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We hope that the response to volume 2 will be as encouraging as the response to volume 1. We would also like to acknowledge the patient work of Ms. Gisèle Clément who managed to type and organize this issue in spite of everything.

The Editors

A. Copeland  
N. Galliaford  
T. Hukari  
H.J. Warkentyne

Please address all correspondence, including subscription requests, to:

The Editors, WPLC  
Department of Linguistics, University of Victoria  
P.O. Box 1700  
Victoria, British Columbia, Canada V8W 2Y2

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### Errata to Ergative and Accusative...

p.50. fn.1. line 1. [nɪsgáʔ]

fn.1. end of line 5 ... Nisga'é (NOT Niska)..

p.81. last line of fn.26. ... while English has I-incorporation(see note 36).

p.82. fn.27. Note the contrast between Antipassive and other incorporating  
compounds.

p.88. end of fn.31. ... p.101-3.

## Pronunciation Considerations in ESL: Voice Quality Settings<sup>1</sup>

John H. Esling

University of Victoria

Voice quality settings are the various composite postures or long-term features of speech. They include the long-term position of the larynx, pharynx, jaw, tongue, velopharyngeal system and lips, as well as long-term laryngeal configurations reflected in the diverse phonation types described by Catford (1964). Voice quality may function linguistically, to characterize the particular language or dialect or social group to which a speaker belongs; or it may function paralinguistically to signal mood or emotion in conversational contexts; or it may function extralinguistically to characterize or identify the individual speaker. It is the voice quality settings that function linguistically that are of most interest to the ESL teacher, for they constitute a part of accent -- together with features of segmental phonology, rhythm, and intonation -- and serve as indicators of the speaker's regional or social affiliations.

An awareness of the voice quality settings -- the articulatory and phonatory postures -- that characterize and indexically mark a person's speech as a part of accent can be a valuable asset to all language teachers, including ESL teachers, and their students. Using this approach, students can practice

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<sup>1</sup> The author would like to thank Rita Wong (San Francisco State University) and Will Vroman (University of California, Santa Cruz) for their contribution to a workshop at the Fifteenth Annual TESOL Convention, Detroit, March 3-8, 1981, in which the concepts of this article were demonstrated.

and develop their pronunciation and intelligibility, improve their comprehension of a greater variety of English speakers, and become more aware of the image that they project when speaking English.

One aim of this article is to draw attention to the investigation of aspects of setting in several languages by Beatrice Honikman (1964). Her objective is to inform teachers and students of the fundamental differences in pronunciation between ESL students' native languages and English, which can facilitate the acquisition of a satisfactory accent in English. More recently, John Laver (1975, 1980) has proposed an articulatory phonetic terminology for describing voice quality. This thorough investigation of an aspect of phonetic description which is often neglected in phonological analysis and sociolinguistic studies is based largely on the teaching of David Abercrombie in the British phonetic tradition. As a descriptive system, it can be applied effectively in the process of diagnosing, illustrating, and studying voice quality settings in ESL students' native languages, and practicing settings in English as the target language.

Laver's approach reflects an alternative to the tendency to emphasize the differences between segments in the chain of speech. Instead, much of our effort in describing speech should concentrate on the similarities running through all the segments in the phonetic substance of the language we are describing.

In such an approach, individual segments are seen as being articulatorily related to other segments in that a particular articulatory feature could be abstracted from the chain of segments as a shared property of all or most of the segments. A recurrent feature of this sort constitutes in effect a tendency for the vocal apparatus to be subjected to a particular long-term muscular adjustment (Abercrombie 1967:93) or 'articulatory setting' (Honikman 1964:73). One example of such a setting would be a quasi-permanent

tendency to keep the lips in a rounded position throughout speech. Another would be a habitual tendency to keep the body of the tongue slightly retracted into the pharynx while speaking. Another would be the persistent choice of a characteristically 'whispery' mode of phonation. Settings give a background, auditory 'colouring' running through sequences of shorter-term segmental articulations (Laver 1980:2).

Examples of these voice quality features are available on a cassette tape (Laver 1980). They are illustrated for a variety of languages below.

The ESL teacher should be aware of a number of voice quality settings in languages other than English. Honikman (1964) discusses setting features for French, Russian, Indian and Pakistani languages, German, Turkish and Persian. She describes a typical setting of French as rounded, with tongue blade and fronted articulation, with slightly open jaw setting. German is also characterized as lip-rounded. Russian, in contrast, is close in jaw setting, with spread lips and fronted (palatal) articulation. Indian and Pakistani languages are described as having open lips and jaw, with retroflex articulation of the tongue. Turkish and Persian are cited as examples of languages where articulation is performed primarily by the tongue tip. These descriptions are restricted to features which can be identified both auditorily and visually. Only labial, mandibular, and front lingual settings are evaluated.

Using the descriptive framework proposed by Laver (1975, 1980), it is possible to elaborate on these descriptions, identifying features associated with articulations which are not necessarily visible. All descriptions in this article represent phonetic analyses by the author. In addition to *open rounding*,

French accents often have a habitual backing of the tongue -- *uvularization*, or *pharyngalization* in some cases. *Nasal voice*, *lowered larynx*, *breathy* or *whispery voice*, and often a relatively high pitch range are common features of French. Since some of these features are also found in a variety of accents of English, it may be that they pose no problem for the French speaker learning English. In fact, features such as lowered larynx and breathy or whispery phonation may be a positive asset, ranking relatively high in sociolinguistic prestige in English, and giving what is recognized as a French accent higher status among foreign accents in English.

German accents, because of their historical proximity to English both since Anglo-Saxon times and in North American colonial development, may also share many of the setting features found in dialects of English. Therefore, lip rounding may be one of the few noticeable differences between German and English settings, although accents of Durham or Northumberland in the north of England also have this feature in common with German. Dialects of German also vary considerably, but characteristic features often include *uvularization* and combinations of degrees of *raised larynx* and *faucal constriction* in many northern accents, or *lowered larynx* and *expanded pharynx* in many southern accents. As in the case of French, these settings may carry varying degrees of prestige in an English-speaking community, presumably improving the image of the speaker in areas where the same features are found in familiar, socially prestigious varieties of English. Extreme open rounding, fronted, *palato-alveolarized* tongue position, and *whispery creaky voice* in Norwegian or Swedish are another example of this. Only extreme rounding is uncharacteristic of English taught in ESL classes, whereas a *palatalized* or palato-

alveolarized tongue setting and whispery creaky phonation are common, and even prestigious in some varieties of English, according to sociolinguistic studies of Norwich (Trudgill 1974) and Edinburgh (Esling 1978b).

Russian accents, in contrast, often combine the features mentioned above, *close jaw*, *spread lips*, and palatalized tongue position, with faucal constriction -- tightening of the upper pharynx. If this setting is unfamiliar to English speakers, it may prove an obstacle to intelligibility or to social interaction.

Any individual feature which figures prominently in the setting of a foreign language but which does not occur commonly in English is a potential obstacle to intelligibility or social favour. Examples of accents which illustrate characteristic features include: extreme *retroflexion* and *open jaw* in some accents of India; close jaw, nasal voice, uvularization, and tongue *blade articulation* in Chinese; extreme uvularization in Hebrew and some dialects of Arabic; lowered larynx, faucal constriction and uvularization, with labial spreading in Japanese; and *tip articulation*, nasal voice, and breathy voice in Persian.

The voice quality features used in these descriptions are adapted from Laver (1980:158-161,165) and listed below.

#### Supralaryngeal voice quality settings

labial	open rounding
	close rounding
	spread lips
mandibular	open jaw position
	close jaw position
	protruded jaw



lingual	tip articulation
tip/blade	blade articulation
	retroflex articulation
lingual	dentalized
tongue body	alveolarized
	palato-alveolarized
	palatalized
	velarized
	uvularized
	pharyngalized
	laryngo-pharyngalized
faucal	faucal constriction
pharyngeal	pharyngeal constriction
velo-pharyngeal	nasal
	denasal
longitudinal	labial protrusion
	labiodentalized
	raised larynx
	lowered larynx

#### Laryngeal voice quality settings

simple phonation types	modal voice
	falsetto
	whisper
	creak
compound phonation types	whispery voice
	creaky voice
	breathy voice
	harsh voice

Teaching pronunciation is an important part of any ESL teacher's

program. A teacher's awareness of differences in voice quality and an ability to present features of pronunciation in terms of the long-term configurations of the vocal tract musculature can be economical for learning and beneficial to the students' performance in spoken English. Students benefit (a) in their ability to communicate in English and (b) in the realization of the personality or image that they project when they converse in English. Teachers, for their part, are better able (c) to understand students' pronunciation difficulties and (d) to provide concrete tools helpful in improving pronunciation performance.

The most important benefit for the ESL student who acquires an awareness of voice quality settings in English is improved spoken communication. A number of segmental pronunciation difficulties may all result from the learner's inability to grasp the generalization that a particular setting -- or long-term configuration -- represents. The vowel and consonant phonemes of a language share features which can be taken together to constitute the habitual articulatory posture of that language. If the voice quality of the learner's native language differs from the setting normally found in the target language, interference will necessarily be long-term and the intelligibility of individual vowels and consonants may be reduced. It is not yet clear how great a role voice quality settings play in comprehension or intelligibility, but we can assume that if multiple accent characteristics are made to sound closer to a native pronunciation of the language (over the entire period that the individual is speaking in the case of settings), the speaker's intelligibility can be expected to improve.

The second major benefit of practice with voice quality settings

is to improve the image that students project when they speak English. Settings have been shown to differentiate individuals according to social background (Trudgill 1974:190; Esling 1978a, 1978b). ESL learners can find it helpful and of general interest to be presented with setting features that reflect the range of social status in an English-speaking community. Since the social background, and even notions of the intelligence or ability of the individual are communicated to some extent through voice quality, attention drawn to these long-term aspects of pronunciation can be revealing, and result in progress for many students.

Teachers will find the concept of settings helpful in recognizing what is causing many students' pronunciation problems. Several vowels and consonants, for example, could all be difficult because of one or two features of voice quality which are very unlike English. Attention to a single higher-level feature may account for a number of collective difficulties encountered with lower-level segmental features. For example, in learning French, it is helpful to keep the lips rounded and tense throughout speech. For a learner of French who has difficulty articulating the individual segments /y/, /ø/ and /œ/, it may be more efficient to concentrate on a habitually rounded setting than to ponder the individual segments as they occur. One might also discover in this process that the /i/ of much colloquial French is often more rounded than an /i/ of English as a result of the roundedness of the setting.

Finally, although students may be aware that their pronunciation differs from the target phonology presented to them, they may be unable to identify the reason for this. Here, a teacher's awareness of voice quality can help identify a formerly unrecognized

or unconscious element of a student's speech. Presenting components of common or preferred voice quality settings in English provides the student with the necessary model to practice (and to listen for) to improve performance in spoken English.

A baby's earliest vocalizations begin to illustrate some of the characteristics, particularly features of voice quality, that will distinguish that individual as an individual. This is evident from the ability of mothers to recognize their own infants' cries (Murry et al 1975, 1977). Such voice quality features are idiosyncractic or personal indices. As units of linguistic contrast are acquired -- a segmental system of vowels and consonants, and voice dynamics features including intonation and rhythm -- the baby is also learning the higher-level linguistic features of voice quality that set off the baby's family and neighbours' families from other dialect groups. These features function as regional and social indices, or indicators in Labov's terminology. The child will also learn contrastive paralinguistic uses of voice quality settings. It is not well documented whether these settings are acquired before, after, or at the same time as minimally distinctive phonological contrasts, but it seems reasonable to assume that by the time the rudiments of the local phonology are mastered by the child, the settings characteristic of the local community are also present. Esling (1978b) has shown that 8-year-olds possess most of the voice quality setting features of adults in the community.

It may be that there is a mutual relationship in the acquisition of setting features and segmental features in that the long-term setting provides the background posture required for the accurate rendering of the segments in the language. Linguistic contrast between phonemes reflects the sometimes small

number of features which distinguish one phoneme from another, while at a slightly higher level of analysis it is the sameness or continuity of the phonetic substance throughout the string of phonemes in speech which defines the particular setting. To a large extent, voice quality settings signal membership of the larger group -- the local region or city or country, or social class.

This leads us to two important points about second language learning and instruction. The first is that voice quality setting features, perhaps because they are associated largely with individual speaker recognition or paralinguistic emotional colouring, may be unrecognized in the extent to which they signal regional or social information. Such distinctions would be particularly difficult for a foreign learner of the language to recognize, lacking the opportunity or ability to observe the extent of distribution of the phenomenon. Segmental features may be more apparently different in a target language from those of the student's native language, while setting features may be harder to recognize as having linguistic significance in the target language. This may cause learning problems for the ESL student. Whereas the child acquires setting and segmental features as a mutually combined system, the foreign learner may impose the new phonemes of English on the old background posture of a non-English, and perhaps inappropriate, voice quality setting. As a result, the identity of segmental contrasts may be obscured or masked by the old posture, and the student's English may often be unintelligible.

The second important point is that the ESL student may not recognize the difference in acceptability between various settings in English, with their contrasting social or regional implications.



The student's own native setting may contain features which, without the speaker's knowing it, evoke an unfavourable response from English speakers. In cases such as these, it should be possible for the ESL instructor to introduce setting features of English which would be more familiar to a greater number of hearers. Practicing English setting features should also provide the background vocal posture necessary for more fluent articulation of the phonology of English.

It is difficult to speak of learning pronunciation as if only one setting were used by all native speakers of the language. All languages have regional and social dialects with distinct settings that function as indicators. Beyond this level of generalization, there is still a considerable amount of individual variation among native speakers. This diversity is characteristic of English, although a combination of setting features common to a wide variety of American English speakers can be identified and presented to ESL students in the United States in the same way that the distinctive segments -- the vowels and consonants of a representative variety of American English -- are presented for improving pronunciation.

First, it will be useful to review some of the different voice quality settings that characterize dialects of English. These include: (1) nasal voice, close jaw and creaky voice; where a quasi-permanent nasality, habitually close position of the jaw, and constant or intermittent creaky, or very low-pitched, phonation combine to produce a voice quality characteristic of the accents of many British speakers; (2) velarized tongue body position; which may be thought of as a characteristic of Liverpool speech, or other parts of Lancashire, where the tongue assumes a velarized position throughout the whole of a person's speech; (3) uvularized

tongue body position and lowered larynx; characteristic of many Yorkshire accents, where the tongue is held further back in the mouth than in much Lancashire speech, and the larynx is kept slightly lower; (4) protruded jaw and harsh voice; which characterize the mandibular setting and phonation type of vernacular Edinburgh dialect; (5) breathy voice and nasal voice; characteristic of Glasgow, where phonation is typically breathier than in other varieties of Scots, and the voice is nasalized throughout; (6) retroflex articulation and spread lips; found in accents of Northern Ireland, where the tongue tip is often retroflexed slightly and the lips are spread, that is, the space between the lips is expanded horizontally, and often vertically as well.

What kind of setting, therefore, are we going to present to ESL students as a model? It should first be remembered that we are not referring to a prescriptive production model, but rather an abstract model made up of a variety of potential components. The purpose of such a model or illustration is sensitization -- to stimulate the students' awareness of the variety of voice quality settings that exist among the languages represented in the classroom, that are found in the local community, and that students might learn to evaluate as they experience and observe more of English-speaking society.

One effective method of sensitizing ESL students to their own and each other's native voice qualities is to ask students to prepare a short phrase from everyday conversation, an announcement, or a tongue-twister to produce in their native language to the rest of the class. Even with only one or two representatives of each language, a linguistically heterogeneous class can yield noticeable differences. Particularly salient

voice quality features can usually be assumed, provisionally, to be linguistically motivated, and can be contrasted from language to language. Students quickly learn that voice quality is not only individual, but also a part of one's accent in a language. Rapid presentation also tends to make the students approximate the average setting of their language.

Another technique for building awareness of voice quality in pronunciation is for students to observe and make notes of the settings of various personalities that they see on television. Certain programs might reflect a variety of regional or social dialects in English, whereas national newscasts might present a model which students wish to imitate. Whether or not imitation is used as a technique, it should be pointed out to students that there are voice quality settings which one adopts in increasingly formal or prestigious varieties of English. The features of a socially higher valued setting in English may or may not correspond to the voice quality features that students bring from their native languages. If not, the difference may contribute, along with differences in rhythm, intonation, and segmental phonology, to low intelligibility or unfavourable social judgements against the speaker. It is important for these students to become aware of voice quality and how to observe and recognize different settings. They should also be presented with a model containing salient features which are likely to occur in the pronunciations of English which they are accustomed to hearing.

In the United States, for example, a broad model of voice quality setting might include the following features:

- (1) spread lips
- (2) open jaw
- (3) palatalized tongue body position

- (4) retroflex articulation
- (5) nasal voice
- (6) lowered larynx
- (7) creaky voice

Not all dialect groups will share the same features, and some may even be opposite, but settings that combine some or all of these features are very common, and represent articulatory habits that students can easily observe and learn to recognize.

Spreadness of the lips is common in many dialects of English. Students with excessive rounding at inappropriate moments, for example during /s/ or /l/ which are normally unrounded, can practice smiling slightly as they speak. Slightly rounded segments such as /ʃ/ or /r/ must then be thought of as the marked case where a slight labial adjustment is introduced. Openness is common in American English but not, according to Honikman (1964:75), in British English. The stereotype that Americans speak as though chewing gum has its origins in this setting feature. Accents in many American television programs visually reinforce both spreading and openness.

Palatalization -- fronted and raised tongue body position -- can be illustrated by frequent vowel raising in English, for example in the word *yeah* which may be realized as [jæ:], [jeə], or [jɪẽẽ]. Retroflexion of the tongue tip, as in the example of Irish English, can also be identified in West Country or south coast dialects of England, and characterizes rhotic varieties of American English. Nasalization as a voice quality setting is common in much American or British English.

Lowering of the larynx, giving the voice a deeper or hollower sound, often characterizes national political figures or news announcers, where the degree of prestige of the setting

can be assumed to be high. This might be an unusual feature in a corresponding British or French context. Creaky phonation, or a low pitch range, is often present in similar American contexts. Neither feature is necessarily confined exclusively to males.

In conclusion, it is desirable to make ESL students aware of the voice quality settings that characterize their own languages, as well as to present voice quality characteristics which they can use as a model of pronunciation in English. Such models can be referred to analytically to identify the settings of speakers of English whom students hear and observe, or for sensitization within a model of an accent of English which is easy to recognize and to practice. Voice quality comprises the constant background of settings that define both (1) the voice of the individual and (2) the accent of the individual's language variety. While the former are personal, the latter are language-specific and should be described and taught within the pronunciation component of the ESL curriculum.

