

A position is absolutive rather than the expected ergative. Crucially, such a DP does not trigger agreement, despite being the highest absolutive in its clause.

(74) *Punjabi*

- a. tū                    lakRi                    vaD-i.  
 you.F/M.ABS wood.F.SG.ABS cut-PAST.F.SG  
 ‘You (male or female) cut the wood.’
- b. tū                    kampuTar                    bech-ia.  
 you.F/M.ABS computer.M.SG.ABS sell-PAST.M.SG  
 ‘You (male or female) sold the computer.’  
 (Butt 2005:187)

(75) *Marathi*

- mii/aamhii/tuu/tuumhii                    gaaNii                    mhaTlii.  
 I.ABS/we.ABS/you.SG.ABS/you.PL.ABS song.3PL.N.ABS sing.PAST.3PL.N  
 ‘I/We/You sang songs.’  
 (Pandharipande 1997:131)

Therefore, the correct generalization is demonstrably not based on morphological case: agreement is triggered, not by the highest DP bearing absolutive case, but by the highest DP bearing structural abstract Case. In (74) and (75), the highest DPs bearing morphological absolutive bear abstract inherent ergative Case and thus do not trigger agreement. The data speak strongly against a purely morphological analysis of agreement.

In sum, Bobaljik proposes that agreement is determined by morphological case marking. In contrast, I have proposed here that agreement relationships are established in the syntax on the basis of closest c-command and realized in the morphology. Bobaljik’s proposal contains two parts: first, an accessibility hierarchy based on morphological case, determining which DPs are able to trigger agreement; second, a locality condition whereby the highest accessible DP in the clause at PF triggers agreement. It is exactly where Bobaljik’s theory and mine make different predictions that his theory’s predictions fail to be realized.

To conclude, these two subsections have supported the general approach taken in this article whereby case and agreement relationships are established in the syntax and realized in the morphology. To wait until the morphology to do case and agreement is to wait too long.

## 5 Conclusion

In this article, I argued that abstract Case and agreement relationships are established in the syntax and realized in the morphology, each language’s realization being as faithful as its morphological resources allow. The main empirical basis was a class of *prima facie* ergative-absolutive languages that lack absolutive both as an abstract Case and as a morphological case. What has been called the absolutive is instead the morphological default case, inserted when a specific realization of the abstract Case feature is unavailable. The proposed analysis was supported by differential case marking based on a nominal hierarchy, which was also shown to have a morphological source.

Finally, I argued that the analysis compares favorably with analyses in which all case and agreement are determined in the morphology.

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