

# Summer School on Language Typology- Leipzig 2010

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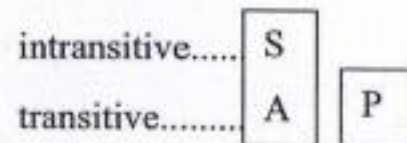
# 3. ACTIVE ALIGNMENT

## Typology of S, A, O

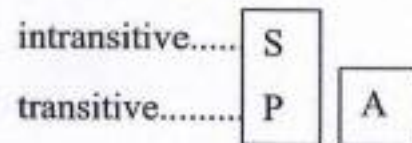
Donahue, Mark, and Søren K. Wichmann (eds.).  
2008. *The Typology of Semantic Alignment*. Oxford:  
Oxford University Press.

„... (active alignment) absent, or rare [in Africa]“

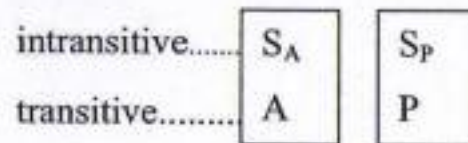
**Diagram 1:** (Nominative-) Accusative system (S = A, P)



**Diagram 2:** (Absolutive-) Ergative system (S = P, A)

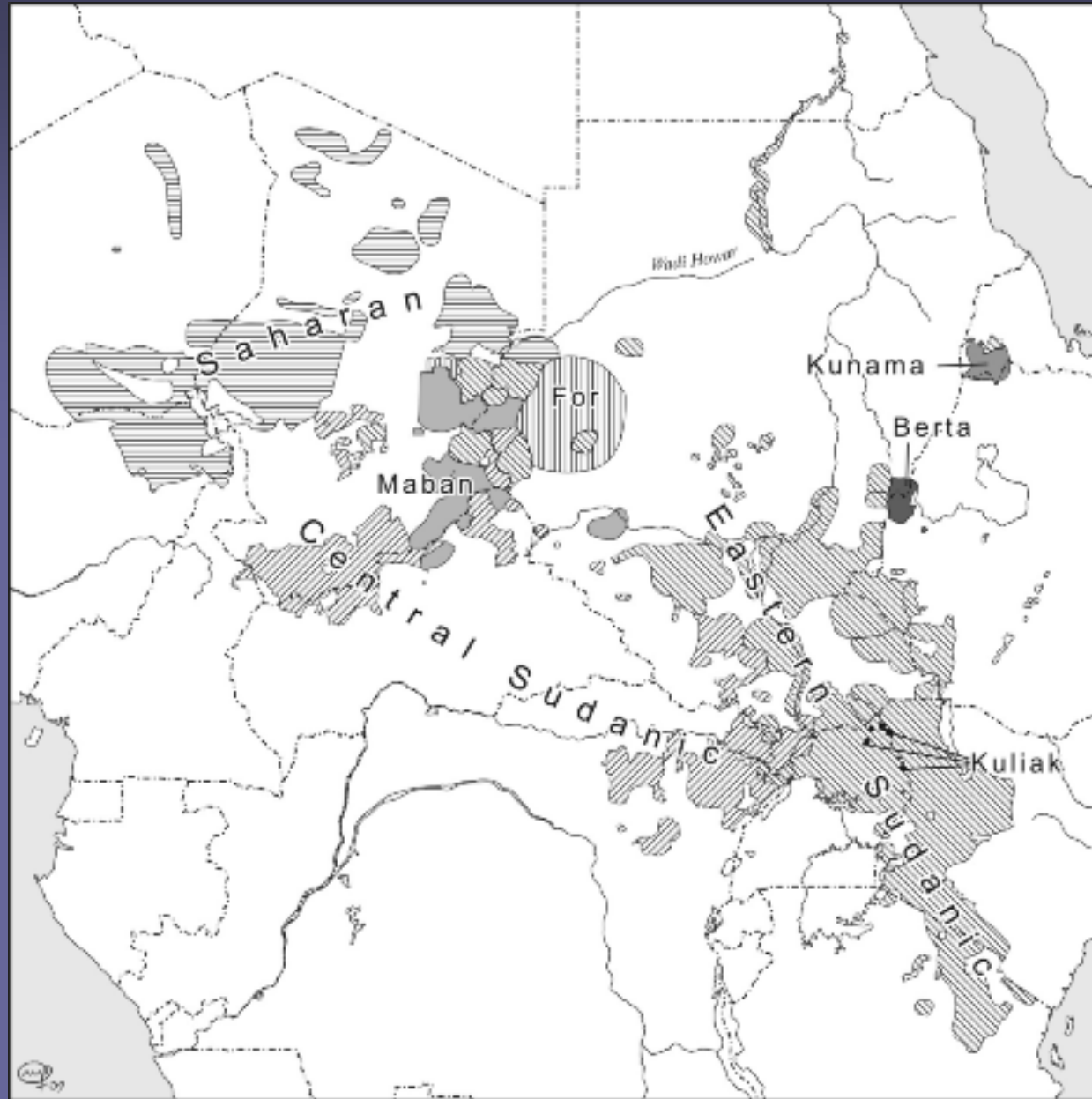


**Diagram 3:** Active/agentive system ( $S_A = A$ ,  $S_P = P$ )



Case assignment in these Afroasiatic and Nilo-Saharan languages is conditioned by the semantic nature of core noun phrases, the semantics of the verb, as well as tense/aspect. All three factors are listed by Dixon (1994: 70-110) as frequently occurring features conditioning the distribution of **split-S** and **fluid-S** marking cross-linguistically.

Dixon, R. M. W. 1994. *Ergativity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



DOM in Saharan (Nilo-Saharan) languages like Kanuri. But no case marking of core functions (S, A, O) in Beria

Beria (Saharan, Nilo-Saharan): split-S system

Jakobi, Angelika. 2006. Focus in an active/agentive alignment system – the case of Beria (Saharan). *ZAS Papers in Linguistics* 46: 129-142.

**Table 1:** Participant reference markers on the verb

		Object markers for P and the principal argument of a medium verb	Subject markers for A and S