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Etymological Problems in the Lexicon of Chinook Jargon:

Some Proposed Solutions

Part II: Words of Non-French Origin

Barbara P. Harris

University of Victoria

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Before proceeding with the remaining "mystery words" of Chinook Jargon, I should like to return briefly to a few of the items investigated in Part I of this paper.

Dr. John Hewson of the Memorial University of Newfoundland has kindly sent me the following suggestions:

1) referring to *clef*, *balle*, and *main* he says, "... it is quite feasible that it was the plural form that was borrowed, and the *lekleh* represents *les clefs*. Several of the borrowings in Micmac are of this kind ..." <sup>1</sup> This explanation fits the French/Chinook vowel correspondence [e]/[i]~[ɪ] (see Appendix II) perfectly for *lekleh* [liklɪ] and *lebal* [lɪbál]; the plural article *les* also appears in Jargon as [lɛ]~[ɪ] in *lezep* [lɛzɛp] ~ *lesap* [lɪsap] < *les oeufs* (eggs). However, the reflex of the masculine singular article *le* is also, and almost invariably, [ɪ], while the pronunciation given for *lemah* is [lɛma]. This could again be a case of tense/lax variation [e]~[ɛ], but there are other examples of the feminine singular article *la* turning up as [lɛ] in Jargon (again, see Appendix II). Could it be the case that the original lexicographers had difficulty distinguishing

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<sup>1</sup>Personal communication (letter), December 7, 1981.

the non-low front vowels [i ~ ɪ ~ e ~ ε] (there was a good deal of variation in spoken Chinook Jargon) and were inconsistent in their transcriptions as a result (not to mention unsure of the genders of French nouns)?

2) "*lasanjel* looks to me, given Québec assibilation of dentals before high front vowels, as probably from *la ceinture*, which would explain both the /j/ and the /l/.<sup>2</sup> This etymon certainly fits the phonological correspondences much better than either Gibbs' (apparently) non-existent *cingle*, or the word he probably was referring to, *sangle* — in fact, it fits perfectly.

3) *lepishemo*. Dr. Hewson traces this back to Proto-Algonkian \**axphišimoweni* 'mattress' > Cree *aspisimowin* 'pillow, bed' and Ojibway *appiššimowin* 'mattress', whence CF *apichimon* and CE *appishimon* 'horse blanket'<sup>3</sup> (at which last point I blush with embarrassment at not having seen the connection myself). He goes on to say, "... the *Glossaire* indicates that the word is *acadien*." This fits rather nicely with our other apparently Acadian derivative, *lekylé* 'piebald horse'; it requires no great feat of imagination to envisage "un acadien errant" making his way towards the Pacific Coast and acquiring *en route* a black and white pony with a colourful saddle blanket on its back!

I am also indebted to Emmanuel Hériqué, a graduate student from Nancy, for a possible (and less fanciful) etymology for

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<sup>2</sup>Hewson, *loc. cit.*

<sup>3</sup>Personal communication (letter), December 23, 1981

*lagwin*. He suggests *l'égoine*<sup>4</sup>; Belisle gives the alternate spelling *égohine* and defines it as "Petite scie à main, qu'au Canada on appelle passe-partout" [*italics mine*]. If, as this would seem to imply, *égoine* is not in common use in Canadian French, then it is not surprising to find that few Canadian dictionaries have an entry for it. The *Dictionnaire Canadien* has no entry in the French-English section, but offers *égoine* as a gloss for *handsaw* in the English-French part. The entry in the *Glossaire* reads in its entirety:

egouine (egwin) // Egohine

which is not particularly helpful except for the pronunciation; but this should be reflected in Jargon as \*[ligwin] or \*[lɛgwin] not the given [lagwin]. If, however, *l'égoine* is not an everyday word in French Canada, there may have been confusion with or interference from *la gouine* (see Part I) in the derivation of *lagwin*. The sexual connotation is even more explicit in the current expression *jouer de l'égouine*, a euphemism for 'masturbate'.<sup>5</sup> Neither Dionne nor Juneau list any of the three variants *égoine*, *égouine*, or *égohine*.

I am most grateful to Dr. Hewson and to M. Hérique for their valuable suggestions. There remain to be dealt with a dozen or so words which may or may not be attributable to some definite source, and a few whose origin is still lost in the mists of linguistic history. For the suggested Nootkan etymons, I am

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<sup>4</sup>Personal communication.

<sup>5</sup>Léandre Bergeron, *Dictionnaire de la langue québécoise* (Montreal: VLB éditeur, 1980)

indebted to Chief John Angus Thomas, a native speaker of Nitinaht,<sup>6</sup> who also provided the transcriptions; he also provided information about two of the apparently onomatopoeic items.

## 2.0 WORDS OF APPARENT NOOTKAN ORIGIN

The following items appear to be traceable to Nootkan origins. The proposed etymons given here are chiefly from Nitinaht.

### 2.1 *kapsula* [kəpswóla] 'to steal'

Gibbs and Shaw make no comment. Mr. Thomas cites a Nitinaht word [kəpšɪʔ] 'take something away from someone' as a probable etymon.

### 2.2 *kehwa* [kéwa]? 'because'.

Gibbs says, 'Not in common use.'

Shaw does not give it at all. The usual Jargon word for 'because' is *kahwa* [káwa ~ kwékwe]. Might *kehwa* not simply be a variant form, especially in view of the apparent tendency of Jargon speakers to fricativize velar stops in medial position?

### 2.3 *klahowya* [klahóuja] 'the ordinary salutation at meeting or parting.'

This probably most familiar of all Chinook Jargon words has suffered from extraordinary folk etymologizing. Several of the early lexicographers, including Gibbs, related it to a Chinook word *klahowyum* (one of the thirteen spellings given by Shaw —

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<sup>6</sup>Mr. Thomas also speaks a dialect of Chinook Jargon, learned from his grandfather and his mother who were and are fluent speakers.



he says there are many others) 'poor, miserable, wretched'. Gibbs remarks (with overwhelming ethnocentricity), 'The salutation above given [i.e. *klahowya*] probably originated in some whining reply to the first whites ...'. A more amusing if equally ethnocentric etymology is the one that tells the story of Lewis and Clark being greeted on their first arrival at a native settlement on the Columbia River with the cry 'Clark, how are ya?', which came out in the Indians' English as 'Klahowya?'. Just how these hospitable natives knew who Clark was and were able to greet him in their own variety of English is never explained.<sup>7</sup> Mr. Thomas feels sure that the greeting in fact is derived from a Nootka word, [ʔaχawʔak] in Nitinaht and [ʔaɦu.ʔɦak] in Nootka, meaning 'have you just arrived on the beach?'

#### 2.4 *mistchimas* [mɪsʧɪmas]? 'a slave'.

Gibbs says, 'Dr. Scouler gives this word as Nootka and Columbian. Mr. Hale makes it Chinook. It is certainly, however, neither Chinook nor Chehalis; and Jewitt gives *kakoelth* as Nootka, while I find the Makah word *kotlo* and the Nittinat [sic] *kotl*.' Palmer (1847) cites *elítah* for 'slave' in the area of 'the middle and lower divisions of Oregon', as does Winthrop (1863). Mr. Thomas notes a Nitinaht word [masʧim] meaning 'slave', which would seem a reasonable possibility as the etymon, if the final syllable can be accounted for.

#### 2.5 *nanitsch* [nə́nɪʧ] 'to see, look for, seek'.

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<sup>7</sup>This story is about on a par with that which attributes the origin of *Canada* to the French-Canadian settlers' resentment of the Intendant's having rationed their beer, whereupon they chanted continuously outside his house 'Can a day! Can a day!' (in English!).

Gibbs says (again), 'The word is certainly neither Chinook nor Chehalis. Dr. Scouler gives *nananitch* as Nootka and Columbian. It is possibly the former.' Shaw gives the derivation as '(Nootka, - *nananitch*. -Eels)'. Mr. Thomas apparently has vindicated Gibbs and Eels; he has given me [nana·č] 'looking at, inspecting', from Nitinaht.

2.6 *pohih* [póhɪ]? or *pitchih* [píčɪ]? 'thin in dimension'.

Gibbs notes this word as 'not in common use', and Shaw lists it only in his 'Supplemental Vocabulary'. Neither suggests an etymon. Mr. Thomas cites a Nitinaht word [pukʷ] 'thin' from which he feels *pohih* may be derived.

2.7 *tshike* [čik]? [čaik]? 'directly, soon'.

Gibbs and Shaw, quoting Hale, say 'Not Jargon' (but it was obviously used by Jargon speakers, as neither of them remarks to the contrary as they did with item 2.6). Mr. Thomas gives a Nitinaht word [či·k] having the same meaning.

### 3.0 WORDS OF ONOMATOPOEIC ORIGIN

3.1 *hum* [hʌm] 'stink, smell'.

Gibbs and Shaw say simply 'an invented word'. John Thomas says that it is used in Nitinaht as a euphemism for defecation or excrement, but there is no way of knowing which way the borrowing went, or if it is a borrowing. *Hum* has existed in British (and to some extent Canadian) English slang for many years with the same meaning as it has in Jargon<sup>8</sup>; however, the *Shorter Oxford* dates this usage

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<sup>8</sup>A friend of mine coined (I believe) the expression *anti-hum* for 'deodorant'; it is now the common term used by both our families. Has anyone else ever heard or used it?

to 1927, possibly earlier (enough earlier to have been in sailors' jargon?). *American Heritage* defines *hum(m)* as among other things, an interjection 'indicating surprise or displeasure'; this is usually articulated something like [ʔmmʔ] (spelled *mmph* in the comic strips), which suggests a kind of universal imitative origin for Jargon *hum*.

### 3.2 *muckamuck* [mʌkʌmʌk] 'to eat, to bite, food'.

Gibbs says it is neither Chinook nor Chehalis, and that 'Mr. Anderson considers it an invented word.' So does Mr. Thomas, who says that it represents smacking lips (cf. the English nursery word *numnum*, which can also be used as a noun, as in 'Time for numnums!').

### 3.3 *snass* [snæs] 'rain' ('snow' is *cole snass*, i.e., cold rain).

This is one of the complete mystery words of Chinook Jargon, and but for one thing, should belong in the next section of this paper. Gibbs and Shaw both state 'The word is ...<sup>9</sup> perhaps manufactured'. John Thomas can suggest nothing from Nootka or Nitinaht. However, one of my students who is blessed with an acute ear and a good imagination posits an onomatopoeic origin. In this land of rain forests, this seems as good an explanation as any — as I write, the rain is definitely *snassing* through the trees and shrubs outside the window.

## 4.0 UNSOLVED MYSTERIES

Although some of the remaining items have been given

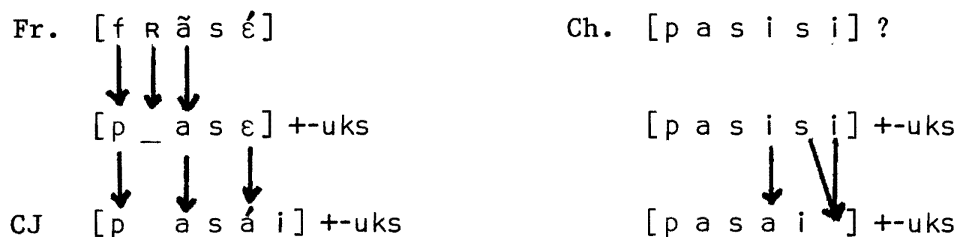
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<sup>9</sup>The reader must be as tired of reading 'neither Chinook nor Chehalis' as I am of writing it.

etymologies, there seems to be room for further investigation.

4.1 *pasiooks* [pasáiuks] (Winthrop gives the spelling *Pasaiooks*)  
'French, a Frenchman'.

Gibbs attributes a derivation from *français* to Hale, but he himself feels that the word is 'really derived from [Chinook] *pasisi*, ['blanket'] with the terminal *uks*, which is a plural form applied to living beings. Lewis and Clark ... give *Pashisheooks*, -clothmen, as the Chinook name for the whites, and this explanation was also furnished me by people of that tribe. *It has since been generally restricted to the French Canadians*' [italics mine]. (Winthrop gives the word for blanket as *pesispy* and Palmer lists it as *pos-seas*, either of which may be a local variant or a simple case of mishearing.) The fact of the word referring usually to French Canadians inclines me to lean towards the *français* derivation, especially since Englishmen were called *King Chautsh* < *King George* and Americans *Boston*. The phonetic correspondences for the proposed etymons work out as follows:



neither of which is completely satisfactory. But there exists yet another possibility, according to John Thomas, who tells me that he has always been told that the word was related to Nitinaht [p̥iʃukʷ] 'dark-complexioned, swarthy'. The phonology is fairly close:

Nit. [p̣ i ṣ̌ u ḳ ẉ]  
 ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓ ↓  
 [p a ṣ a ị u ḳ ṣ]

the main problem being the insertion of the diphthong [ai] (the first vowel, being unstressed, could well have been realized as [ʌ]). The semantic correspondence is also reasonable; compared to many white men (merchants, doctors, etc.) the French Canadian boatmen who spent most of their lives exposed to sun and wind must have indeed seemed swarthy, a complexion often reinforced by the addition of native and métis blood.

#### 4.2 *pelton* [pɛltʌn] 'a fool, deranged person'.

Two possible origins for this word are given by Shaw, both involving the surname of a man who had become mad while travelling or working in the territory; one is (Archibald) *Pelton* or *Felton* (occupation unknown), the other (first name unknown) *Filion* (a Hudson's Bay employee). The man apparently became sort of a legend in the area, and his name applied to anyone who acted in a foolish or outré manner. This at first looks like folk etymology at its most rampant, until one stops to consider, for example, *bigot*, *boycott*, and *pasteurize*. It is tempting to try to relate this item to French *fou* ~ *fol*, but there seems to be no justifiable reason for doing so; the only other possibility I can see is Fr. *félon* or Eng. *felon* 'one who acts contrary to the law', which by extension could come to mean 'contrary to convention'. I am not greatly attached to this explanation; it feels too much like grasping at straws. One can only hope that 'Archibald Pelton' did not suffer too long in his deranged state.

#### 4.3 *pitlilh*, *pithlil* [pɪtlɪl]? 'thick in consistency, as molasses'.



This word is a total mystery, as no etymon whatsoever seems to have been suggested, and Mr. Thomas can offer no assistance. The orthography would suggest that the etymon had at least one [ʔ] sound, pointing to an Amerindian origin. On purely semantic grounds, I would like to suggest *pitchy*, but the word-final stress of the Jargon word would seem to obviate that possibility. French *feutr  * [f  t  r  ] would give a satisfactory phonological result, but the semantics are hardly attractive; *feutr  * < *feutre* 'felt' means 'muffled' as in *   pas feutr  s* 'with muffled steps'. The etymon of this item must, at least for the time being, remain a large question mark.

#### 4.4 *solleks, sahleks* [s  l  ks] 'angry, anger, malice, etc.'.

There are no suggested etymons. The orthography would seem to indicate that the first vowel sound might equally well have been [  ] or [a]. If we also consider that the *-eks* may represent the same suffix as is said to exist in *pasiooks*, a number of possibilities present themselves for the stem, e.g., English *sore* [s  r], [sar] in some dialects. The older senses of the word are 'severe, hard, harsh' and the modern slang sense of 'angry' dates at least as far back as 1887, according to Wentworth and Flexner (1975) (the Jargon word for *sore* in its more usual sense of 'painful' is *sick*). Other possibilities are English *sullen* and *sulky*, but they pose phonological problems which must by now be evident to the reader. Another puzzle for etymologists to ponder.

#### 4.5 *wappatoo* [w  pato] 'potato'.

Gibbs, after once more eliminating Chinook and Chehalis, says that the word 'is everywhere in common use.' Shaw quotes Chamberlain: 'from Cree or Otcipwe' [sic]. The *Dictionary of Canadianisms on Historical Principles* derives it from Chinook

Jargon, an etymology which leaves us exactly where we started.

#### 4.6 Complete mysteries

There are two items remaining about which nothing whatsoever seems to be known, *halo* [hélo] 'none, absent' and *likpuhu* or *likpo* 'elder sister'. About the former, one can only say that it was a very commonly used word, and that a Chinook origin has apparently been eliminated. As to the latter, all I can offer is the Jargon word for 'elder brother' *kahpho* (Shaw's orthography) [kápo], which he says is from Chinook and which looks as if it might form the root of the item in question.

#### 5.0 SUMMARY

It is thus possible to divide the etymologically problematic words from Chinook Jargon into four main categories, those for which French derivations are posited, those apparently of Nootkan origin, imitative words, and as yet unsolved mysteries. Again, I should like to invite readers' comments on these items, especially those offering any further etymological possibilities that I may have overlooked or be unaware of.

Appendix I: Transcription of the Lord's Prayer in Chinook Jargon.<sup>10</sup>

[n(ə)saika papa ʔaksta məʔait kupa saxali  
*Nesika papa klaksta mitlite kopa saghalie,*

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<sup>10</sup>This transcription was provided by Lorna Lane, a student in the Department of Linguistics, University of Victoria. The interlining is the prayer as commonly written in Chinook Jargon. I have taken the liberty of changing some of the vowel symbols of the transcription so that it is consistent with that used in the body of the text.

ʔuʃ kupa n(ə)saika təmtəm maika nem  
*kloshe kopa nesika tuntum mika nem;*  
 ʔuʃ maika taii kupa kanawi talhəm  
*kloshe mika tyee kopa konaway tillicum;*  
 ʔuʃ maika təmtəm kupa iliʔi kakwa kupa saxali##  
*kloshe mika tuntum kopa illahie kahkwa kopa saghalie.*  
 paʔač kanawi san n(ə)saika makmak##(s)pus  
*Potlatch konaway sun nesika muckamuck. Spose*  
 n(ə)saika mamuk masáči wik maika haias salaks  
*nesika mamook masachie wake mika hyas solleks,*  
 pi (s)pus ʔaksta masáči kupa n(ə)saika wik n(ə)saika  
*pe sponse klaksta masuchie kopa nesika, wake nesika*  
 saləks kupa ʔaska##maš saia kupa n(ə)saika  
*solleks kopa klaska. Mahsh siah kopa nesika*  
 kanawi masači ## ʔuʃ kakwa.  
*konaway masachie. Kloshe kahkwa.*

(A very literal translation would be as follows:

Our father who dwells in above, beautiful in our hearts thy  
 name; good you [are] chief over all people; good thy will on earth  
 as in above. Give every day our food. If we do evil not thou  
 [be] very angry, and if anyone [does] evil to us, not we [be] angry  
 at them. Take far from us all evil. Good so.)

