Syntactic Ergativity in Tongan: Resumptive Pronouns Revisited

Yuko Otsuka

University of Hawaii at Mānoa

Introduction

It is well known that so-called ergative languages are classified roughly into two groups: those which show an ergative pattern only at the morphological level and those which exhibit an ergative pattern also at the syntactic level. Syntactic ergativity is a curious phenomenon in the following respects. First, while there is apparently some correlation between morphological and syntactic ergativity, the link between the two appears to be rather weak. On the one hand, no language with accusative morphology shows syntactic ergativity. On the other, morphological ergativity does not always entail syntactic ergativity. Evidence from languages such as Warlpiri and Niuean, which are morphologically ergative, but does not show syntactic ergativity, suggests that morphological ergativity does not necessarily induce syntactic ergativity. Secondly, even when a language does show syntactic ergativity, an ergative pattern is sometimes restricted to certain construction types. Two questions arise. What gives rise to syntactic ergativity? How is syntactic ergativity related to morphological ergativity?

Among the phenomena concerning syntactic ergativity, relativisation seems to show a fairly consistent pattern crosslinguistically. That is, syntactically ergative languages generally show an ergative pattern with respect to relativisation: while absolutive (ABS) arguments can undergo normal relativisation (i.e., the gap strategy), ergative (ERG) arguments cannot. This restriction is manifested in two ways: a) relativization of ERG arguments is strictly prohibited and therefore, the structure must be
Such an ergative pattern is intriguing both typologically and theoretically. Typologically, those languages that demonstrate an ergative pattern with respect to relativization are problematic exceptions to Keenan and Comrie’s (1977) accessibility hierarchy, in which subjects are located higher than direct objects. In ergative languages, the category “subject” divides into two subcategories, ERG and ABS. ERG subjects are apparently less accessible than direct objects in terms of relativization. Theoretically, the use of resumptive pronouns raises an interesting question with regard to wh-movement in general. Why is relativization of ERG arguments prohibited in languages like Tongan? Why is it that the presence of a resumptive pronoun rescues the situation, which would otherwise result in ungrammaticality? And finally, why is a similar resumptive pronoun strategy unavailable in other syntactically ergative languages such as Dyirbal?

In this chapter I address these questions and provide an account for syntactic ergativity within the framework of the Minimalist Program (Chomsky 1995, 2000, 2001). Specifically, I argue that the distribution of gap and resumptive pronouns can be explained in terms of C’s features, following the proposals of Shlonsky (1992) and Suñer (1998). The chapter is organized as follows. Section 1 provides an overview of syntactic ergativity with respect to relativization. In Section 2 Keenan and Comrie’s (1977) accessibility hierarchy is discussed. In Section 3 we discuss a minimalist analysis of morphological ergativity. The current study assumes that ABS and ERG are both structural and checked by v and T, respectively. In Section 4 we consider some previous analyses of the Tongan-type resumptive pronouns. In Section 5, an alternative analysis is
proposed, which argues that the distribution of resumptive pronouns in Tongan can be accounted for in terms of C’s features. Section 6 discusses the extension of the current analysis to other languages such as Irish, Dyirbal, Spanish, Niuean, and English, in which the distribution of resumptive pronouns shows different patterns. Altogether the current analysis provides a uniform account of the various patterns of relativization found in both accusative and ergative languages. In Section 7, we discuss the Highest Subject Constraint. Section 8 concludes the chapter.

1. Ergative patterns of relativization

Some languages with ergative Case marking exhibit an ergative pattern with respect to relativization. Dyirbal, for example, allows only ABS arguments to undergo relativization. In order to relativize the subject of a transitive verb, the structure must be first antipassivised so that the relevant argument appears in ABS rather than ERG. See (1) below.1


   “The tree which the man had cut nearly fell on me.”

b. ŋuma-Ø [banaga-ŋu-Ø] yabu-ŋgu bura-n.
   father-ABS return- REL-ABS mother-ERG see-NFUT
   “Mother saw father, who was returning.”

   mother-ABS [see-APASS- REL-ABS father-DAT return- PST
   “Mother, who saw father, was returning.”

1 Abbreviations used in this chapter are as follows: ABS = absolutive, ACC = accusative, APASS = antipassive, COMP = complementizer, DAT = dative, DEF = definite, DEM = demonstrative, EMPH = emphatic, ERG = ergative, FUT = future, LOC = locative, NFUT = non-future, NOM = nominative, Obj = object, OBL = oblique, PERF = perfect, PL = plural, PRS = present, PST = past, REL = relative, S = singular, Subj = subject, 1 = first person, 2 = second person, 3 = third person.
There is another group of languages that show an ergative pattern in a slightly different fashion. In these languages, only ABS arguments may undergo normal relativization (i.e., the gap strategy) and ERG relatives require a resumptive pronoun. Consider the Tongan example in (2) below.

(2) a. e fefine [na’e tangi] 
    DEF woman PST cry 
    “the woman (who) cried”

b. e fefine [na’e fili ‘e Sione] 
   DEF woman PST choose ERG Sione 
   “the woman (who) Sione chose”

c. *e fefine [na’e fili ‘a Sione] 
   DEF woman PST choose ABS Sione 
   “the woman (who) chose Sione”

d. e fefine [na’a ne fili ‘a Sione] 
   DEF woman PST 3.S choose ABS Sione 
   same as (2c)

As illustrated in (2c) and (2d), the relative clause must contain a pronoun that is coreferential with the head noun if the relativized argument is the subject of a transitive verb. Failure to do so would result in ungrammaticality. Furthermore, the use of such a pronoun is prohibited in ABS relatives, as shown in (3) below.²

(3) a. *e fefine [na’a ne tangi] 
   DEF woman PST 3.S cry 
   “the woman (who) cried”

b. *e fefine [na’e fili ia ‘e Sione] 
   DEF woman PST choose 3.S ERG Sione 
   “the woman (who) Sione chose”

Note that not all morphologically ergative languages show syntactic ergativity. Some well-known examples are Warlpiri (Bittner and Hale 1996a, b, Dixon 1979) and Niuean (Chung 1978, Levin and Massam 1984, Seiter 1980). Thus, it is not the morphological ergativity per se that gives rise to the ergative patterns shown above.

² It should be noted that Tongan shows an apparent split ergativity in that the pronominal arguments show an accusative pattern. Tongan has two sets of pronouns, clitic and independent. Clitic pronouns such as ne in (2a) above can only be used as subjects. Pronominal objects can only take the independent form such as ia. For the analysis of the morphological split in Tongan, see Otsuka (2000, 2002).
Bittner and Hale (1996a, b) propose that the difference is essentially whether VP is transparent or opaque to government from C. To grossly simplify, they argue that ABS arguments are K-less and therefore must be governed by C.\(^3\) This condition can be met either by raising the K-less nominal to [Spec, IP] or by rendering VP transparent by V-to-I-to-C movement. If VP is opaque, ABS arguments must raise to [Spec, IP]. In effect, ABS-marked arguments are always in [Spec, IP], forming a natural class that gives rise to syntactic ergativity. In contrast, if VP is transparent, ABS arguments can be governed by C in situ. As a result, ERG-marked arguments are higher than ABS-marked arguments. ABS-arguments do not form a natural class, which accounts for the lack of syntactic ergativity. In short, syntactic ergativity arises in raising ergative languages, in which ABS arguments are higher than ERG arguments as a result of raising to [Spec, IP]. While this analysis explains why an ergative pattern arises, a question remains as to why the resumptive pronoun strategy is required for ERG relatives in a subgroup of syntactic ergative languages.\(^4\)

2. Accessibility hierarchy

Based on their typological study, Keenan and Comrie (1977) propose the accessibility hierarchy, as illustrated below.

