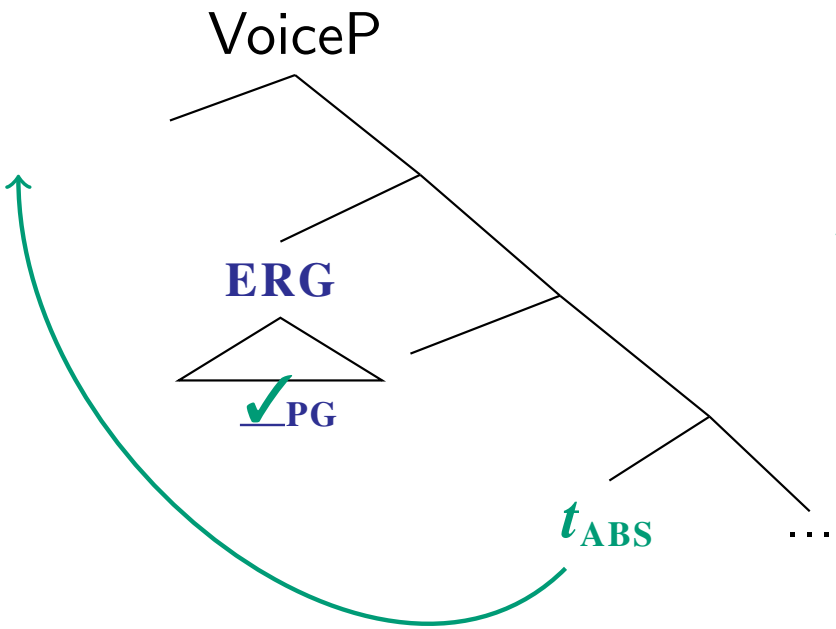
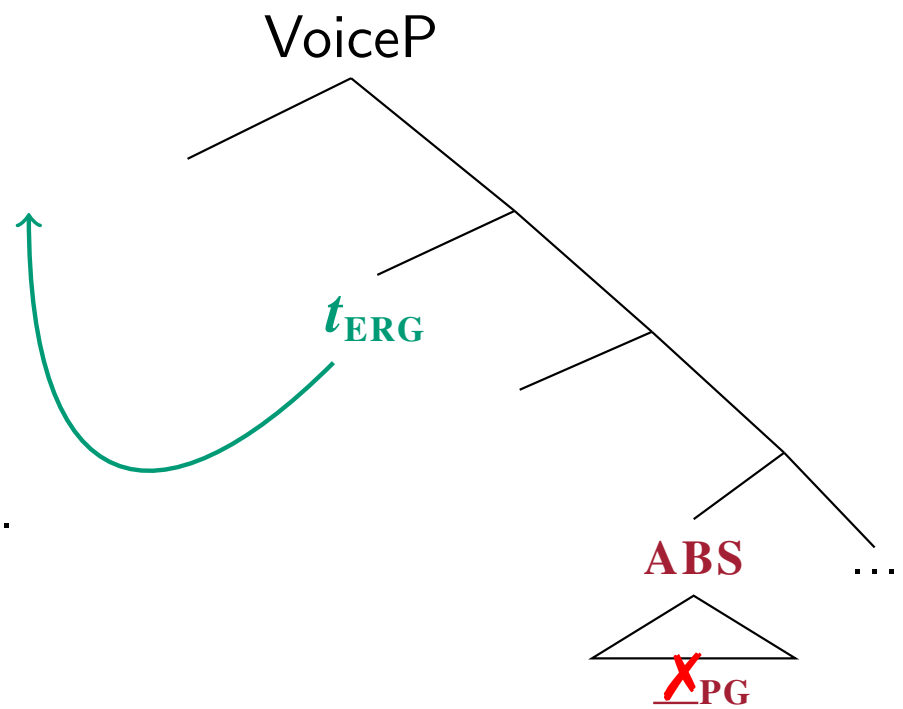
  - **ABS raising does not feed PG licensing**

    Ergative Extraction Constraint in action!
- **Wrapping up:** a nuanced typology of syntactic ergativity

ABS raising does not feed or bleed PG licensing

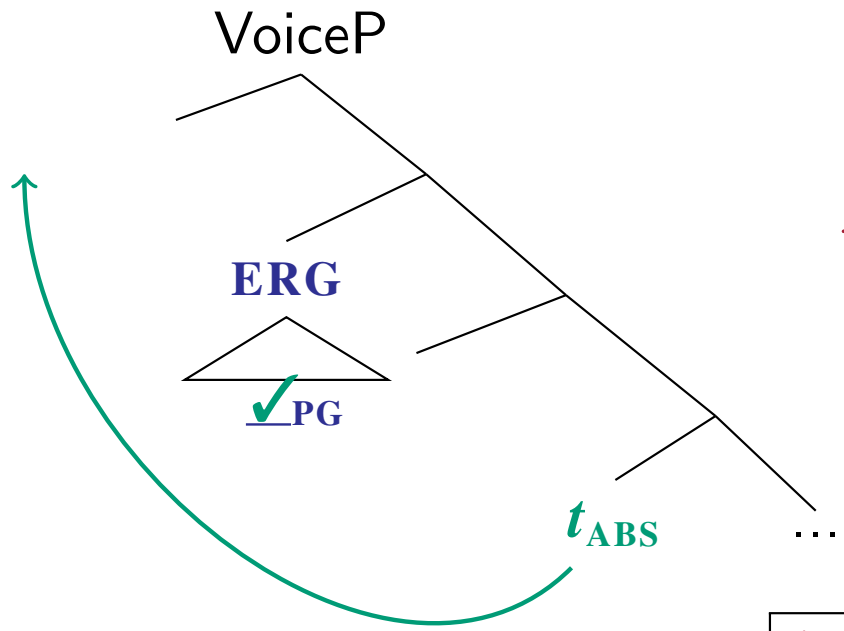
- ABS raising is optional
  + low ABS can license parasitic gap in ERG
- ABS raising blocks ERG movement
  ⇒ ERG cannot license parasitic gap in ABS



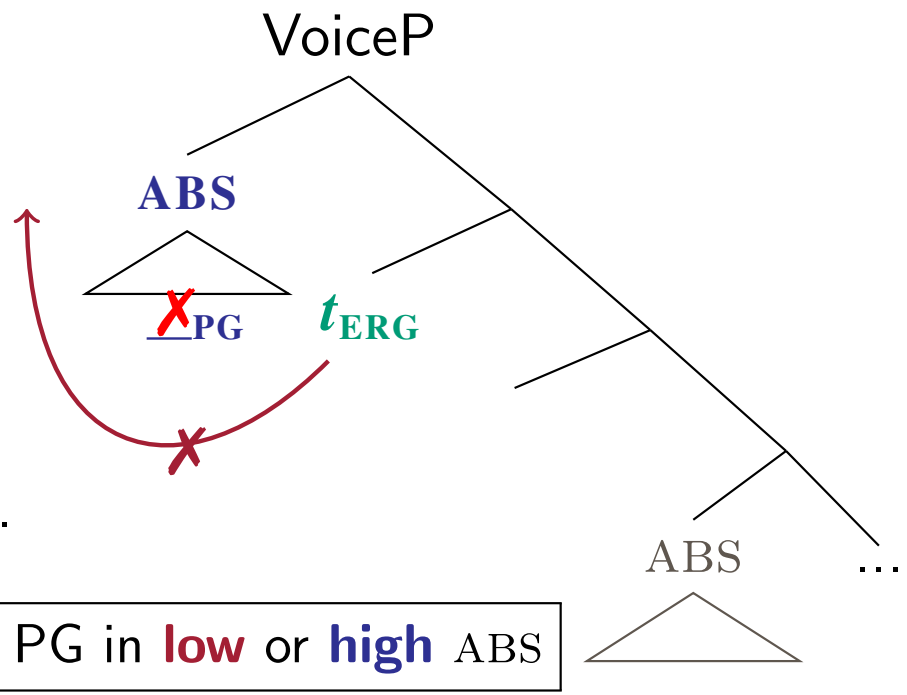


ABS raising does not feed or bleed PG licensing

- ABS raising is optional
  + low ABS can license parasitic gap in ERG
- ABS raising blocks ERG movement
  ⇒ ERG cannot license parasitic gap in ABS

