

5 *The distribution of unmarked cases in Samoan*

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1 Introduction¹

Legate (2008) proposes a class of ergative case marking systems, in which sole arguments of intransitives receive nominative case, transitive patients receive accusative case, and transitive agents receive ergative case. The system does not exhibit absolutive as a distinct case. The appearance of a single morphological case on both intransitive sole arguments and transitive patients is due to a morphological syncretism between the nominative and accusative morphological cases.

I argue that the Polynesian language Samoan falls into this category of ergative languages, arguing that both nominative and accusative case in Samoan are realised by the absence of any phonologically overt case marking on full DPs, but that nominative and accusative pronouns are morphologically distinguished. The evidence for this comes from nominalised clauses, where the distribution of the morphologically null case (ordinarily taken to be absolutive case) follows a nominative-accusative like distribution: P may retain the morphologically null case under nominalisation, but S and A may not. I argue this pattern falls out from positing two distinct morphologically null abstract Cases, nominative and accusative, which are licensed by distinct mechanisms; only accusative case is licensed under nominalisation. I also demonstrate previous analyses of Polynesian ergativity within the generative tradition (e.g., Bittner and Hale 1996a; Massam 2001) predict the wrong results for these data.¹

2 An introduction to Samoan morphosyntax

Samoan is spoken in Samoa and American Samoa and by significant immigrant populations in New Zealand, Australia, the USA and elsewhere. It is an Austronesian language of the Polynesian sub-branch. It is head-initial, with predicate-initial word ordering.

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The basic paradigm for case marking finite Samoan clauses follows in (1). The preposition *e* only occurs on the more agentive argument of a transitive predicate. Throughout I use the abbreviation A for the more agentive argument of a transitive predicate, P for the less agentive argument and S for the sole argument of an intransitive predicate, a convention borrowed from typological literature on ergativity (Comrie 1978). In (1a), the preposition *e* occurs on the more agentive argument of a transitive. Both the patient of the transitive verb in (1a), and the sole arguments of the intransitive verbs in (1b) and (1c) are not marked with any preposition. This pattern of behaviour has led the descriptive literature on Samoan (including Mosel and Hovdhaugen 1992, Milner 1976) to classify the absence of case marking on a DP as ‘absolutive’ case. Where the sole argument of an intransitive predicate is agentive, it does not take ergative marking, (1c).²

- 1
- a. *‘Olo’o fafao e le tama le pusafa’i*
 PROG pack ERG the boy the banana-case
 ‘The boy is packing the banana-case.’ (Milner 1976; 59)
- b. *‘Ua to’a le vai*
 PERF settle the water
 ‘The water settled down.’ (Milner 1976; 269)
- c. *‘Ua ‘ata le tama*
 PERF laugh the boy
 ‘The boy laughed.’ (Milner 1976; 26)

Tense, mood and viewpoint aspect in Samoan are marked on an auxiliary-like element which precedes the predicate. The predicate may fall into a large range of semantic categories. For example, it could be an event-denoting predicate, as in (2a), a stative predicate (2b), or a numeral (2c).

- 2
- a. *‘Ua mele le vai e A’opo*
 PERF throw.away the water ERG A’opo
 ‘A’opo threw away the water.’ (Milner 1976: 144)
- b. *Sā fiafia tele le ali’i*
 PAST happy very the chief
 ‘The chief was very happy.’ (Mosel and Hovdhaugen 1992: 421)
- c. *E lua ta’avale a Feleti*
 PRES two car.PL GEN Feleti
 ‘Feleti has two cars.’ (Mosel and Hovdhaugen 1992: 422)

As is clear from the above examples, the basic clause structure in Samoan is predicate-initial. Roughly speaking, the ordering of constituents within a clause headed by a transitive verb is VAP, though the relative ordering of the post-verbal arguments is largely

² Abbreviations: ACC accusative, ALIEN alienable, ANTICAUS anticausative, CAUS causative, DAT dative, DIR directional particle, ERG ergative, GEN genitive, HON honorific, INAL inalienable, LOC locative, NOM nominative, NMZR nominaliser, PERF perfective, PL plural, PRES present, PROG progressive, REDUP reduplication, SG singular, SUBJUNCT subjunctive, TOP topic marker

variable, with the rightmost element receiving a focused interpretation. In (3), variances between VAP and VPA ordering have an effect of focussing A and P respectively.

- 3 a. *Sā* 'ai e le tamaloa le i'a
 PAST eat ERG the man the fish
 'It was the man that was eating the fish.'
- b. *Sā* 'ai le i'a e le tamaloa
 PAST eat the fish ERG the man
 'It was the fish that the man was eating.'

The structure of the nominal complex is similar to the clausal structure exemplified above. I assume the nominal complex is a DP, headed by a determiner located at the left periphery of the constituent. The determiner precedes the nominal head, which is followed by any arguments or adjuncts. As in non-nominal clauses, the ordering of the arguments within a DP is variable.

- 4 *le ulua'i fa'apāina e tagata o le pulu atomika*
 the first CAUS.explode ERG person GEN the bomb atomic
 'The first exploding of the atomic bomb by people.' (Mosel and Hovdhaugen 1992: 545)

Arguments in Samoan are often dropped if their referent may be inferred from context. This is most common in conjoined clauses where arguments overt in one clause may be dropped from any following clauses. In (5), there is a sequence of conjoined clauses. After the first occurrence of the nominals which refer to Sina and the pigeon, any further references to these individuals are implicit.