(4) Accessibility Hierarchy (Keenan and Comrie 1977)

Subject > Direct Object > Indirect Object > Oblique > Genitive

\(^3\) ERG, on the other hand, is considered to be the morphological realization of a functional head K, which in turn must be Case-bound by I. I Case-binds K if and only if a) I locally c-commands K and b) I governs a Case competitor for K, namely, a K-less nominal.

\(^4\) Moreover, languages that show syntactic ergativity do not show an ergative pattern across the board. Rather, such an ergative pattern is often restricted to certain syntactic operations. For example, in Tongan, while relativization and two types of coordination show an ergative pattern, another type of coordination shows an accusative pattern (Dixon 1979, Otsuka 2000).
According to Keenan and Comrie (1977), if a language permits relativization of NPs of a particular type, say indirect object, then those NPs of the type that is located higher in the hierarchy (in this case direct object and subject) may also undergo relativization. Admittedly descriptive as it is, this generalization holds fairly well crosslinguistically as far as accusative languages are concerned. This fairly strong generalization collapses, however, when the data from ergative languages are taken into consideration. As far as syntactically ergative languages are concerned, the accessibility hierarchy should be modified as in (5) below.

(5) Intransitive subject > Transitive subject > Oblique
   Direct object

The alleged universal nature of Keenan and Comrie’s accessibility hierarchy faces a serious problem here.

Hawkins (1999) argues that the accessibility hierarchy can be explained in terms of sentence processing. He shows that the accessibility hierarchy involves increasingly complex domains for relativization: that is, the subject gaps are easier to process than direct object gaps, which in turn are easier to process than those of indirect objects. In a nutshell, gaps that are structurally higher are easier to process than those in lower positions, because the latter involve more nodes between the filler and the gap. Given the principle that the speaker prefers a structure that takes less time to process than one that takes more time and effort, Keenan and Comrie’s accessibility hierarchy can be understood as a manifestation of such preference. Assuming that Hawkins’s claim is correct, given the accessibility hierarchy in ergative languages (5), we would expect that ABS gaps are easier to process than ERG gaps. Not only has there been no empirical evidence for this hypothesis, but also such a hypothesis fail to explain why some ERG
gaps, i.e., those in syntactically accusative languages, are as easy to process as ABS gaps. Notice that Hawkins’s study only concern the data from accusative languages.

On a different note, Chomsky (1993: 10) observes that less-marked Case is higher on the extractability hierarchy. In (4) NOM is higher in the hierarchy than ACC, the latter being the marked Case in the system. Similarly, in (5) ABS is higher than ERG, which is the marked Case in the system. It is this observation that the accessibility hierarchy seems to have something to do with Case that I would like to pursue in the following discussion. I propose that the accessibility hierarchy should be stated in terms of Case rather than grammatical relations. What is universal about the accessibility hierarchy is that NPs bearing the unmarked Case is higher than those bearing the marked Case.

(6) Unmarked Case (NOM/ABS) > Marked Case (ACC/ERG) > Oblique

The question is, however, why it has to be so.

3. Checking Ergative Case

To reiterate, we are dealing with the following three questions. Why do some languages prohibit ergative arguments to undergo relativization? Why does the resumptive pronoun strategy rescue the otherwise ungrammatical ergative relatives in Tongan? Is there any

---

5 On the other hand, Bittner and Hale (1996a, b) claim that ABS is higher than ERG in raising ergative languages, while ERG is higher than ABS in transparent ergative languages. If this is true, it explains why some ERG gaps (i.e., those in raising ergative languages) are more difficult to process than ABS gaps and supports Hawkins’s proposal that the accessibility hierarchy (5) reflects relative ease of processing. Given Bittner and Hale’s analysis of transparent ergative languages, however, we would expect ABS-marked objects to be more difficult to process than ABS-marked subjects and ERG-marked subjects. Yet, there does not seem to be a language in which Case marking is ergative and only the subjects, but not direct objects, can undergo relativization. When a morphologically ergative language does not show syntactic ergativity with respect to relativization, it is not that it shows an accusative pattern. Rather, it simply does not distinguish ABS from ERG and allows the gap strategy to apply to both subjects (ABS or ERG) and objects.
explanation for the accessibility hierarchy based on Case provided in (6) above? These questions can be answered if we assume that the distribution of resumptive pronouns is governed by C’s features and that the difference between accusative and ergative Case morphology is essentially the choice of the marked Case.

There have been a number of proposals as to how ergative Case marking should be understood in the minimalist framework. Approaches to ergative Case marking can be roughly divided into two groups: one that considers ERG an inherent Case (Carnie this volume, Johns 1992, Legate this volume, Massam 2000, 2001, 2002, Nash 1995, this volume, Ndayiragije this volume, Nevins and Anand this volume, Ura 2000, Woolford 1997) and the other in which ERG is treated as a structural Case (Bittner and Hale 1996a, b, Bobaljik 1993, Laka 1993, Mahajan 1997, Murasugi 1992, Otsuka 2000, Wiltschko this volume). In both approaches, ABS is considered a structural Case. However, there is no consensus as to how exactly ABS is checked. Some argue that ABS is associated with T, i.e., equivalent to NOM (Bobaljik and Branigan this volume, Murasugi 1992, Nevins and Anand this volume, Ura 2000). Some argue that ABS is associated with v, i.e., equivalent of ACC (Massam 2000, 2001, 2002, Bobaljik 1993, Laka 1993). Some other argue that ABS is regarded as a default structural Case (Hale and Bittner 1996a, b, Nash 1995, this volume, Ndayiragije this volume).

Discussion on the pros and cons of each of these proposals is beyond the scope of this chapter. Suffice it to say that as far as Tongan is concerned, the most preferable analysis is the one which considers both ABS and ERG structural Case associated with v and T, respectively. First, ERG is not always associated with a particular theta-role. The subject of an unergative verb is never marked as ERG although its theta role is AGENT.
This argues against the hypothesis that ERG is an inherent Case. Second, assuming that both ERG and ABS are structural, the approach assuming the crossing path is preferred over the one assuming the nested path, as the latter inevitably leads to violation of the Minimal Link Condition (MLC) in the sense of Chomsky (1995). Furthermore, the fact that ERG is structurally higher than ABS is supported by independent evidence. For example, an ABS-argument cannot bind a reflexive in an ERG-marked position whereas an ERG argument can bind a reflexive in an ABS-marked position.

(7) a. Na’e fakalangilangi‘i ‘e Mele ‘a ia pē.
   PST praise ERG Mele ABS 3.S EMPH
   “Mele praised herself.”
b. Na’e fakalangilangi‘i ‘e ia pē ‘a Mele.
   PST praise ERG 3.PL ABS DEF children
   *“Herself praised Mele.”
   “(Only) she praised Mele.”