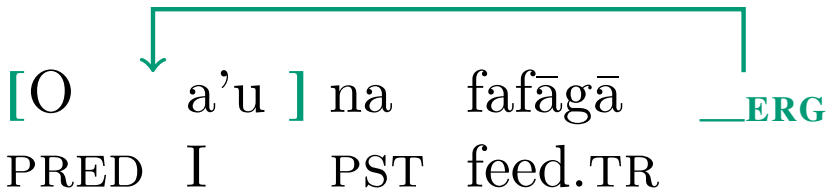


✓ PG in **ERG**



* PG in **low** or **high** ABS

ERG trace cannot license PG in ABS DP



[tamaiti na aumai-a fugala'au **iā te a'u.**]
child.PL PST give-TR flower OBL I(OBL)

'It was me who fed the kids who brought the flowers to me.'

ERG trace cannot license PG in ABS DP

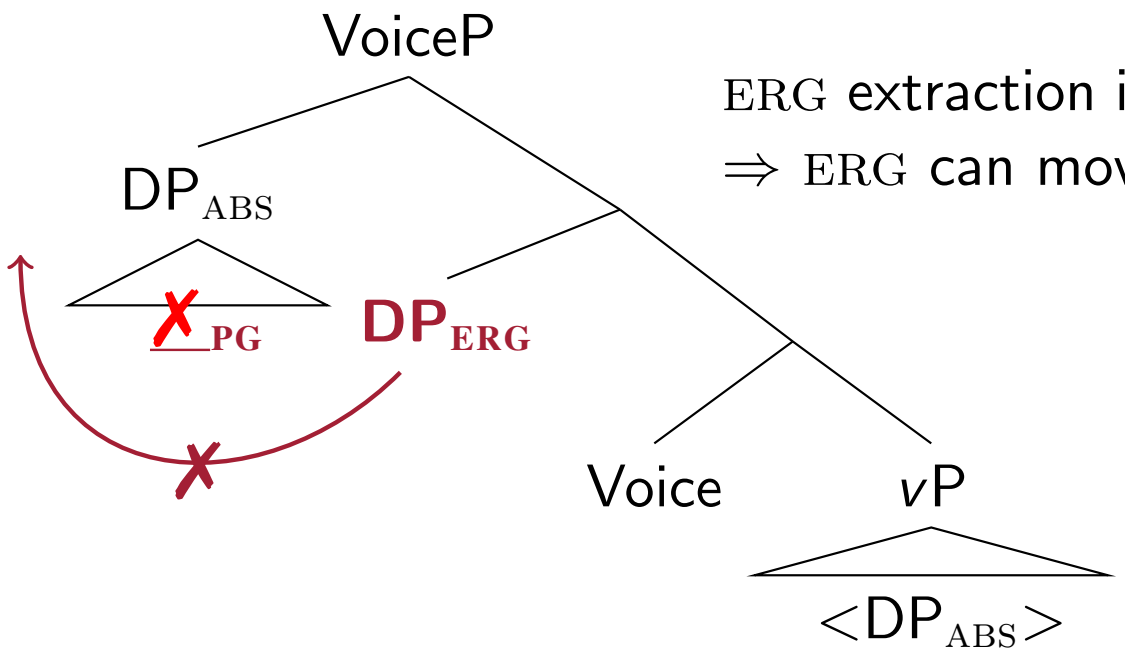
* [O a'u] na fafāgā __ERG
PRED I PST feed.TR

✗

[tamaiti na aumai-a fugala'au **i** **ai**.]
child.PL PST give-TR flower OBL it(OBL)

'It was me who fed the kids who brought the flowers to me.'

ABS raising blocks ERG movement



ERG extraction is blocked by raised ABS

$\Rightarrow$ ERG can move only if ABS stays low

ERG cannot license PGs in ABS DP:

- if no A-scrambling, because ERG c-commands ABS.
- if ABS has A-scrambled, because high ABS blocks ERG extraction.

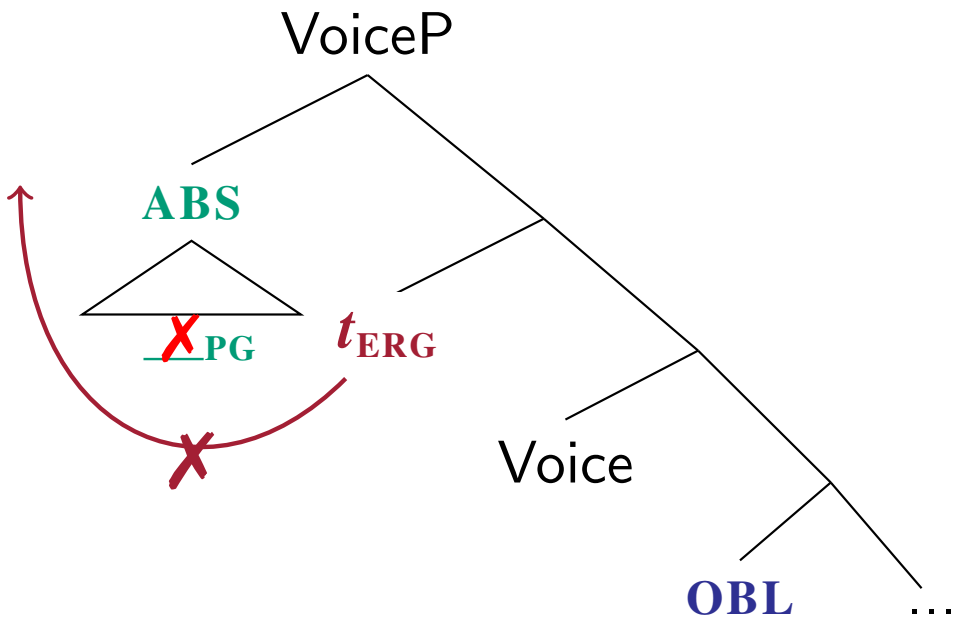
But only ERG movement is blocked by ABS raising.

$\rightarrow$ as predicted by the analysis! (details in Appendix)

High ABS blocks only ERG: prediction for parasitic gaps

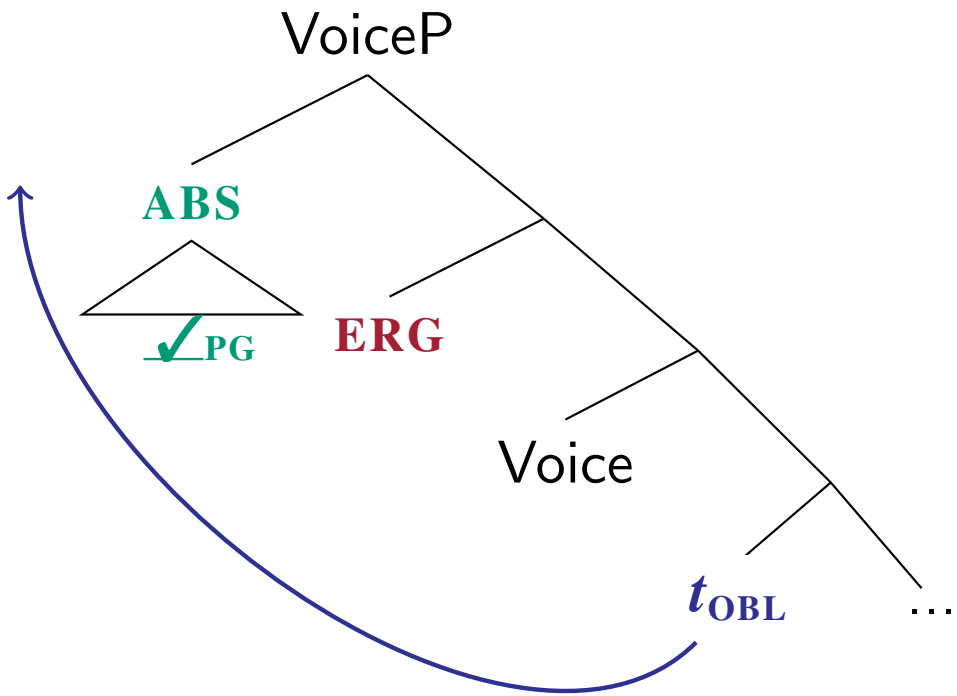
- ABS in Spec,VoiceP blocks ERG extraction