- 5 *Tū atu loa lea 'o Sina, tago 'i le lupe,*
 stand up then that TOP Sina hold DAT the pigeon
titina, togi 'i fafo
 strangle Throw DAT outside
 'Then Sina stood up, [she] took hold of the pigeon, [she] strangled [it], [she] threw [it] outside.' (Mosel and Hovdhaugen 1992: 706)

Turning now to clauses with nominal predicates, a DP predicate precedes its subject. The predicational DP is prefixed with the particle 'o. In the following clause, the predicational DP *se fale Sāmoa*, 'a Samoan house', is marked with 'o, while the referential DP *lo 'u aiga fou*, 'my new house', is left unmarked.

- 6 'O se fale Sāmoa lo 'u aiga fou
 TOP a house Samoa my house new
 'My new house is a Samoan house.' (Mosel and Hovdhaugen 1992: 502)

The same 'o particle is also seen in the following structure, where a core argument may be fronted to a position to the left of the tense marking auxiliary. In the example below, the argument *le mea* precedes the tense marker and is marked with 'o. The post-verbal position where *le mea* would appear in a canonical transitive structure is left empty.

7	<i>'O</i>	<i>le</i>	<i>mea</i>	<i>na</i>	<i>fai</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>le</i>	<i>tama</i>
	TOP	the	thing	PAST	do	ERG	the	boy
	'It is the thing that the boy did.' (Cook 1991: 85)							

Having introduced a set of data relating to Samoan morphosyntax, I will now lay out the data of central import to this paper, relating to the distribution of morphological case on core arguments.

3 A tripartite case system in Samoan

This section lays out the evidence for a case assignment mechanism which assigns two distinct cases to S and P (nominative and accusative respectively). The two cases are morphologically syncretic. This gives rise to the appearance of a single morphological case on both S and P, often termed absolutive. The evidence for two distinct but homophonous morphological cases comes from two distinct patterns of the distribution of morphological case on S and P. In explaining the data, I will discuss how an apparent ergative-absolutive pattern arises in the morphological case system.

The layout of the argument within this section proceeds as follows — first, I demonstrate that S and P have distinct patterns with respect to their morphological case. The data comes from nominalised clauses and pronominal forms. Based on these data, I argue that a system of morphological case assignment must not treat S and P in Samoan as a unified category, contra any analysis which posits an absolutive abstract Case. I also argue that the data presented is consistent with the system of morphological case assignment proposed by Legate (2008) for a subclass of ergative languages, which demonstrate three distinct abstract Cases according to her analysis: nominative, accusative and ergative. The approach stands in opposition to analyses which analyse ergative systems as assigning two cases to core arguments: the marked ergative and the unmarked absolutive. Under Legate's system, there are two unmarked cases, nominative and accusative, as well as the marked ergative case. The availability of accusative case allows us to account for the complicated range of data presented in this section, which demonstrates that each of S, A and P takes a unique set of morphological realisations.

The primary focus of the entire paper is the class of verbs in Samoan which I label as transitive. It is these verbs, and these verbs only, which can co-occur with ergative case marked arguments. These verbs fall into two broad categories each of which display some degree of semantic homogeneity. The first category includes verbs which exhibit high semantic transitivity in the sense of Hopper and Thompson (1980). They involve two or more participants, denote dynamic (non-stative) events, entail that one participant is the causer or initiator of the event. The other participant is in some way affected by the event. The class includes verbs whose arguments undergo some kind of change of state as a result of the event denoted by the verb. It also includes arguments which denote recipients of some force, including the point of contact within events of surface contact (e.g., *hit*, *sweep*), and the participant upon which force is exerted in events of force exertion (e.g., *pull*, *push*, *yank*). Some examples of verbs in this large category which co-occur with ergative and (what I will argue to be) accusative case are listed below

8	<i>tipi</i>	'cut'	<i>muāvae</i>	'kick'
	<i>poi</i>	'sever'	<i>moto</i>	'punch'
	<i>vae</i>	'divide'	<i>pani</i>	'strike'
	<i>sala</i>	'slice'	<i>tu'i</i>	'strike, blow'
	<i>tutū</i>	'cut down'	<i>toso</i>	'pull'

<i>soni</i>	‘cut up’	<i>fālō</i>	‘pull down’
<i>pena</i>	‘butcher’	<i>fai</i>	‘build’
<i>polo</i>	‘cut into pieces’	<i>vali</i>	‘paint’
<i>tafa</i>	‘lance (a boil)’	<i>lalaga</i>	‘weave’
<i>fa‘i</i>	‘break, snap’	<i>tusi</i>	‘write’
<i>gau</i>	‘break’	<i>me‘i</i>	‘draw’
<i>motu</i>	‘break (s.t. brittle)’	<i>‘ai</i>	‘eat’
<i>talepe</i>	‘break (s.t. long)’	<i>inu</i>	‘drink’
<i>sasa</i>	‘beat’		

Verbs in the second category are necessarily morphologically complex. They are derived from verbs which in isolation fall under a wide set of categories, including intransitive verbs, dative case assigning verbs and transitive verbs from the category exemplified in (8). With the addition of the suffix *-Cia*³, the pattern of morphological case on the verb’s arguments must be ergative-accusative. The semantics of the suffix *-Cia* is complex, and for simplicity is not discussed to any great extent in this paper. This set of *-Cia* suffixed verbs demonstrate a lower semantic transitivity in the sense of Hopper and Thompson than the class exemplified in (8). These verbs do not always denote dynamic events (e.g. *fa‘alagaia* denotes the state of A desiring P), but generally entail the event was caused or initiated by one participant, which is mapped to the A argument. The P argument is often but not always affected by the event.