## Appendix II: Phonological Correspondences between French and Chinook Jargon

### A. Front vowels

#### 1. Fr. [i]

##### a. > CJ [i] in the final syllable of a word:

Fr. *carabine* [karabin] 'rifle' > CJ *calipeen* [kəlapín]

- b. > CJ [ɪ] elsewhere (and occasionally finally):  
Fr. *biscuit* [biskɥi] > CJ *lebiskwee* [lɪbɪskwi]
- c. > CJ [e] in one case from contamination with English:  
Fr. *le gris* [ləɡʁi] 'the grey one' > CJ *legley* [lɪɡlé] 'grey'
- 2. Fr. [ɣ]
  - a. > CJ [i] ~ [u]  
Fr. *charrue* [ʃaʁɥ] 'plough' > CJ *la shallee* [láʃali]  
*la shalloo* [láʃalu]
  - b. > CJ [o] if [ʀ] precedes in the French etymon:  
Fr. *ruban* [ʁybã] 'ribbon' > CJ *leloba* [lɪlɔba]
- 3. Fr. [e] > CJ [i] ~ [ɪ]:  
Fr. *clef* [kle] 'key' > CJ *lekleh* [likli]  
*courez* [kure] 'run!' 2nd plural imperative > *cooley* [kúli]
- 4. Fr. [ɛ]
  - a. > CJ [ɛ]:  
Fr. *cassette* [kaset] 'box' > CJ *lacaset* [lakasét]  
*graisse* [ɡʁɛs] 'grease' > CJ *lakles* [lagrés]
  - b. if Fr. [ɛ] is long, or if it is followed by [ʀ], the following shifts occur:
    - i. Fr. [ɛ:] > CJ [e]:  
Fr. *chaise* [ʃɛ:z] 'chair' > CJ *lashase* [laʃes]  
(This is the only example in Jargon, but the same thing happens in English where a *chaise longue* [ʃɛ:z lɔ̃g] has become a *chaise lounge* [ʃez launʃ].)
    - ii. Fr. [ɛʀ] > CJ [a]:  
Fr. *merci* [mɛʁsi] > CJ *mahsi* [mási]  
(Again the only example; the pronunciation of the vowel may well have been influenced by Canadian

French and the [ʀ] would disappear as the first element of a cluster.)

5. Fr. [ø] and [œ] > CJ [ɛ] ~ [a]:

Fr. *les oeufs* [lezœ:] 'eggs' > CJ *lezep* [lezép]

*lesap* [lɛsáp]

6. Fr. [ẽ] > CJ [a]:

Fr. *moulin* [mulẽ] 'mill' > CJ *moolɛ* [múla]

#### B. Non-front vowels

1. Fr. [a]

- a. > CJ [æ] frequently (but not invariably) if stressed:

Fr. *sac* [sak] 'bag' > CJ *lesak* [lɛsák]

Fr. *carabine* [karabin] 'rifle' > CJ *calipeen* [kælápɛn]

- b. > CJ [e] sometimes in the Jargon reflex of the French feminine definite article:<sup>11</sup>

Fr. *la hache* [laʔaʃ] 'hatchet' > CJ *lahash* [leháš]

*la main* [lamẽ] 'hand' > CJ *lema* [lɛma]

*la montagne* [lamɔ̃tɛn] 'mountain' > CJ *lamonti* [lɛmɔ̃nti]

- c. > CJ [ɔ] in two words only, presumably from contamination with English:

Fr. *balle* [bal] 'ball, bullet' > CJ *lebal* [lɛbɔl]

cf Eng. *ball* [bɔl]

*sauvage* [sovaʒ] 'wild, untamed' > CJ *siwash* [saiwɔʃ]

cf. Eng. *wash* [wɔʃ]

- d. > CJ [a]:

Fr. *capot* [kapo] 'coat' > CJ *capo* [kapó]

*bardeau* [bardɔ] 'shingle' > CJ *lebahdo* [lɛbádo]

2. ?Fr. [a] > CJ [ɔ]; there is only one example:

Fr. *diabla* [djabl] 'devil' > *leyaub* [lɛjɔb]

(There are ten other spellings for this, nine of them indicating a low back vowel.)

<sup>11</sup> If these had been borrowed with the plural article *les*, as Dr. Hewson suggests, they should have had [li] rather than [le] as the first syllable, unless one posits a single high front vowel /i/ with allophones [i] ~ [e]; in any case, why are these nouns all feminine?

## 3. Fr. [ǣ]

- a. > CJ [æn] if followed by a stop in the French etymon:

Fr. *chandelle* [ʃǣdɛl] 'candle' > CJ *lashandel* [laʃǣndɛl]

- b. > CJ [æ] if followed by a consonant other than a stop:

Fr. *planche* [plǣʃ] 'board' > CJ *laplash* [laplǣʃ]

- c. > CJ [a] in final position:

Fr. *dent* [dǣ] 'tooth' > CJ *letah* [lɛtá]

## 4. Fr. [u] &gt; CJ [u] ~ [ʊ]

Fr. *bouche* [buʃ] 'mouth' > CJ *laboos* [labus]*lapush* [lapuʃ]

## 5. Fr. [ɔ]

- a. > CJ [o] usually:

Fr. *cochon* [kɔʃɔ] 'pig' > *cosho* [kóʃo]Fr. *porte* [pɔrt] 'door' > *lapote* [lapót]

- b. > CJ [ɔ] in two words only:

Fr. *carotte* [karɔt] 'carrot' > *lacalat* [lakalót]Fr. *coq* [kɔk] 'cock' > CJ *lecock* [lɛkók]

## 6. Fr. [ɔ̃]

- a. > CJ [ɔn] if followed by a stop in the French etymon:

Fr. *montagne* [mɔ̃tɛn] 'mountain' > CJ *lamonti* [lamónti]

- b. > CJ [o] in final position:

Fr. *mouton* [mutɔ̃] 'sheep' > CJ *mooto* [lɛmúto]

(The one exception to this is CJ *leblau* [lɛblɔ] 'light haired etc.' < *le blond* [lɛblɔ̃], where there could be contamination from English *blonde* [blɒnd].)

## 7. Fr. [o] &gt; CJ [o]

Fr. *bardeau* [bardɔ] 'shingle' > CJ *lebahdo* [lɛbádo]

## C. Glides

## 1. Fr. [wa]. The CJ reflexes show great variation:

- a. > CJ [u]:

Fr. *doigt* [dwa] 'finger' > CJ *ledoo* [lɛdú]

- b. > CJ [e]:  
Fr. *droite* [dʁwat] 'right' > CJ *delate* [dɛlét]
- c. > CJ [we]:  
Fr. *soie* [swa] 'silk' > *lasway* [laswé]
- d. > CJ [i]:  
Fr. *avoine* [avwan] 'oats' > CJ *laween* [lawín]
- e. > CJ [oa]:  
Fr. *croix* [krwa] 'cross' > CJ *laclou* [laklóa]
- f. > CJ [wɔ]:  
Fr. *pois* [pwa] 'peas' > CJ *lepwan* [lɛpwɔ́]  
(This distribution of these needs to be worked out more carefully than I have had time to do so far.)

2. Fr. [j] > CJ [i]

Fr. *marier* [marje] 'marry' > CJ *malieh* [máliɛ]

3. Fr. [ɥ]

- a. > CJ [u] when the stress shifts onto it from the following vowel:

Fr. *hui-hui* [ʔɥi ʔɥi] 'a bargain, hasty exchange'  
> CJ *huy-huy* [húɪhɪ] 'barter, trade'

- b. > CJ [w]:

Fr. *biscuit* [biskɥi] > CJ *lebiskewie* [lɛbískwi]

- c. disappears:

Fr. *puis* [pɥi] 'then' > CJ *pe* [pi] 'and, but'

(This reduced form of *puis* is common to French-based Pidgins and Creoles as a whole.)

D. Consonants

- 1. Fr. [ʔ] > CJ [h]

Fr. *hache* [ʔaʃ] 'hatchet' > CJ *lahash* [laháʃ]

- 2. Fr. [f] > CJ [p]

Fr. *fourchette* [furʃet] 'fork' > *lapooshet* [lapuʃét]

## 3. Fr. [v] &gt; CJ [w]

Fr. *veste* [vest] 'jacket' > CJ *lawest* [lawest]Fr. *avoine* [avwan] 'oats' > CJ *laween* [lawin]

## 4. Fr. [ʃ]

a. &gt; CJ [ʃ] usually:

Fr. *cochon* [kɔʃɔ̃] 'pig' > CJ *cosho* [kóʃo]Fr. *bouche* [buʃ] 'mouth' > CJ *lapush* [lapuʃ]

b. &gt; CJ [s] occasionally:

Fr. *chapeau* [ʃapo] 'hat' > CJ *seahpo* [s'apo]Fr. *bouche* [buʃ] 'mouth' > CJ *laboos* [labus]

## 5. Fr. [ʒ]

a. &gt; CJ [ʃ]

Fr. *sauvage* [sovaʒ] 'wild' > CJ *siwash* [saiwoʃ] 'native'b. > CJ [ʒ]?  
This correspondence is suggested by the orthography of certain words, e.g., *lapiege* [lapieʒ]? from Fr. *piège* [pieʒ] 'trap', but the voiced affricate seems unlikely except in the mouths of native English speakers of Jargon.

## 6. Fr. [ʀ]

a. &gt; CJ [ɪ]

Fr. *prêtre* [pʀɛtʀ] 'priest' > CJ *leplet* [ɪɫɪɫɛt]  
'clergyman'

b. disappears if part of a medial or final consonant cluster, see example above, also:

Fr. *marteau* [mɑʀto] 'hammer' > CJ *lemahto* [ɪmáto]



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## Theme vs. Context

Joseph F. Kess

University of Victoria

Psycholinguistic research has often found that there are differences in the processual strategies employed in dealing with ambiguous sentence structures (for a complete review of this experimental paradigm, see Kess and Hoppe, 1981). Some early studies had even suggested that there might be a hierarchy of ordering in the processing of ambiguity at different linguistic levels in language, for example, the lexical, the surface structure, and the underlying structure levels. These findings revolve around the contrast made between ambiguous and unambiguous sentences, insofar as psycholinguistic differences have been reported for processing the two sentence types. The basic comprehension question comes down to a theoretical dispute between whether individuals process one meaning for a given ambiguous sentence (the single meaning approach) or compute both or multiple meanings of an ambiguous sentence (the double or multiple meaning approach), despite their being unaware of the ambiguity. The ultimate question, of course, is how are ambiguous sentences resolved? Given their absolute pervasiveness in the language and the relative ease which they are dealt with, the processes underlying this task must also be important components in explaining sentence comprehension in general.

The study of ambiguity has been a central issue in the formulation of generative linguistic theory, and has consequently been an area which serious psycholinguistic study has also focussed upon in the past two decades. However, the results have been to some degree equivocal in that a reading of the experimental evidence provides no easy answer as to whether ambiguous sentences make for differences in processing and comprehensional strategies. Many psycholinguistic studies have noted that sentences which are ambiguous will exhibit processing differences in a variety of tasks. For example, they have been said to differ from normal unambiguous

sentences in such tasks by usually taking longer to deal with or process in the manner prescribed by the experimental design. The implication that arises from such results is that ambiguous sentences are more difficult to deal with, and like negative sentences, this may be ascribed to the fact that they are inherently more complex in some cognitive sense.

Either way one looks at the question, it presents an interesting face. If ambiguity is not really a practical processing problem, why is it not? When considering the many possible readings that so many sentences can have, how do we manage to ignore all or most of the readings and finally decide on the correct one? This version, corresponding to the seemingly common-sense single-reading view seems intuitively correct, but what underlies such single-reading decisions is yet open to definition. Context is the obvious candidate, but we have yet to provide a full computation of what an exhaustive and exclusive context can always be counted on to be. On the other hand, if the counter-intuitive multiple-reading approach is correct, then there are likely to be obvious implications for this fact. We should find out what they are with due haste, though very little direct effort seems to have been expended in this direction to date. If more than one reading is processed, and this affects processing times or whatever, we wonder how, why, and whether ambiguity always makes for processing differences? Unlike negatives, which also seem to exhibit this feature of processing complexity, ambiguities do not exhibit overt markers; and the number of potential ambiguities is startling when one begins to look for them.

The question regarding ambiguity may be restated as follows: Is it the case that at some level of performance all possible readings of an ambiguous sentence are processed, one of which is finally selected at some point in the overall comprehension process? Or is

it the case that ambiguous sentences are treated exactly like unambiguous ones and that only one reading is ever computed for any given ambiguous sentence? The latter version leads one to expect that some contextual circumstance so severely constrains the possible readings of the sentence that only one is possible. If only one reading is possible, there should be no differences at all in the treatment of ambiguous sentences as opposed to unambiguous sentences.

There is, of course, a third possible model of ambiguity comprehension, one which places sentences in a larger discourse context. An interpretation is thus immediately given to a sentence, it being the most likely or most plausible one. That interpretation is then rejected only in those instances where some conflict occurs between the first choice interpretation and other information. Thus, though a single interpretation may be chosen which eventually turns out to be the wrong one, it is still the case that a single-reading interpretation is made. In such cases, the first interpretation is rejected and a processing search for the correct interpretation is set into motion for the next likely choice (see Kess and Hoppe, 1981, for a review of the variants of the ordered access hypothesis). This ordered approach notion not only provides some explanation for 'garden path' sentences, but also for our treatment of sentences for which no immediately germane theme is available. For an example of the former, Lashley's classic 'garden path' sentence (1951) Rapid/ raytIn/ with his uninjured hand saved from loss the contents of the capsized canoe is typical of one reading being seized upon, only to be contradicted backwards by the extraction of a following theme. The re-tracing of syntactic steps is apparent here and suggests a way of resolving the comprehension of somewhat more common ambiguous sentences by forward theme advancement in discourse.

This paper suggests that when potentially ambiguous sentences

are embedded in larger discourse units with logically germane theme structures, they are immediately assigned a single reading and do not differ from other sentences in the comprehension stage. Very simply, thematic constraints must operate in discourse processing in such a way as to make the comprehension of ambiguous sentences parallel to unambiguous sentences.

To a certain degree, the often equivocal experimental results we have seen are thus a function of the experimental design. Like much earlier linguistic research, many psycholinguistic investigations into ambiguity typically considered processual dimensions of sentences which appeared in complete or semi-isolation. Those which have employed context are few and the context minimal; most importantly, the context was typically not the continuation of a recognizable thematic organization. Logical and thus comprehensional constraints are imposed by thematic structures in the longer well-integrated discourse sequence. According to Van Dijk's (1977) analysis of the pragmatics of discourse, such macro-structures have two major cognitive functions, that of reducing and integrating information as well as organizing it. The application of the notion of thematic structures to the problem of ambiguity resolution offers an explanation of how sentences with multiple readings are dealt with in processing larger well-integrated sequences. Psycholinguistic discussions to date have dealt with the form of disambiguation and not the format; the notion of macro-structures at the higher processing levels answers the way in which disambiguation must proceed for many ambiguous sentences. The model is analogous to visual perception in Gestalt terms, where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. In this case, the whole is provided by the organizing gestalt of the discourse theme or themes, so that only one interpretation is allowed, with one reading settled upon

immediately. This interpretation explains why sentences which are in fact ambiguous are rarely perceived to be ambiguous in running discourse. Many grammatical or semantic possibilities are not even considered, having been ruled out by their failure to logically relate to a theme.

Attention must be paid to the relevance of context within larger units of discourse. But simply thinking of preceding verbiage as sufficient context is not enough -- *theme* is the key word, not *context*. Typically, experiments with context have offered a single preceding word or possibly even an entire sentence as context. Upon closer examination however, even such sentential contexts can be seen to break down into a single word or two which is potentially relevant to the single reading in question. Now it is true that one can tune ambiguous sentences to different degrees of bias by manipulating the semantic variables, and some illustration of this is even provided in this paper. It is not the case, however, that an ambiguous sentence has two equally probable meanings. There may be some value to this experimental heuristic when dealing with sentences in isolation, but even here hearer-readers seem to employ an ordered access approach. Even if ambiguous information were relegated to the working memory with all of the readings intact and possible until decision point, it is likely that such information is presented to the working memory in an efficient heirarchically-ranked ordered sequence, depending on frequency and plausibility considerations. This must take place even in the absence of context, since there is a generally ordered ranking in terms of likelihood variables for syntactic and semantic items.

As soon as sentences appear in discourse context, however, the illusion quickly disappears. Here one can again make use of Van Dijk's



(1977) eminently sensible suggestion that discourse in language consists of sequences of sentences, the properties of which are logically and informationally accounted for only in reference to those preceding sentences of which the individual token is but a continuance. This view casts individual sentences in the role of tiles in a mosaic, the complete picture of which is seen only by looking at the totality of the piece, and which in turn gives each individual tile its particular meaningfulness. The view of the sentence as the basic or optimum unit for description is often limiting in the psycholinguistic analysis of production and comprehension, for sentence processing is often satisfied only in reference to a larger set of abstract themes within the text. Such theme considerations aid the cognitive tasks of organizing the input for both processing and memory storage for eventual retrieval. The question then becomes not so much whether a given sentence in discourse is ambiguous or not, but whether the thematic proposition can be clearly stated in respect to the sentence. The potentially ambiguous sentence then is processed as a logical consequence or implication of that theme or subtheme. Note that one can still have ambiguity in the sentence despite the presence of large amounts of so-called context. The sentence Many New Yorkers would never miss the ballet remains ambiguous despite being placed after a paragraph of generally related prose. The following paragraph (1) offers an example of this.

(1) People who live outside of New York tend to think that the city has a strong feeling for culture. Many think that of all places in North America the arts occupy a special niche there. Naturally, the performers are keen to keep this spirit alive. How wonderful it would be for a dancer

to always have an appreciative audience, an assured and sympathetic following. Knowledgeable ballet enthusiasts know the arts scene there. Many New Yorkers would never miss the ballet.

If the paragraph is changed by one sentence, the ambiguity disappears because the logical sequencing of the discourse only allows the sentence to be taken as an extension of the new preceding counter-point sentence The truth, however, is very different indeed. In addition, though the preceding paragraph could be otherwise kept the same, one could also set the bias further by slightly altering the third sentence, substituting ... certainly wish that the myth were true for ... are keen to keep this spirit alive. Note the differences effected in paragraph (2) by these changes.

(2) People who live outside New York tend to think that the city has a strong feeling for culture. Many think that of all places in North America the arts occupy a special niche there. Naturally, the performers wish that the myth were true. How wonderful it would be for a dancer to always have an appreciative audience, an assured and sympathetic following. The truth, however, is very different indeed. Many New Yorkers would never miss the ballet.

That this can also occur in surface and underlying ambiguity is obvious, as paragraph (3) exemplifies, for the surface structure ambiguity The old men and women did not cooperate. It could be possible, of course, that two readings are processed when the discourse theme is neutral to the intended reading of the sentence, but from the point of view of processual parsimony it is likely that even here a single reading is selected.