  $\Rightarrow$ ERG cannot license PG in ABS DP



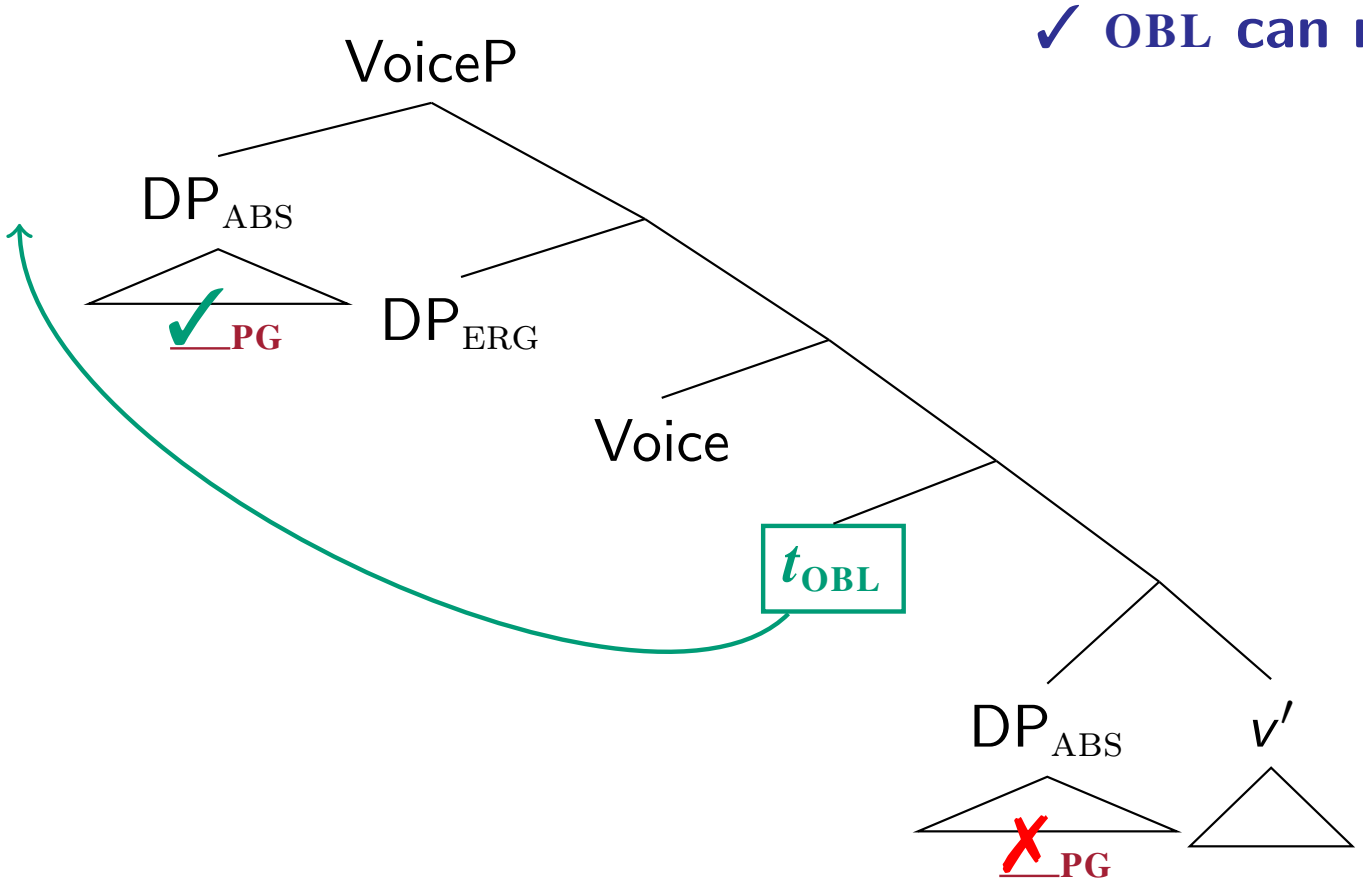
High ABS blocks only ERG: prediction for parasitic gaps

- ABS in Spec,VoiceP blocks ERG extraction
  $\Rightarrow$ ERG cannot license PG in ABS DP
- high ABS does not block other arguments
  $\Rightarrow$ **non-ERG trace (e.g. OBL) can license PG in ABS DP!**



ABS raising only blocks ERG movement

- OBL indirect object c-commands ABS object (see Appendix)
  $\Rightarrow$ PG in base position of ABS is ungrammatical
- A-scrambling of ABS $\Rightarrow$ OBL can license PG in ABS



A-scrambling feeds parasitic resumptives in OBL

OBL indirect object can license PG in **ABS** direct object:

→	[O	a'u]	na	aumai	e	le	teine	tausima'i
	PRED	I	PST	give	ERG	the	girl	nurse

✓ [l-**ana** tama-tama] **i** **ai**.
the-3SG child-child OBL it(OBL)

'It was me the nurse gave my son to.'

Summary: high ABS and parasitic resumptives in Samoan

- ABS raising to Spec,VoiceP blocks ERG extraction
- ABS raising is optional ⇒ ERG can move when ABS stays low
- ERG blocking observable only with parasitic resumptives:
  - ERG cannot license PG in high ABS
    ⇒ Ergative Extraction Constraint
  - non-ERG trace can license PG in high ABS
    ⇒ only ERG is blocked by high ABS

The other piece of the puzzle: West Circassian

- high ABS, but ERG can move
  ⇒ ERG can license PG in high ABS
- ERG is blocked by ABS in Spec,VoiceP, not high ABS generally

Roadmap

- ◇ Parasitic gaps, high ABS and ergative extraction
- ◇ **West Circassian:** high ABS, but ERG can move
  - ▶ Background
  - ▶ Relativization and parasitic gaps
  - ▶ ABS raising feeds PG licensing
- ◇ **Samoan:** high ABS blocks ERG movement
  - ▶ Background
  - ▶ Topicalization and parasitic gaps
  - ▶ ABS raising does not feed PG licensing

  Ergative Extraction Constraint in action!
- ◇ **Wrapping up:** a nuanced typology of syntactic ergativity

