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Unergativity in Embosi

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Abstract: This contribution investigates the unaccusative hypothesis driving data from Embosí language regarding unergative predicates. It comes out from discussion that if Split intransitive is a cross linguistically based phenomenon, its diagnostic tests are rather linguistic parameters of variation. Perlmutter (1978) puts forward three different forms of unaccusative hypothesis, then I assert that it is his second form which suits and meets its explanatory adequacy cross linguistically. Moreover, Embosí resorts to two tests namely nominalization and cognate objects to diagnose unergative predicates. Finally, unergativity is related to agentivity and volition.

Keywords: Unergativity; Unergative predicates; Unaccusative hypothesis; Embosí.

1. Introduction

The main objective of this work is to examine the ways Embosi attests Split Intransitivity Hypothesis with a special reference to unergative verbs. According to the literature available, (Belletti and Luigi, 1981; Burzio, 1986a; Grewendorf, 1989; Hall, 1965; Perlmutter, 1978; Radford, 2009) intransitive predicates are divided into two classes notably unergatives and unaccusatives. In the ensuing lines, we are going to discuss the properties, the structure and the idiosyncratic features of unergative predicates in Embosi. This study raises the following questions:

- (1) Are unergative predicate tests cross linguistically based?
- (2) What are Embosi tests to depict unergative predicates?
- (3) Are there any language universal governing unergativity?

This paper includes four sections. Section 1 provides an overview of unergativity properties. The syntax semantic interface in terms of structure of unergatives is the concern of section 2. In section 3, I discussed well-known unergativity tests based on English to avoid melting different arguments. Finally, section 4 deals unergative analysis in Embosi language.

2. Unergative Properties

Traditionally speaking, the predicate typology shows three major class of verbs namely one argument verbs (intransitive), two argument verbs (transitive) and three argument verbs (ditransitive). This typology has shown its limitations to the extent that the first class of verbs is not homogeneous. To quote Tamas (2012).

In essence, the Unaccusative Hypothesis (Perlmutter, 1978) traditional proposes a refinement of this traditional categorization as it claims that the class of single- argument verbs is not homogeneous; rather, it can be neatly subdivided into two disjoint subgroups based on syntactic behaviour. So-called unergative verbs behave like the subject of two-argument verbs, whereas so-called unaccusatives display syntactic behaviour similar to that of the objects of two-argument verbs.

Based on Perlmutter (1978) pioneering work, intransitive verbs are divided into two distinct groups namely unaccusative and unergative predicates. Since this work is based on unergative predicates, we are going to highlight its syntactic characteristics. Let's consider the following examples.

- (1) a-Paul **works** here.
- b- A baby **coughed** all night.
- c- Parents **quarrelled** all the times.
- d- Kids **walk** in the garden.
- e- He **hammered** on the table.

All the examples in (1) illustrate predicates which select only one argument. This argument at LF position occupies the subject position. So, based on semantic interpretation, this argument is assigned Agent role because it has the control over the action denoted by the predicate. Similarly, this verb external argument is the instigator, the actor of the event. In the same vein, it appears that unergative predicates are intimately related to volition acts. Putting things quite in a similar way, unergatives denote actions that describe the will or the volition of the instigator. In this connection Kishimoto (1996) assumes that the subjects of unergative are generally perceived as

willfully initiating the action expressed by the verbs in Japanese. This is corroborated by Vendler (1957) and Dowty (1979) verb classification, unergatives are put in activity verb category. In addition to volition property, unergative predicates are typically atelic, that is, they are concerned with events that do not have a natural end point in the discourse, hence their compatibility with duration adverbial as show in (2).

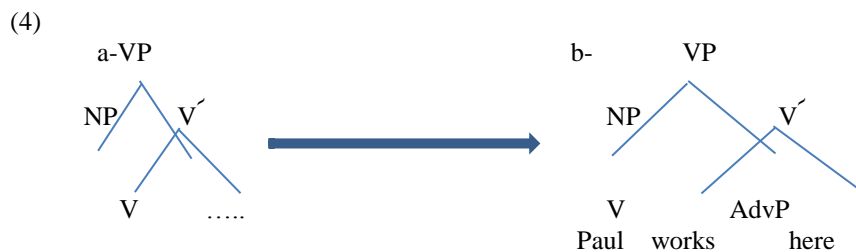
- (2) a- Paul works here since last year.
 b- A baby has been coughing for 20 minutes.
 c- Parents have been quarrelling since twelve o'clock.
 d- Kids are walking in the garden for one hour.
 e- He has been hammering on the table for ten minutes.