9	<i>iloa</i>	‘find out, know’	<i>talosia</i>	‘pray for’
	<i>va‘aia</i>	‘look at’	<i>la‘asia</i>	‘step over’
	<i>tagofia</i>	‘intentionally touch’	<i>fulisia</i>	‘turn over’
	<i>fa‘alagaia</i>	‘desire’	<i>inumia</i>	‘drink’
	<i>fofōia</i>	‘massage’	<i>mana‘omia</i>	‘need’
	<i>lafoia</i>	‘throw, cast away’	<i>masalomia</i>	‘suspect’
	<i>sōloia</i>	‘move s.t. forward’	<i>si‘omia</i>	‘surround’
	<i>usuia</i>	‘woo’	<i>fa‘alanumia</i>	‘wash off’
	<i>tāgisia</i>	‘cry over’		

The primary focus of this paper is the verbs in the category exemplified in (8). The remainder of this section is devoted to presenting the data which I argue are evidence for treating S and P distinctly for the purposes of the assignment of morphological case.

3.1 The syncretism of S and P

I now present the key data demonstrating that S and P pattern differently in terms of the range of morphological cases available to them. Having demonstrated this, I argue that any analysis of Samoan must not lead to generalisations which treat S and P as a natural class for the purposes of morphological case assignment. The data contradict any analysis which posits that S and P take a single morphological case (absolutive) whose assignment is mediated by a single mechanism.

Legate proposes a typological split in ergative languages: there are absolutive as nominative (ABS=NOM) languages and absolutive as a morphological default

³ The suffix is termed *-Cia*, where *C* is a lexically specified consonant. The initial consonant of the suffix, referred to as the thematic consonant in Mosel and Hovdhaugen (1992), varies lexically.

(ABS=DEF) languages. ABS=NOM languages are analysed as having a single abstract Case assigned to both intransitive subjects and transitive objects by a unified mechanism. This abstract Case on S and P is labelled nominative. ABS=DEF languages assign different abstract Cases to both S and P. In ABS=DEF languages, S and P receive distinct abstract Cases: S receives nominative and P receives accusative. The appearance of absolutive case is a product of both nominative and accusative being mapped to a default morphological form. I argue that Samoan falls into the category of ABS=DEF languages, where both nominative and accusative are realised by the lack of a case marking preposition.

In both ABS=NOM and ABS=DEF languages, ergative case is an inherent case licensed in the specifier position projected by a functional head determining the transitivity of the clause, termed ν (or little ν).

Legate's system crucially differs from any system where absolutive case is assigned by a unified mechanism. For example, Bittner and Hale (1996a) argue that absolutive in Samoan is assigned to both S and P via government by C in finite clauses. Massam (2001) argues that absolutive case in Niuean is licensed on S and P by a dedicated functional head Abs, embedded below ν . I will demonstrate that any such analysis which asserts that a single morphological case is assigned to both S and P has difficulties accounting for Samoan data presented in this section.

3.2 Case in nominalised clauses

This section outlines the syntax of nominalised clauses in Samoan. In particular, I show that P, but not S, is able to retain its phonologically null case marking (ordinarily labelled absolutive) under nominalisation of its selecting predicate. If the unmarked case on S in Samoan is nominative, we predict it to be absent in finite clauses. If the unmarked case on P is accusative, it should have no interaction with the finiteness of the clause.

Under Legate's system, supported with data from Warlpiri, Enga, Niuean and Hindi, nominative and accusative case are licensed by distinct functional heads. Nominative is assigned to subjects by T (the functional head controlling tense), and accusative is assigned to transitive objects by ν (the functional head controlling transitivity). Her key piece of evidence for this proposal is the distinct case distributions in non-finite contexts. The languages investigated do not allow S to take the morphological case ordinarily labelled absolutive in a non-finite clause, while P is free to take this morphological case. According to Legate, analyses where S and P receive case via the same mechanism are unable to extend to these data.

Samoan frequently employs nominalisations. Most often exclamative clauses and clauses which set the background state of affairs in narratives are nominalised (Mosel 1991b). Samoan nominalised clauses are similar to verbal clauses in terms of constituent order. Nominalised clauses never contain tense marking morphemes. Rather, the clause is preceded by any of the articles found in ordinary DPs. In (10a), the clause is preceded by the determiner *le*. Tense marking is categorically excluded from appearing within the clause. Compare (10a) with its finite counterpart (10b), where tense marking is available.

10 a. *le (*sā) kī-ina o le leitio*
 the PAST turn.on-INA GEN the radio
 'The turning on of the radio.' (Mosel and Hovdhaugen 1992: 533)

b. *Sā kī-ina le leitio*
 PAST turn.on-INA the radio
 'The radio was turned on.'

Although nominalised clauses are never tensed, they may include various other functional material. For example, nominalised clauses may contain negation (11a). Negation (realised by the particle *lē*) occurs in the same position as in finite clause counterparts (11b).