Sg	1	(V)-	-g
	2	n(V)-	-n
	3	∅	-r, -n, ∅
Pl	1	t(V)-	-d
	2	n(V)-	-b
	3	∅	-r, -n, ∅









Active alignment is also found in Eastern Sudanic languages with Ergative/Marked Nominative case.

# Turkana (Nilotic, Nilo-Saharan)

Some basic properties:

- Essentially verb-initial
- Postverbal S, A marked for case (by way of tonal inflection): *Marked Nominative*
- O (regardless of its syntactic position not marked for case: *Absolutive*)

- Preverbal S, A (or O): *Absolutive*
- Cross-reference marking on the verb for S, A, and O
- Strongly head marking at the clausal level

(18) *k-à-kòŋ-t̃ ayɔŋ`emuni lò-kimòyin* 'a/the snake bit me in  
 P-me-bite-A me snake (N) in-finger my finger'

Most typically, the locative complement indicates an inalienably possessed entity, such as a body-part. Constructions of this type are extended cases of VO<sub>1</sub>S core sentences where the subject refers to a part possessed by the object.

(19) *k-à-ryɛb-i ayɔŋ`akòɔki* 'my stomach aches'  
 P-me-ache-A me stomach (N)

(21) *è-yàka-si ŋikààla* 'there are camels, the camels are there'  
 3-be-PL camels (N)

(22) *è-yàka-si ayɔŋ`ŋikààla* 'I own/have camels'  
 3-be-PL me camels (N)

(52) *k-à-ipyiyo* : *ayəŋ* PRO<sub>2</sub> 'it surprises me'  
P-me-surprise-IT me

(53) *k-à-sil-ikin-it* *ayəŋ* PRO<sub>2</sub> 'I am lonely'  
P-me-lonely-DAT-A me

Subjectless sentences with a primary plus a secondary object are either passive, or the subject is left out optionally (ellipsis), in which case it can always be inserted.