Moreover, some intransitive unergative verbs in (1&2) examples are semantically related to location. The question that immediately crops out concerns whether these verbs can still be grammatical once we use locative inversion as illustrate below.

- (3) a- In the garden works Paul.
 b- Around them chattered and sang many Gospel singers.
 c- Up the stairs bounded Congressman Jackson.

The verbs in (3) are all intransitive unergative that accommodate locative inversion. The conclusion that can be drawn from these examples is that the semantic property of these verbs is so productive that they have two inherent features: one feature is related to unergativity (1a) and one is compatible with unaccusativity (3a), hence allowing locative inversion.

As can be observed from the above examples, the events described by these unergative predicates do not have a natural end point. This means that the action is not accomplished yet. On syntactic level, the unergative predicate select an external argument which is basically in a subject position as demonstrated in the following P-marker.



Moreover, Burzio's Generalization assumes that the assignment of case is inherent to the presence of an external argument. This can be summarized as follows:

- a. Only verbs, which assign external Θ -role, assign accusative Case (Burzio, 1986a)
- b. A verb, which fails to assign accusative Case to its object, does not assign an external Θ -role (Burzio, 1986a).

Yet it is important based on Chomsky (1986a) to highlight that the case is twofold, that is, inherent and structural case. In this connection, (Zwakele, 2006) assumes that "inherent Case as the type of Case assigned at D-structure. It is associated with δ -marking i.e. a head assigns inherent Case to a DP it Θ -marks. Inherent Cases are genitive Case and dative Case".

In addition, structural case is explained in the following lines.

In contrast, structural Cases are nominative and accusative: they are not assigned to DPs according to their δ -roles, but at S-Structure according to the structural position of the DP. Verbs, prepositions and [+finite] I assign structural Cases to DPs. (Motsa Zwakele ibid)

In connection to unergative predicates, one can conclude that they are capable of assigning accusative case since they have true external arguments.

3. Unergative Tests

Among the different tests that have elicited to cover Unaccusative Hypothesis, the following concern those that are related to unergativity only.

- (4) a- der- lach-er
 the laughter
 'The person who laughs'

- b- Es wurde gelacht
 it was laughed
 'People laughed'

- c- Der Man hat/ist gelacht
 the man has/is laughed
 The man laughed (Kaufmann, 1995)

- d- Sylvester cried his eyes out. (Levin and Rappaport, 1995)
 e- You may sleep [it(the baby)] quiet again. (Levin and Rappaport, 1995)
 f- Liz slept a restful sleep.
 g- cal-o daurr-aa jaa-e
 come-Subjv.2Sg run-Perf.M. go-Subjv.M.Sg
 Come on, let it be run (Let us run). (Tasfeer, 2010)

The examples in (5) show that unergative predicates can be tested under the conditions hereafter described. Firstly, this class of predicates allows the derivation of deverbal noun, hence nominalization process; (5a) is a telling example. Secondly, the unergative predicates can be subject to impersonal passivization. This means that this category of verbs can take an impersonal subject, an expletive subject 'it' as illustrated in (5b) and (5g). The third test for unergative predicates can be the selection of the auxiliary. This condition is only met with language which attest two auxiliary 'Be/have' contrast. Under this circumstance, the auxiliary that goes with unergativity is 'to have', (5c) better illustrates this idea.

Moreover, an unergative predicate can appear with a resultative construction under some restrictive conditions. In fact, the co-occurrence of unergative and a resultative construction is made possible if the NP c-commanded by the predicate is not viewed as its sole argument. In the example (5d), the NP adjacent to the predicate 'cry' is not subcategorized by the latter simply because once we resort to externalization or nominalization, the derived sentence will be ungrammatical. Another argument in support of the incompatibility of the NP following unergative predicates to be argument comes from the small clause implying that NP and its complements. In this connection, the NP 'his eyes' is rather the subject of out. Similarly, the pronoun 'it' in (5e) is the subject of 'quiet'. The argument about resultative construction justifies the ungrammaticality of the examples below because these predicates are devoid of the capacity to subcategorize for a complement.