Tongan data suggest a) that ERG is a structural Case and b) that it is associated with T, as NOM is in an accusative system.

Following Levin and Massam (1984), Bobaljik (1993) and Laka (1993), let us assume that the difference between accusative and ergative systems reduces to the choice of “active” Case, i.e., the Case that is activated in intransitive constructions: T-Case in accusative languages and V-Case in ergative languages. In terms of feature checking, the active Case hypothesis can be stated as follows. T bears a Case feature [T-Case], v bears a Case feature [V-Case], and NPs bear a Case feature [Case] with its value unspecified. The relevant structure for transitive constructions is illustrated in (8) below.

---

6 To be precise, Massam postulates a functional head ABS within vP.
7 However, see Ura (2000) for an argument for the nested path in the checking theory. See also Murasugi (1992).
8 Note that Tongan does not have an independent set of reflexive pronouns, but pronouns can also be used as reflexives given an appropriate context. When used as a reflexive, the pronoun is often accompanied by the emphatic pē “only, just”.

---
T’s Case feature and that of NP in [Spec, vP] check off under Agree. T cannot Agree with the NP in [V, NP], for it would violate the MLC. Similarly, v’s Case feature checks off under Agree with that of the NP in [V, NP]. Thus, in a transitive construction, the external argument would bear T Case and the internal argument would have V Case. This much is the same in both accusative and ergative languages. The difference arises in intransitive constructions. The basic tenet of the active Case hypothesis is that in intransitive constructions one Case becomes inert and therefore, unavailable. In accusative languages, this inert Case is V-Case. Thus, the sole argument of an intransitive verb bears T-Case, the active Case in the system. In contrast, in ergative languages, it is T-Case that is inert. Consequently, the subject of an intransitive verb receives V-Case. In both Bobaljik’s (1993) and Laka’s (1993) models, Agr is taken to be the medium for feature checking. Thus, the difference between accusative and ergative languages is essentially whether the subject of an intransitive verb checks its Case in Agrs or Agro, respectively. Given that Agr is dispensed with in the current minimalist approach, the active Case hypothesis needs to be reinterpreted so as to conform to this assumption.

---

9 Bobaljik (1993) considers that the active Case is determined by the availability of the relevant Agr. In ergative languages, AgrO is inert in intransitive constructions. For Laka (1993), it is Case itself that can be active or inert.
Following Hale and Keyser (1993), Chomsky (1995) argues that unergative constructions are underlingly transitive. Thus, unergative constructions are assumed to have the following structure.

(9) 

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{TP} \\
\text{T'} \\
\text{T} \ [\text{T-CASE}] \\
\text{vP} \\
\text{Subj} \ [\text{CASE}] \\
\text{v'} \\
\text{v} \ [\text{V-CASE}] \\
\text{VP} \\
\text{V} \ (\text{Obj})
\end{array}
\]

Accusative Case marking is accounted for as follows. V-Case is checked by the covert object, while T-Case agrees with the subject. As a result, the subject of an unergative verb bears the same Case as the subject of a transitive verb, giving rise to an accusative pattern.\(^\text{10}\) In terms of the active Case hypothesis, we may argue that V-Case is rendered “inert” by the covert object. It is not inert in the strict sense, but nonetheless unavailable for the subject. As for unaccusative constructions, it is assumed that \( v \) is lacking.

(10) 

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{TP} \\
\text{T'} \\
\text{T} \ [\text{T-CASE}] \\
\text{VP} \\
\text{V} \ [\text{CASE}] \\
\text{Subj}
\end{array}
\]

In the active Case approach, this is understood as inertness of V-Case: V-Case is inert in unaccusative constructions, i.e., the relevant functional head \( v \) is lacking.

\(^{10}\) In fact, a similar analysis has been proposed to account for the ERG-marked intransitive subjects in ergative languages (Bobaljik 1993 for Basque and Hindi, Laka 1993 for Basque,).
With regard to ergative languages, more drastic modification is necessary.

Consider the structure (11) below.

(11)
```
TP
   T’
   T [T-CASE]
   vP
   Subj [CASE]
   v’ [V-CASE]
   VP
   V (Obj)
```

Given the active Case hypothesis, we must somehow render T-Case inert and maintain V-Case available for the subject. This can only be done by assuming a) that T in an intransitive construction lacks Case feature and b) that the covert object does not delete v’s Case feature. As for the latter, there are two possibilities: either v’s Case feature can enter into multiple checking relations, or the covert object incorporates into V and thereby it does not involve checking of v’s Case feature. Whichever may be the case, it does not matter to the present discussion. Either way, we would have the following structure for unergative constructions in ergative languages.

(12)
```
TP
   T’
   T vP
   Subj [CASE]
   v’ [V-CASE]
   VP
   V (Obj)
```
Here, another technical problem arises. It is generally assumed that the operation Agree applies to a Probe and a Goal, where the Probe is structurally higher than the Goal. In (12), however, the Probe, v, is lower than the Goal, the subject NP. Again, we have several possible solutions. First is to say that the structural hierarchy does not matter to the operation Agree. This, however, is highly problematic, for Agree is assumed to license movement of the Goal. If we permit a configuration in which Probe is lower than Goal, we would also have to permit downward movement. Second possibility is to assume that v raises to T and then Agree with the subject. Though it is plausible, this hypothesis would also predict that V-to-T movement is obligatory in ergative languages, which is not an established fact. Finally, we may assume that the subject is generated VP-internally, as illustrated in (13) below.\footnote{Witschko (this volume) claims that in Halkomelem intransitive subjects are generated VP-internally while transitive subjects are generated outside VP.}

(13)\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{TP} \\
\text{T'} \\
\text{T} \\
\text{vP} \\
\text{v} \\
\text{[V-CASE]} \\
\text{Subj} \\
\text{[CASE]} \\
\text{V}
\end{array}
\]

In (13), v and Subj can Agree in situ.

Turning to unaccusative constructions, we face an interesting situation. Let us take, as standardly assumed, the subject of an unaccusative verb to be generated as V’s complement. According to the active Case hypothesis, we assume that V-Case is active. This means that unaccusative verbs do not exist in ergative languages, as all intransitive verbs must have structural Case. That Burzio’s generalization does not hold true of
ergative languages has long been noted in the literature (Levin 1983, Levin and Massam, 1986, Mahajan 1997, to name a few). Does this necessarily mean that ergative languages do not distinguish unergatives from unaccusatives? The distinction can still be maintained if we take unaccusatives to be different from unergatives in that their sole argument is generated as their complement rather than Spec.  

To summarize, the difference between accusative languages and ergative languages is captured in the active Case hypothesis as follows. In the former, intransitive constructions lack v and (finite) T always has a Case feature. Ergative languages differ from accusative languages in two respects. First, v is present in intransitive as well as transitive constructions. Second, there are two kinds of (finite) T, one with a Case feature and the other without. The former is selected in a transitive construction and the latter in an intransitive construction. The distribution of the relevant functional heads is summarised in Table 1 below (√/- indicate that the relevant item is selected/lacking).