- 11 a. *lona lē fia 'ai*
her NEG want eat
'Her not wanting to eat.'
- b. *Sā lē fia 'ai*
PAST NEG want eat
'She didn't want to eat.' (Mosel and Hovdhaugen 1992: 558)

The nominalised verb retains the aspectual morphology typical of verbs in finite clauses, such as reduplication for a frequentative interpretation.

- 12 *le oteote o tinā o tamaiti*
the scold.REDUP GEN mother.PL GEN child.PL
'The scolding by the children's mothers.' (Mosel and Hovdhaugen 1992: 533)

The distribution of morphological case on arguments within a nominalisation differs from the distribution of morphological case in a finite clause. In order to make the comparison, I partially repeat the paradigm from (1) below. The case pattern in finite clauses clearly fits the definition of an ergative alignment: A receives a marked case, while P and S are both unmarked.

- 14 a. 'Olo'ō fafao e le tama le pusafa'i
PROG pack ERG the boy the banana-case
'The boy is packing the banana-case.' (Milner 1976; 59)
- b. 'Ua to'a le vai
PERF settle the water
'The water settled down.' (Milner 1976; 269)

Where S may take the morphologically null case in a finite clause (as in 14b), it may not under nominalisation. Under nominalisation, S must take one of the two genitive case markers, the inalienable genitive marker *o* or alienable *a*. Examples (15) and (16) show two nominalised intransitive predicates which co-occur with an obligatorily genitive marked S argument. The S argument in (15) takes *a*, while the S argument in (16) takes *o*.

- 15 'ua i'i vale [le fetagisi *(a) namu]
PERF squeak stupid the cry.PL GEN.ALIEN mosquito.PL
'The cry of the mosquitoes was a stupid squeak.' (Mosel and Hovdhaugen 1992: 542)
- 16 *le taunu'u *(o) le ulua'i misionare 'o Ioane*
the arrive GEN the first missionary TOP John
'The arrival of the first missionary, John.' (P. L. Tauiliili, 2009, *Anoafale o le Gagana ma le Aganu'u*, p. 19)

The choice between *o* or *a* appears to depend roughly on the agentivity of the argument. The prediction is that the agentive sole participants of unergative predicates appear with the alienable genitive marker *a*, while patientive sole participants of unaccusative and stative predicates would appear with the inalienable genitive marker *o*. The alienable genitive marker *a* is associated with arguments denoting participants which can exert control or agency over the event, initiate or cause the event, are animate and/or are propelled by self-directed motion. Roughly speaking, the choice between the *a* and *o* genitive could be considered a first pass diagnostic for determining whether an intransitive verb is unergative or unaccusative.

For a more thorough understanding of the distribution of *o* and *a* on S amongst nominalised intransitive predicates, consider the following lists of verbs. The verbs which appear with an *o*-marked S under nominalisation often denote change of state events, or stative properties of S. The verbs which appear with an *a*-marked S include active processes enacted by the S participant, including but not limited to manners of motion, bodily functions, and sound and light emission. A more thorough discussion of this distinction is a topic for future research.

17 **Intransitive Verbs with *o*-Marked S in nominalisations**

<i>a'alogo</i>	'hear'	<i>leai</i>	'lack, not exist'
<i>pala</i>	'rot'	<i>taunu'u</i>	'arrive'
<i>mūmū</i>	'burn'	<i>maualuga</i>	'be high'
<i>gagau</i>	'break'	<i>alofa</i>	'be kind, feel love'
<i>lelei</i>	'be good'	<i>mago</i>	'be dry'

18 **Intransitive Verbs with *a*-Marked S in nominalisations**

<i>pese</i>	'sing'	<i>sau</i>	'come'
<i>fa'alogo mai</i>	'listen to'	<i>tagi</i>	'cry'
<i>fetagisi</i>	'cry, whine'	<i>tusi</i>	'write'
<i>u'u</i>	'make hollow sound'	<i>susu</i>	'suck'
<i>alu</i>	'go'	<i>galue</i>	'work'

Within nominalised clauses, P may also take genitive case. Earlier, I stated that P is causally affected or a force recipient. It therefore does not fit the prototype for an argument which takes the alienable genitive marker *a*. In fact, if P is marked with genitive, it is the *o* genitive. In (19), the P arguments are marked with the *o* genitive.

- 19 a. *le* *fafaga* *o* *le* *pepe* *i* *le* *fagu* *susu*
 the feed GEN the baby LOC the bottle milk
 'The feeding of the baby with the milk bottle.' (Mosel and Hovdhaugen 1992: 546)

- b. *'O* *le* *ala* *lena* *'o* [*le* *fau* *o* *ni* *potu*]
 TOP the reason that TOP the build GEN some room
 'It is for that reason some rooms are built.' (Mosel and Hovdhaugen 1992: 546)

Unlike the sole argument of an intransitive, P may take the morphologically null case in a nominalisation if it does not take genitive. In (20), the P arguments of the nominalised transitive predicates appear without any morphological case marking.