(54) *k-à-in-akin-i* (*ŋesi ayəŋ*) *akimɔj*  
P-me-give-DAT-A 3 SG (N) me food  
'he will give me some food'

(55) *k-à-in-akin-i-o* (*ayəŋ*) *akimɔj*  
P-me-give-DAT-A-PASS me food  
'I will be given some food'

# Active Alignment in Afroasiatic

- Omotic:

Amha, Azeb. 2009. Wolaitta. In Gerrit J. Dimmendaal (ed.), *Coding Participant Marking: Construction Types in Twelve African Languages*, pp. 355-384. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

- Fluid-S system

# Wolaitta (Omotic)

- Strongly dependent marking at the clausal level (extensive case marking)
- Formal (“iconic”) marking of core versus peripheral case (with the Dative)
- Nominative and Absolutive (Accusative) formally marked
- Essentially verb-final
- Fluid-S system



- (8) a. *naʔá-y gupp-eési*  
 boy-M:NOM jump-3MS:PRES:AFF:DCL  
 'The boy jumps'
- b. *mac'caas-íya laaw-aús(u)*  
 woman-F:NOM yawn-3FS:PRES:AFF:DCL  
 'The woman yawns'
- c. *naʔá-y hiitt-áa bollá-n gupp-eési*  
 boy-M:NOM bed:M:ACC body-LOC jump-3MS:PRES:AFF:DCL  
 'The boy jumps on the bed'
- d. *naa-t-í harg-ánčaa bollá-n waass-oósona*  
 child-PL- sick- body- make.noise-  
 M:NOM NMZ:M:ACC LOC 3PL:PRES:AFF:DCL  
 'The children make noise on the sick man (i.e. they disturb him)'
- e. *naa-t-í ʔastamar-íya-ssi dend-oósona*  
 child-PL-M:NOM teacher-M:ACC-DAT stand.up-3PL:PRES:AFF:DCL  
 'The children stand up for the teacher (to show him their respect)'

- (9) a. *bitáneé harg-eési*  
 man.M:NOM be\_sick-3MS:PRES:AFF:DCL  
 'The man is sick'
- b. *mac'ças-ıya řaar-aısu*  
 woman-F:NOM be.pregnant-3FS:PAST:AFF:DCL  
 'The woman is pregnant/The woman became pregnant'

Statives can also be expressed by non-verbal constructions. Thus, (9a and b) can alternatively be expressed as in (10a) and (10b).

- (10) a. *bitáneé harg-ınća*  
 man.M:NOM sick-NMZ  
 'The man is sick'

- (12) a. *bitáneé perer-ıwa harg-eési*  
 man:NOM arrogance-M:ACC be\_sick-3MS:PRES:AFF:DCL  
 'The man looks down upon everyone'
- b. *bitáneé suıttaa yeekk-eési*  
 man:NOM blood:ACC cry-3MS:PRES:AFF:DCL  
 'The man cries bitterly/ regrets something very badly'
- c. *mac'ças-ıya gulbataa-n řaar-aısu*  
 woman-F:NOM knee:M:ACC-LOC be.pregnant-3FS:PAST:AFF:DCL  
 'The woman has become very lazy'  
 [i.e. 'The woman became pregnant on her knee which hindered her from moving']  
 (\**mac'ças-ıya gulbatan řaıra* 'The woman is pregnant on her knee')

- (14) a. *balgó-y gel-iisi*  
 winter-M:NOM enter-3MS:PAST:AFF:DCL  
 'The winter/rainy season started'
- b. *bóneé kíy-iisi*  
 dry.season-M:NOM go.out-3MS:PAST:AFF:DCL  
 'The dry season started'
- c. *?íra-y wódd-iisi*  
 rain-M:NOM descend-3MS:PAST:AFF:DCL  
 'It rained'