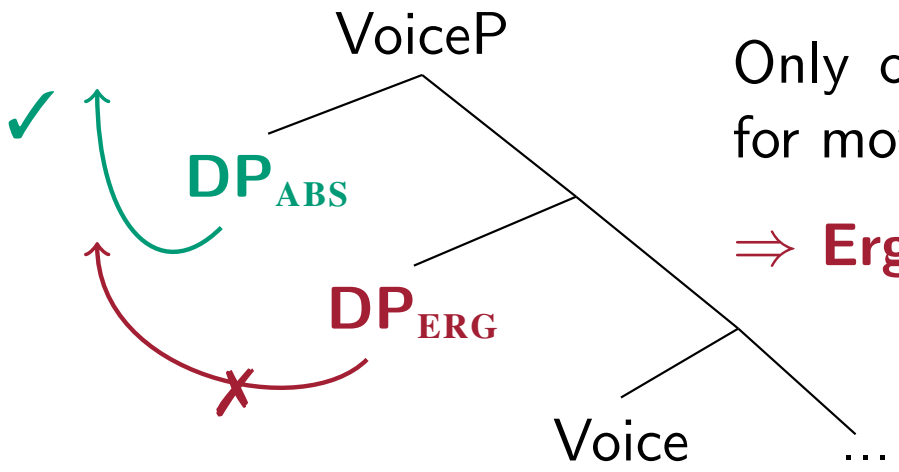
Wrapping up: Why ERG can't move

Ingredients of the Ergative Extraction Constraint

Position of ERG:
ERG merges at phase edge = Spec,VoiceP

+

High ABS:
ABS raises to outer Spec,VoiceP



Only outer phase edge is accessible for movement.

⇒ **Ergative Extraction Constraint**

Ergative Extraction Constraint is phase-based locality

The analysis confirms:
The Ergative Extraction Constraint is reducible to standard notions of **locality** and **syntactic domains**.

Explains:

- why only ERG cannot move cf. OBL in Samoan
- why high ABS doesn't always block ERG extraction
  cf. no Ergative Extraction Constraint in West Circassian

A more nuanced typology of syntactic ergativity

Previous research:

- High ABS ⇒ Ergative Extraction Constraint
- Low ABS: ERG displacement not influenced by ABS

This talk: the typology is more complex

- High ABS does not universally block ERG extraction

cf. West Circassian

- A language can be both high and low ABS

  ERG extraction conditioned by ABS raising + ERG position.

cf. Samoan

An expanded, but constrained typology

The analysis expands the typology of syntactic ergativity.

But not everything is possible!

ABS moves to Spec,VoiceP, where ERG is introduced.

Explains why ERG is special!

There aren't comparable constraints on other types of arguments, e.g. dative or accusative,because they are not in Spec,VoiceP.

Parasitic gaps as a diagnostic for ERG movement

Parasitic gaps are

- licensed by Ā-movement
- sensitive to c-command

PGs can be used to diagnose the interaction between ABS raising and ERG extraction.

In a language with optional ABS raising (e.g. Samoan), this is the only available diagnostic!

When ABS is low, ERG can move.

$\Rightarrow$ ERG extraction constraint is observable only with parasitic gaps!

The building blocks of typological variation

West Circassian and Samoan

expand the empirical landscape of syntactic ergativity,
but narrow down the syntactic components behind the variation.

Through the prism of **parasitic gaps**
= a complex long-distance dependency between empty categories

which, despite vastly different surface manifestations,
display a stable set of complex properties.

$\Rightarrow$ Attention to typological diversity brings us closer to establishing the shared skeleton at the core of all languages.

> A finite set of basic building blocks underlie strikingly different surface patterns.

Thank you!

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Reciprocal binding in West Circassian

Reciprocals are covert and trigger **reciprocal agreement** on the predicate:

- correlates with syntactic position of the reciprocal
- does not affect transitivity $\Rightarrow$ not a de-transitivizing operator

Reciprocals are subject to Condition A

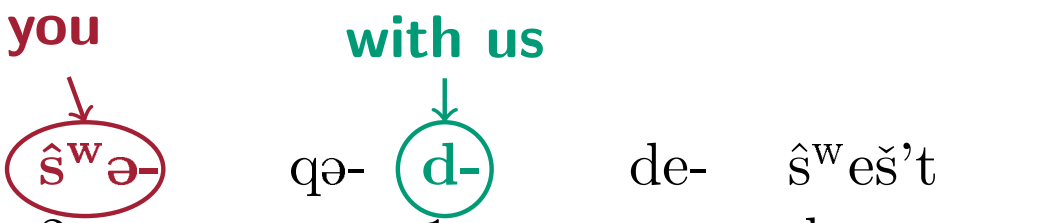
= must be bound by a local c-commanding antecedent

(Ershova 2019, to appear b)

Reciprocal agreement

ABS external argument binds **IO**

$\Rightarrow$ REC replaces IO agreement



BASELINE

'You(pl) will dance with us'

Reciprocal agreement

ABS external argument binds **IO**

$\Rightarrow$ REC replaces IO agreement

you **with each other**

ŝʷə-	qə-	ze-	de-	ŝʷeš't
2PL.ABS-	DIR-	REC.IO-	COM-	dance.FUT

RECIPROCAL

'You(pl) will dance with each other'

Reciprocal agreement does not affect transitivity

ERG binds **IO**

- REC replaces IO agreement
- ERG antecedent bears OBL (=ERG) case

axe**-me**	ʔeg^{w}əbžˆe-r	Ø-	**ze-**	r-	**a-**	təž'ə
that.PL**-OBL**	cup-ABS	3ABS-	**REC.IO-**	DAT-	**3PL.ERG-**	give

'They pass the cup to each other.'

(http://adyghe.web-corpora.net/)

Reciprocal agreement does not affect transitivity

ABS binds **IO**

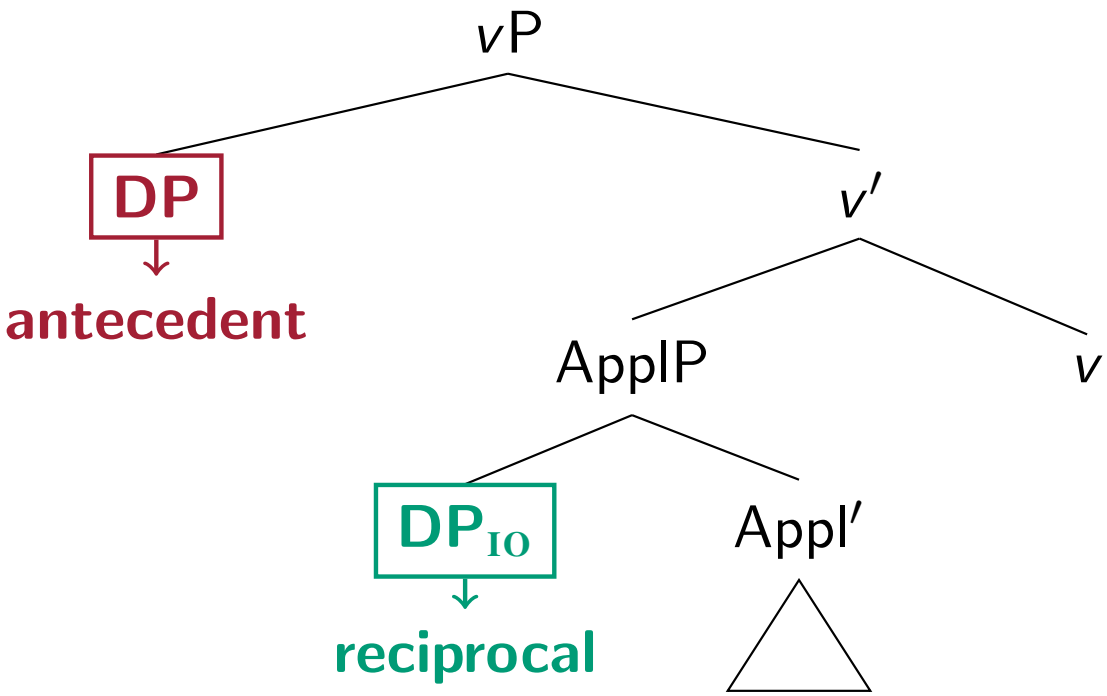
- REC replaces IO agreement
- ABS antecedent bears ABS case

sabəjxe**-r**	Ø-	**z-**	e-	pλəž'əx
child.PL**-ABS**	3ABS-	**REC.IO-**	DAT-	look.PL

'The children are looking at each other.'