---

12 Yet, one must admit that given the bare phrase structure (Chomsky 1995), it is impossible to distinguish the two constructions (13) and (14) above. This is the very reason why Chomsky argues that unergatives are underlingly transitive in order to make sure that the subject of an unergative verb is generated outside VP. Therefore, as far as the phrase structure is concerned, unergatives and unaccusatives cannot be distinguished unless the language shows active Case marking, i.e., ERG marking on unergative subjects. In that case, unergatives can be treated as underlingly transitive just like in accusative languages. As for those languages which do not show active Case marking, we need to find out whether there are any syntactic rules that refer to theta-roles, i.e., external vs. internal. I will leave this question open.
Table 1. Distribution of v and T

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Accusative</th>
<th></th>
<th>Ergative</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transitive</td>
<td>Intransitive</td>
<td>Transitive</td>
<td>Intransitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T [+Case]</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>−</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T [−Case]</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>v [+Case]</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>−</td>
<td>√</td>
<td>√</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the following discussion, we refer to the Case that is always available in the system as “active” Case: namely, T-Case in accusative languages (i.e., NOM) and V-Case in ergative languages (i.e., ABS).\(^{13}\)

4. Resumptive pronouns and C’s features

It should be noted that there are two kinds of resumptive pronouns (Sells 1984): one that is used to overcome island effects and the other that appears even in the absence of islands. A typical example of the former is found in English.

(15) a. *I always bump into that guy\(_i\) that I cannot remember where \(i\) studies.
     b. I always bump into that guy\(_i\) that I cannot remember where he\(_i\) studies.

The second type is found in languages like Irish (McClosky 1990), Hebrew and Palestinian Arabic (Shlonsky 1992), and Spanish (Suñer 1998). Resumptive pronouns in Tongan belong to this second class. Consider (2c, d) repeated here as (16).

(16) a. *e  fefine [na’e  fili  ‘a Sione]
def  woman  PST  choose  ABS  Sione
    “the woman (who) chose Sione”
     b. e  fefine [na’a ne  fili  ‘a Sione]
def  woman  PST  3.S  choose  ABS  Sione
     same as (16a).

\(^{13}\) As noted earlier, there are many different approaches regarding whether ABS should be treated as V-Case or T-Case. Massam (2000, 2001, 2002, this volume), Nash (1995, this volume) postulate an independent functional head ABS and VOICE, respectively, while Carnie (this volume), Nevin and Anand (this volume), and Bobaljik and Branigan (this volume) consider ABS to be T-Case. Legate (this volume) argues that in Warlpiri there are two kinds of ABS, T-Case and V-Case.
Island effects are irrelevant in (16). Yet, the resumptive pronoun *ne* is obligatory. What exactly is the condition that requires the resumptive pronoun in sentences like (16a)? In this section, we discuss some previous analyses of the Irish-type resumptive pronouns.

### 4.1 Three types of complementizers in Irish

The distribution of resumptive pronouns in Irish is governed by two factors: a) types of complementizers and b) types of arguments. There are two complementizers that are used in relative clauses, which are called *aL* and *aN* in the literature. The former licenses a gap, while the latter licenses a resumptive pronoun. See (17) below.

(17) Irish (McClosky 1990: 205-6)

a. an fear a bhual tů t
   “the man *aL* struck you
   “the man that you struck”

b. an fear ar bhual tů é
   “the man *aN* struck you him
   “the man that you struck (him)”

There is also *go* that licenses neither, occurring, for example, in an embedded declarative clause. McClosky attributes the forms and functions of these three complementizers to their respective feature specifications. Specifically, he argues that a complementizer agrees with the element in its Spec. It is assumed that [Spec, C] of a relative clause contains a null operator, which binds either a *wh*-trace or a resumptive pronoun. Each of these elements is endowed with a pair of features, [−pron(ominal), −ana(phor)] and [−pron, −ana], respectively. The operator inherits the features of the element it binds. C agrees with the operator in these features as an instance of Spec-Head agreement: *aN* if the relevant features are [−pron, −ana] and *aL* if they are [+pron, −ana]. The other complementizer, *go* appears when there is no element in [Spec, C] to trigger agreement.
Another phenomenon that requires some explanation is that resumptive pronouns may not appear in the highest subject position of the relative clause, a condition known as the Highest Subject Constraint (HSC). On the other hand, resumptive pronouns are permissible in the subject position of the embedded clause headed by the complementizer *go*, which introduces a declarative clause. See (18) below.

(18) Irish (McClosky 1990: 214)
   a. *an fear [a raibh sé breoite]
      the man aN was he ill
      “the man that (he) was ill”
   b. an fear [ar dhúirt mé [go dtiocfadh sé]]
      the man aN said I COMP would-come he
      “the man that I said (he) would come”

McClosky argues that it is the syntactic distance that matters. Being [+pron], resumptive pronouns are subject to a disjoint reference condition similar to the Binding Principle B, and therefore, cannot be locally bound. A resumptive pronoun in the subject position of a relative clause is “too close” to the binder. Sells (1984) proposes the following alternative account of this phenomenon. Contrary to McClosky’s analysis, Sells proposes that *aN* is not a complementizer, but appears in Infl. The HSC is due to the condition that prohibits a resumptive pronoun from appearing in a position to which the same Infl assigns Case. In other words, a resumptive pronoun cannot occur in a position to which NOM is assigned, namely, [Spec, I]. The pronoun *sé* in (18b) does not violate this condition, since it receives NOM from I of the deeply embedded clause. Leaving aside the validity of Sells’ analysis, his proposal that licensing of a resumptive pronoun has to do with Case is worth noting, for this observation can be carried over to ergative languages as we will see shortly.
4.2 Obligatory resumptive pronouns in Palestinian

Developing the idea that resumptive pronouns are licensed by a certain type of complementizer, Shlonsky (1992) argues that not only the English-type, but also the Irish-type resumptive pronouns should be taken to be a last resort device: whenever a resumptive pronoun occurs, it is because a certain condition prohibits movement.

Shlonsky argues that resumptive pronouns in Palestinian occur only when the complementizer has a property of rendering its Spec an A- rather than Ā-position. Unlike Irish, Palestinian does not permit a trace and a resumptive pronoun to alternate.

Resumptive pronouns are obligatory in the direct object position, the embedded subject position, and the embedded object position. On the other hand, resumptive pronouns cannot occur in the highest subject position of a relative clause, just like in Irish. See (19) below.

(19) Palestinian (Shlonsky 1992: 445-6)
   a. l-bint ʔilli šufti- *(ha)
      the-girl that (you.F) saw-(her)
      “the girl that you saw”
   b. l-bing ʔilli (*hiy) raayha ñal beet
      the-girl that (she) going to house
      “the girl that is going home”
   c. l-bint ʔilli fakkarti ?inno mona habbat-*(ha)
      the-girl that (you.F) thought that Mona loved-(her)
      “the girl that you thought that Mona loved”
   d. l-bint ʔilli fakkarti ?inno *(hiy) raayha ñal beet
      the-girl that (you.F) thought that *(she) going to the house
      “The girl that you thought that (she) is going home”

Shlonsky’s account of the distribution of resumptive pronouns in Palestinian goes as follows. As ʔilli identifies its Spec as A-position, movement to [Spec, C] is an instance of A-movement and is subject to the Specific Subject Constraint (SSC). In (19a,c-d), in which resumptive pronouns are obligatory, there is a subject which blocks movement
from the relevant position to [Spec, C]. In contrast, nothing prohibits movement to [Spec, C] in (19b). A resumptive pronoun cannot occur in the subject position in (19b) because movement is possible. Insertion of a resumptive pronoun is permissible only as a last resort, i.e., when movement is impossible. The HSC is explained in terms of the economy principle: movement from the subject position is possible, wherefore it must take place.