- (17) a. *?á-yyo méhé-y de?-eési*  
 3MS-DAT cattle-M:NOM exist-3MS:PRES:AFF:DCL  
 'He has cattle'
- b. *?á-ssi naa-t-i báa(wa)*  
 3MS-DAT child-PL-M:NOM exist:NEG  
 'He does not have children'
- c. *neé-yyo wolká-y ?it't'-iisi*  
 2SG-DAT strength-M:NOM refuse-3MS:PAST:AFF:DCL  
 'You are not strong any more' [lit: 'Strength refused for you']
- d. *taá-yyo tukké-y gid-iisi*  
 1SG-DAT coffee-M:NOM be.enough-3MS:PAST:AFF:DCL  
 'I have enough coffee' [i.e. 'I don't want any more coffee']

- (18) a. *tána sákk-eesi*  
 1SG:ACC do\_pain-3MS:PRES:AFF:DCL  
 'I'm sick' (I feel pain as I speak)
- b. *tááni sák-étt-aisi*  
 1SG:NOM do\_pain-PASS-1SG:PRES:AFF:DCL  
 'I'm sick' (state, longer period of sickness)
- (19) a. *tána namis-iísi*  
 1SG:ACC be.hungry-3MS:PAST:AFF:DCL  
 'I am hungry'
- b. *tááni namis-étt-aasi*  
 1SG:NOM be.hungry-PASS-1SG:PAST:AFF:DCL  
 'I'm hungry'

(20) a. *táná huúpè k'ót't'-eesi*

1SG:ACC head-M:NOM knock-3MS:PRES:AFF:DCL

'I have head ache' (\* *taáni huúp'iya k'ót'ettaasi*)

b. *táná ?úloy sákk-eesi*

1SG:ACC stomach-M:NOM do.pain-3MS:PRES:AFF:DCL

'I have stomach ache' (? *taáni ?úluwaa sákettaasi*)

- (21) a. *táná tukkeé ?ámoy-iisi*  
 1SG:ACC coffee:NOM crave.for-3MS:PAST:AFF:DCL  
 'I longed for coffee'
- b. *táání tukk-íya ?ámott-aasi*  
 1SG:NOM coffee-M:ACC crave.for-1SG:PAST:AFF:DCL  
 'I craved/longed for coffee'
- (22) a. *?ó naa-t-i yiilloy-oósona*  
 3FS:ACC child-PL-M:NOM make.angry-3PL:PRES:AFF:DCL  
 'The children make her angry'
- b. *?á naa-t-ú bólla-n yiillot-aásu*  
 3FS:NOM child-PL-M:NOM body-LOC be.angry-3FS:PAST:AFF:DCL  
 'She is angry at the children'

# Maale (Omotic, Afroasiatic)

- Strongly dependent marking at the clausal level (extensive case marking)
- Nominative and Absolutive (Accusative) formally marked
- Essentially verb-final (but OVS, SVO, VSO allowed)

### 3.5.1 Core case

There are two main ways of marking core case in Maale. The first type involves suffixing the morphemes -ó for the Absolutive and -á for the Nominative. The second way of marking core case involves tone. That is, low tone on the final vowel of the noun designates the Absolutive whereas high tone indicates the Nominative. The choice of one of these two ways of marking case correlates with definiteness, gender and number inflection of the noun. In this section we present a summary of the interaction between definiteness, gender, number and these two core cases.

All indefinite singular nouns (which are identical to citation form nouns), nouns affixed with the masculine gender marker -atsi, indefinite plural nouns marked with -atsi, and definite plural nouns marked with -ntsi distinguish Nominative and Absolutive cases by high and low tone respectively. The following examples illustrate this:

- 43a. zóbbi      dársi      baj-uwá-se  
lion:NOM elephant:ABS surpass-IPF:NEG-N:DCL  
'A lion cannot intimidate an elephant'  
(lit. 'A lion does not surpass an elephant')
- 43b. naʔʔ-atsí      wál-átsi      baizz-é-ne  
child-M:NOM axe-M:ABS lose-PF-A:DCL  
'The boy lost the axe'
- 43c. wudúr-átsi      mukk-é-ne  
young girl-PL:NOM come-PF-A:DCL  
'Young girls came'
- 43d. dárzó-ntsí      mis'ó-ntsi      ments-é-ne  
elephant:PL-DF:PL:NOM tree:PL-DF:PL:ABS break-PF-A:DCL  
'The elephants broke the trees'