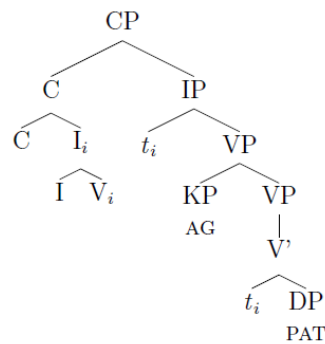
20 a. *'Ole 'ā lē fa'atauina le masini e [la'u 'ai le vaumago]*
 FUT NEG sell.INA the machine ERG my grip the straw
 'The machine will not get sold by my gripping the straw.'
 (<https://www.lds.org/general-conference/2010/10/the-divine-gift-of-gratitude?lang=zho&clang=smo>)

b. *E matamata le tamaitiiti i [le sii ane e lona tama le matatao]*
 PRES watch thechild DATthe lift up ERG his father the spear
 'The child watches his father lifting up the spear.' (Mosel and Hovdhaugen 1992: 546) lit. 'The child watches the lifting the spear by his father.'

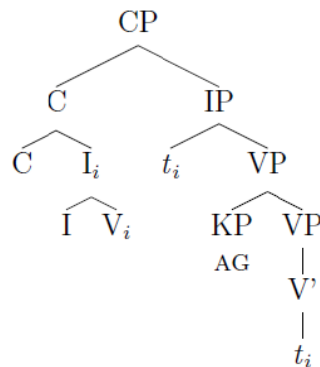
Here is a clear instance where the grammatical properties of S and P diverge. Where intransitive sole arguments must take genitive case under nominalisation, transitive patients may optionally take genitive case or the morphologically null case. This pattern is not predicted by previous accounts such as the model for Samoan proposed by Bittner and Hale (1996a) or the Massam (2001) model for Niuean.

Bittner and Hale (1996a) posit the following structures for Samoan transitive clauses (21a) and intransitive clauses (21b).

21 a. Transitive



b. Intransitive

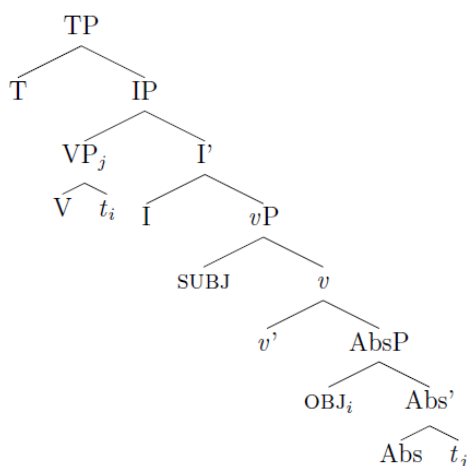


Bittner and Hale have the morphologically null case on S and P (which they identify as nominative) assigned by C. For them (contra Massam (2001)), verb-initial word order is derived via head movement of V to I to C. Head movement of the verb all the way to C renders the whole clause transparent to government by C. As nominative is licensed by C, nominative case is licensed on both S and P. This predicts that the distribution of the morphologically null case on S and P should pattern together in nominalised and finite clauses alike. In finite clauses, S and P are both governed C and both receive nominative

case. In nominalised clauses, S and P are both governed by a functional head K, which Bittner and Hale propose is also a nominative case licenser. Therefore, they do not predict any split in the distribution of the morphologically null case on S and P.

Under Massam's (2001) system, absolutive case is assigned by a dedicated functional head, Abs, within the ν P. The structure in (22) represents Massam's proposal for clause structure and case assignment. For Massam, verb-initial word order is derived via fronting the VP constituent to a specifier position above the subject. Note that in her system, the object also moves to a position outside of the VP.

22



Massam proposes that the morphologically null case in Niuean (which she labels absolutive) is licensed in one of two ways. Firstly, the internal argument in a transitive clause or an unaccusative clause raises to the specifier position of AbsP, in which it receives absolutive case via specifier-head agreement with the functional head Abs. The external argument of an unergative intransitive also receives absolutive case however, as she assumes that unergative subjects are underlyingly positioned in the specifier of ν P. Massam maintains that this position too assigns absolutive case. By these assumptions, absolutive case must be available within any ν P. Massam's clause structure requires the ν P constituent to appear in both nominalised and finite clauses, therefore absolutive should be freely available in both nominalised and non-nominalised clauses, contrary to what we see.

However, the observed pattern of data presented in this section is entirely consistent with Legate's proposal. For Legate, the case ordinarily termed absolutive is actually accusative on P and nominative on S. Nominative case is a structural case assigned by T, the functional category determining the tense of the clause. If the morphologically null case on S is nominative, it is therefore expected that S may not take the morphologically null case in any non-finite syntactic environment, such as a nominalisation.

In order to import Legate's analysis to Samoan, I take T to be instantiated by the class of clause initial tense marking free morphemes. The obligatory absence of these particles in a nominalised clause correlates with the obligatory absence of the morphologically null case on the sole arguments of intransitives in examples like (15) and (16). If the morphologically null case on S is defined as nominative case assigned by T, this correlation is predicted.

Furthermore, if the morphologically null case on P is not dependent on T, it is expected that the absence of T in a nominalised clause will have no effect on the patient's case. Legate's system has accusative case assigned by transitive ν , a functional category which assigns an agentive thematic role to the external argument. The prediction is that internal

arguments will only receive accusative case if the predicate is able to take an external argument, thereby capturing Burzio's Generalisation. This prediction is supported by the data from nominalised clauses. Wherever the morphologically null case appears on P under nominalisation, the nominalised verb denotes a transitive event with an external argument which denotes an agentive participant (as in 20).