There arises a question as to how the ʔilli-type complementizers can identify their Spec as A-position. Noting that A-positions are generally either θ-positions or Spec of Agr, and adopting Rizzi’s (1990) idea of agreement in the domain of C, Shlonsky proposes that complementizers of this type are endowed with agreement features. Strong support for this hypothesis comes from Standard Arabic, in which the complementizer of a relative clause shows agreement with the head noun.

(20) Standard Arabic (Shlonsky 1992: 457)
   a. ʔal-rajul-u ilaʔii raʔaytu-(hu)
      the-man-NOM that.MS (I) saw-(him)
      “the man that I saw”
   b. ʔal-marʔat-u llatii raʔaytu-(ha)
      the-woman-NOM that.FS (I) saw-(her)
      “the woman that I saw”
   c. ʔal-ʔawlaad-u ilaʔiiina raʔaytu-(hum)
      the-boys-NOM that.MPL (I) saw-(them)
      “the boys that I saw”

Shlonsky argues that it is not the head noun, but the operator in [Spec, C] that triggers agreement in these examples. For Shlonsky, agreement features on C render its Spec an A-position. This hypothesis has a critical weakness, however. Assuming an operator is base-generated in [Spec, C], which is an A-position, the resumptive pronoun cannot be Ā-bound by this operator unless the operator further moves to an Ā-position. Thus, Shlonsky speculates a) that the operator undergoes LF movement to an Ā-position, i.e.,
adjunction to CP; and b) that the trace in A-[Spec, C] will be deleted. This solution, however, sounds rather ad-hoc.

4.3 C’s [+pronominal] feature in Spanish

In the light of Minimalist Program, the idea of resumptive pronouns being a last resort and the hypothesis that the distribution of resumptive pronouns is governed by C’s features are welcome. We have observed that there is a correlation between the form of complementizers and the presence of a resumptive pronoun. This observation leads to the hypothesis that C agrees with the operator in its Spec. The relevant features are [±pron, ±ana] for McClosky (1990) and φ-features for Shlonsky (1992). Given the minimalist assumption that derivation is driven by feature checking, it would be preferable if we could state that some feature on C requires the operator to undergo movement, or that some feature on C requires the operator to be base-generated.

Pursuing this possibility, Suñer (1998) argues that it is C’s [+pron(ominal)] feature that governs the distribution of resumptive pronoun. Unlike McClosky (1990) and Shlonsky (1992), Suñer assumes that resumptive pronouns are introduced in PF. Suñer’s argument goes as follows. In a relative clause, C has a feature [+pron] and a relative pronoun (relpro) is always base generated. When C’s [+pron] feature is strong, it attracts the relative pronoun to [Spec, C], yielding the structure in (21) below.

(21) [relpro, [C [ …… t_i]]]

If C’s [+pron] feature is weak, the relative pronoun remains in situ and a null operator (OP) will be merged. This will result in the structure in (22). OP binds the relative pronoun in the relative clause and links it to the head noun. The relative pronoun will subsequently be spelled out as a resumptive pronoun at PF.
It should be noted that in this analysis a resumptive pronoun is in fact a relative pronoun. A relative pronoun, which is generally assumed to be an operator, functions as such only if movement applies. Consider the following examples in Spanish.

(23) Spanish (Suñer 1998: 346-7)
   a. la mujer [a quien, Ø [Luis llamó a quien]]
      the woman A whom Luis called
   b. una mujer [OP, que [Luis la llamó]]
      a woman that Luis her called
      “a woman that Luis called her”

In (23a), C is phonetically null (Ø) and its [+pron] feature is strong. Consequently, the relative pronoun (a) quien has moved to [Spec, C], leaving a copy that will be deleted at PF. In (23b), C has a phonetic content (que) and its [+pron] feature is weak. The relative pronoun remains in situ and will be later pronounced as a resumptive pronoun. A question arises as to the phonetic form of the raised relative pronoun (i.e., quien) and that of the one that remains in situ (i.e., la). If they are the same element, how could it have two different phonetic realizations? Suñer argues that the relative pronoun in (23b) is a null relative pronoun, and that it materializes only at PF. Thus, at the point of Spell-Out the structure actually looks like the one in (24) below.

(24) una mujer [OP, que [Luis Ø, llamó]]

The null relative pronoun, however, fails to act as a bound variable due to a language specific condition that relative pronouns cannot act as bound variables at the PF interface unless it is in [Spec, C]. Therefore, the relative pronoun must be lexicalised and made into a resumptive pronoun.

To recapitulate, Suñer postulates two kinds of relative pronouns and two kinds of complementizers in Spanish. C can be either overt or null, and its [+pron] feature can be
either strong or weak. Relative pronouns can also be overt or null. The attested combinations of these elements are summarized in Table 2 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C</th>
<th>[+pron]</th>
<th>Relpro</th>
<th>Gap or pronoun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>que</td>
<td>weak</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Pronoun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>Gap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td><em>quien</em></td>
<td>Gap</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second pattern is illustrated in (25) below.

(25) Spanish (Suñer 1998: 347)
una mujer [Ø *que* [Luis llamó Ø]]
a woman that Luis called

According to this approach, the distribution of resumptive pronouns in Irish can also explained in terms of C’s [+pron] feature: *aL*’s [+pron] feature is strong, while that on *aN* is weak. Similarly, we may consider that in Palestinian, *ʔillī*’s [+pron] feature is weak, whereby it licenses resumptive pronouns.

One problem that needs to be accounted for is the HSC, which is observed in Irish and Palestinian, but crucially, not in Spanish. Recall that McClosky (1990) argues that this constraint is due to the condition similar to the Binding Principle B, which prohibits local binding of a resumptive pronoun. Shlonsky (1992) considers that it is essentially an instance of the SCC, arguing that it is due to C’s ability to identify its Spec as an A-position. In Suñer’s analysis, the HSC can be interpreted as follows: subject relatives cannot select C whose [+pron] feature is strong. This, however, is merely another way of describing the fact. Thus, Suñer follows Shlonsky’s proposal that agreeing C renders its Spec an A-position. She further argues that this possibility is blocked if the null operator is merged in [Spec,C] because OP by definition must be in an Ā-position. Thus, when the relative clause is headed by an agreeing C, it will contain a gap rather than a pronoun.
Suñer (1998: 352) proposes that languages that show the HSC “ban the nonagreeing C for subject relatives because they value a gap… more highly than a resumptive pronoun.” However, this does not seem to be a particularly satisfactory solution either. We will return to this point shortly.

5. Resumptive pronouns and Case

Let us take Suñer’s (1998) proposal to be on the right track and assume that the distribution of resumptive pronouns is governed by the strength of C’s [+pron] feature. When C’s [+pron] feature is strong, the relative pronoun must move up to [Spec, C] to check this feature, leaving a gap in the relative clause. When the relevant feature on C is weak, the null operator OP is merged and the relative pronoun remains in situ and is subsequently spelled out as a pronoun in PF. This hypothesis correctly accounts for the distribution of resumptive pronouns in accusative languages. Can Suñer’s argument be extended to account for ergative patterns of relativization?