- (6) *a- Sylvester cried his eyes.
 *b- You may sleep it.

The last two tests on unergative predicates concern the selection of cognate object (5f). These predicates can select cognate objects because their post-verbal position is underlyingly empty.

4. Unergative Verbs in Embosi

This section provides a list of diagnosis tests Embosi language uses to instantiate unergative predicates. The first test that is nominalization of the one argument of the predicate as illustrated in (6) below.

- (6) a- o-sál-i
 Nom.Pref-Stem.work-Nom.Suf.
 (the) worker

- b- o-bùn-ù
 Nom.Pref-Stem.fight-Nom.Suf.
 (the) fighter

- c- o-bín-i
 Nom.Pref- Stem.dance-Nom.Suf.
 (the) dancer

- d- o-bér-i
 Nom.Pref- Stem.play-Nom.Suf.
 (the) player

It is worth stressing that not all unergative predicates in Embosi will follow the above morphological patterns. In this respect, the expression *X ye-* (the *X* that) is used with some verbs to denote agentivity. Examples in (7) are illustrious.

- (7) a- moro ye-baar-a
 Person who-think-FV
 (the) person who thinks

- b- moro ye-síny-a
 Person who-urinate-FV
 (the) person who urinates

- c- moro ye-β-ó ma awawasi
 Person who-speak-FV in a whisper
 (the) person who whispers

- c- nyama ye-ηðn-ɔ
 Animal that-growl-FV

(the) animal that growls

There is one word of caution here. This concerns the verb class of manner of speaking verbs as illustrated in (7c). This example illustrates an instance of Subevent Identification Condition which stipulates that “*each subevent in the event structure must be identified by a lexical head (e.g., a V, an A, or a P) in the syntax*” (Rappaport and Levin, 1998). This means that syntax must show all the possible participants of a predicate via a lexicalized entity which syntactically and fully overt. In other words, if English has verbs distinguishing the act of speaking and the manner of speaking, this is not always in all languages-the case of Embosi- hence the language can have resort to an expression denoting the manner the action of the verb is carried out. This proves that the Template Augmentation (Rappaport & Levin, op.cit.111) is not always lexicalized, but it can also be structural. What I mean here is the lexicalization of the Template Augmentation is based on lexicalized verb (the case of English to speak vs to whisper) whilst the structural frame means that the Template Augmentation can be captured out by an expression, a structural unit (the case of Embosi *ib̥s* to speak and *ib̥s ma awawasi* ‘to whisper’).

Cognate object is the second test for unergativity in Embosi. Examples (8) are true illustrations.

(8) a- Kanga a-dz-èè at̥

Kanga he-laugh-FV laugh
Kanga laughs (a laugh)

b- Ikia a-l̥r-i nd̥r̥ó
Ikia she-dream-FV a dream
Ikia dreams (makes a dram)

c- Ibara a-sál-a isála
Ibara s/he-work-FV work
‘Ibara works (a job)’

d- Akweli abwé ombèè
Akweli s/he-fall-FV a fall
Akweli falls down

e- Ndongo a-síny-a andzínyá
Ndongo s/he-urinate-FV urine
‘Ndongo urinates (urine)’

There is an abundant literature on the analysis of cognate object cross linguistically ((Huddleston and Pullum, 2002; Jones 1988; Massam, 1990; Quirk *et al.*, 1985; Real Puigdollars Cristina, 2008), and many others). Real Puigdollars Cristina (2008) provides a summary of properties that are not compatible with cognate objects in English as follows:

(9)

CO PROPERTIES

- | | |
|---|------------------------------|
| a. *A silly smile was smiled. | [Passivization] |
| b. *A silly smile, nobody smiled. | [Topicalization] |
| c. *Maggie smiled a silly smiled and then her brother smiled. | [Pronominalization] |
| d. *He smiled the smile for which he was famous. | [Definiteness Restriction] |
| e. *What did he die? | [Questioning] |
| f. ? He died a death. | [Modifier obligatory] |
| g. *He died a suicide/ a murder. | [Object necessarily cognate] |

The question that immediately crops out is whether these properties fall into language common or idiosyncratic aspects. Let’s consider Embosi counterexamples in this regard.