Reciprocal binding is established via c-command

ABS/**ERG** external argument binds **IO**:



Reciprocals and high absolutive

Reciprocals provide evidence for high absolutive:

- reciprocals are bound by a c-commanding antecedent
- **ABS** binds **ERG** and **IO**

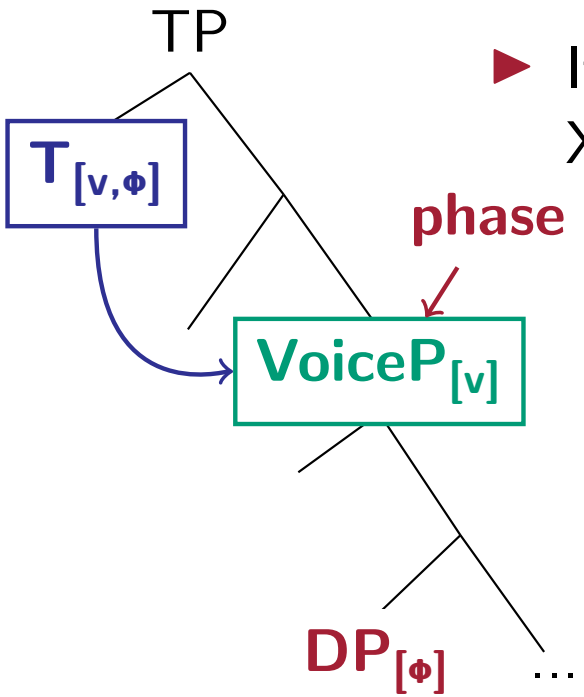
  $\Rightarrow$ **ABS** c-commands **ERG** and **IO**

ABS binds **IO**:

us	**each other**			
↓	↓			
tə-	**ze-**	f-	jə-	š'aʁ
1PL.ABS-	**REC.IO-**	BEN-	3SG.ERG-	bring.PST

'S/he brought us together (= to each other).'

How can ABS skip the phase edge?

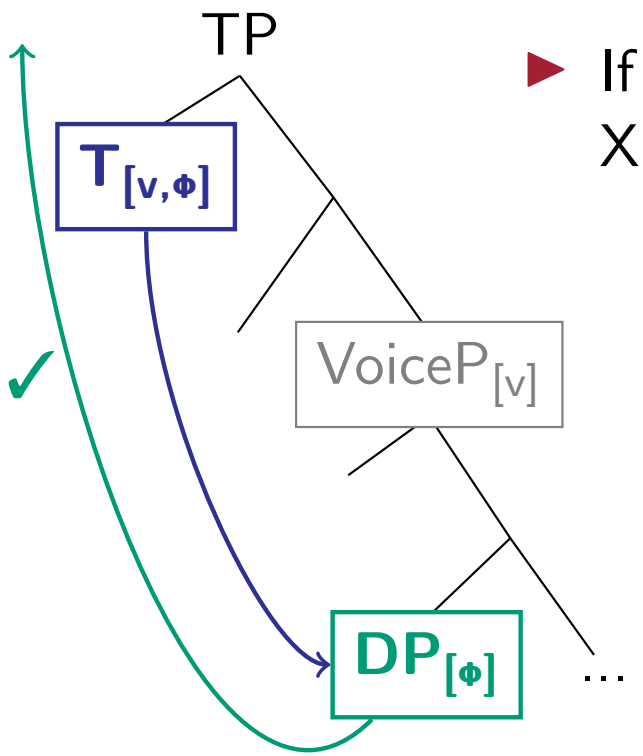


- All **phases** are potential **goals**
- If **P** independently agrees with phase **XP**, XP is no longer visible for P

  $\Rightarrow$ XP is no longer a phase

(Richards 1998; Rackowski and Richards 2005; Van Urk and Richards 2015; Halpert 2019; Ershova to appear a)

How can ABS skip the phase edge?



- All **phases** are potential **goals**
- If **P** independently agrees with phase **XP**, XP is no longer visible for P

  $\Rightarrow$ XP is no longer a phase
  - **P** can probe into **XP**.
  - **YP** inside phase **XP** is closest goal.

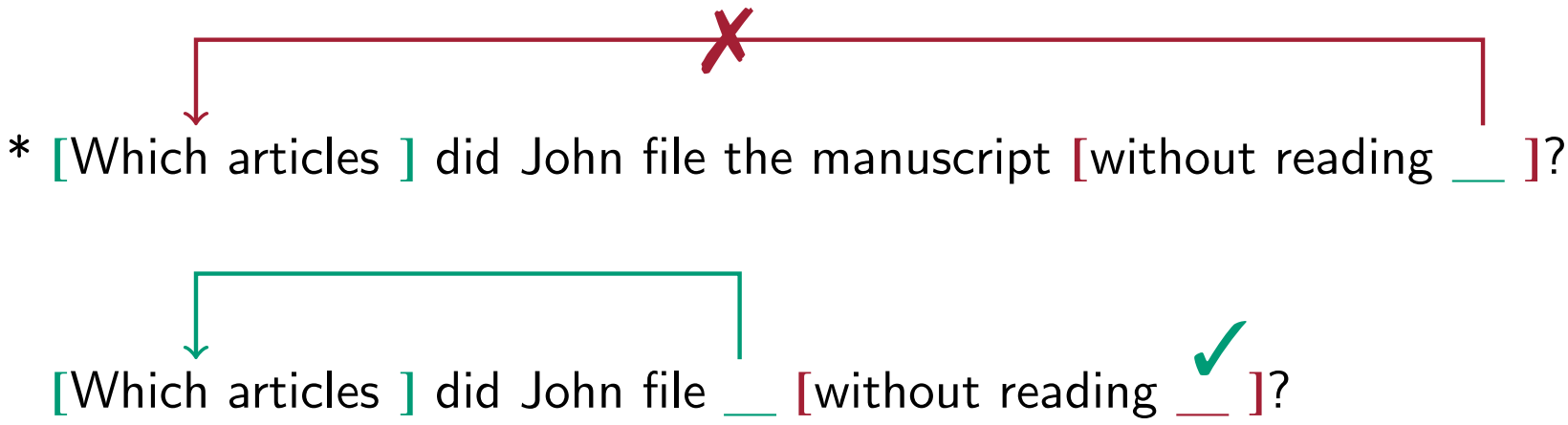
    $\Rightarrow$ **YP** skips phase edge.

