



Aspects of Split Ergativity (Oxford Studies in Comparative Syntax)

Jessica Coon

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In languages with aspect-based split ergativity, one portion of the grammar follows an ergative pattern, while another shows a "split." In this book, Jessica Coon argues that aspectual split ergativity does not mark a split in how case is assigned, but rather, a split in sentence structure. Specifically, the contexts in which we find the appearance of a nonergative pattern in an otherwise ergative language involve added structure--a disassociation between the syntactic predicate and the stem carrying the lexical verb stem.

The book begins with an analysis of split person marking patterns in Chol, a Mayan language of southern Mexico. Here appearance of split ergativity follows naturally from the fact that the progressive and the imperfective morphemes are *verbs*, while the perfective morpheme is not. The fact that the nonperfective morphemes are verbs, combined with independent properties of Chol grammar, results in the appearance of a split.

This book further surveys aspectual splits in a variety of unrelated languages and offers an explanation for the universal directionality of split ergativity: in splits, ergativity is always retained in the perfective aspect. Following Laka's (2006) proposal for Basque, Coon proposes that the cross-linguistic tendency for imperfective aspects to pattern with *locative* constructions is responsible for the biclausality which causes the appearance of a nonergative pattern. Building on Demirdache and Uribe-Etxebarria's (2000) prepositional account of spatiotemporal relations, Coon proposes that the perfective is never periphrastic--and thus never involves a split--because there is no preposition in natural language that correctly captures the relation of the *assertion time* to the *event time* denoted by the perfective aspect.

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