(3) Planning the social events for a hospital ward can be difficult. At Christmas time we always arrange at least one get-together party, a social when we decorate the tree, and a festive Christmas dinner. We try to get the patients into the Christmas spirit by asking everyone to give a present to someone else in the home. Unfortunately, last year the whole thing was a failure from beginning to end. The old men and women did not cooperate.

The point to be made, of course, is that ambiguity is not resolved a priori at the level of context, simply by the ambiguous sentence being surrounded by sentences. Notice that in paragraphs (1) and (3) the mere fact of having a context does not necessarily serve to completely disambiguate the sentence, despite its being 70 to 80 words long and even being generally related. Resolution depends upon the accessibility of an unambiguously stated, logically relevant discourse theme or subtheme. However, it may also be the case that even when sufficient information to make the correct inferences is present, the expectation ratio may not be sufficiently high to always produce the appropriate reading. Take paragraph (4) as an example.

(4) The boat was sinking fast. With insufficient life-jackets to go around, the captain had to decide who should use the available life-saving equipment. He decided that the crew, the children, and the young men should have first priority. Not surprisingly, this decision caused much tension and dissension among the passengers. Fights and arguments broke out everywhere as the life-jackets were being distributed. There was chaos everywhere. The old men and women did not cooperate.

Here there are two possible readings: The elderly people did not cooperate and The elderly men and the women did not cooperate.

It is still possible for some hearer-readers to have the first reading instead of the second, through having only incompletely processed all the incoming information. Very simply, the dominant themes of the boat sinking and chaos reigning relegate the information relevant to our ambiguity to a fairly minor status in our discourse. It is then the potential ambiguity of the sentence, coupled with the low-level status of the relevant information, which may allow a reading which is incorrect in the strict sense. Had the relevant information been moved up to dominant theme status, however, it is not likely that the first reading would occur.

What this paper does claim, then, is that for discourse sequences in which there is an easily recognizable and relevant dominant theme the possibility of any second reading is diminished to the point of processing it just as any other single-reading sentence. In these instances, a dominant theme is seen as overriding all aspects of the discourse, organizing the contribution of each sentence to the theme itself. Furthermore, other expectations deriving from frequency of appearance, past experience and general world knowledge, and connotative bias are not forceful enough to intrude into the comprehension stage. In these instances, ambiguous sentences are given but a single reading. One can contrast the preceding failure to clearly disambiguate with the following sentences which are readily relegated to discourse themes allowing only one reading of the sentence. Examples are offered in each of the areas of lexical (paragraphs 5 and 6), surface structure (paragraphs 7 and 8), and underlying structural (paragraphs 9 and 10) ambiguity. Themes are listed after the paragraph in parentheses.

(5) When the Broadmead tract was opened to development, many

local people wanted to restrict housing to two-acre holdings. The real estate companies, on the other hand, wanted to see large-scale development in the area with four houses built per acre. The real estate salesman was delighted when city council approved the new zoning bylaw calling for building sites of no more than 4000 square feet. The salesman wanted lots of that size.

Themes: (Real estate development occurred.)  
(Building sites were of a certain size.)

(6) The Pendleton sweaters in size 40 had sold out in three days and the new shipment from the factory included only three in that size. It was too late to order any more in; the factory had already started to produce summer stock. The salesman called all the other clothing stores to locate as much stock as he could for the many eager customers he had waiting. The salesman wanted lots of that size.

Themes: (Sweaters of a certain size were a popular sales item.)  
(The salesman was searching for more.)

(7) Whatever the reason, poor Mayor Jones had obviously grown enormous during his ten years in office. He had grown so gross that his wife began to be embarrassed by his size. When the town's new swimming pool was opened, the mayor and his wife were asked to take the first dip. Mrs. Jones thought about it, and about her husband's size. Then she refused to go. The stout mayor's wife stayed home.

Themes: (The mayor was fat.)

(The wife was embarrassed.)

(8) When her husband was elected mayor, Mrs. Jones decided that she would have to lose weight. She wanted to go to the inaugural ball in a beautiful dress, but she had grown so fat that she couldn't find a gown to fit her. She dieted and exercised, but to no avail. As soon as she lost a pound she would gain two. The night of the ball arrived. The stout mayor's wife stayed home.

Themes: (The wife was fat.)

(The wife stayed home.)

(9) In twenty-five years as an architect, Mr. Doe had never before received the least recognition for his work. His colleagues were surprised that he decided to submit his design for the new satellite community to the district planners. He did not expect his plan to be chosen, but he thought his ideas were innovative as well as practical. When the selection was finally made, the modest architect was soon famous. The planning of the community was brilliant indeed.

Themes: (Mr. Doe was an architect.)

(Mr. Doe submitted plans for the new community.)

(10) What a way to celebrate the centennial year! The best thing about the party was that everyone in town helped plan it and everybody had a hand in it. The whole town divided up into neighbourhoods which each planned a part of the festivities. Some districts planned the entertainment,

while others organized the refreshments. One group even arranged a parade with a special guest star. Everyone enjoyed himself thoroughly. The planning of the community was brilliant indeed.

Themes: (There was a celebration.)

(The community planned the celebration.)

We expect the important information to be extracted, thus organizing processing for comprehension around these critical points. The information processing task is reduced by the heuristic of theme selection from the ongoing discourse. Theme constraints provide a unifying backdrop to which continuing input can be linked and through which inferences can be made on the incoming speech. Not all speech input requires inferences, nor is all linked directly to the main themes, but whenever the input is relevant to the theme in question, comprehensional decisions are made as to where the new piece fits. Discourse themes not only organize the comprehension of complex information input at the time of processing, but probably also pre-organize it for entry into memory. To complicate the processing side of ambiguous sentences by insisting upon a multiple-reading interpretation in all cases seems to unnecessarily over-qualify comprehension procedures. This may happen in some, but certainly not all cases. When present, relevant discourse themes exert their own contextual constraints, limiting ambiguous sentences to a single reading. The real question for psycholinguistic analysis, then, is more how semantic and pragmatic considerations contribute to inferring relevant themes which in turn constrain the possible readings of a sentence to a single interpretation, not whether both readings are concurrently processed. To answer this question will require us to replace the notion of context with the more refined

and useful concept of theme if we are to understand the processing of ambiguous sentences.

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Ergative and Accusative: A Single Representation  
of Grammatical Relations with Evidence from Nisgha

Marie-Lucie Tarpent  
University of Victoria

1.0 INTRODUCTION

There has been, in recent years, an upsurge of interest in languages with ergative constructions and in the problem of ergativity. Although a great deal more is now known about the properties of these constructions, the question of what relation they bear to accusative ones has never been satisfactorily answered. Most recent writing on the subject assumes that accusative patterns are basic and ergative ones derived from them in some fashion, a conception that has been strengthened by the discovery that most languages with ergative constructions have accusative ones as well. Attempts to derive both ergative and accusative patterns from a common source on an equal basis have remained vague and ill-defined.

Here, I first review briefly some current attitudes to the subject and the basic, mirror-image features of ergative and accusative patterns; I next present as an illustration of syntactic ergativity a hitherto little-known language, Nisgha,<sup>1</sup> with solidly ergative syntax, showing that ergativity is as full and valid a

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<sup>1</sup>Nisgha [nɪsɬá], spoken in the Nass Valley of British Columbia, is one of the Interior Tsimshian languages along with the very closely related Gitksan; both are more distantly related to Coast Tsimshian (CT), Nisgha is the language described as 'the Niska dialect' in Boas 1911, and the 'Nass' of Rigsby 1975's 'Nass-Gitksan'.

Boas' description is incomplete and in some cases faulty. It cannot be fully relied upon for material on ergativity. Rigsby's 1975 analysis of Gitksan (which applies equally to Nisgha) is also

mode of syntactic expression as accusativity; finally, from observation of the behaviour of the elements in Active, Passive and Antipassive constructions, I arrive at a single schema underlying both ergativity and accusativity without favouring the one over the other.

## 2.0                   ERGATIVITY AND ACCUSATIVITY

### 2.1                   Attitudes towards ergativity

For a Western linguist, to start learning a language with ergative syntax is to find oneself in a topsy-turvy world: nothing works according to familiar patterns, nothing agrees or co-refers with what one expects it should. Eventually patterns get analyzed, become known intellectually, but they still defy one's intuitive feeling of how they should work. And so one tries to interpret the unfamiliar constructions in more familiar terms: perhaps, for instance, ergative constructions should be understood as Passives? Once the linguist has come to the point of being able to use the language with some confidence, and to feel intuitively as well as intellectually at home in it, such learning strategies are recognized

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partially inexact. The dearth of material on these languages should be remedied shortly, as grammars of Gitksan (by Rigsby) and Nisgha (by myself), both based on recent first-hand research, are in preparation.

Most of the Nisgha data presented here were collected during the course of my employment with the Bilingual/Bicultural Programme of B. C. School District #92 (Nisgha); I resided on the Gitlakdamix reserve at New Aiyansh in the Nass Valley from May 1977 to July 1980. I wish to thank the Nisgha-speaking personnel of the Programme for their patience and unstinting help, especially Mrs. Nita Morven, Mrs. Rosie Robinson and Mrs. Verna Williams.

Thanks are also due to Bruce Rigsby for sharing with me his Nisgha and Gitksan files.

as such, and discarded,<sup>2</sup> and the looking-glass world of ergative syntax becomes as logical and orderly as the familiar world of accusative syntax.

Much of the recent literature on ergativity reflects this bewilderment of Western linguists trying to come to grips with this unfamiliar phenomenon, and to reduce ergative patterns as much as possible to familiar accusative patterns.<sup>3</sup> A major contribution to the debate has been the discovery that most so-called ergative languages in fact have a mix of ergative and accusative structures (Silverstein 1976, Woodbury 1977, Dixon 1979), in varying proportions, obeying a hierarchy of features (Silverstein). In spite of findings that many accusative languages too have some ergative patterning (Moravcsik 1978), the general consensus seems to be that languages are only ergative up to a point (Silverstein, Dixon); the accusative pattern is the basic, underlying one, and ergativity is an overlay, a matter of extra rules (Anderson 1976, Postal 1977), a shallow-structure phenomenon (Dixon 1979).<sup>4</sup>

This recent emphasis on split ergativity and the resulting comforting conclusion that ergativity is after all but a superficial phenomenon, accusativity the unchallenged basic universal, have tended to obscure the deep-seated parallelisms and complementarities

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<sup>2</sup>This is not to say that some ergative constructions may not be Passive in origin.

<sup>3</sup>At the time of writing this paper I had not read Heath 1976, whose observations on ergativity have much in common with mine.

<sup>4</sup>Although Dixon 1979 considers ergativity and accusativity as irreducible to each other, his notion of a deep structure Subject shows bias in favour of accusativity; see 4.7 below.

between these two modes of syntactic expression. In fact, as pointed out by Woodbury 1977, following a much earlier suggestion by Kurylowicz, the two can be considered mirror-images of each other, and neither can be derived from or reduced to the other. That both types can be found together in the same language under a variety of conditions does not invalidate the basic structural description of each type.

## 2.2 Basic ergative and accusative patterns

The following reviews the main features of typical ergative and accusative patterns. Exact particulars may differ according to the language.

There are two basic sentence types: transitive and intransitive.

In an intransitive sentence, only one NP (the subject, S) is associated with the verb; in a transitive sentence, there are two NP's (the agent A and the direct object O).<sup>5</sup>

There are languages in which these three NP's are treated differently; in both ergative and accusative patterns, however, one of the NP's of the transitive sentence is treated the same way as the single NP of the intransitive sentence. The difference lies in which of the two NP's, A or O, is equated with the single NP S: the O in ergative patterning, the A in accusative patterning.

This is reflected in verb-agreement: the verb agrees with the S always, and with the A or O that is equated with S; the other NP, treated differently from S and not agreeing with the verb, usually receives special marking: the accusative case marks O, the

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<sup>5</sup>For the sake of simplicity the case of the Dative object, the third NP in some transitive sentences, is not considered here as it has no bearing on the matter. See also note 32.

ergative case marks A.

In both types, there exists the possibility of shifting the normal emphasis of the transitive sentence and of transforming it into an intransitive sentence, Passive or Antipassive; the single NP of this new sentence is that NP of the transitive sentence that receives special treatment: in accusative patterns, O becomes S in the Passive sentence; in ergative patterns, A becomes S in the Antipassive sentence. The NP that formerly agreed with the verb is optionally recoverable as I (indirect object) in the intransitive sentence: the A of the accusative pattern is recoverable as I when O becomes S, the O of the ergative pattern is recoverable as I when A becomes S.

These basic features of ergative and accusative patterns are summarized in the following chart:

<u>Pattern type</u>	<u>Accusative</u>	<u>Ergative</u>
Functions equated	$S = A \neq O$	$S = O \neq A$
Verb agreement	S, A	S, O
Special treatment	O	A
Basic transformation	$O \rightarrow S (A \rightarrow I)$	$A \rightarrow S (O \rightarrow I)$

There is plainly nothing in this basic list that suggests that ergative patterns are derivable from accusative ones, any more than the opposite. Both are internally consistent, both are equally logical alternatives.

Beyond these basic patterns, there are other consequences of the equation of S with A or O which appear in more complex constructions. If a language can be fully accusative in those constructions as well, there is no logical reason why another cannot have fully ergative syntax. We shall see that Nisgha comes close

to this logical ideal.

Some of the more complex features of syntactic ergativity will be mentioned as they arise in the following overview of Nisgha syntax.

### 3.0 NISGHA ERGATIVITY

Nisgha is a language with basically ergative syntax (Rigsby 1975) and with some morphologically ergative features in the pronominal and verbal system. The noun-marking system, however, operates according to different principles. The overt difference between dependent and independent clauses does not affect their ergative status.<sup>6</sup>

#### 3.1 Basic schemata

Nisgha has two basic schemata, one for dependent and one for independent clauses.<sup>7</sup> In either case, A is unambiguously marked:

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<sup>6</sup>Published references by Silverstein 1976, followed by Dixon 1979, to Tsimshian 'split ergativity' conditioned by sentence status may be right for CT but do not apply to the Interior Tsimshian languages. It is appropriate to point out that Nisgha is the most conservative of all three languages, both phonologically and syntactically, CT the most innovative. It is possible that what appears to be lack of ergative marking in some CT independent sentences is originally due to phonological rather than syntactic causes.

<sup>7</sup>Boas calls these schemata 'subjunctive' and 'indicative moods' respectively. These terms, a carry-over from European, especially German structure, do not adequately reflect the Nisgha facts. Boas correctly observes that the dependent order is far more frequent than the independent one. This is because of the extreme connectedness of Nisgha discourse. In the narrative style especially (where most of his data come from), independent declarative sentences signal a break with the smooth flow of related events, which consist of

- with an ergative suffix on the verb in the independent clause;<sup>8</sup>

- (2) ts'in t Mary                      Mary came in  
TM
- (3) ts'inhI hanak'                      The woman came in  
c'ín-† hənáq'  
ND woman
- transitives: (4) hlimoomiý t Mary                      I helped Mary  
†əmó•m -ə - ý t M.  
help    ERG 1S TM O
- (5) hlimoomit niiý                      S/he helped me  
†əmó•m - ə - t    ni - ý  
ERG 3S TOP 1S
- (6) hlimoomis Lucy t Mary    Lucy helped Mary  
†əmó•m - ə - s L.    t M.  
ERG DM A    TM O

The -s suffix (DM) before the agent noun *Lucy* specifies that the following noun is determinate, but does not by itself mark its grammatical function in the sentence. The agent is the pronoun or noun that immediately follows the ergative suffix.

3.1.2            In *dependent clauses*, S and O may be suffix pronouns attached to the verb, or nouns marked with the specifier suffix -s if determinate, the general connective -hl (†) if non-determinate.

A must be a clitic pronoun (different for each person) preceding

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opposed to clitic pronouns (used in dependent clauses), which are always ergative (Boas' 'subjective'). The term 'absolutive' could be used for the unmarked pronouns, but it does not seem quite appropriate, since they may be associated with the ergative verbal suffix.



the verb and sometimes also the introductory word.

-intransitives

- (7) ... wil ts'iniy' ... as I came in  
       wəl c'ín - y'  
       CONJ 1S
- (8) ... wil ts'ins Mary ... as Mary came in  
       DM
- (9) ... wil ts'inhI hanak' ... as the woman came in  
       ↑  
       ND

-transitives

- (10) ... ni wil hlimooms Mary ... as I helped Mary  
       nə wəl təmó•m - s M.  
       1ERG CONJ help DM O
- (11) ... wilt hlimoomiy' ... as s/he helped me  
       wəl -t təmó•m - y'  
       CONJ 3ERG help 1S
- (12) ... ni wil hlimoomt ... as I helped him/her  
       nə wəl təmó•m - t  
       1ERG CONJ 3S

### 3.1.3 Verb agreement

Nisgha verbs commonly have distinct stems for singular and plural. Which stem is used depends on the number of S or O, not on the number of A. This is true in both dependent and independent clauses. Some examples of independent clauses are:

## -intransitives

- (13) goshl hlgu tk'ihlkw                      The child jumped  
       qús - † †ku tkʸ'í†kw  
       jump ND little child  
       (sg)            (sg)
- (14) gasgoshl k'uba tk'ihlkw                      The children jumped  
       qəsquś - † k'upa tkʸ'í†kw  
       jump ND little  
       (pl)            (pl)

## -transitives

- (15) niik'an gosgwihl hlgu tk'ihlkwhl lo'op      The child jumped  
       ñi·q'ən qús - kw - ə - † †ku                      over the rock  
       over jump TR ERG ND  
       (sg)  
       tkʸ'í†kw - † ló?p  
       ND rock
- (16) niik'an gasgosgwihl hlgutk'ihlkwhl lo'op      The child jumped  
       ñi·q'ən qəsquś - kw - ə - †                      over the rocks  
       over jump TR ERG ND  
       (pl)  
       †ku tkʸ'í†kw - † ló?p  
       little child ND rock  
       (sg)
- (17) niik'an gosgwihl k'uba tk'ihlkwhl lo'op      The children jumped  
       ñi·q'ən qús - kw - ə - †                      over the rock  
       over jump TR ERG ND  
       (sg)  
       k'upa tkʸ'í†kw - † ló?p  
       little child ND rock  
       (pl)

- (18) <sup>1</sup>niik'an gasgosgwi<sup>1</sup>hl k'uba tk'ihlkwhl lo'op The children  
<sup>1</sup>ni·q'an qəsqu<sup>1</sup>s - k<sup>w</sup> - ə - † jumped over the  
over jump TR ERG ND rocks.  
(pl)  
k'upa tk<sup>y</sup>'i†k<sup>w</sup> - † ló?p  
little child ND rock  
(pl)

### 3.2 Derived schemata

#### 3.2.1 Deletion

##### 3.2.1.1 Deletion of recoverable elements

##### 3.2.1.1.1 Deletion of O or S in independent clauses

O or S can be deleted if its referent is inferrable from the context (e.g., in answer to a question). A cannot be deleted.

