Conditions on ergative case in Manang Gurung

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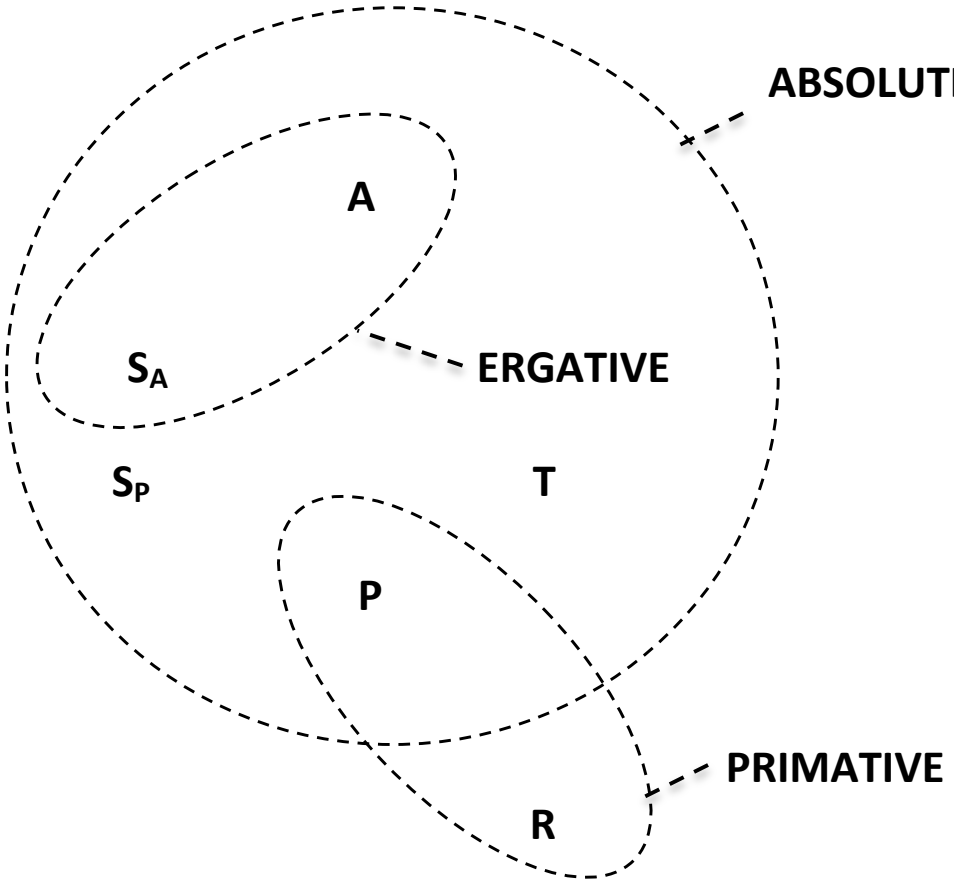
Issue

- In some dependent-marking languages of the Tibeto-Burman area, case is **(probabilistically) determinable** based on variable characteristics of the **governor** and its **governee** rather than a more straightforward mapping between the argument structure/case frame of a verb and its dependent NPs.
- In such instances, the presence of a particular case is not strictly determined by morphosyntactic feature structures, but is subject to other (formal) **conditions.**

Case profile of Manang Gurung



Conditions in elicited structures

- Variability in case-marking is typically described as **Differential Subject Marking (DSM)** (de Hoop & de Swart 2008, Malchukov 2008) or **Differential Object Marking (DOM)** (Bossong 1985, Aissen 2003, Dalrymple and Nikolaeva 2011). DSM in Manang Gurung is exemplified in (1).

(1) a. tela **ŋa-i/*ŋa** po-ri hon ta-i
yesterday 1SG-ERG/1SG[ABS] ground-LOC hole dig-PST
'Yesterday I dug a hole in the ground.'

b. nagai **ŋa-i/ŋa** po-ri hon ta-mu
tomorrow 1SG-ERG/1SG[ABS] ground-LOC hole dig-NPST
'Tomorrow I will dig a hole in the ground.'

In elicited utterances, ergative is favoured when the agent is high on the animacy hierarchy and the patient is low on the same scale.

Variation in spontaneous speech data

- Gurung text data demonstrates that agentive subjects are frequently morphologically unmarked for case.

(2)

sorə	sətrə	bərsə	umere	**ŋi**	tshətəpəe	dukhə	jo-pa
sixteen	seventeen	year	age.LOC	1.PL[ABS]	like.this	pain	get-NMLZR

'For sixteen, seventeen years, we received hardships.'

(3)

tini	tiro	**ŋə**	mrũ-e	ko	tsə-mo
today	one.day	1.SG[ABS]	king-GEN	blood	eat-NPST

'…I will suck the blood of a king today.'

(4)

tjarkja	**ŋi**	məno	khə-pə	kjã	bəne-mu
from.now.on	1.PL[ABS]	Manang	come-NMLZR	road	make-NPST

'Now we have constructed a road to Manang.'