(10) a- at̥ e- a-dz-èè Kanga

Kanga he-laugh-FV laugh
Kanga laughs (a laugh).

b- at̥, Kanga a-dz-èè
laugh, Kanga he-laugh-FV
Laugh; Kanga does.

c- Kanga a-dz-èè nde?
Kanga he-laugh-FV what
What is Kanga laughing?

d- at̥ ma-dz-èè Kanga
laugh that-laugh Kanga
(the) laugh that Kanga laughs

Before analyzing this example on cognate objects in Embosi, it is worth saying on the nature of cognate objects. In the literature, cognate objects have been divided into two groups namely adjunct (Huddleston and Pullum, 2002; Jones 1988; Moltmann, 1989) and complements (Kuno and Takami, 2004; Massam, 1990; Quirk *et al.*, 1985). Based on this typology, it is obvious that when a cognate object is taken as an adjunct, it is impossible to be passivized as in (9a), questioned as in (9e), pronominalized as in (9c). On the contrary, if a cognate object is a complement, this means that it has the possibility to be passivized as in (10a), topicalized as in (10b), relativized as in (10d) or questioned as in (10c). As just argued; I hold the view that Embosi cognates look like complements because they behave like true objects. There is an issue worth of attention. If the examples in (8) are instances of unergative predicates, we wonder whether they should be classified as one argument predicate or two argument predicate. To account for the classification of these predicates I put forward the idea that the selection of these cognate objects is motivated by the fact their non-selection could lead to semantic bleaching. Rappaport and Levin (op.cit:105) provides further details on semantic bleaching on their footnote (5) that we repeat hereafter as follows:

There are some types of meaning change that are not monotonic, but these appear to represent phenomena distinct from that under study in this paper. An example is the phenomenon sometimes referred to as "semantic bleaching" which appears to involve the loss of some element word meaning. Illustrations of "semantic bleaching" are the use of the verb break in *The news broke* of the use of the verb fall in *The baby fell asleep*. It is significant that "semantic bleaching" always involves the loss or weakening of the idiosyncratic aspect of verb semantic (what we call the "constant"...) and to our knowledge, never involve removal of grammatically-relevant aspect of verb meaning. [...]. Further semantic bleaching is quite idiosyncratic, being associated with individual verbs rather than with grammatically-relevant semantic classes of verb in the sense of Levin (1993).

In the light of the above assertion, we draw the conclusion the conclusion the semantic bleaching target one verb individually, but has no connection with a group of verbs sharing some grammatical inherent properties. In this connection, some of the predicates in the examples (8) have a complex subcategorization framework to the extent that it can select different arguments leading to a weakening of its semantic aspects. This is the case of *idzèè* which means 'to laugh' when its object is a cognate object (at), whereas it means 'to laugh at or to mock' if it selects an animate NP, *isala* means 'work' with a cognate object, while it is 'to criticize sb' when an animate NP is licensed. Therefore, it is the worthwhile mentioning that animacy is the criterion that can account for the distinction between the different reading of some unergative predicates that select cognate object.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, I have proposed the analysis of Embósi unergative predicate with a view to provide an answer to Perlmutter (op.cit:161) question:

A major question that arises in connection to with the unaccusative hypothesis is that of the extent to which initial unaccusative vs initial unergative is cross linguistically uniform and the extent to which it varies from language to language.

The uniformity of the unaccusative hypothesis is confirmed by the fact most languages attest the split of the traditional verb class, that of intransitive, in terms of unergative and unaccusative predicates. This instantiation of this linguistic phenomenon cross linguistically illustrates the heuristic value of universal grammar principles, i.e., language universals include principles that are common to all languages and those that are idiosyncratic to them. It is in fact the idiosyncrasy factor that leads to variation amongst languages. As a matter, since the template augmentation governing the event structure regarding verb meaning, it is obvious what one language lexicalize the phenomenon, another language can resort an expression to denote the same semantic reality.

Regarding Embósi language, I can conclude that a sample of the set of proposed tests abundantly elaborated in the literature are confirmed namely agentivity of the subject of unergative predicates, the capacity to form an agent nouns from these predicates as well as the selection of cognate objects.

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