- intransitive

- (19) -- nda t Mary? Where is Mary?  
ntá t M.  
where TM S  
-- daawihl. She left (lit. left)  
tá·w†  
leave  
(sg)

- transitive

- (20) -- wilaayinh<sup>1</sup>l sim'algaxa? Do you know Nisgha?  
wəlá·x - ə - n - † səm - ʔá|k<sup>y</sup>əx̃ - a  
know ERG 2S ND real talk Q  
(sg) (sg)

-- wilaayiy.

Yes (lit. I know).

wəla'x - ə - y

know      ERG 1S  
(sg)

### 3.2.1.1.2      Deletion of A in subordinate clause: the imperative

Imperatives are equivalent to truncated dependent clauses. The clitic pronoun A is deleted along with the beginning of the clause, but O or S, which are at the end, are not deleted:<sup>12</sup>

#### -intransitives

(21) (aamhl dim) yeen!

(You should) go! (sg)

ʔa'm - t təm yé' - n

(lit. it is good that you  
walk)

good ND FUT walk 2S  
(sg)

(22) (aamhl dim) hlo'osim!

(You should) go! (pl)

tó? - sm

walk 2P  
(pl)

(23) (aamhl dim) hlo'om!

(We should go) Let's go!

- m

1P

#### -transitives

(23) (aam mi dim) hlimooms Mary!

(You should) help Mary! (sg)

---

<sup>12</sup> The full clause also occurs without deletion as a more polite form of imperative, and with persons other than 2nd sg and pl and 1st pl. Thus, although deletion only occurs with these persons, there is nothing peculiar about the form of the Nisgha imperative, as Dixon 1979: 113-4, quoting (inaccurately) Gitksan data from Rigsby 1975, appears to think.

ʔá·m mə təm ʔəmó·m - s M.

good 2ERG FUT help DM O

(25) (aam mi dim) sim hlimooms Mary! (You should) help Mary! (p1)

səm

2p1 (suffix used only with 2ERG)

In addition, a non-determinate O may be deleted from a transitive imperative if it is recoverable from the context of situation (as in 3.2.1.1.1), e.g.

(26) (sim) ga'ahl!

Look! (lit. See!)

səm kʷáʔ - ʔ

2P see ND

Note that the connective is not deleted, showing that this is an incomplete sentence.

### 3.2.1.2 Deletion under identity

A test of syntactic ergativity is whether the A or O of a transitive clause is deleted after coordination with an intransitive clause; e.g., given sentences like

(27) a. ts'in t Fred

Fred came in

c'in t F.

come in TM S

b. humts'axas Fred t Mary

Fred kissed Mary

húmc'əǰ - ə - s F. t M.

kiss ERG DM A TM O

c. humts'axas Mary t Fred

Mary kissed Fred

húmc'əǰ - ə - s M. t F.

kiss ERG DM A TM O

syntactically accusative languages like English coordinate a. and b.:

- (28) Fred came in and kissed  
Mary

while syntactically ergative languages like Nisgha coordinate a. and c.:

- (29) ts'in t Fred iit humts'axs Mary      Fred came in and Mary  
c'in - t F. ?i· - t      kissed him<sup>13</sup>  
come in TM A and 3ERG  
humc'əx - s M.  
kiss DM A

### 3.2.2 Focused and relative clauses

Focused clauses may be independent clauses, or the focused element may have a role in a preceding sentence, in which case the focused clause corresponds to what we would call a relative clause.

#### 3.2.2.1 Focusing

Either A, S or O may be focused by extraposition to the left of the clause. Marking is different for each: special pronouns for

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<sup>13</sup>a. Note that the equivalent of the English coordinate clause is a Nisgha dependent clause introduced by the conjunction ii (?i·).

- b. Note also that there is a potential ambiguity in that iit humts'axs 'Mary' could also mean 'and he kissed Mary'. However, this interpretation could only occur if the context made it obvious, and if the main stress fell on 'Mary' rather than on 'humts'ax'. The normal way of saying 'Fred came in and kissed Mary' would be  
ts'int Fred ii nihl ~~wil~~ wilt: humts'axat t Mary  
(lit. F. came in and this is what he did: he kissed Mary.)

S and A, word order for O. This is an exception to the generally equal treatment of S and O, which does not, however, result in an accusative-type equation of S and A. In fact, through this exception the surface structures of S and O-focused sentences remain virtually identical.

### 3.2.2.1.1 Focus on A

A is extraposed and the ergative relative pronoun an (ʔən) 'the one who/which' is inserted before the verb, making the rest of the clause dependent (in effect, A functions as a MC consisting of a single word). The ergative pronoun t may be placed before or after the ergative relative.

- (6) MC: hlímoomis Lucy t Mary                      Lucy helped Mary  
           təmó·m - ə - s L. t M.  
           help        ERG DM A TM O
- (30) FC: Lucy (ant hlímooms Mary                      It was Lucy who helped Mary  
           (t an  
           L. ʔən t təmó·m - s M.  
           A    ERG 3ERG help DM O  
           REL

### 3.2.2.1.2 Focus on S

S is extraposed and the general connective -hl (-t) may be inserted.<sup>14</sup> In addition the verb takes the relative suffix -it

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<sup>14</sup>This may be a fairly recent development on the analogy of O-focusing, see next section; -hl is rarely found in this position in Boas 1902, where in most cases there is no connection between the focused S and the verb.

(-ət)<sup>15</sup>:

- (31) MC: daawihl t Mary                      Mary left  
          tá·w† t M.  
          leave TM S
- (32) FC: Maryhl daawihlit                      It was Mary who left  
          M. - † tá·w† - ət  
          S    ND leave REL

### 3.2.2.1.3      Focus on O

O is extraposed and joined to the verb by -hl (-†); there are no other changes:

- (6) MC: hlimoomis Lucy t Mary                      Lucy helped Mary
- (33) FC: Maryhl hlimoomis Lucy                      It was Mary that Lucy  
          M. - † təmó·m - ə - s L.                      helped  
          O    ND help      ERG DM A

### 3.2.2.1.4      Remarks

- a. The structural shape of the relative pronouns for A and S
- 

<sup>15</sup>The suffix is -t after vowels and resonants, -it (-ət) after consonants. Thus it cannot be the same as the 3S suffix -t which has no other allomorphs. It cannot be decomposed into -ə -† either, otherwise a y would be inserted between a vowel and it (as it is before -ə- ERG in (46)).



corresponds to that of the personal pronouns used in dependent clauses: a clitic for A, a suffix for S. We would expect the S-relative suffix to be used for O as well.

b. That there is no overt relative object pronoun may be attributable in part to surface morphological constraints: in sentences like:

(33) Maryhl hlimoomis Lucy                      It was Mary that Lucy helped

(34) Maryhl hlimoomit                      It was Mary that she helped

- ə - t

ERG 3S

there is simply no place in the sentence where the relative suffix -it could be inserted, since only one element (specifier -s or personal suffix pronoun) can come after the ergative suffix.

c. On the other hand, the surface of S and O-focused clauses is remarkably similar, especially if the agent in the O-focused clause is a 3rd person singular pronoun:

(32) S-focus: Maryhl daawihlit                      It was M. who left

-ət

S

REL

(34) O-focus: Maryhl hlimoomit                      It was Mary that she helped

- ə - t

O

ERG 3S

Adding a relative pronoun to the end of the transitive verb, even if it were allowed by the morphology, would destroy the surface similarity of the S and O-focused clauses, expected under ergative syntax.

d. It seems then that when the various factors are considered, the overt presence of a relative object pronoun would disrupt other

deep-seated morphological and syntactic regularities of the language. Since Nisgha ergativity is manifested mostly at the syntactic level, the absence of such a pronoun does not invalidate the general syntactic equation of S and O.

### 3.2.2.2. Relative clauses

#### 3.2.2.2.1 Relative clauses with NP heads

Two clauses which have an NP in common may be linked by this NP, which will be in the focused position in the second clause, which then becomes a relative clause. The meaning may be restrictive or non-restrictive. Restrictive meaning may be emphasized by the particle hli (tə) 'the particular (one)' placed after the head noun.

The head NP must necessarily be the rightmost NP in the previous clause (PC) (which may be a subordinate clause); very often it will be an S or an O, or a noun with a secondary role in the PC, as long as it is the rightmost one; more rarely an A. This NP may be the S, O or A of the relative clause<sup>16</sup>

PCS = RelS:

(35) kw'ihl t'aahl hlgu tk'ihlkw hlaa kap wiit'isit (B 13.13)

The child, who was now quite big, sat around

kw'əɬ	t'á·	- ɬ	ɬku	tkʷ'íɬkw	ɬá·	q'əp	wi·t'ís	- ət
around	sit	ND	little	child	now	surely	grown	REL
(sg)	(sg)						(sg)	

PCS = Rel O:

(36) aamhl gabiihl mugwiý (B 59.2)

---

<sup>16</sup>The following examples are mostly from Boas 1902, with references to page and line number. They are transcribed in Standard Nisgha and Amerindian scripts, and corrected and retranslated if needs be, as the texts contain numerous errors.

I've caught enough fish (lit. the number I've caught is good)

ʔá·m - ɿ qəpí· - ɿ múkw - ə - ý  
 good ND number ND catch ERG 1S  
 fish

PCS = REL A:

- (37) níhłk'ii ksibaxhl wii xa'a t an gwin lukwhl galts'ap (B 145.10)

And then the big slave went out, [who was] to tell the people to move away.

ni - ɿ ky'i· ksə - páx̣ - ɿ wi· xáʔ t ʔən kwən lúkʷ - ɿ qəlɕ'áp  
 TOP ND and out run ND big slave 3ERG ERG ind. move ND village  
 (sg) REL caus. (pl)

PCO = REL S:

- (38) ga'athl gat want ahl gililx (B 11.12-13)

He saw people sitting up in the woods.

kyáʔ - ə - t - ɿ kyát wán - (ə)t ʔa - ɿ kyəlílɕ  
 see ERG 3S ND man sit REL PREP ND up in the woods  
 (pl)

PCO = REL O:

- (39) agu ma gan jahl hoon hli jabiý? (B 118.3)

Why did you eat all the fish I caught?

ʔəkú mə qən cáɿ(-ɿ) hó·n tə cáp - ə - ý  
 what 2ERG why eat ND fish the make ERG 1S  
 up one

PCO = REL A:

- (40) níhłk'iiit huwo'ohl bagadilhl wiit'ax gigat dimt an gendaxhl  
 hlgu tk'ihłkw (B 36.5-6)

Then he called two old people who were to chew the child's food for him.

'ni - t kʷ'i· - t huwóʔ - t pəqətíí - t wí·t'əǎ kʷəkʷát  
 TOP ND and 3ERG call ND two ND old people  
 (pl) (persons) (pl)  
 təm - t ʔən qíntəǎ - t tku tkʷ'i'tkʷ  
 FUT 3ERG ERG chew food ND little child  
 REL for (sg)

An A can only be relativized if the O of the same clause has been deleted, leaving it in rightmost position, as in

PCA = REL A:

(41) hlbíyuihl axwthl hli ts'ap ahl wilt wilaagwíhl ts'imílx t  
 an wó'ot (B 145.10)

The porcupine informed his tribe of the way the beaver, who  
 had invited him, had treated him.

t̚pəyúxw - ə - t ʔáxwt - t t̚ə c'áp ʔa - t wəl - t  
 inform ERG ND porcupine ND the tribe PREP ND as 3ERG  
 wəlá·kw - t c'əmílx t ʔən wóʔ - t  
 treat ND beaver 3ERG ERG invite 3S  
 REL (sg)

### 3.2.2.2.2 Relative clauses without a noun head

Relative clauses without a noun head also occur. Such clauses  
 can function as either S or O of the previous clause, not as its  
 A.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup>A headless REL A cannot be the A of a main clause; instead, it  
 can be apposited to a main clause beginning with the topicalizer  
ni-, as in :

Dimt an gidiiguuhl gwiłks-woxgwit-hitsa, niłnít dim ant nakskwhl  
 hlguuhlgiy (B 141. 8-9)  
 The one who kills this self-barker [a bear], that one will marry  
 my daughter.

PCS = REL S:

In this case the verb of the relative clause functions as a noun.<sup>18</sup>

- (42) hlaa ksisakskwhl t'ist'isitgi (B 41.13-14)

The old people (lit. [the ones] who were old) had now gone out.

ʔá· ksə sákskʷ - ʔ t'əst'ís - ət -kʷi  
 now out leave ND old REL DISTANT  
 (pl) (pl)

PCS = REL O:

- (43) aamhl jabin!

Good work! You did well! (lit.[what] you did is good)

ʔá·m - ʔ cáp - ə - n  
 good ND make ERG 2S

PCS = REL A:

- (44) hlaa daxwhl t an saa kwsdaksdiitgi (B 178.8)

[The ones] who had abandoned them were now dead.

ʔa· táxʷ - ʔ t ʔən sa· kʷstáqs - ti·t - kʷi  
 now dead ND 3ERG ERG off leave 3P DISTANT  
 (pl) REL behind

---

təm - t ʔən kʷəti· kú· - ʔ kʷəlks wóʃ - kʷ - ə - t - hí - t - sa  
 FUT 3ERG ERG holding take ND back on bark TR ERG 3S say 3S PROX-  
 REL back self IMATE  
 ní - ʔ ní - t təm ʔən - t náks - kʷ - ʔ ʔkú· ʔkʷ - ý  
 TOP ND TOP 3S FUT ERG 3ERG spouse TR ND own child 1S  
 REL

<sup>18</sup>This form however does not have all the privileges of occurrence of a noun, e.g., it cannot be focused or used as a predicate.

PCO = REL S:

Again, the relativized verb functions as a noun.

- (45) wó'ohl k'yoolhl wiit'isit ... ! (B 21.13-14)

Call some old man ... ! (lit. one who is old)<sup>19</sup>

wó? - t k'ó'ól - t wi·t'ís - ət

call ND one ND grown REL  
(person) (sg)

PCO = REL O:

- (46) hlaat huxw wahl hli wayihl wakt (B 202.4-5)

Again he found the very [place] that his brother had found.

hla· - t huxw wá - t tə wá -(y)ə - t wákʷ - t

now 3ERG again find ND the find ERG ND man's 3S  
one brother

PCO = REL A:

- (47) wilaayin t an guuhl hlguuhlgwina? (B 87.11)

Do you know who took your child?

welá·x - ə - n t ?ən kú· - t t kú·tkw - n - a

know ERG 2S 3ERG ERG take ND own 2S Q  
(sg) REL (sg) child

### 3.2.2.3

In general, then, S and O-focusing and relativization have similar characteristics, often different from those involving A. The lack of an overt relative object pronoun may be attributed to

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<sup>19</sup>The word k'yool 'one' is a numeral adjective, not a noun or pronoun and cannot be the antecedent of the relative clause. It is not the grammatical equivalent of English one in one who is old, but of one in one old man.

other causes (see above 3.2.2.1.4) and this absence reinforces rather than deters from the close surface syntactic similarity of the treatment of S and O.

### 3.2.3 Modal sentences

#### 3.2.3.1. Equivalents to SAE Equi

Where in SAE languages the desire, intention or other mood of a subject (S or A) to effect an action is expressed by means of subordination to a verb expressing the subject's mental state (e.g., try, want, etc.) Nisgha uses modal proclitics which do not change the status of the sentence describing the action (cf. 3.1.1):

-intransitive

- (48) sik'ihl ts'in t Mary                      Mary tried to come in  
       sikʷ'ɬ c'ɪn t M.  
       trying come TM S  
           in

-transitive

- (49) ʎaam hlimoomis Lucy t Mary            Lucy wanted to help Mary  
       ʎa·m    ɬəmó·m - ə - s L. t M.  
       wanting help      ERG DM A TM O

#### 3.2.3.2. Indirect causation (jussive construction)

Similarly, where an agent gets something done through someone else, (by telling that person to do something), the proclitic gwin (kʷən) is used in front of the verb. The combination gwin + verb is a transitive verb.

If the original verb is intransitive, its S becomes the O of the gwin verb, as in

- (50) gwin ts'inis Donna t Mary

Donna told Mary to come in, Donna had Mary come in.

kʷən c'ín - ə - s D. t M.

ind. come ERG DM A TM O<S

caus. in

If the original verb is transitive, its O remains the O of the gwin verb; its A becomes an indirect object, which is usually deleted:

- (51) gwin hlimoomis Donna t Mary (as Lucy)

Donna told Lucy to help Mary; Donna had Lucy help Mary; Donna had Lucy helped (by Mary).<sup>20</sup>

kʷən təmó·m - ə - s D. t M. (?a - s L.).

ind. help ERG DM A TM O PREP DM < A

caus.

This type of construction shows that indirect causation can indeed be expressed ergatively, without resorting to accusative patterns such as English

Donna asked (told, ordered, begged) Lucy to come in (help Mary) where the O of the main clause becomes the S or A of the dependent

---

<sup>20</sup>Note the exact parallelism with the French faire constructions

Marie est entrée > Donna a fait entrer Marie

S

O < S

Lucie a aidé Marie > Donna a fait aider Marie (par Lucie)

A

O

O

< A

In both Nisgha and French, the emphasis in such constructions is on getting something done, not on the means (usually verbal) by which a person is induced to perform the desired action; the identity of that person is often irrelevant. These constructions will be explored further in a forthcoming paper.



clause.<sup>21</sup>

### 3.3 Nisgha Passive and Antipassive

Nisgha's rich derivational morphology allows for both Passive and Antipassive stems to be derived from transitive stems, e.g.

root wá 'name':	siwa	T 'to name'	(sə Proclitic, to make)
	siwatkʷ	P 'to be named'	(-kʷ Passive suffix; epenthetic t)
	siwe'eskw	AP 'to give names'	(-ʔskʷ Antipassive suffix)

Although these suffixes can potentially be added to any transitive stem, they are not fully grammaticalized, and their actual occurrence is lexically conditioned. Both, however, are productive suffixes.

There is morphological, semantic and syntactic evidence, however, that the Antipassive is much more basic to the language than the Passive, which seems to have gained ground recently as a result of contact with English.