(Richards 1998; Rackowski and Richards 2005; Van Urk and Richards 2015; Halpert 2019; Ershova to appear a)

Parasitic resumptives = parasitic gaps

- may appear in syntactic islands

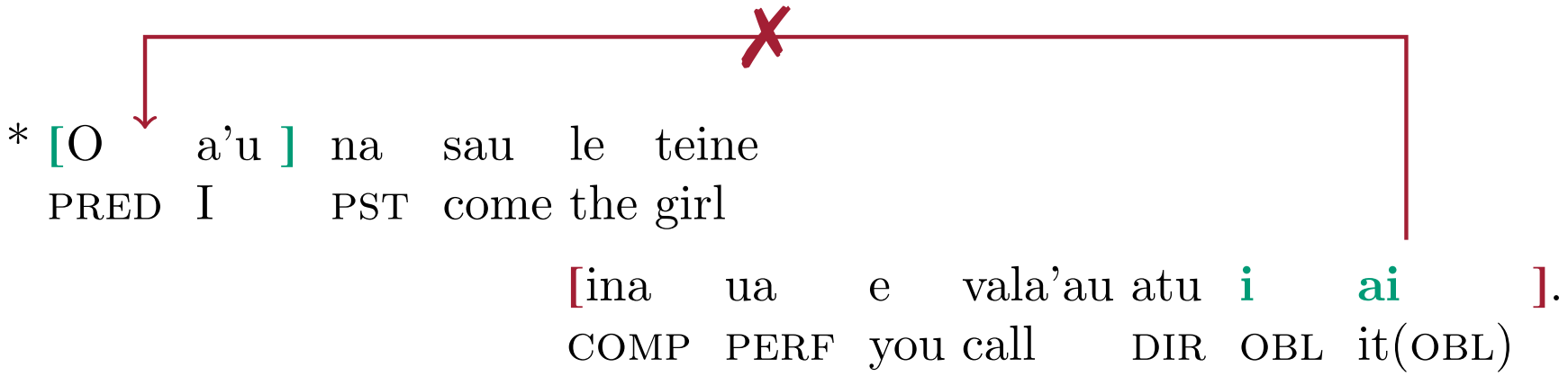
E.G. IN ENGLISH:



(Engdahl 1983 *et seq.*)

Parasitic resumptives = parasitic gaps

- may appear in syntactic islands



lit. 'It was me who the girl came when you called __.'

(Engdahl 1983 *et seq.*)

Parasitic resumptives = parasitic gaps

- may appear in syntactic islands

[O	a'u]	na	sau	___ABS
PRED	I	PST	come	

✓

[ina	ua	e	vala'au	atu	i	ai	].
COMP	PERF	you	call	DIR	OBL	it(OBL)	

lit. 'It was me who __ came when you called __.'

(Engdahl 1983 *et seq.*)

Parasitic resumptives are only licensed by Ā-movement

E.G. IN ENGLISH:

* [John] was killed __ by a tree falling on $\_\__{PG}$.

(Engdahl 1983 *et seq.*)

Parasitic resumptives are only licensed by Ā-movement

Raising cannot license parasitic resumptive:

E	mafai	[	ona	**ou**	sau			
PRS	can		COMP	I	come			
					[	pe'a	e	vala'au atu **iā te a'u**]].
						when	you	call DIR OBL I

'I can come when you call for me.'

(Engdahl 1983 *et seq.*)

Parasitic resumptives are only licensed by Ā-movement

Raising cannot license parasitic resumptive:

* **Ou** te mafai [ona __ sau
I PRS can COMP come

[pe'a e vala'au atu **i ai**]].
when you call DIR OBL it(OBL)

'I can come when you call for me.'

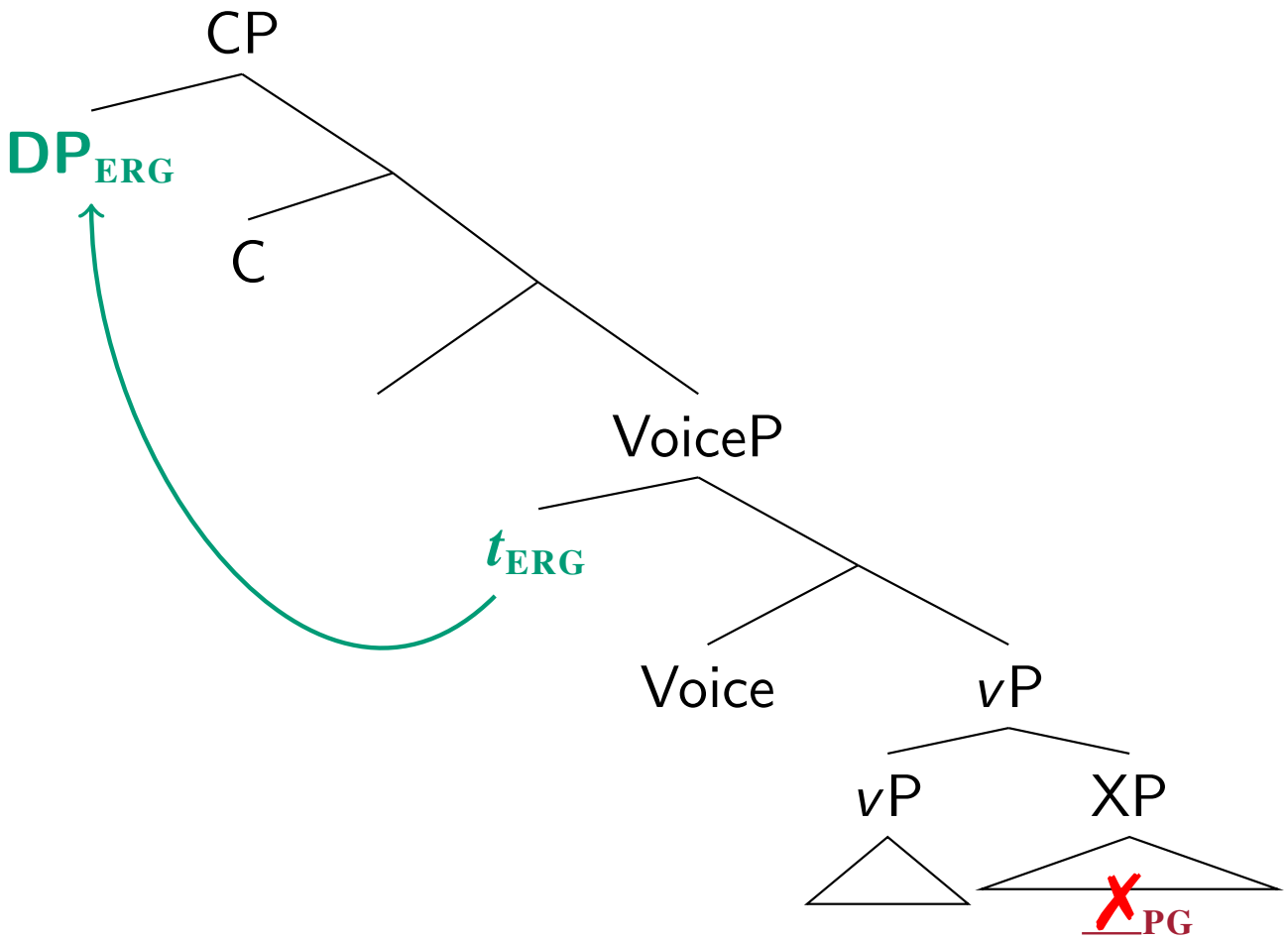
(Engdahl 1983 *et seq.*)

The anti-c-command condition in Samoan

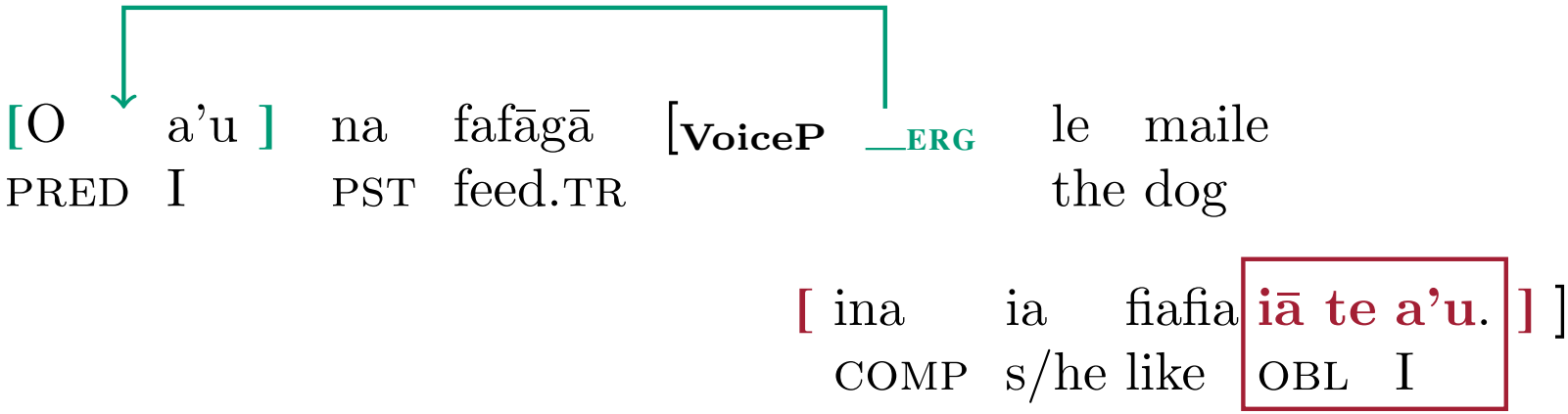
- ERG in Spec,VoiceP
- ABS in Spec,*v*P

(Tollan 2018; Tollan and Massam 2022; Ershova 2023)