Samoan demonstrates several morphological alternations where verbs gain or lose the ability to co-occur with an external argument. Under nominalisation, these alternations demonstrate that only in instances where the verb co-occurs with an external argument may the internal argument take the morphologically null case. The first alternation is the prefixation of monomorphemic transitives with *ma-* to form an anticausative. When prefixed with *ma-* the predicate denotes an event which is not necessarily initiated by any identifiable participant. Where a transitive predicate is nominalised, the P argument may take the morphologically null case. When the same predicate is anticausativised with *ma-*, the patientive sole argument of the now intransitive predicate must take genitive case. The morphological case available to the bolded arguments in (23) differs based on the transitivity of the predicate, despite the fact that their thematic roles are equivalent.

(23a) demonstrates a nominalisation of a transitive verb, while (23b) is a nominalisation of its anticausativised variant.

- 23 a. *Sā matamata le teine 'i [la 'u goto le va'a]*
 PAST write the girl DAT my sink the boat
 'The girl watched me sink the boat.'
- b. *E gata ai [le magoto *(o) se va'a]*
 PRES complete LOC the ANTICAUS.sink PAST a boat
 'A boat has sunk there.' lit. 'the sinking of a boat has completed there.'
 (<http://208.109.238.104/viewstory.php?storyid=30342>)

The second alternation is causativisation of an intransitive with the prefix *fa'a* to form a transitive. With this prefix, the verb denotes an event necessarily caused by a participant, denoted by the A argument. Where the non-prefixed form is nominalised, the internal argument must take genitive case. Where the causativised form is nominalised, the internal argument may take the null case. Again, the morphological case available to the bolded arguments in (24) differs based on whether the predicate is causativised. (24a) demonstrates a nominalisation of an intransitive verb, while (24b) is a nominalisation of its causativised variant.

- 24 a. *Fa'afetai 'i [le tupu *(o) le atunu'u Sāmoa]*
 thanks DAT the grow GEN the country Samoa
 'Thanks for the growth of the country of Samoa.' (www.youtube.com/allcomments?v=1NMOt vY-dQ)
- b. *le fa'atupu le taofiofi o tagata*
 the CAUS.grow the restraint GEN person.PL
 'The raising the restraint of the people.'
 (<http://42976.activeboard.com/t47860333/>)

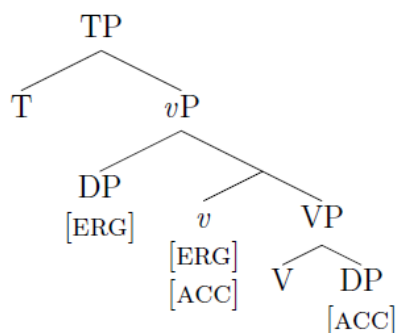
Under Legate's system, the null case on internal arguments is accusative case assigned by v . The data in (20)-(24) support this hypothesis. Only in instances where the verb-form co-occurs with an A argument is accusative case available. However, although accusative case is available for the P argument, it is not obligatory. The examples in (19) demonstrate that P is able to take genitive case in a nominalised clause. We can therefore conclude that the assignment of accusative case in a nominalised clause is governed by an optional rule.

The next major element of Legate's analysis is that ergative case is an inherent case licensed in the specifier position projected by v in a transitive clause, following Woolford (1997). As with accusative case, this hypothesis predicts that ergative case is insensitive to the presence of T within a clause. It is therefore predicted that ergative case is licensed within nominalised clauses. It is simple to find data confirming this prediction. In (25), the A argument (*e tagata*) is able to take ergative case within a nominalisation.

- 25 *le uluai fa'apāina o le pulu atomika e tagata*
 the first CAUS.explode.INA GEN the bomb atomic ERG person.PL
 'The first exploding of the atomic bomb by people.' (Mosel and Hovdhaugen 1992: 544)

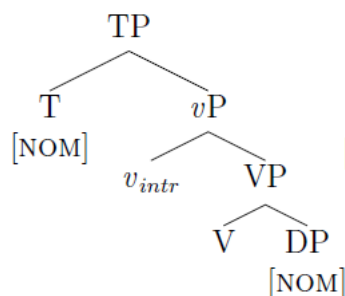
Schematising Legate's (2008) proposal structurally, in a transitive clause, ergative and accusative are licensed by the same source, the functional head which determines the transitivity of the clause, v . As the two arguments in a transitive clause take accusative and ergative case, the nominative case is left unassigned by T.

26

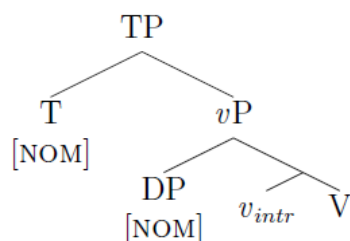


Legate's model relies on multiple variants of the functional category v . She posits a transitive variant v_{tr} , which licenses ergative and accusative, and an intransitive variant, v_{intr} , which does not license any case. The trees in (27) are Legate's proposed structures for intransitive predicates (unaccusative in (27a) and unergative in (27b)). In both structures, the S argument does not receive case from v , and therefore must receive nominative case from T.

27 a. Unaccusative



b. Unergative



If it is assumed that finiteness is determined by functional heads higher than vP , and that ergative and accusative are licensed vP internally, it may be concluded that the licensing of both ergative and accusative is insensitive to whether the clause is finite or nominalised. As nominative is licensed by T, it is licensed only in finite clauses (where T is present), and not licensed in nominalised clauses (which lack T).