Let us now consider the Tongan data. In Tongan, only ABS arguments may undergo relativization by the gap strategy and relativization of ERG arguments requires a resumptive pronoun. Consider (2) repeated here as (26).

(26) a. e fefine [na’e tangi t]
   DEF woman PST cry
   “the woman (who) cried”

b. e fefine [na’e fili ‘e Sione t]
   DEF woman PST choose ERG Sione
   “the woman (who) Sione chose”

c. *e fefine [na’e fili t ‘a Sione]
   DEF woman PST choose ABS Sione
   “the woman (who) chose Sione”

d. e fefine [na’a ne fili ‘a Sione]
   DEF woman PST 3.S choose ABS Sione
   same as (26c)
The above data suggest that C is null and that the relative pronoun is also null in Tongan.

We must also assume that C’s [+pron] feature is strong in (26a, b) and weak in (26c).

Things are not so straightforward, however. As illustrated in (27) below, the resumptive pronoun strategy is not available for ABS argument.

(27)  a. *e  fefine [na’a ne tangi]
      DEF woman PST 3.S cry
      “the woman (who) she cried”
    b. *e  fefine [na’e fili ia ‘e Sione]
      DEF woman PST choose 3.S ERG Sione
      “the woman (who) Sione chose her”

In short, we have the following situation: ABS relatives must select C whose [+pron] feature is strong, while ERG relatives must select C whose [+pron] feature is weak. The question is, however, why it has to be so.

Note that this is a situation similar to the one posed by the HSC in the languages discussed above. The choice of complementizer is not arbitrary when the relativized argument has a certain property. Note also that the contrast between the two phenomena is quite intriguing in that they actually have one property in common. Namely, resumptive pronouns are prohibited in positions to which the unmarked Case is assigned: NOM in Irish and Palestinian, ABS in Tongan. Recall that Sells’ (1984) proposal that licensing of resumptive pronouns has something to do with Case. Let us consider how this observation can be incorporated into Suñer’s analysis.

My proposal is as follows. First, agreeing C also bears a Case feature. Second, the value of C’s Case feature is the active Case of the system, which is [T-Case] in an accusative language and [V-Case] in an ergative language. This means that C can only Agree with an element which bears the active Case (i.e., NOM in accusative languages and ABS in ergative languages, respectively). This hypothesis in turn requires that (the
value of) the Case feature on an NP remains accessible after checking. This goes against the standard minimalist account (Chomsky 1995) in which Case features must be deleted and become inaccessible once checked. However, in the more recent Phase model (Chomsky 2000, 2001) an NP’s Case feature is no longer considered a feature with specified value, but rather a by-product of Agree. The value of an NP’s Case feature is assigned by virtue of Agree and determined by the element with which it Agrees: e.g., NOM if the relevant element is T, and ACC, if it is v. Thus, I assume that the assigned value must somehow be accessible to the computation in order to obtain the required morphology. The tree diagram in (28) below represents the structure at the point of derivation immediately after the Case features on NPs have been checked.

(28)

```
C
   [+pron]
    [V-CASE]
        TP
            T'
                vP
                    Subj
                        [CASE]-T
                    Vb
                        [V-CASE]
                VP
                    t
                        Obj
                        [CASE]-V
```

At this point, C’s [+pron] feature needs to be checked. Suppose a relative pronoun is base generated in [Spec, vP]. It cannot Agree with C since it has T-Case, which does not match C’s Case feature. Suppose a relative pronoun is base generated in the object position. It has both [+pron] and [V-Case] features. In contrast, in an accusative language, C whose [+pron] feature is strong also bears [T-Case]. Hence, a relative pronoun can Agree with C only if it is in the subject position.
There is more to be said, however. We have only explained why the gap cannot occur in a position which is associated with the marked Case if the selected C’s [+pron] feature is strong. Suppose we select C whose [+pron] feature is weak. This means that this feature will be checked covertly and that consequently, the relative pronoun would remain in situ and subsequently become a resumptive pronoun at PF. In theory, therefore, the relative pronoun can be in either the subject position or the object position. This option, however, is not available for ABS arguments, as shown in (27) above. In order to rule out the ABS relatives containing a resumptive pronoun, we need to put forward another hypothesis. That is, C whose [+pron] is weak is also endowed with a Case feature and its value is [−active]. Due to this feature, if a relative pronoun is base generated in the object position, it cannot Agree with C. Consequently, resumptive pronouns are not permitted in this position.

To summarise the discussion so far, there are two types of C that occur in relative clauses in Tongan: one whose [+pron] feature is strong and the other whose [+pron] feature is weak. These features are associated with a Case feature of a particular value: [+active] if it is strong, and [−active] if it is weak. Note that a similar analysis applies to Palestinian. Recall that in Palestinian resumptive pronouns are obligatory in the object position and the gap in the (highest) subject position. We may account for this fact as follows. Palestinian also has two kinds of C, both with the same phonetic realization ʔilli: one whose [+pron] is strong and the other whose [+pron] feature is weak. The former is associated with the active Case (i.e., NOM) and the latter with non-active Case (i.e., ACC).
6. Typology of C and the distribution of resumptive pronouns

Thus far, we have proposed that C of a relative clause has features [+pron] and [Case]. We have also argued that there is a correlation between the strength of C’s [+pron] feature and the value of its Case feature: if C’s [+pron] feature is strong, its Case feature is [+active] (NOM or ABS); if C’s [+pron] is weak, its Case feature is [−active] (ACC or ERG). This analysis has been shown to account for the distribution of resumptive pronouns in Tongan as well as Palestinian. The inventory of complementizers in these two languages is summarized in Table 3 below.

| Complementizers in Tongan and Palestinian | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Tongan | Palestinian | [+pron] | Case | Gap or pronoun |
| Ø | ?inno | [−pron] | N/A | N/A |
| Ø | ?illi | [+pron] strong | Active | Gap |
| Ø | ?illi | [+pron] weak | −Active | Pronoun |

In this section, we extend this hypothesis to other languages, in which the distribution of resumptive pronouns shows different patterns.

The current analysis faces a problem when Irish data are taken into consideration. As we have seen, Irish has two complementizers that occur in relative clauses, \(aN\) and \(aL\). The former licenses a resumptive pronoun and the latter a gap. In the current approach, this means that \(aN\)’s [+pron] feature is strong and its Case feature is [+active] (i.e., NOM), while \(aL\)’s [+pron] feature is weak and its Case feature is [−active] (i.e., ACC). This analysis correctly predicts that a resumptive pronoun cannot occur in the subject position. However, it also predicts, incorrectly, that a gap is not permissible in the object position. In Irish a gap as well as a resumptive pronoun are permitted in the direct object position, provided that the relative clause contains an appropriate complementizer. See (29) below.
Irish (McClosky 1990: 206, 214)

a. an fear a bhual tú t
   the man aL struck you
   “the man that you struck”

b. an fear ar bhual tú é
   the man aN struck you him
   “the man that you struck (him)”

Maintaining our hypothesis that resumptive pronoun is licensed by virtue of agreement with C, we may propose the following solution to this Irish puzzle. It seems that the Case feature on aL, a complementizer whose [+pron] feature is strong, does not have a specified value. The one whose [+pron] feature is weak, aN, is just like its counterparts in Tongan and Palestinian, having a Case feature associated with the active Case.