ERG trace cannot license PG in *v*P adjunct:

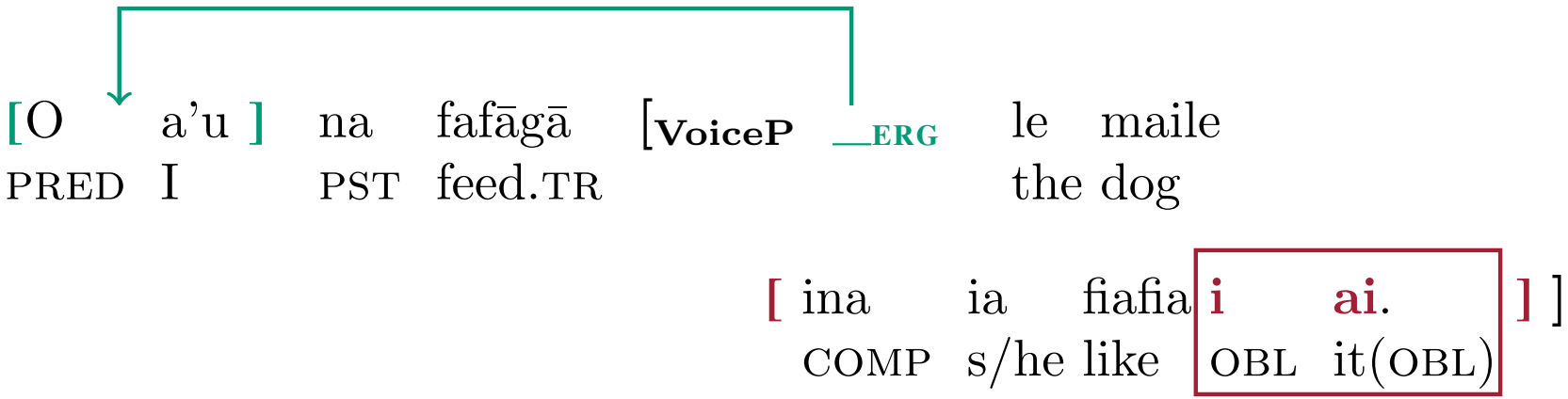


Ergative trace cannot license PG in *v*P adjunct



'It was me who fed the dog so it would like me.'

Ergative trace cannot license PG in *v*P adjunct

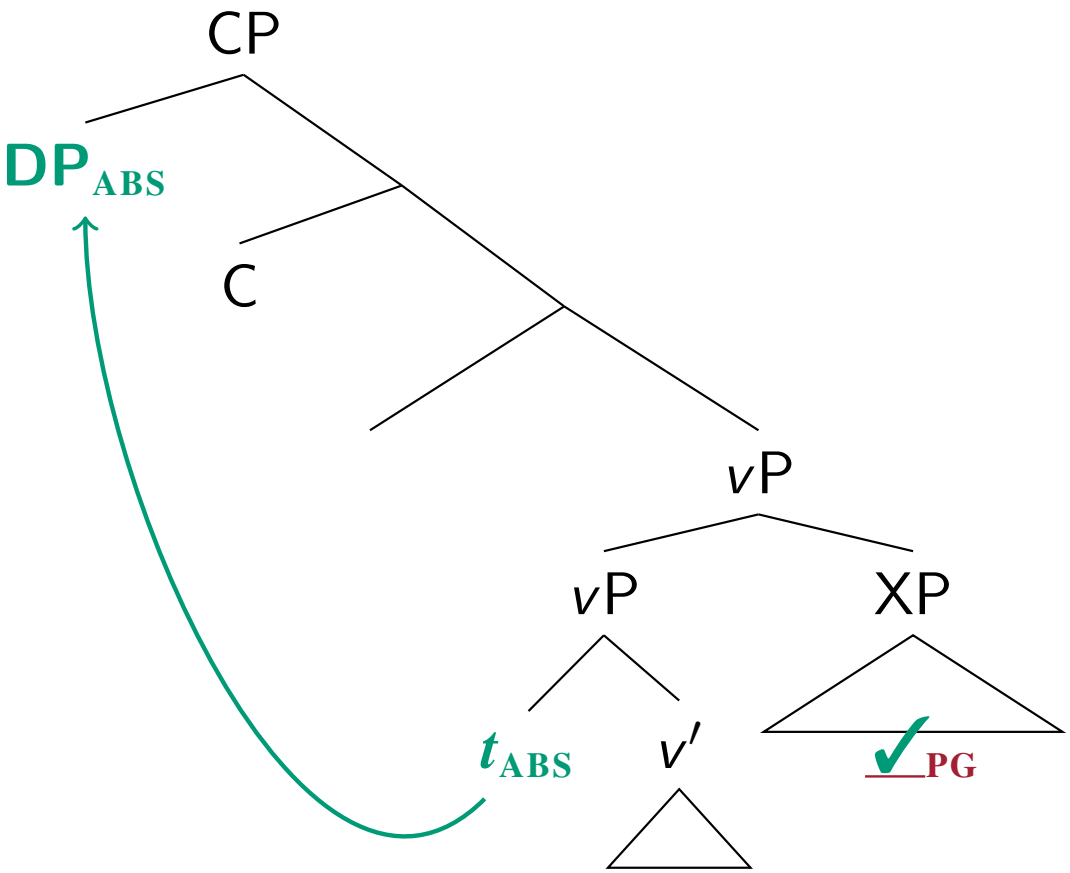


'It was me who fed the dog so it would like me.'

Contrast with:

- ABS agent of unergative verb
- ERG in embedded clause

ABS agent can license parasitic gap in *v*P adjunct



ABS agent can license parasitic gap in *v*P adjunct

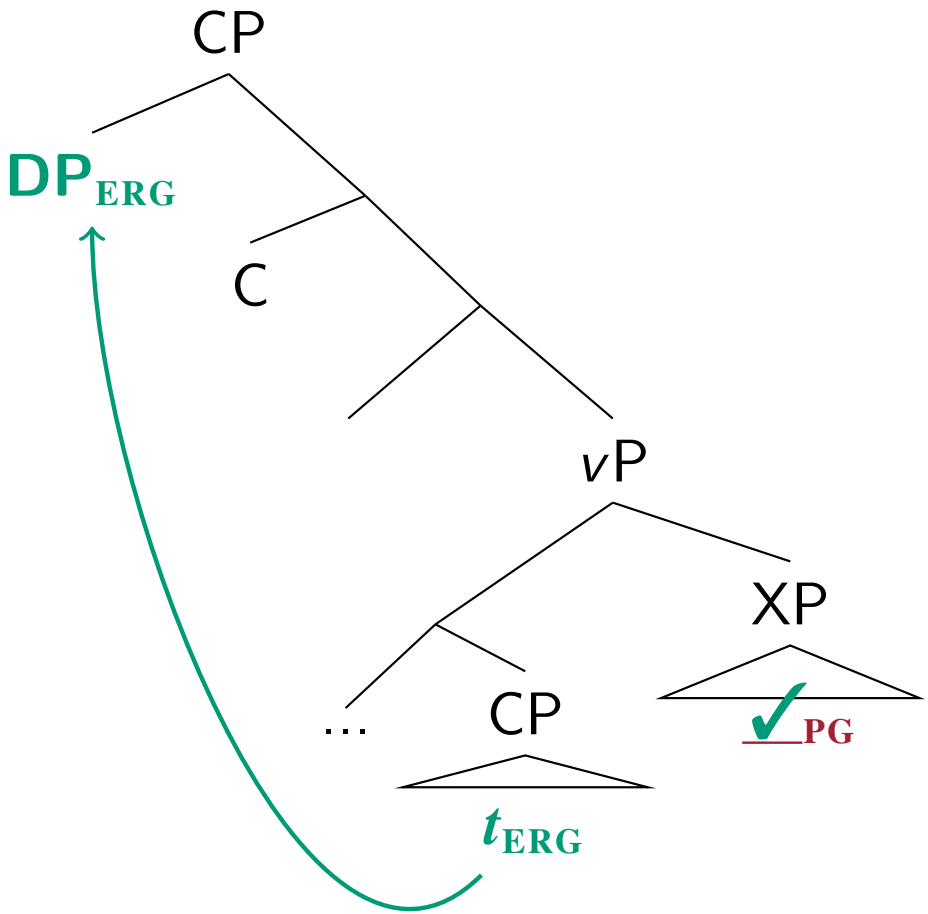
[O	a'u]	na	sau	___ABS
PRED	I	PST	come	

✓

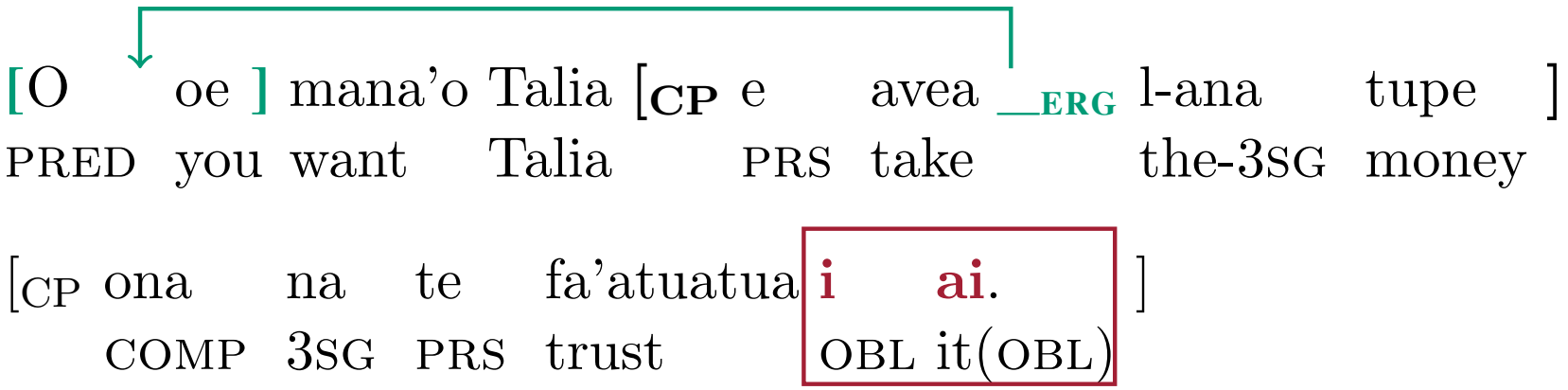
[ina	ua	e	vala'au	atu	**i**	**ai**	].
COMP	PERF	you	call	DIR	OBL	it(OBL)	

'It was me who __ came when you called __.'

Embedded ERG can license parasitic gap in *v*P adjunct



Embedded ERG can license parasitic resumptive



'It's you Talia wants to take her money because she trusts in you.'

ABS scrambling over OBL indirect object

- **OBL** indirect object c-commands **ABS** direct object

  Evidence from Condition C:

			***pro*$_j$**					**RE$_j$**
Na	ou	aumai-a	**iā te ia$_{i/*j}$**	**[** le	tama	teine	a	Talia$_j$ **]**.
PST	I	bring-TR	OBL	s/he	the	child	girl	GEN Talia

  'I brought Talia's$_j$ daughter to her$_{i/*j}$.'

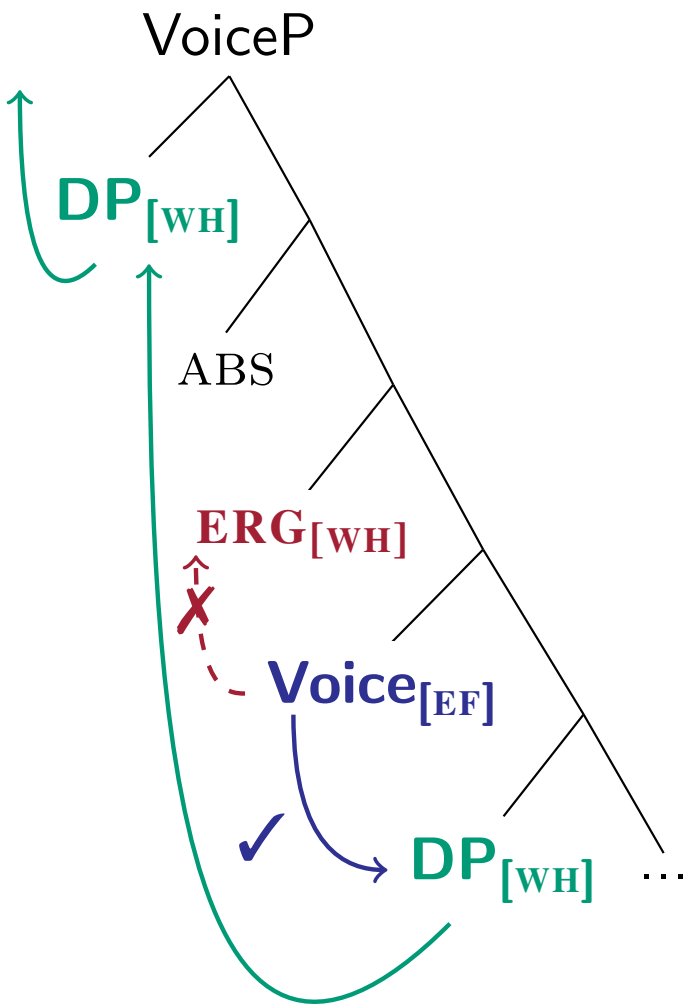
- **ABS** direct object A-scrambles to Spec,VoiceP

  $\Rightarrow$ no reconstruction for Condition C

						RE$_j$	***pro*$_{i/j}$**
Na	ou	aumai-a	**[** le	tama	teine	a	Talia$_j$ **]** **iā te ia$_{i/j}$**.
PST	I	bring-TR	the	child	girl	GEN	Talia OBL s/he

  'I brought Talia's$_j$ daughter to her$_{i/j}$.'

Prediction: Only ERG can't move



- **Successive-cyclic movement**: to move out of phase YP, XP must move to Spec,YP.
- Triggered by edge feature on phase head, which probes **down**.
- Lower XPs can move to outer Spec,VoiceP above ABS.
- ERG cannot move to outer Spec,VoiceP above ABS.

Only ERG cannot move.
Other DPs can move.

(Georgi 2014, 2017; Ershova to appear a)