3.3 Case and pronouns

The hypothesis that nominative and accusative are two distinct cases in Samoan with two distinct assignment mechanisms neatly accounts for a large range of data relating to the morphological forms of Samoan pronouns. In this section I briefly summarise that data set and show that instances where the pronoun cliticises to the tense marking morpheme coincide with the predicted distribution of nominative case.

Pronouns may be realised in the same positions as full DPs, that is, following the verb. In this position, a pronoun is a morphologically free-standing unit, able to be marked with a case-marking preposition. Pronouns may also be realised cliticised to the tense marking morpheme. Pronouns take distinct forms depending on whether they are morphologically free-standing or cliticised to the tense marker. The following table lists the forms for each person and number combination.

Table 3.1

Morphological Realisation of Personal Pronouns		
	Clitic	Free-standing
1SG	'ou	a'u
2SG	'e	'oe
3SG	ia or na	ia
1DU-INC	tā	tā'ua
1DU-EXC	mā	mā'ua
2DU	lua	'oulua or lua
3DU	lā	lā'ua
1PL-INC	tātou	tātou
1PL-EXC	mātou	mātou
2PL	'outou	'outou or tou
3PL	lātou	lātou

(data from Mosel and Hovdhaugen 1992)

The distribution of morphological forms of Samoan pronouns appears to be tripartite, with unique instantiations for each of S, P and A.

The S argument of both unaccusatives and unergatives may surface as the pronominal clitic form, forming a prosodic unit with the tense marking morpheme.

- 28 a. 'Olo 'o= 'ou *siva*
 PROG=1SG dance
 'I am dancing.'
- b. 'Olo 'o= 'ou *pa 'ū*
 PROG=1SG fall
 'I am falling.'

A pronominal S argument may also appear post-verbally as a morphologically free-standing unit. It may or may not be marked with the particle 'o — identical to the topic/focus marking element identified in section 2.1 (cf. Mosel 1991a: 187).

- 29 a. 'Olo 'o *siva* ('o) *a 'u*
 PROG dance TOP/FOC 1SG
 'I am dancing.'
- b. 'Olo 'o *pa 'ū* ('o) *a 'u*
 PROG fall TOP/FOC 1SG
 'I am falling.'

The P argument of a transitive may also appear post-verbally. The P argument may also optionally appear with the 'o marker. (30a) is a causativised version of (29a). However, a pronominal P argument is never able to surface cliticised to the tense marker (30b).

- 30 a. 'Olo 'o *fa 'asiva* *e* *le* *ta 'ita 'i* ('o) *a 'u*
 PROG CAUS.dance ERG the leader TOP 1SG
 'The chief is making me dance.'
- b. *'Olo 'o= 'ou *fa 'asiva* *e* *le* *ta 'ita 'i*
 PROG=1SG CAUS.dance ERG the leader
 'The chief is making me dance.'

A pronominal A argument may occur post-verbally. It may be either marked with *e* or left bare. Native speaker consultants dispreferred sentences where post-verbal A was marked with 'o.

- 31 'Olo 'o *fa 'asiva* (*e*) *a 'u* *le* *teine*
 PROG CAUS.dance ERG 1SG the girl
 'I am making the girl dance.'

A pronominal A argument may also appear cliticised to the tense marker (32). In this instance, the transitive verb generally takes the suffix *-ina*, though this is not a categorical rule. Speakers differ on the level of grammaticality of sentences with clitics where the *-ina* suffix is absent, ranging from vaguely ungrammatical to dispreferred but acceptable.

32 *'Olo 'o= 'ou fa 'asivaina le teine*
 PROG=1SG CAUS.dance.INA the girl
 'I am making the girl dance.'

The following table summarises the possible realisations of S, A and P where they are expressed as pronouns. Only the A argument is ever marked with the preposition *e*, and only S and P are marked with *'o*. To paraphrase, the appearance of *e* and *'o* marking on an argument relies on the conjunction of the transitivity of the argument's predicate and whether the argument is or is not an external argument.

Case Possibilities for Pronouns

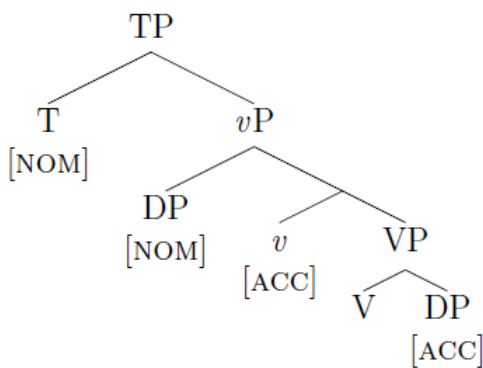
Table 3.2

	S	P	A
Bare + Post-Verbal	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clitic	Yes	No	Yes (with <i>-ina</i>)
<i>e</i> DP	No	No	Yes
<i>'o</i> DP	Yes	Yes	No

The data summarised in this table is consistent with a hypothesis where the clitic form is the pronominal realisation of nominative morphological case, while the post-verbal bare form is the pronominal realisation of accusative case. Only S and A are able to appear in the clitic form, while only P is able to appear in the post-verbal bare form. Under the assumption that both S and P take a single, absolutive case, the divergence in the morphological forms of S and P is entirely unexpected.