Table 3.2 Absolutive and Nominative case marking in Maale

			ABS: ...	NOM: Hi	ABS: -ó	NOM: -á
SG	IDF	–	ʔasi 'person' mítsi 'tree' kani 'dog' wudúró 'girl'	ʔasi mítsi kani wudúró		
SG	DF	–			mis'-ó wudúr-ó	mis'-á wudúr-á
SG	DF	MASC	ʔas-atsi kan-atsi, (kanzi	ʔas-atsi kan-atsi, kanzi)		
SG	DF	FEM			ʔas-éll-ó kan-éll-ó, (kan-ó	ʔas-éll-á kan-éll-á, kan-á)
PL	IDF	–	wudúr-átsi	wudúr-átsi	ʔas-ó mis'ó kan-at(t)-ó	ʔas-á mis'á kan-at(t)-á
PL	DF	–	wudúr-ó-ntsi kan-at(t)-ó-ntsi	ʔas-ó-ntsi wudúr-ó-ntsi kan-at(t)-ó-ntsi		

### 3.5.2 *Peripheral case*

The term ‘peripheral case’ is used here as a cover term to refer to morphemes marking the “Dative”, “Instrumental”, “Locative” etc. Except in some occurrences of the Locative, the other peripheral cases are preceded by the Absolutive marker -ó.

#### 3.5.2.1 *The Dative*

The Dative is marked by the morpheme **-m**. It is affixed to nouns in the Absolutive case. The following examples illustrate the marking of the Dative case in indefinite singular nouns (i.e., the form identical to the citation form).

45.	Citation form		Dative
	<b>?anni</b>	‘husband’	<b>?anní-m</b> ‘for a husband’
	<b>doolle</b>	‘pigeon’	<b>doollé-m</b> ‘for a pigeon’
	<b>paró</b>	‘horse’	<b>paró-m</b> ‘for a horse’
	<b>márka</b>	‘witness’	<b>márka-m</b> ‘for a witness’

46a.	<b>ʔííní</b>	<b>ʔád-ó-m</b>	<b>maʔ-é</b>	<b>baazzi</b>	<b>keezz-é-ne</b>
	3MS:NOM	father-ABS-DAT	happen-REL.PF	thing:ABS	tell-PF-A:DCL
	‘He told something to his father’				

However, there are some examples where the benefactive meaning does not seem to be associated with the noun affixed with the Dative case.

- 52a. **ʔizá mízáʕbi ʔasí-m lóʔ-é-ne**  
 3FS:NOM beautiful person-DAT marry-PF-A:DCL  
 'She married a handsome boy'
- 52b. **gúbbe ʔafki muuzzi-m k'ára-ke**  
 all meat food-DAT good-BE:A:DCL  
 'All meat is good to eat'
- 52c. **ʔiini ʔafill-ó-m wááʔʔi miifje c'igg-é-y**  
 3MS:NOM cloth-ABS-DAT how much money:ABS pay-PF-Q  
 'How much did he pay for the cloth'

In some fixed expressions, the noun with the Dative case is interpreted as an affected entity or beneficiary which lacks control over the situation expressed.