Table 4 Irish complementizers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>[+pron]</th>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Gap or pronoun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>go</td>
<td>[−pron]</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aL</td>
<td>[+pron] strong</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>Gap</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aN</td>
<td>[+pron] weak</td>
<td>−Active</td>
<td>Pronoun</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The contrast between Tongan and Palestinian on the one hand and Irish on the other is due to the parametric difference in the value of C’s Case feature.

There is yet another group of languages that permits resumptive pronouns, to which Spanish and Yiddish belong. In these languages resumptive pronouns are permitted everywhere, including the highest subject position. See (30) and (31) below.

(30) Spanish (Suñer 1998: 342)
    conozco a un tipo que él me aconseja a mí
    “I know a guy who advises me.”

    a yid vos er iz geven a groyser lamdn un a gvir
    a Jew that he is been a big scholar and a rich man
    “a guy who (he) was a big scholar and a rich man”
This suggests that in Spanish and Yiddish the complementizer whose [+pron] feature is weak lacks the Case feature with a specified value. This is a case analogous to aL in Irish.

See Table 4 for the inventory of Spanish complementizers.

### Table 5. Complementizers in Spanish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>[+pron]</th>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Gap or pronoun</th>
<th>Relpro</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>que</td>
<td>[−pron]</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que</td>
<td>[+pron] strong</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>Gap</td>
<td>Ø</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>que</td>
<td>[+pron] weak</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>Pronoun</td>
<td>quién</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>[+pron] strong</td>
<td>Unspecified</td>
<td>Gap</td>
<td>quién</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Spanish, however, demonstrates a peculiar property that does not conform to the current proposal. While resumptive pronouns are permitted in the highest subject position, movement of a relative pronoun (quien) out of this position is prohibited.

Consider (32) below.

(32) Spanish (Suñer 1998: 342)

a. *el científico quien ganó el premio Nobel
   the scientist who won the prize Nobel
   “the scientist who won the Nobel prize”

b. el científico que ganó el premio Nobel
   the scientist that won the prize Nobel
   “the scientist that won the Nobel prize”

The relative pronoun quien cannot appear in [Spec, C] in (32a), suggesting that the null C whose [+pron] feature is strong fails to Agree with a relative pronoun with NOM Case.

This obviously contradicts our hypothesis: C whose [+pron] feature is strong has a Case feature associated with the active Case (i.e., NOM in Spanish). On the surface, it appears that we need to stipulate that in (32a) the null complementizer’s [+pron] feature is strong and its Case feature is associated with the non-active Case. This, however, would undermine the generalizations that seem to hold true of all the other cases we have discussed so far. If we allowed for the case in which C’s [+pron] feature is strong and its Case feature is [−active], the analysis proposed here would inevitably become
indisputably ad hoc. Our solution, then, would be to hypothesize that the prohibition of a gap in the subject position is due to a constraint independent of Case. I have only a tentative proposal regarding this point. Note that Spanish is a pro-drop language. Thus, the subject position is often, almost always, empty if the subject is pronominal. The gap in (32a), therefore, could be in theory a pro rather than the gap as a result of the relative pronoun movement.14

(33) el científico quien C pro ganó el premio Nobel

(33) is ungrammatical for the same reason why (34) is ungrammatical: a relative pronoun cannot occur in two different positions simultaneously.

(34) el científico quien C el ganó el premio Nobel

A relative pronoun cannot co-occur with a resumptive pronoun in the same sentence because a resumptive pronoun is basically the relative pronoun spelled out in situ. If we take pro to be base generated, quien cannot be generated inside the relative clause. It is also assumed that quien cannot be introduced by merge to [Spec, C]. I suspect that the restriction on the subject gap in Spanish has something to do with this structural ambiguity: a phonetically null subject can be either a gap or a pro. If C’s [+pron] feature is weak, this ambiguity would not arise. Therefore, another complementizer, que whose [+pron] feature is weak, is selected to head a subject relative clause. The other option is

---

14 I assume that this is the case in (32b). That is, the missing subject in the relative clause in (32b) is pro, not a trace of relative pronoun.
available for object relatives, since, unlike subjects, relativization of objects does not give rise to such ambiguity.\textsuperscript{15}

The current approach, then, seems to provide a fairly consistent account for those languages that permit the Irish-type resumptive pronouns. It is necessary at this point to examine whether the current approach can also account for the lack of resumptive pronouns of this type. Specifically, we are concerned with two types of languages: syntactically ergative languages that permit neither a resumptive pronoun nor a gap in the position associated with ERG (e.g., Dyirbal), and those languages that permit a gap everywhere such as English (accusative), Warlpiri, and Niuean (ergative).\textsuperscript{16}

First, let us consider Dyirbal. In this language, ERG relativization is strictly prohibited. That is, the resumptive pronoun strategy is not available. The relevant examples are repeated here as (35).

\textsuperscript{15} Admittedly, a functional account such as this runs into difficulty, for language generally does allow for functionally uneconomical phenomena. Intriguingly, a similar object-only restriction on the distribution of gap exists in English: the \textit{that}-trace effect.

(i) a. *Who do you think [that \textit{t} came]?
b. Who do you think [that John brought \textit{t}]?

In the extended standard theory, (ia) is ruled out by the ECP: the subject trace is not properly governed. Given that the notion government is not available in MP, the contrast illustrated in (i) needs to be accounted for some other way. I do not have a satisfactory proposal as to what it could be or if it has anything to do with Spanish relativization, however.

\textsuperscript{16} Warlpiri relative clauses are not part of DPs, but CPs containing the relative auxiliary-complementizer \textit{kuja} and adjoin to another CP (Hale 1976). Thus, it may be problematic to consider relativization in Warlpiri on a par with relativization in the general sense. However, it is worth noting that formation of relative clauses is not restricted in any way by the type of argument that is relativized (i.e., the one precedes the relative auxiliary-complimentizer). Consider (i) below (Mary Laughren, personal communication).

(i) a. wati (yangka) kuja ya-nu-mu.
   man DEM COMP go-PST-hither
   “that man that came” (or “when the man came” or “it’s the man that came”)

b. wati-ngki (yangka-ngku) kuja karnta nyangu
   man-ERG DEM-ERG COMP woman:ABS saw
   “the man who saw the woman”

c. wati (yangka) kuja karnta-ngku nyangu
   man:ABS DEM COMP woman-ERG SAW
   “the man whom the woman saw”
As illustrated in (35), relativization of a transitive subject must be preceded by antipassivization so that the relevant argument should appear in ABS rather than ERG. The fact that resumptive pronouns cannot occur at all suggests that Dyirbal lacks the relevant type of C, i.e., the one whose [+pron] feature is weak. There are only two types of C in Dyirbal, one with a feature [+pron] and the other without, as shown in Table 6.