#### 3.3.1 Morphologically

##### 3.3.1.1

There is often overt phonological discrepancy between Antipassive forms and their active counterparts; while most AP forms

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<sup>21</sup>Contra Comrie 1978, Dixon 1979, Ramsey 1980, for whom jussive constructions are necessarily accusative.

have fairly predictable phonological shapes, sometimes the two can only be related through historical phonological rules which are no longer productive,<sup>22</sup> making the AP stems opaque, e.g.,

t'ak	T 'to forget'	t'iiskw	AP 'to be forgetful'
t'ákʷ < *téky		t'í·skw < *t'éky-ʔskw	

More regular examples are

t'axw	'to sweep'	t'awiskw	'to sweep'
t'áxw		t'áxw - ʔskw	
giba	'to wait'	gibe'eskw	'to wait'
kʷəpá		kʷəpá - ʔskw	
mahl	'to tell'	mahla' askw	'to tell everyone, to spread news'
máʔ		máʔ - ʔskw	

### 3.3.1.2

On the other hand, Passive forms are always transparently derived, pointing to a more recent origin, e.g.,

jap T	'to make'	japkw P	'to be made'
cáp		cáp - kw	
giikw	'to buy'	giikws	'to be bought'
kʷí·kw		kʷí·kw - s (-s allomorph of -kw after dorsal stops)	

Some Passive forms are obviously very recent calques of English

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<sup>22</sup>These are described in my unpublished paper Nisgha plural formation: An analysis of the morphophonemics.

Passives and betray the fact by their lack of conformity to normal morphophonemic alternations, e.g.,

dilkkw	'to be stuck' (as in English 'we are stuck')
	(instead of dilks or dilxkw)
yaamakkw	'to be betrayed' (as in 'the night He was betrayed')
	(instead of yaamaks or yaamaxkw)

### 3.3.2 Semantically

#### 3.3.2.1

There is often a discrepancy between Active and Antipassive meanings that cannot always be attributed to the inadequacy of the English terms available to translate them. AP forms often have a divergent or specialized meaning, e.g.,

diyee T	'to take (s.o.)	diyee'eskw AP	'to be extremely
tə - yé.	for a walk, to	tə - yé. - ?skw	high tide'
	lead'		
along walk			
(TR.			
PREF.)			
guxw	'to shoot'	gu'wiskw	'to fall over, as
			after being shot'
kúxw		kúxw-?skw	
aat'ix	'to reach,	aat'ikskw	'to arrive'
	touch, feel'		
?á·t'x		?á·t'x - ?skw	

and there are a number of morphologically AP forms whose active counterpart has been lost, e.g.,

?	aw'aawiskw	'to be curly'
	(from root * ?á·w)	

Also, a number of such AP forms have acquired a purely nominal meaning<sup>23</sup> sometimes very specialized (somewhat like English -ing), e.g.,

jakw	'to kill'	jakw'iskw	'(game) animal' (lit. killing)
cák <sup>w</sup>		cák <sup>w</sup> - ?sk <sup>w</sup>	
simiyeen T	'to smoke'	simiyeen'iskw	'smoked spring salmon' (lit. smoking)
sə - məyé·n prepare smoke		sə - məyé·n - ?sk <sup>w</sup>	
hap	'to cover'	hap'iskw	'grass' (lit. (ground) covering)
		háp - ?sk <sup>w</sup>	
?		lik'in'skw	'grizzly bear'
		? lək <sup>y</sup> 'ín - ?sk <sup>w</sup>	

### 3.3.2.2

No such shifts are evidenced for Passive forms. On the other hand, while the AP suffix -?sk<sup>w</sup> only has the AP or derived nominal meaning, the suffix -k<sup>w</sup>/-s has other meanings besides that of Passive; in particular, it has the meanings:

- 'having':

gaytkw	'to wear a hat'	(gayt 'hat')
qáy <sup>t</sup> - k <sup>w</sup>		

<sup>23</sup>This is also the case for other detransitivizing suffixes, since Nisgha syntax makes it easy for the same word to be used as either intransitive verb, or noun.

am'ugitkw 'to be dressed' (am'ugit 'clothing')  
 ʔəmʔúkʔət - kw

- 'resembling':

geskw 'to be thin, narrow' (ges 'hair')  
 qís - kw

t'uuts'kw 'to be black' (t'uuts' 'charcoal')  
 t'ú·c' - kw

- reflexive:<sup>24</sup>

pts'aytkw 'to comb one's hair' (pts'ay' 'comb')  
 pc'áy - (t)kw

ksiyimkw 'to shave' (ksi 'out' + yimk 'whiskers')  
 ksə - yímq - kw

laks 'to bathe, to immerse one self in water' (lak 'to live in water, e.g., fish')

laq - s

There are also, in Nisgha, other Passive suffixes, which are far less productive, if at all e.g.,

- -t 'Passive of state':

kw'ast 'to be broken' (kw'as I to break)  
 kw'ás - t

---

<sup>24</sup>It can also have Active meaning, as in lipkw 'to sew', níik'angoskw 'to jump over', and it can even be used antipassively as in wo'o 'to invite (tr.)', wo'otkw (a ...) 'to invite (sbdy passing by) on the spur of the moment, without formal invitation'.

akst 'to be wet' (aks 'water')

ʔáks - t

- -kws 'resultative Passive':

daawtkws 'to have become (daaw 'ice')  
frozen'

tá·w - (t)kws

It seems likely, then, that the Passive meaning of -kw is a recently derived one, made possible by the wide range of related meanings and the current productivity of this suffix, perhaps at the expense of other Passive suffixes in the language.

### 3.3.3 Syntactically

#### 3.3.3.1 Active and Antipassive sentences

As befits a language with ergative syntax, Nisgha has a fully fledged syntactic Antipassive construction, while morphological passives do not seem to have any special properties beyond those of intransitives. In particular, Nisgha Passives are always agentless.

The Antipassive construction detransitivizes the verb, normally marked by the AP suffix -ʔskw;<sup>25</sup> the agent becomes the subject of the new intransitive verb, and the object is optionally recoverable, after the preposition a (ʔa), as in

- (52) gibayis Lucy t Mary Lucy waited for Mary  
kʷəpá - (y)ə - s L. t M.  
wait      ERG   DM A TM O

---

<sup>25</sup>Sometimes just -ʔs.

- (53) gibe'eskw t Lucy (as Mary) Lucy waited (for Mary)  
 kʷəpá - ʔskw t L. ʔa - s M.  
 wait AP TM S PREP DM PP

Although the English glosses are the same, there is an important meaning difference between the Active sentence and its Antipassive counterpart: (52) implies not only that Lucy waited for Mary, but that she fully expected Mary to join her, and that Mary did in fact join her after a reasonable amount of time; while in (53) there is no certainty that Mary did join Lucy, or even that Lucy expected her to do so: Lucy might just have been waiting around on the odd chance that Mary might show up. However, in both cases Lucy did indeed wait.

In an Active sentence, the action described by the verb is construed as attaining a specific goal, the object, which is always expressed. The time element expressed or implied by the verb is also more or less definite.

In an Antipassive sentence, the action described by the verb occurs, but the goal may or may not be reached; the object may be left undefined; even if it is expressed in the sentence, it may be indefinite in extent; and even where the object is fully specified, as in the examples above, there is no certainty that the goal of the action will be reached. The indefiniteness of the object and the uncertainty of when, if ever, the goal of the action is reached do not detract from the fact that the action does in fact take place, and that it is controlled by the agent. But if the object is vague in nature or indefinite in extent, the process also takes an indeterminate amount of time and may stretch out indefinitely, in contrast to the more or less predictable or at least definable amount of time required to perform the action in the Active sentence.

These differences are also evident in Nisgha object-incorporation.

### 3.3.3.2 Object-incorporation after Active and Antipassive

Nisgha has numerous object-incorporating compounds designating habitual activities.<sup>26</sup>

Relatively few of these are of the type tr. verb + object noun = intr. verb, for example,

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<sup>26</sup>That object-incorporation is common but agent-incorporation is apparently unattested is a case to be explained by semantics or thematics rather than syntax. Object-incorporation occurs in both ergative and accusative languages. However, there seems to be a difference between the meaning of object-incorporating compounds in ergative languages such as Nisgha and in accusative languages such as English or French:

N	yo'oksno'ohl yoʔks - noʔɬ wash dish	to wash the dishes
Eng.	dishwasher dishwashing (*dishwash	person or machine that washes dishes act of washing dishes to wash dishes)
Fr.	lave-vaisselle	machine that washes dishes

The compound is a verb in Nisgha, a noun in English and French.

Furthermore, the O is not the only element that can be incorporated. Nisgha gives evidence of S-incorporation, as in

N	yeemsk'amksiiwaatkw yé· - ms - q'əmksi·wa· - (t)kʷ walk white person	to walk like a white man (a game)
		- ms — (t)kʷ acting like
	saytk'yoolimsgatkw səyt - k'yó·l - ms - kʷát - kʷ together one person man	to be united

while English had I-incorporation (see note 33):



yo'oksno'ohl	'to wash the dishes'	yo'oks + no'ohl yóʔks      nóʔɿ wash      dish
yo'oksweentkw	'to brush one's teeth'	wé•n - (t)kʷ teeth      POSS
gahlhoon	'to spear fish'	kʷáɿ - hó•n to spear      fish
k'ohlhoon	'to fillet fish'	q'úrɿ to cut, cleave
jamhoon	'to jar fish'	cám to boil

These are activities which require the actor's full attention to the object for a definite period of time; the actor carries out the activity without interruption from beginning to end of the process.

A larger number of compounds is formed with detransitivized verbs, including Antipassives.<sup>27</sup> In these compounds the adjectival suffix -m is used between verb and object, as in

simiyeen<sup>1</sup>isgum-hoon      'to smoke fish'

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Eng. spear-fishing	act of fishing <u>with</u> a spear
sleep-walker	person who walks <u>in</u> his sleep

<sup>27</sup>Note the contrast between Antipassive and other illustrative compounds:

e.g., simiyeen <sup>1</sup> isgum-hoom	'to smoke fish'
vs.	
iits'a'am-hoon	'to fry fish; fried fish'

The detransitive compound (suffix -ʔaʔ) can be used either predicatively or nominally; the AP compound can never be used nominally, only predicatively (but the AP by itself may be used nominally in some cases, e.g., simiyeen<sup>1</sup>iskw).

	sə - məyé·n - ʔskw - m - hó·n
	(to) process smoke AP ADJ fish
lip'ilsgum-aat	'to mend nets'
	lípʔl - ʔskw - m - ʔá·t
	mend up AP ADJ fishnet
lits'ilsgum-daala	'to keep track of money donated at a potlatch'
	lícʔl - ʔskw - m - tá·la
	count up AP ADJ money
gilsgum-ts'ak'	'to dig for clams'
	kʷíí - ʔskw - m - c'áq'
	search for AP ADJ clam

Here the process might go on indefinitely, or be done at intervals: for instance, simiyeen'isgum-hoon describes a more leisurely and less absorbing process than gahlhoon or k'ohlhoon; the actor may be one of several participants in a group process as in lits'ilsgum-daala. The meaning of these expressions, then, is something like 'to do some ----ing, to do a bit of ----ing, to take part in ----ing.'

### 3.3.3.3 The uses of the Nisgha Passive

The uses of the Nisgha Passive are closer to those of a passive participle or adjective in SAE languages. It is frequently used as a RelC adjunct to a non-determinate noun, corresponding to an English past participle:

(54) nihlk'iit wadiithl galts'ap siwatgwit ahl Gingolx<sup>28</sup>

They reached the village named Kincolith.

---

<sup>28</sup>The preposition a before the name is required by any form of the verb siwa 'to name', not because the verb is Passive.

ʔi - ʔ ky'i - t wá - ti·t - ʔ qəlc'áp səwá - (t)kw  
 TOP ND and 3ERG find 3P ND village to name PASS  
 - ət ʔa - ʔ kyən - qúlɤ  
 REL PREP ND place skull

- (55) ʔihl ʔi t gunsa hliphlaníy ginamtgwit as ʔisim

This is my body given for you.<sup>29</sup>

ʔi - ʔ ʔi t kún - sa ʔəptán - y kyənam - (t)kw - ət ʔa  
 TOP ND TOP TM thisPROX- body 1S give PASS REL PREP  
 - s ʔí - sm IMATE  
 DM TOP 2P

It can also be used as the main predicate in the sentence, under conditions where the agent is irrelevant:

- (56) japkw t guni u ligi giikwst?

Was this made or bought? (=Did you buy this or did someone make it for you?)

cáp - kw t kún - i ʔu ləkʏə kyí·kw - s - t  
 make PASS TM this Q or INDEF buy PASS 3S

- (57) aguhl dim wil hookst?

What will it be used for?

ʔəkú - ʔ təm wəl hó·x - s - t  
 what ND FUT CONJ use PASS 3S

No special syntactic or semantic features are associated with the Passive as such, as distinct from other intransitives.

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<sup>29</sup>Excerpt from the Nisgha liturgy, Lilgidim Amadalk'askw, issued by the Anglican Diocese of Caledonia, a Nisgha translation due mostly to Rev. Hubert McMillan and other Nisgha elders.

### 3.3.4 Summary on Passive and Antipassive

These are morphological, semantic and syntactic reasons to consider the Antipassive construction, not the Passive, as the counterpart of the Active in Nisgha. There is no true Passive construction since the Agent cannot be recovered.<sup>30</sup> Elements of Passive meaning are shared among several intransitive suffixes, and the one now most closely associated with the Passive also has a variety of other meanings. Its present productivity in the Passive meaning seems heavily influenced by English.

The respective status of Passive and Antipassive in Nisgha, then, is very different, and the existence of both in the morphology can hardly be taken as evidence for a mixed or split syntax. The Active/Antipassive contrast, both in sentences and in object-incorporation, agrees with the fundamentally ergative character of Nisgha syntax.

### 3.4 Summary of ergative features

3.4.1 Morphologically, Nisgha has positive ergative features in the ergative suffix used in independent clauses, the ergative clitic pronouns used in dependent clauses, and the ergative relative pronoun used in focusing and relativizing A's. Other elements of the morphology are neutral, except that the other relative pronoun, the suffix -it (-ət), is only used with S, a fact which, however, may be due to specific surface constraints.

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<sup>30</sup>Of course one could say that this is because former Passives have become ergative; but there is not a shred of evidence in Nisgha for such a view.

## 3.4.2

Syntactically, most constructions differentiate A from S and O which are usually treated the same, and nowhere are A and S treated the same while O is treated differently:

- a. in basic independent clauses, S and O pattern alike, differently from A;
- b. verb agreement is with S and O, not with A;
- c. O or S, not A, can be deleted from independent sentences if recoverable from the context;
- d. in imperative constructions, A, not O or S, can be deleted (deletion of O in imperatives is an instance of deletion of a contextually recoverable element);
- e. in cases of deletion in coordinated sentences, O, not A, of the second clause is deleted under identity with S of the first;
- f. in relative clauses, S and O are treated the same, A slightly differently; while A, S and O may all head relative clauses, it is much more often S or O than A that is relativized; headless relative clauses can be S or O, but not A, of a previous clause;
- g. modal sentences being formed with proclitics, do not require a higher clause with equation of S with A as in SAE languages; the basic clause does not change with the addition of a proclitic;
- h. indirect or jussive causation with the proclitic gwin (kʷən) which makes the verb transitive, does change the form of the sentence; the object of the new transitive verb is the former O or S, never A, which is extraposed as a prepositional phrase.

## 3.4.3

While Nisgha has both Passive and Antipassive morphology, only the Antipassive is syntactically related to the Active.

## 3.5 Summary on Nisgha ergativity

I hope to have shown in the above sketch that Nisgha is truly a syntactically ergative language. Nisgha ergativity is not confined to a few sentence types, but pervades the whole of its syntax. Indeed, Nisgha has ergative syntax even in cases where most languages have accusative constructions; indirect causation is a case in point.

There is absolutely no evidence in Nisgha for considering syntactic ergativity as anything but basic and fundamental to the structure of the language, and certainly nothing that suggests that its ergative properties might be derived from accusative ones. Nisgha shows that a fully ergative syntax, although statistically rare, is possible, and that the scope of ergativity need not be limited in theory. Ergativity deserves full status along with accusativity.

## 4.0 A SINGLE REPRESENTATION OF GRAMMATICAL RELATIONS

## 4.1

Whether they consider ergative patterns as derived in some fashion from accusative ones, or as their mirror-images, most linguists agree on the desirability for linguistic theory to encompass both types into a single framework. The most recent attempts have been made by linguists developing, or reacting to, the theory of Relational Grammar.

According to RG, basic grammatical categories are Subject of,

Direct Object of, Indirect Object of, ranked as a hierarchy with Subject of as (1), the highest category: Since Subject of designates the subject both of a transitive and an intransitive verb, this schema effectively enshrines accusativity as the basic syntactic universal. Ergativity is clearly secondary:

This leads to the view that an 'ergative' clause pattern is simply an 'accusative' clause pattern, that is, one based on the notions of Subject and Direct Object, which involves in addition one or more rules ... (Postal 1977)

This view has been rightly criticized by linguists more truly familiar with ergative-type languages, notably Woodbury 1977 and Dixon 1979.<sup>31</sup> It leads to results such as Postal's derivation of the Antipassive, which requires a transitive subject to become an object, then an intransitive subject, a derivation for which there is no evidence in ergative-type languages, and which is also much more complex than the Passive derivation, although the Antipassive, not the Passive, is the fundamental transformation in ergative-type languages.<sup>32</sup>

Recognizing the artificiality of such constructs and the desirability of capturing the mirror-image quality of ergative and accusative structures such as Antipassive and Passive, Woodbury 1977 presents a proposal for a universal schema in terms of a linear hierarchy of markedness: in each type there are marked and unmarked relations, but which ones they are varies from one type

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<sup>31</sup>Although Dixon seems to consider accusative structures as basic in deep structure, see p. 41-43.

<sup>32</sup>Supporting evidence for this derivation is apparently found in Choctaw, an accusative language (Davies 1981).

to the other. This marked-unmarked hierarchy then must be supplemented by two others: the RG hierarchy which is accusative, and a mirror-image one for the ergative type; these two hierarchies in turn, not being compatible, must be supplemented by another hierarchy of more precise grammatical categories, such as  $\langle S_t, S_i, O_t \rangle$  (p. 331), with variable cut-off points determining which elements are grouped together as one category. These hierarchies will also be affected by Silverstein's 1976 hierarchy of features governing split ergativity.

In contrast to RG's model, which is too strongly accusative to reflect ergative-type structures, Woodbury's marked/unmarked model is too vague: he does not attribute any content to his basic hierarchy of markedness, and he does not specify how the other hierarchies would interact with it and with each other.

Dixon 1979 also criticizes RG's model as too accusative, and points out that a more generalized framework must treat transitive and intransitive subjects (A and S) as separate grammatical categories. If there is to be a hierarchy, it could be something like  $1 = S$ ,  $2 = A$ ,  $3 = O$  (p. 124 fn. ). However, he cannot find any principled reason for such an ordering, and would prefer to do away with hierarchies altogether.