- 53a. **ʔizá-m giig-é-ne**  
 3MS:ABS-DAT agree-PF-A:DCL  
 'He succeeded' (i.e., 'It agreed to him')
- 53b. **ʔizá-m gel-é-ne**  
 3MS:ABS-DAT enter-PF-A:DCL  
 'He understood' (i.e., 'It entered to him')

Compare the above examples with (54) below in which the subject is in the Nominative case:

- 54a. **ʔizi giig-é-ne**  
 3MS:NOM agree-PF-A:DCL  
 'He agreed'
- 54b. **ʔizi gel-é-ne**  
 3MS:NOM enter-PF-A:DCL  
 'He entered'

### 3.5.2.2 *The Instrumental*

The morpheme **-na** marks the Instrumental and its semantically related case; the “Comitative”. Consider the following examples:

55a. **ʔiini**      **deefa**      **wolk'é-na**      **poʔʔ-é-ne**  
3MS:NOM medicine:ABS power:ABS-INST be-light-PF-A:DCL  
'He was cured by the medicine'  
(lit. 'He became light (not dark) by the power of the medicine')

55b. **ta**      **lág-g-átsi**      **peekó**      **mácc-ó-na**      **wolla**  
1SG:GEN friend-M:NOM 3LOG:GEN wife-ABS-INST together  
**mukk-é-ne**  
come-PF-A:DCL  
'My friend came with his wife'

### 3.5.2.4 The Locative

There are three Locative suffixes. These have an overlapping but slightly different function and morphological distribution.

62. -idda 'on/in'  
-aa 'on/in'  
-ka 'on/in'

-idda, -aa and -ka may occur in identical positions as in :

63. tóki 'foot' → tók-idda tók-a tók-ka 'on/in a foot'  
mítsi 'tree' → míts-idda mís-a mís-ka 'on/in a tree'  
máári 'house' → máár-idda máár-a máár-ka 'on/in a house'  
tookí 'head' → took-idda took-aa took-ka 'on/in a head'

Note that the expressions **máára**, **mááridda**, **máárka** 'on/in a house' do not strictly refer to the interior of the house or the construction itself. They refer to the house as well as the cleared ground around it, which is used as a drying place for grain and a place where different family activities take place. To refer only to house as a construction or to locate something in the interior only, **keetsi** 'house', **wúde** 'hut' are used.

As the examples under (63) show, when the Locative suffix **-aa** follows a syllable with high tone, it is reduced to **-a**. Further examples showing this tonal variation include the following:

- 64a. ʔizí zedɗ-aa koom-é-ne  
3MS:NOM skin-LOC jump-PF-A:DCL  
'He jumped on the mat'

# Amharic (Ethiopian Semitic)

(23) *aster tə-č'ənnək'-əčč*  
Aster INCH-WORRY.PRF-3F  
'Aster is worried'

(24) *aster tə-dənnək'-əčč*  
Aster INCH-ASTONISH.PRF-3F  
'Aster is astonished'

In both (23) and (24) the subject (S) of the intransitive clause occurs in clause-initial position and agrees with the pronominal suffix on the verb as expected. Now consider the synonymous constructions in (25) and (26) below:

(25) *aster-(in) č'ənnək'-at*  
Aster-(ACC) WORRY.PRF.3M-3FO  
'Aster is worried'

(26) *aster-(in) dənnək'-at*  
Aster-(ACC) ASTONISH.PRF.3M-3FO  
'Aster is astonished'

## Some conclusions:

- Case assignment in these Afroasiatic and Nilo-Saharan languages is conditioned by the semantic nature of core noun phrases, the semantics of the verb, as well as tense/aspect. All three factors are listed by Dixon (1994: 70-110) as frequently occurring features conditioning the distribution of **split-S** and **fluid-S** marking cross-linguistically.

- Communication between “descriptivists” and “theoreticians” not always easy

Evans and Levinson (2009: 430) make the following observation:

“It will take a historian of science to unravel the causes of this ongoing presumption of underlying language uniformity. But a major reason is simply that there is a lack of communication between theorists in the cognitive sciences and those linguists most in the know about linguistic diversity. This is partly because of the reluctance by most descriptive and typological linguists to look up from their fascinating particularistic worlds and engage with the larger theoretical issues in the cognitive sciences. Outsiders have instead taken the articulate envoys from the universalizing generativist camp to represent the consensus view within linguistics. But there are other reasons as well: the relevant literature is forbiddingly opaque to outsiders, bristling with arcane phonetic symbols and esoteric terminologies.”