Table 6. Dyirbal complementizers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>[+pron]</th>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Gap or pronoun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ø [-pron]</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ø [+pron] strong</td>
<td>Active Case</td>
<td>Gap</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

C’s Case feature is [+active], conforming to the proposed generalization: strong [+pron] is associated with [+active]. This explains why ERG relativization is impossible in Dyirbal. If a relative pronoun is base generated in [Spec, vP] of a transitive construction, C’s features would not be checked and thereby the derivation would crash.

Finally, there is a group of languages that do not license resumptive pronouns, but allow a gap to occur everywhere. Consider the Niuean examples below.

(36) Niuean (Seiter 1980: 94)

a. E tama ne hau (*a ia) i Makefu
   DEF child NFUT come ABS he LOC Makefu
   “the child who (he) comes from Makefu”

b. ke he tama ka kai (*e ia) e tau pateta
to DEF child FUT eat ERG he ABS PL potato
   “to the child who (he) is going to eat the potatoes”

c. mo e tagata ne moto e koe (*a ia)
   with ABS person NFUT punch ERG you ABS him
   “with the person who you punched (him)”

Given the present hypothesis, such a language lacks C whose [+pron] feature is weak. C’s [+pron] feature is always strong, forcing the overt movement of a relative pronoun. In
addition, the type of C that is available, the one whose [+pron] feature is strong, behaves like its Irish counterpart: its Case feature does not have a specified value, allowing C to agree with a relative pronoun regardless of its Case. See Table 7 below.

Table 7. Complementizers in English and Niuean

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>English</th>
<th>Niuean</th>
<th>[+pron]</th>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Gap or pronoun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>that</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>[-pron]</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that/Ø</td>
<td>Ø</td>
<td>[+pron]</td>
<td>strong</td>
<td>Active Case</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

To summarize, it has been shown that the current proposal accounts for the crosslinguistic variations of the distribution of the Irish-type resumptive pronouns.

7. Highest Subject Constraint (HSC)

We have shown that the HSC derives from a more general rule: namely, C whose [+pron] feature is weak is associated with the marked Case (if the value of C’s Case feature is specified). There is another side to the HSC, however. Namely, resumptive pronouns are permitted in the embedded subject position, as illustrated in (37) and (38) below.

(37) Irish (McClosky 1990: 214)

an fear [ar dhúirt mé [go dtiocfadh sé]]
the man aN said I COMP would-come he
“the man that I said (he) would come”

(38) Palestinian (Shlonsky 1992: 445)

l-bint ?illi fakkarti ?inno *(hiy) raayha ðal beet
the-girl that (you.F) thought that *(she) going to the house
“The girl that you thought that (she) is going home”

In these sentences, the relative clause is headed by C whose [+pron] feature is weak and Case feature [−active]: aN in Irish and ?illi in Palestinian. The current analysis fails to offer any account of the possibility of the resumptive pronoun in the embedded subject position.

When we consider the following Tongan data, a striking parallel emerges.
We have concluded in the previous section that the C whose [+pron] feature is weak (i.e., the one that licenses resumptive pronouns) has a Case feature associated with the non-active Case (i.e., ERG). Thus, as illustrated in (39a), resumptive pronouns cannot occur in a position associated with ABS. However, a resumptive pronoun is permitted in a position associated with ABS in the deeply embedded clause, as illustrated in (39b). As shown in (40) below, the same holds true if the relevant argument is a direct object.

In other words, a condition similar to the HSC exists in Tongan: resumptive pronouns are prohibited in the highest ABS positions.

Note that the grammatical examples in (37) and (40) involve long-distance binding. I propose that the pronoun in the embedded clause is not the kind of resumptive pronouns that has been discussing so far. Rather, it is of the English type: the one used as a last resort to avoid island effects. Let us consider the Irish-type resumptive pronouns.
agreement with C. Turning back to the examples in (37)-(40), based on the preceding
discussion, we assume that the complementizer heading the embedded clause (i.e., go,
?inno, or Ø) is not endowed with [+pron]. This means that [Spec, C] is unavailable for
both the relative pronoun (to move to) and the null operator (to be merged).
Consequently, the derivation would crash if a relative pronoun were generated in the
embedded clause; it would fail to be licensed. Suppose that the pronoun in question is a
regular pronoun rather than a relative pronoun. Regular pronouns need not to be licensed
in the same way as a relative pronoun. On the other hand, they can be bound by a null
operator and function as bound variables. The relation between the operator and the
pronoun is that of binding in both cases; the difference is that a relative pronoun must be
licensed, but a regular pronoun need not. In this view, the difference between the Irish-
type resumptive pronouns and the English-type resumptive pronouns is that the former is
relative pronouns and the latter is regular pronouns.\footnote{Aoun et al. (2001) call the
former apparent resumptives and the latter true resumptives. Unlike the
current analysis, however, Aoun et al. assume that apparent resumptives involve movement.}

8. Conclusion

In this chapter we have considered some puzzling facts concerning syntactic ergativity.
Why only a subset of ergative languages show syntactic ergativity? What is the condition
that prohibits relativization of ergative arguments? Why is it that in Tongan a resumptive
pronoun makes ergative relatives grammatical? Why is a similar resumptive strategy
unavailable in Dyirbal? Our proposal is that C’s features are the key to these puzzles: the
distribution of resumptive pronouns is governed by C’s features. Specifically, we have
argued that the Irish-type resumptive pronouns are actually relative pronouns and as such
they must be licensed by an appropriate C. It is assumed a) that C of a relative clause is endowed with [+pron], which can be strong or weak; and b) that C’s [+pron] feature is associated with a Case feature. When C’s [+pron] feature is strong, a gap results. When it is weak, movement is impossible and therefore, the relative pronoun remains in situ. A relative pronoun in situ must be licensed by means of agreement with C in features including the Case feature. With regard to C’s Case feature, we have observed the following. First, its value may be unspecified. In this case, C can agree with a relative pronoun regardless of its Case. Second, when it has a specified value, the following seems to hold true: C’s Case feature is [+active] if its [+pron] feature is strong and [−active] if it is weak. In this case, a gap is permitted only in positions associated with the active Case (i.e., NOM/ABS) and a resumptive pronoun only in positions associated with the non-active Case (ACC/ERG).

We began this chapter by noting that Keenan and Comrie’s accessibility hierarchy does not hold true of ergative languages. Based on the observation that the relevant factor is Case rather than grammatical relation, we propose an alternative hierarchy as shown in (41) below.

(41) Active Case > Non-active Case > Oblique

Active Case and non-active Case refer to the unmarked Case (i.e., NOM/ABS) and the marked Case (ACC/ERG), respectively. This hierarchy is based on the data discussed in this chapter: there is a general tendency that C whose [+pron] feature is strong, the one inducing movement, bears a Case feature [+active]. If the value of C’s Case feature is unspecified, active Case and non-active Case are treated equally. Then, extraction is possible from positions associated with either Case. Crucially, C’s Case feature is never
[--active] when its [+pron] feature is strong. In other words, under no circumstances a gap is permitted only in positions associated with non-active Case.

In conclusion, in the current approach, syntactic ergativity (at least as far as relativization is concerned) is taken to be a direct consequence of morphological ergativity. This explains why we do not find a language that is morphologically accusative and syntactically ergative. The fact that only a subset of ergative languages show syntactic ergativity is explained in terms of the crosslinguistic variations of complementizers. Syntactic ergativity may not be so puzzling a phenomenon after all.

References