Clearly, none of these models is satisfactory, yet all make some valuable contributions. The fact that the RG model is biased in favour of accusativity, that Woodbury's proposal is too vague and Dixon's not sufficiently thought out does not mean that their positive contributions have to be discarded and that a generalized model cannot be established.

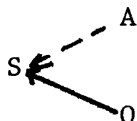
It is indeed possible to conceive of a model which would incorporate the grammatical insights of all these linguists, as well as others, with a single principled representation of the



relations between the main grammatical functions, and which would be valid for both ergative and accusative syntax. It is possible to establish such a model by starting from the observable features of the Active, Passive and Antipassive constructions.

#### 4.2 The basic configuration

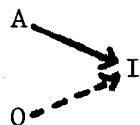
Taking S, A and O to be basic grammatical functions, an Active sentence has both A and O in the normal roles. The obligatory feature of the Passive construction is  $O \rightarrow S$ , while the obligatory feature of the Antipassive construction is  $A \rightarrow S$ . Since S is generally a less marked function than O (in accusative systems) or A (in ergative systems) (as observed by Woodbury), it can be written on the left (traditionally the weaker position) and the two possibilities can be represented thus (solid arrows = Passive, broken arrows = Antipassive):



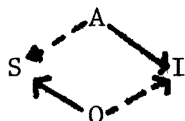
The element that does not go to S, if it stays in the sentence, becomes an indirect object (I);<sup>33</sup> the two possibilities are

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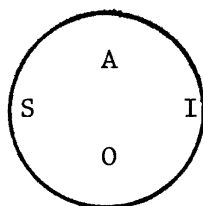
<sup>33</sup>In this paper I am only considering the indirect object derived by Passive or Antipassive transformation from an original A, not other types of indirect object such as Dative, which will be the object of a later paper. For examples of other indirect objects treated as I, however, see notes 26 and 36.



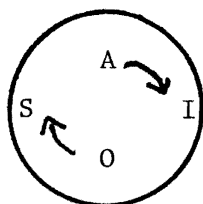
Hence the single schema representing all four possibilities<sup>34</sup>



Only two of the four possibilities are realizable at the same time, under language-specific circumstances, but the four basic categories S, A, O, I can be represented around a circle:



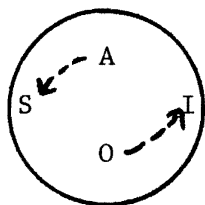
Accusative constructions use a clockwise motion of A and O for the Passive:



and similarly ergative constructions use an anticlockwise motion for the Antipassive:

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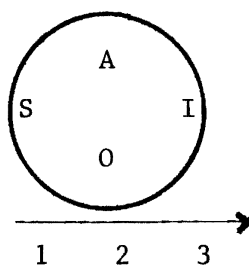
<sup>34</sup>Since this paper was written I have found that Ard 1978 has proposed a similar schema of grammatical relations; he does not, however, start from the same premises nor pursue the same implications.



#### 4.3 Associated values

S has been written on the left as less highly marked than either A or O, and this representation then implies that I is the most highly marked of all these elements, more so than A or O, which are represented as equally marked. Here the reasoning agrees with Woodbury's: S is the least marked of all categories, since its occurrence is fully predictable. On the other hand, the overt occurrence of I is usually optional; the presence of I in a sentence adds an element of meaning which is not at all predictable, hence is highly marked. And in between, A and O are both equally indispensable in an Active sentence, hence one cannot be said to have more weight than the other: they both have a marked value intermediate between S and I.

Thus it is possible to associate to the basic configuration, which is a circle, a scale:<sup>35</sup>

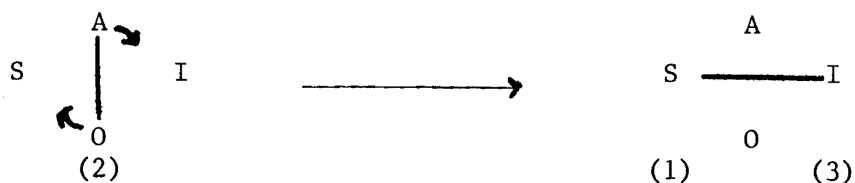


The point of equilibrium is represented by the Active transitive

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<sup>35</sup>The value of 3 attributed to I in this system should not be confused with the Dative = 3 equation in Relational Grammar.

sentence, where both A and O are present with their basic value of 2. This balance may be tipped in a direction determined by the particular language, thus for Passive, clockwise:



and for the Antipassive, anticlockwise:



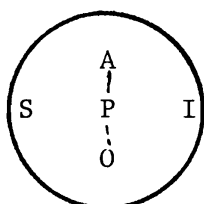
Note that the complete Passive or Antipassive sentence, including I, has the same value (4) as the Active transitive sentence; while the reduced Passive or Antipassive sentence (without I) has only the value of (1) which is that of an intransitive sentence.

Note also that this schema does not give priority to either demotion (to S) or promotion (to I) of one or the other element, since both are necessary to the balance of the sentence, and are part of a unified underlying whole. But, the fact that only the promoted element (now I), never the demoted one (now S) may be deleted, seems to indicate that demotion is less marked than promotion, hence more likely to happen.

#### 4.4 Verb agreement vs. special marking

Our schema can provide a representation not only of the basic grammatical functions S, A, O and I's relations to each other, but

also of their relation to the verb, and also provide an explanation of the complementary distribution between verb-agreement and special case-marking. The verb (P for Predicate) is represented in the centre of the circle:



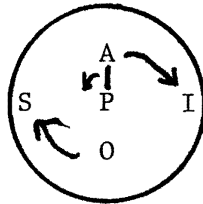
In the transitive sentence, containing A and O, the verb agrees with one of these functions, and the other takes on special marking: thus in accusative-type languages, the verb agrees with A, and O has accusative marking; while in ergative-type languages, the verb agrees with O, and A has ergative marking.

The choice of which element does what is related to the Passive/Antipassive transformation: only the element that may become S gets special marking: in accusative languages O becomes S through the Passive transformation, in ergative languages A becomes S through the Antipassive transformation. The fact that it is the element that may become S that gets special marking is not trivial, but is justified by the necessity of keeping apart the two roles; it is essential to be able to tell whether this element has its original function in the sentence (with special marking), or the S function, which is least marked. The other element, which cannot become S, hence never gets confused with it, normally gets the same marking as S, that is, agrees with the verb.

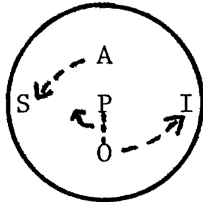
When an A or O moves to S in an Antipassive or Passive transformation, the verb agrees with the new S. This is representable on our schema too.

In accusative languages, the verb agrees with A: we represent this as a P-A radius. When the Passive transformation moves O to S

(and A to I), the verb stops agreeing with A and instead agrees with the new S: thus the clockwise motion of O and A is counterbalanced by a counterclockwise motion of the P-radius:



The opposite occurs in ergative languages:<sup>36</sup>

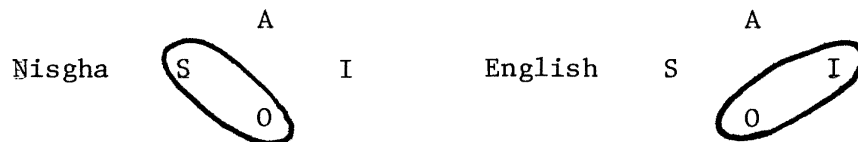


The element that used to agree with the verb, and has become I, can no longer agree with the verb, since the verb must agree with S; but it does get special marking as an oblique case or prepositional phrase.

In this way both Active and Passive/Antipassive sentences ultimately have the same marking structure: one element agrees with the verb, the other is specially marked. What is different in the structures is the weight given to the different elements: A and O have equal weight in Active sentences, while they are differently weighted in Passive/Antipassive sentences.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup>See also noun-incorporation (note 26): Nisgha incorporates O and S, English O and I, again in mirror-image fashion:



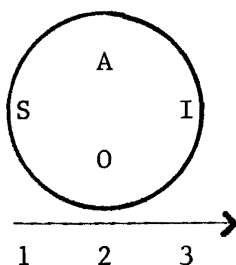
<sup>37</sup>See below 4.6.2 for a definition of weight.

## 4.5 Marked/unmarked

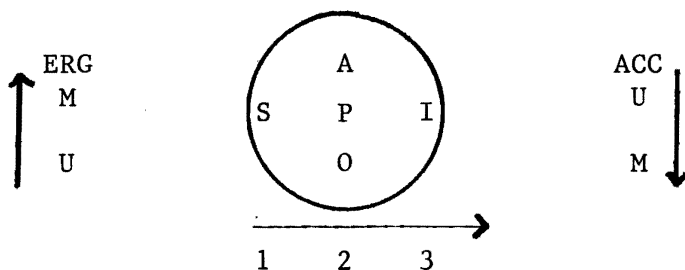
In a Passive or Antipassive sentence, the verb must agree with S as the unmarked or least marked, obligatory element in the sentence. In Active sentences, the verb agrees with only one of A or O, never with both.

If, from the fact of the verb's agreeing with S, one can conclude that the verb agrees with the unmarked element in the sentence, then one of A or O, whichever one agrees with the verb, must be less marked than its non-agreeing, specially marked counterpart. Thus, for accusative languages A is less marked than O, for ergative languages, O is less marked than A.

However, A & O have already been defined as equally necessary to the Active sentence, and therefore each as having the same value of (2). This value was reached by ranking S, A/O and I on a scale represented as parallel with the horizontal axis of the circle:



It is not possible to further differentiate A and O on this axis; but they can be differentiated on the vertical axis: in accusative languages, A is unmarked, O marked; in ergative languages, O is unmarked, A marked:



The basic quadripartite configuration and its associated scale must be universal. The fact that A and O receive U/M rankings may also be universal: if both A and O are necessary to the Active sentence, then the occurrence of one necessarily entails the occurrence of the other, which is predictable,<sup>38</sup> hence less marked. Which of A or O is chosen as M or U, and under which conditions (since split-type languages use both hierarchies), is language-specific.

Note that only one hierarchy, vertical or horizontal, is manifested in any one sentence, not both, since a sentence with two NP's has to be either of the A-O or S-I type. If the Active sentence is taken as basic, the effect of the Passive/Antipassive transformation is to reverse the basic vertical hierarchy of the language and transpose it on the horizontal axis:

- in the Passive, O ( $\rightarrow$  S) becomes unmarked, A ( $\rightarrow$  I) marked;
- in the Antipassive, A ( $\rightarrow$  S) becomes unmarked, O ( $\rightarrow$  I) marked.

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<sup>38</sup>This is stated here in syntactic terms, but there are semantic consequences as well. A and O influence each other's meaning, as shown in Chomsky's celebrated example of the non-identity of meaning of some Active and Passive counterparts:

(a) Everyone in the room knows two languages.

(b) Two languages are known to everyone in the room.

Only in (b) must the two languages be the same for everyone in the room. In (a), there may be as many sets of two languages as there are individuals described collectively by everyone.

It is no accident that (a) is a transitive sentence. The occurrence of an A in such a sentence predicts, as well as determines, the occurrence of an O; accordingly the meaning of the O, here two languages, is influenced by the indeterminacy of the meaning of the A everyone; but in (b), two languages is an S, an element which stands by itself in the sentence and does not require another NP; accordingly its meaning is not influenced by that of the I everyone.



But since values on the horizontal axis are more differentiated than those on the vertical axis, the relationship between S and I is differently weighted than that between A and O.

#### 4.6 Weight vs. markedness

Although there are cases where weight and markedness overlap, the two notions must be kept apart.

##### 4.6.1 Markedness

Markedness is a polar notion admitting of two values: U and M. Markedness has no meaning unless the U and M elements are opposable to each other in a context. Hence markedness only plays a role when a marked and an unmarked term are both present in a sentence. This is the case in a basic transitive sentence (A-O) or in a full Passive or Antipassive sentence (S-I).

In the A-O sentence, where both A and O are always present (at least in the context), which one of A or O is marked or unmarked depends on language specific factors, which condition ergative (A=M) or accusative (O=M) structure.

In the S-I sentence, S, which is obligatory, can be considered unmarked (U), I, which is optional, as marked (M).

In either sentence type, the unmarked element (S, A or O) agrees with the verb, the marked element (O or A, I) receives special marking (special case, preposition, etc. depending on the language).

In the reduced Passive or Antipassive sentence, however, markedness plays no role, since there is no I to oppose to S.

##### 4.6.2 Weight

Weight, on the other hand, is not a polar notion like markedness,

but an intrinsic property of the basic grammatical elements of the sentence.

Weight can be defined as the normal amount of stress or emphasis placed on the presence of a certain grammatical element. This means, of course, emphasis that is inherent in the grammatical function, not the various means which languages use to either reinforce this emphasis or shift it to other elements in the sentence. The term weight is free of this connotation of exceptionality. Weight is attached to certain elements of the sentence by virtue of their function.

A single obligatory element carries little weight, hence the S of an intransitive sentence gets the lowest value, 1.

In the transitive sentence, both A and O have equal weight, since they are opposable elements; hence they get the value of 2 (further differentiation is not on the weight scale but in terms of markedness as explained above).

In the S-I Passive or Antipassive sentence, one of O or A respectively becomes S, and gets the normal weight value of 1; the other element becomes I; an optional element, when present, carries a great deal of weight, hence I receives the value of 3.

Note that S always has the value of 1, whether or not I is present in the sentence. But when I is present, the 1-3 difference in their weight can be assimilated to a U-M distinction.

In the S-I sentence, then, relative weight and markedness of S and I overlap; while in the A-O sentence, markedness is distinct from weight; A and O are differentially marked, although they have the same weight:

<u>ACC/ERG</u>			<u>ACC</u>		<u>ERG</u>
S	—	I	U	A	M
			M	O	U
weight	1	3		2	
	(U)	(M)		+	
				2	

## 4.6.3

This partial overlap of markedness with weight explains the pivotal or equivalent role of S and the unmarked A or O in a variety of processes, for instance

- the least weighted/marked element agrees with the verb;
- S (weight 1) not I (weight 3)
- A(=U) in accusative patterns, O(=U) in ergative patterns;
- deletion occurs under coordination if
  - S (weight 1) = A (=U) in accusative patterns;
  - = O (=U) in ergative patterns.

## 4.7 Syntactic vs. thematic primes

The model presented here deals with the syntactic properties of ergativity and accusativity and not with any potential semantic/thematic correlates. That there is usually a correlation between the two types of properties hardly needs to be said; for instance, in an A-O sentence the likelihood of A being an animate actor and O an inanimate patient is far greater than the reverse. Languages can be ranked on a hierarchy as to how far they allow semantic elements to occupy less than optimally appropriate syntactic roles. However, transformations such as Passive and Antipassive also alter syntactic relations; if one can establish a hierarchy of

semantic criteria for opposable elements such as A and O, it is much more difficult to do so for S, since almost any NP can be in the S position, whether in a basic or a derived sentence.

No attempt will be made to deal with this problem here except to emphasize that S, A/O and I are syntactic functions, not thematic ones.

It seems appropriate, however, to comment on Dixon 1979's discussion of this point.

Dixon considers S, A and O to be syntactic primes, irreducible to each other, and the  $S=A$  or  $S=O$  equations of accusativity and ergativity respectively as belonging to a level of shallow structure (apparently the syntactic level) intermediate between surface structure (the morphological level) and deep structure, in which the primes are semantic or thematic. Overriding the accusative/ergative dichotomy is the fact that there is at the deep level a category of Subject, characterized as [+actor] and subsuming both S and A. Dixon finds evidence for this category in the almost universal accusativity of structures like imperatives and jussive constructions.

Such a conception seems to be an attempt to reconcile the ergative language specialist's awareness of the non-derivative status of ergative syntax with the Western linguist's deep intuitive but 'linguocentric' feeling that there is, or ought to be, a level where  $S=A$  as in accusative languages. In fact, Dixon's evidence is highly selective and he tends to dismiss it when it does not favour his hypothesis.

For instance, he mentions (p. 113-4) the fact that Nass-Gitksan imperatives do have ergative patterning (see above 3.2.1.1.2) a fact that seems to puzzle him as he expects imperatives to have accusative patterning; he seems to think this has nothing to do

with the ergative syntax of the language, but is only 'a fact about the structure of the verb in Nass-Gitksan' (p. 114). As for jussive constructions, Dixon only takes into account those which literally translate English 'X ordered Y to (do) Z', where Y is S or A of the infinitive clause. He could have found that in the Romance languages the more commonly used equivalents (using an auxiliary verb such as Fr. faire, see note 20) have an  $S=0$  equation; these languages, of course, are not ergative, and are beyond the range of those considered by Dixon; but the existence of such patterns does invalidate the claim that jussive constructions necessarily involve the  $S=A$  equation. The fact that Dixon gives no such patterns from ergative languages does not mean that they don't exist; they may have been overlooked (for instance, the Nisgha pattern is not described in Boas).

Moreover, even for accusative languages the  $S=A$  [+actor] semantic equation is not always valid. Thus, in

(58) John ate  
S

(59) John ate the roast  
A O

we do have  $S=A$ , but in

(60) John broke the window  
A O

(61) The window broke  
S

the equation is  $S=0$ , and in

(62) Mary cooked the roast  
A O

(63) Mary cooked  
S

(64) The roast cooked  
S

S can be equated with either A or O, although A and O each has to have definite semantic properties. To attribute to S in (64) the feature [+actor] is absurd. As well, on the basis of a number of examples of types (60) and (61), or (62) and (64), one could make a case for a deep category  $S=O=$  [+Patient] or [+Undergoer]. A linguist whose personal linguistic background was an ergative language would probably find plenty of evidence even in accusative languages for such a category.

In short, Dixon's conclusions about a privileged status for the category of subject outside of specific languages are not acceptable.

#### 4.8 Generalities

The model presented here, starting from the basic properties and transformations of the Active sentence, rather than from theoretical postulates, achieves the goal of unifying the presentation of ergativity and accusativity; it favours neither the one nor the other, but captures their mirror-image relationship, and considers both as equally possible ways of manifesting underlying grammatical relationships.

The model separates S from A and O as suggested by Dixon, and assigns them values on the hierarchy S, A/O, I, not arbitrarily, but on the basis of the observed behaviour of these elements in Active, Passive and Antipassive sentences. This model gives the I in such transformed sentences a status of its own and not just that of a Chômeur A or O as in RG.<sup>39</sup> This hierarchy is one of weight, a new notion. It is considered universal.

The model also incorporates a marked/unmarked hierarchy as suggested by Woodbury, with two different realizations conditioning ergativity or accusativity. Here again this hierarchy is not

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<sup>39</sup>See note 33.

an abstract theoretical concept pre-existing actual content, it is applied to actual members (A and O) of the basic configuration, which otherwise have the same weight value. This second hierarchy, although universal in its principle, is language-specific in its realization.