As with the nominalised clause data, the pronominal data is consistent with Legate's proposal. Recall that Legate has nominative case assigned by T and accusative by *v* in her system. Given that these two assignments of cases are determined by independent functional categories, there is nothing ruling out their co-occurrence in a configuration like in (33) below.

33



Clauses such as (32), with A realised as a subject clitic, have no instantiation of the ergative morphological case. Both A and P appear in unmarked forms. Pronominal A is realised in the same morphological form as pronominal S. This pattern is predicted if (32) instantiates the structure in (33), where A takes nominative case and P takes accusative.

The data in the table 3.2, where S, A and P have unique morphological instantiations, is consistent with a hypothesis that all three of nominative, accusative and ergative are available to be licensed. The clitic form of the pronoun is licensed precisely where nominative case is predicted to be licensed, on S or A in a finite clause. The morphological paradigm in which free-standing differ from clitic pronouns is understood as the differing morphological realisation of accusative and nominative case.

A surprising fact emerging from the data in this section is that A, when expressed as a pronoun, is often realised as a nominative pronoun, rather than with ergative case, for example the clause in (32). This is a productive alternation in which A is variously realised with nominative or ergative case. This alternation is explored in the next section.

3.4 Optional Ergative Marking

In the structure (33), nominative and accusative may both be assigned within the same clause to A and P respectively, as with a typical nominative-accusative language. Clauses where A and P are expressed as what I analyse as nominative and accusative pronouns respectively are common in Samoan.

- 34 *Sā* = 'outou *sasaina* *a'u*
 PAST=2PL hit.INA 1SG
 'You (pl.) hit me.'

Given the assumption that nominative and accusative are not morphologically distinguished on non-pronominal DPs, there is now a principled explanation for the apparent optionality of ergative case in finite clauses. In a transitive clause, the A argument may appear with or without the ergative preposition *e*.

- 35 *Sā* *fa'amoe* (*e*) *le* *tinā* *lana* *pepe*
 PAST CAUS.sleep ERG the mother her baby
 'The mother put her baby to sleep.'

This alternation is especially common in more casual registers of the language. The dropping of ergative often coincides with other features of casual Samoan speech, most prominently the replacement of all instances of alveolar stops with velar stops (commonly represented in writing). Example (36) shows both the dropping of ergative and the replacement of alveolar stops with velar stops.

- 36 *E* *kau* *fa'asiva* *lo'u* *keige* *lea* *sole*
 PRES try CAUS.dance my girl that lad
 'My girlfriend tries to make that lad dance.' (www.veingle.com/s/Keige's/3.html)

I propose that examples like (36) realise A with nominative case and P with accusative case. As nominative is realised without any overt preposition, it gives the appearance that the ergative preposition marking A in the basic clause type has been dropped. Under this view, these types of clauses have a clear analogy with clauses such as (34), where nominative and accusative pronouns are morphologically distinguished.

This data is problematic for a system where absolutive case is assigned via a unified mechanism to S and P. These analyses must account for why their absolutive case is assigned twice in these clauses. One possible explanation is that the ergative preposition is elided by some process of phonological reduction. This hypothesis loses the theoretically appealing connection between such clauses and clauses with nominative-accusative

pronouns like (34). Furthermore, the hypothesis is contradicted by data from nominalised clauses. Recall that nominalised clauses may contain ergative marked A arguments. (37) repeats (20b), while (38) is a finite paraphrase of the nominalised clause.

37 *E matamata le tamaitiiti i le si'i ane e lona tama le matatao*
 PRES watch the child DAT the lift up ERG his father the spear
 'The child watches his father lifting up the spear.' (Mosel and Hovdhaugen 1992: 546) lit. 'The child watches the lifting the spear by his father.'

38 *Sā ane (e) lona tama le matatao*
 PAST up ERG his father the spear
 'His father lifted up the spear'

In nominalised clauses, the ergative preposition may not be 'dropped'. If the dropping of ergative were a phonological phenomenon, this restriction is unexpected as the phonological environment of the ergative preposition would be identical in (37) and (38). However, if the paradigm is instead characterised as a productive alternation between nominative and ergative case, this pattern is expected; nominative case is unavailable in a nominalised clause and therefore the A argument is forced to take an overt morphological case marker.

4 Summary

Data from the morphological forms of pronouns, the distribution of case marking prepositions in nominalised clauses and the ability of transitive agents to 'drop' their ergative preposition in finite tensed clauses give evidence in favour of the hypothesis that the grammar of Samoan does not make reference to any coherent notion of absolutive case. Rather, what is generally taken to be absolutive case is in fact the manifestation of two distinct cases, nominative and accusative, which are morphologically syncretic when marking full DPs, but distinguished when marking pronouns. This analysis demonstrates a three-way case marking system, allowing for ergative, nominative and accusative. As full DPs do not distinguish nominative and accusative, but do distinguish ergative, the appearance of an ergative-absolutive pattern in the morphological case system is derived.

The study suggests that the underlying, abstract system of Case in Samoan is in fact a tripartite system. This suggestion is perhaps surprising considering the relative scarcity of tripartite-aligned systems manifested overtly in morphological case cross-linguistically. The diagnostics in this paper for determining the presence of such an underlying system may lead us to re-evaluate other languages which demonstrate a regular ergative-absolutive pattern in their morphological case system. If similar systems present themselves cross-linguistically, the scarcity of tripartite systems may need to be questioned.

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