The existence of the two types of hierarchy and the underlying configuration of the basic sentence elements are derived from the facts of Active versus Passive/Antipassive constructions, which they serve to explain, as well as to describe, in related but opposite directions. The existence of Passive/Antipassive constructions is a necessary counterpart to the existence of the differential marking of A and O in the Active construction. The model also provides a principled way to account for ergative and accusative types of verb-agreement and case-marking, and for the complementarity between these phenomena; these are areas which are ususally relegated to 'lower rule' status, of no particular significance; they are shown here to tie in with the rest of the model.

This schema is only intended to represent basic relations in the sentence and is not designed to account for the variability of language-specific realizations; but it is compatible with mixed or split types as well as with fully ergative or accusative languages, since all that is needed for a change from one to the other is a reversal in the U/M values of A/O, which may be conditioned by factors such as Silverstein's 1976 hierarchy.

The usefulness of the model is not restricted to ergative and accusative types only; it is also compatible with languages where  $S \neq A \neq O$ , as well as those with  $S = A = O$ , since the language-specific features of the model need not all be present at any one time. In particular, it does not seem necessary for all languages

to have a M/U vertical hierarchy.

## 5.0 CONCLUSION

The syntactic structure of Nisgha shows that a language with truly ergative syntax, although statistically rare, is not just a logical possibility removed from the world of experience, but can be fully functional. It shows that regardless of thematic or semantic criteria there is no type of construction that a priori requires the accusative mode of syntactic expression. There is therefore no justification for relegating ergativity to a lower theoretical status than accusativity.

The model of grammatical relations presented here grants ergativity fully equal status with accusativity, and also underlies mixed or other types of syntactic expression. It reconciles, incorporates and reevaluates the observations and insights of a number of linguists, as well as introduces the notion of weight. It makes a sharp distinction between grammatical versus thematic roles.

It will now be necessary to further test and explore the implications of these findings in both practical and theoretical terms.

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Inter-/Intra-Ethnic Group Linguistic Humour:  
A Slovene Example.<sup>1</sup>

Joseph F. Kess and Cathleen A. Kess  
University of Victoria and Camosun College

Slovenes are one of a number of Slavic immigrant groups found in the industrial Great Lakes region of Canada and the United States. These North American Slovenes originated from what was then the Austro-Hungarian Empire and what has since become Yugoslavia during the first waves of migration between 1880 and 1920. Their northerly segment of about two million Slovene speakers within the Yugoslav federation has long since been politicized from membership in the post-World War I Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes into the Federated Republic of Slovenia. Those who migrated have not always directly participated in socio-political developments in the star kraj ('old country'), but nevertheless maintain strong feelings of ethnic identity.

The Slovenes are predominantly Catholic, highly literate, and their contribution to the industrial economy far outstrips their relative size geographically and numerically. It is difficult not to be impressed by the feat of Slovenia's survival as an ethnic unit in the middle of the changing Eastern European political scene, especially when one considers that they were bounded by powerful and expanding neighbours like the Germans, Austrians, Italians, and Hungarians. Such neighbours were always

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<sup>1</sup>This is a revised version of a paper which was presented at the Western Humor, Irony, and Metaphor Conference on Linguistic Humor, Arizona State University, April 3, 1982.

numerically superior to the Slovenes, sometimes by many times over and in past times such groups often held under their complete sway the little Slovene provinces, and to some degree still do. For example, as a result of faulty post-war partitioning, Slovene minorities are still to be found in Italy, Hungary, and Austria, with by far the largest number in the latter country's southern provinces. It is interesting to note that some of the same humor mechanisms used to bolster ethnicity in the Old World find reflections in the North American Slovenes' attempt to maintain ethnicity in a heterogeneous English-speaking dominant culture populated by other immigrant subcultures, some of which were familiar ones from the European scene.

There have been several large waves of migration by the Slovenes — one around the turn of the century, another in the period after World War I, and the last one after World War II. Slovenes migrated in large numbers for their relatively small population, travelling to such diverse places as Australia, Argentina, Canada, and most especially, to the United States. To many, their most noticeable presence has been in the Great Lakes industrial region, and it is in Cleveland, Ohio, that their contributions have been most obvious. But they are now a disappearing breed, these Ameriški Slovenci, and of the many literary organs published in the past by the American Slovenes — namely, the Amerikanski Slovenec, 'The American Slovene', the Glas Naroda, 'Voice of the People', the Narodni Vestnik, 'Folk News', the Proletarec, the 'Worker', the Slovenski Narod, the 'Slovene People', the Ameriška Domovina, 'The American Home', and the Prosveta, 'The Enlightenment', only the Cleveland-based Ameriška Domovina continues on with a dwindling readership.

For a time the community was stable, and many Slovenes

managed to keep their mother tongue and ethnic identity intact by establishing and maintaining neighbourhoods, parishes, or small communities along ethnic lines. (This paper is based on one of those small communities on the East Side of Cleveland, Ohio, and the data herein presented is derived from immigrant villagers who arrived just after the first war.) With time, younger generations, as is typical with most immigrant groups in North America, break their ethnic and linguistic ties with the older culture, moving out to find a place in the larger North American society. As with the other small immigrant groups in North America, the problem of adjustment and assimilation was not exclusively one of meeting the dominant society head-on, but also one of meeting and co-existing with a number of other ethnic subcultures. Some of these subcultures were familiar from the Old World and some of the pressures to preserve ethnicity in the face of these other larger and more often more important immigrant subcultures reasserted themselves in the retention or refurbishing of the humor surrounding such groups. Obviously, the investigation of ethnic linguistic humor leads to a clearer picture of the respective share of various ethnic elements in the shaping of North American culture, as well as a clearer picture of their own self-concepts during the active period of their assimilation into that culture.

One cannot help but be fascinated by the general manner and frequency of linguistic play in Slovene, and its participation in the humor tradition itself. There are several humor themes which occur with some regularity in post-World War I immigrant Slovene folklore and it is interesting to contrast two of these as a measure of inter-group and intra-group perceptions. There are, for example, short humorous stories about an anonymous wandering inhabitant of the Slovene town of Ribnica. The Ribenčan is a

Slovene Charlie Brown — he never gets things straight and fortune never smiles on him. But the Ribenčan, no matter what happens to him, is always a Slovene. Another set of humorous stories deal with outsiders, often other groups with whom the Slovenes have shared or disputed political, cultural, and geographical ties. Such tales are not only interesting in themselves, but the linguistic treatment of in-group as opposed to out-group is informative of Slovenes' perceptions of themselves as a cohesive, unified ethnic group.

The Ribenčan is the protagonist of countless 'numbskull stories', all designed to point up the cultural and intellectual superiority of the teller's own community in comparison to the sad state of Ribnica affairs. In times past, the Ribenčan played an important part in village economies by peddling wooden utensils, pottery, and weavings in exchange for winter provisions like corn, wheat, barley, oats and potatoes. Travelling from village to village, from a very early time he was known far and wide, and his own eccentricities of speech and behaviour became far better known than the more extreme habits of others who had simply never travelled at all. It was not that he was so very different from the other communities; he was simply better known.

The numerous tales which deal with the exploits of the villagers of Ribnica are to a one humorously, but never morally, laid out. They are seldom vicious, rarely sarcastic, simply teasing and pleasantly humorous. They usually reflect on some minor weakness of mankind as personified in the Ribenčan or specifically on some minor weakness of the Ribenčan himself. What is incredible is that one finds such Ribenčan tales told even in small farming villages of no more than a dozen houses — like Vas Ratje, which has no bus and until recently did not even appear on government maps. Ribnica

itself is not the major urban centre, but it is reasonably sized!

Ribnica tales usually follow along the vein exhibited in the following examples.

Six Ribenčani were in the army in the north, assigned to the cannons. During the heat of the battle they found an ornamental cannon made of ceramic and loaded it up for firing.

"Ready! Aim! Fire!"

When the smoke had cleared, the six were no more. Only one Ribenčan was left, and he could only weakly gasp,

"My God, what a cannon! Just think, even here five were killed; you can only imagine what it was like where the charge fell!"

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One day a Ribenčan was walking down the street in Ljubljana enjoying the sights. Unbeknownst to him, a lady who had been cleaning the upper-story windows had slipped and fallen to the ground right at his feet. He was utterly dumbfounded at the sight, and could hardly contain himself until he got home again. He excitedly told all his friends of what happened.

"Friends, you'd never believe it! In Ljubljana there are such fine women. And they just throw them away if they're no good anymore. Why, just at my feet fell one that someone had tossed right out the window. Imagine! Here at least we keep them for working in the fields, but there they just toss them right out the window."

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There are some Ribenčan tales which also make use of linguistic play as the central theme. But those never poke fun at the Ribenčan's eccentric speech patterns from a dialectal point of view, although comments on the dialectal idiosyncracies of Slovene speech forms are head in conventional speech. Rather, they usually deal with his coming out on the wrong side of linguistically defined ambiguities. For example, one story runs as follows.

One day a Ribenčan was driving a wagon into town, and as he went along, he was daydreaming of the lottery, saying to himself,

"God grant that I hit it just right! God grant that I hit it just right this time!"

And sure enough, he hit it just right — he collided with a milestone by the side of the road.

This tale is obviously based on the play on words allowed by the polysemy inherent in the verb zadeti, which can mean variously "to hit (the mark); to win (a prize); to meet with an accident; to go well for one." Unfortunately for our Ribenčan protagonist, the intended meaning of "Oh, let me hit it this time!", speaking of the winning number in the lottery, was realized as "Oh, let me hit it!", in the manner of striking or colliding with something. As the Ribenčan asks fervently, Bog daj da bi dobro zadenil ... dobro zadenil ..., "God grant that I hit it just right ... that I hit it just right ..." And he does indeed zadenil, but not in the sense he had intended. Pa je res zadenil, 'He hit it all right'; 'he ran right into a milestone by the side of the road', ... pa res je zadenil noter en kanton, pa je dober zadenil.

A similar tale runs as follows:

On his way to market the Ribenčan kept praying out loud,

"Oh dear God, I hope I'm the only one there at the fair. Oh, how I hope I'm the only one there!"

Of course, what he intended was his being the only vendor with this particular kind of goods to sell — but he did indeed count on there being lots of customers there to sell his wares to.

He travelled for days and days, and when he did finally arrive at the market-fair, sure enough if he wasn't the only one there after all. He asked a passerby where everyone was for the fair. The passerby replied,

"Why, the fair was held yesterday. Don't you know you're a day late? Why, you must be the only one here."

And the Ribenčan thought to himself,

"Well, I did want to be the only one here, didn't I?"

Other groups are not given quite the same treatment. Slovenia is bordered by Italy, Austria, Hungary, and Croatia, and has been variously under the political and cultural reachers of Italic, Germanic, and less so the Gallic and Turkic spheres of influence. Slovene was also spoken far more widely than it is now, extending into parts of Croatian Pannonia in the south and into upper Austria. For example, upper Styria (Štajersko) was in effect a Slovene-speaking province in the Austro-Hungarian empire. There are still minorities of Slovene-speaking inhabitants in neighbouring areas in northern Italy; for example Trieste (Trst) has both Slovene and



Italian speakers and the Italian Soča River Valley is sprinkled with Slovenes. In lower Austria, Klagenfurt (Celovec) was a Germanic-speaking urban centre in a Slovene-speaking countryside.

One result of this geographical spread is that those areas in which bilingualism and language contact are common have probably added to the variety of speech forms in Slovene itself. Slovene spoken in these areas has taken on some phonological and lexical characteristics of the dominant language in the area. Soča Valley speakers, for example, are characterized by intonation and stress cadences similar to northern Italian. Some speech forms in Austrian territory and on the present Slovene side of the boundaries exhibit Germanic characteristics, from past historical as well as continuing contact. Maribor, for example, once a German urban centre on the Drava River, but repopulated from the surrounding Slovene countryside after the establishment of Yugoslavia in the years following the first war, shows some distinctively Germanic influences.

However, it is noteworthy that among this group of immigrant Slovenes such Slovene constituencies are not typically singled out for humor of the linguistic kind, even though dialectically they are somewhat removed from any given dialect on the linguistic continuum. But those other ethnic groups (whose speech may have even influenced such variation) are often singled out in terms of their speech patterns or their cultural patterns. Ribnica speakers, for example, are not typically singled out for such characteristics, they simply occupy the position of protagonist in humorous tales revolving about their misfortunes. There is little question that such dialect differences were well-recognized. For example, Josip Jurčič in his novel Rokovnjači, serialized in the first volume of the Ljubljanski Zvon of 1881, puts the following words in the mouth

of his famous blusterer Blaž Mozol:

"Oh kod? Tam iz Štajerskega od nekod. Ne vem več, kako se pravi. Ali to je čudno, ali ni čudno? Ljubi moj Rajtguzen, da kadar govori, takó govori, kakor mi govorimo, le malo bolj zivija kakor naši poljci doli. Ne zavija pa takó, kakor sem slišal, ko sem enkrat z ranjco svojo materjo na Štajersko na božjo pot šel, v Gornji grad, kaj misliš ti, Rajtguzen? Vidiš ti zmirom po Obloški zavijaš, tako nekako po Ribniški 'nájsem-nájsem'. A ta naš Nande, ki bi rad pri mojej sestri zet bil, nič ne zavija po štajerski."

"From where? There in Štajersko somewhere. I don't know any more, as they say. But isn't it strange, my dear Rajtguzen, that when he talks, he talks like we talk, even if he does twist it a bit like the flatlanders. He doesn't twist (his speech) the way I heard it when I went to Štajersko, to Gornji grad, with my mother on a pilgrimage once. What do you think, Rajtguzen? See, you always talk in the Obloški style, sort of like the Ribniški (Ribnica) 'I'm not-I'm not'. But this Nande of ours, who wants to be my sister's son-in-law, doesn't talk in the Štajerski fashion at all."

Non-Slovene groups do, however, occupy more central positions in stories involving linguistic characteristics. An excellent example of this is offered by the following treatment of Croatian, another south Slavic language close enough to constitute a separate sub-grouping with Slovene (especially true of those northwestern varieties of Croatian termed kajkavian). Standard

Slovene is derived from Ljubljana, the political and cultural centre of Slovenia, but Ljubljana Slovene is actually based on Dolenjsko and Gorenjsko speech, two separately defined dialects, and more or less straddles the boundary between them. Even this standard shares a large quotient of mutual intelligibility with the Zagreb standard for northern kajkavian Croatian, and obviously, those immediately adjacent dialects on either side of the linguistic border offer an even greater continuum of similarities. Ribnica, incidentally, is not far from the boundaries, but it is the Croat who figures prominently in humorous tales dealing not with his misfortunes and adventures alone, but with his speech patterns in arriving at these. The point of the tale is not entirely his misfortune, his ineptness, his hard luck (as it is with the Ribenčan); it also employs the differences in his speech patterns as a central point in the humor of the story.

Slovenes have long chafed at the numerical superiority of their southern neighbours, the Croats. Slovenia, being directly under the Germanic-speaking pre-World War I Austro-Hungarian Empire was industrially developed from an early time, and continues to this day to enjoy a position of technological superiority over its sister republics in the Federation. Ljubljana (Laibach) is on the main rail line which went from inland to the sea at Trieste and Fiume. The following example is likely some veiled reference to this fact and both real and imagined Slovene technological superiority.

One day a Croat was visiting Ljubljana, and there happened to see a train on the track. He was amazed at this, never having seen one before, and could hardly contain his excitement at the sight. When he returned home, he told all of his friends of the strange sight,

saying,

"You know, I saw a wondrous thing in Ljubljana.  
There I saw a strange and wonderful machine,  
which farts a little,  
stinks a little,  
and goes like the devil himself."

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In Slovene, the tone of the tale is carried by the language itself. The teller inserts a few apparent Croat, or Croat-like, usages into the idiom, and the tale proceeds on this basis. Thus, the original stanza has the following.

"Znaš, šta sem videl,  
To véliko črno mrcino;  
Pa to malo pa prđi,  
Malo pa smrđi,  
Pa ide ko vrag."

Note the underlined elements. The Croat-like forms vrag for Slovene hudič 'devil', znaš for veš 'you (sing.) know', šta for kaj 'what', ide for gre 'it goes', and the stress change on velíko, prdí, and smrdí to véliko 'big', prđi 'it farts', and smrđi 'it stinks' complete the basis of the sentence.

The same kinds of jokes were created in the New World. For example, the following joke makes use of the same narrator strategies, i.e., adopting what appears to the listener to be Croatian linguistic features (but which may not in fact be!).

"Two Croats went to America. And when they got  
to New York they saw a house with a sign on it, advertising

it FOR RENT. The one Croat said to the other,

"Glej no, to je kuća forent.

(Look, there's a house forent.)

A idemo napred.

(But let's go on a little further.)

Hoćemo dóbiti za bádeva."

(We're sure to get (the next one) for nothing.)

Besides the obvious play on supposed Croatian linguistic features, the tale also revolves about the Croats' misunderstanding of the word forent. At this time, what was commonly called a goldinar (see also Slov. for golinar dialectally) in Slovenian was forint in Croatian — a florin, about the equivalent of two Austrian crowns and used in Croatia until 1892. Besides this feature, the dialectal Slovene version would have been something like the following instead.

"Le no, tam je hiša 'for rent'.

Pa prjdemo še malo naprej.

Bomo dobili za nič.

What is equally interesting is that the Slovene narrator's supposed Croatian usages are often incorrect. Not the least among these is forent itself, which should be Croatian forint. Another good example is bádeva, which should be badáva with the stress on the second syllable (this, incidentally, is an archaic Turkish borrowing into Croatian and is unknown to most modern speakers).

It is interesting to note that the treatment accorded in-group fellow-members of what is perceived as the same linguistic and cultural continuum is not accorded outgroup individuals. In point of fact, the former may be relatively different on the linguistic

continuum, and perhaps for those on the geographical periphery, on the cultural continuum. But these are nevertheless considered in-group members on the same abstract language framework. One sees in such humor implicit dimensions of ethnicity, not surprising in the new world where one has often felt the need of preservation of such ethnicity. More stress is laid on seemingly large cultural and linguistic differences outside the group and less attention is paid to the seemingly minor cultural and linguistic differences within the group.

In conclusion, the attempt to preserve ethnic and linguistic identity is seen in two outlets for ethnic humor. One notes the minimal attention paid to language differences in humorous tales which have an easily-identified Slovene dialect group as protagonists and the maximal attention paid to language differences for a closely related but distinctive language group. In the first case, linguistic dissimilarities are not taken note of, while in the second linguistic similarities are very much taken note of. Inter-group and intra-group ethnic humor seems to support different themes, and this paper has offered Slovene examples of each.