Probabilistic case and information structure

- While some distributional properties of case are consistent, we use the term **probabilistic case** to refer to instances of case marking where (i) the presence of case cannot be strictly determined by grammatical rules, and (ii) there are non-syntactic factors involved in determining its realization.
- Specifically, we are interested in the distribution of case marking that aligns with grammatical parameters commonly associated with **topicality and reference tracking**.
- Our ultimate aim is to construct **statistical models** to account for observed behaviour, namely, variation in the distribution of case marking in spontaneous speech data.

Variables associated with DEM

Verbal/clausal properties
predicate valence
clause polarity
aspect/tense

Information structure
contrastive focus
switch in agent

Agent properties
person
number
animacy
humanness
definiteness
specificity
referentiality
agent volition
agent control

Subjectivity
subjective judgment of speaker
socially unexpected actions
speech predicates

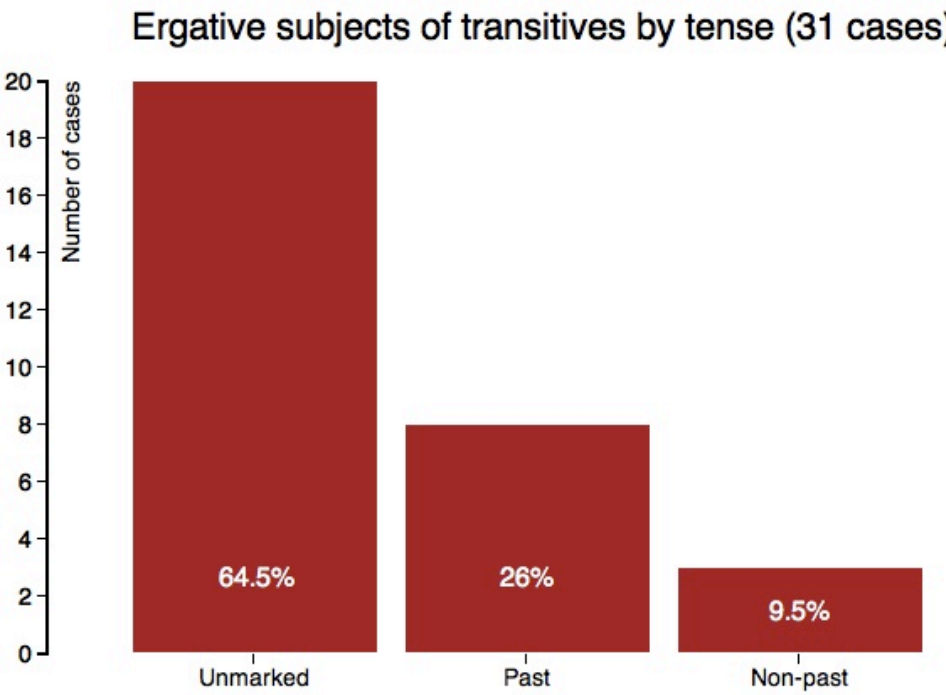
NP properties
'heavy' NPs

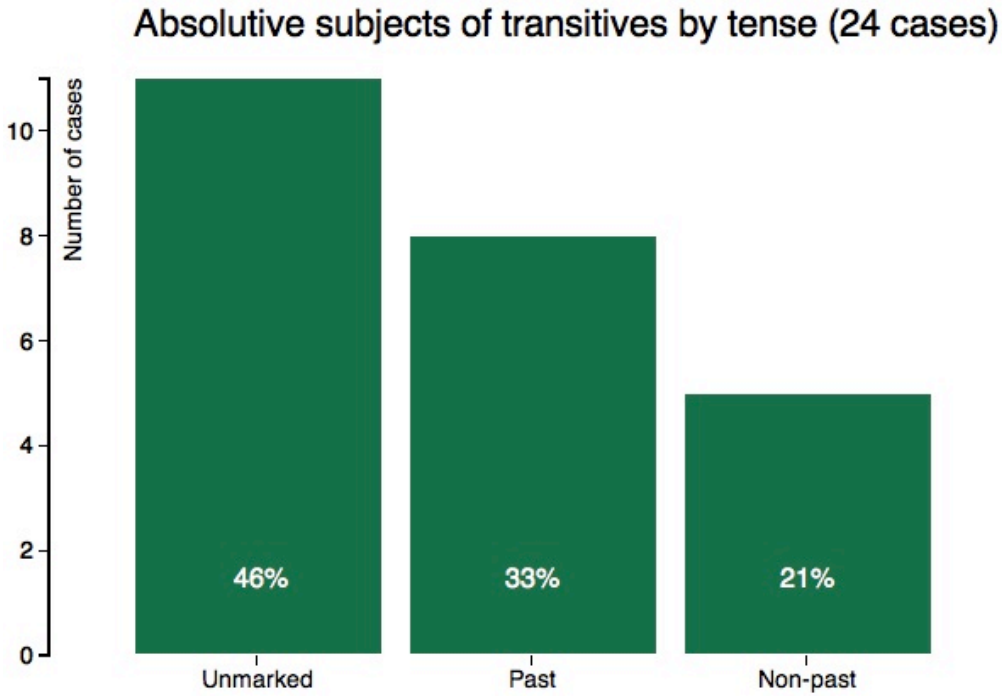
Based on variables discussed in Chelliah and Hyslop (2011)

Data overview

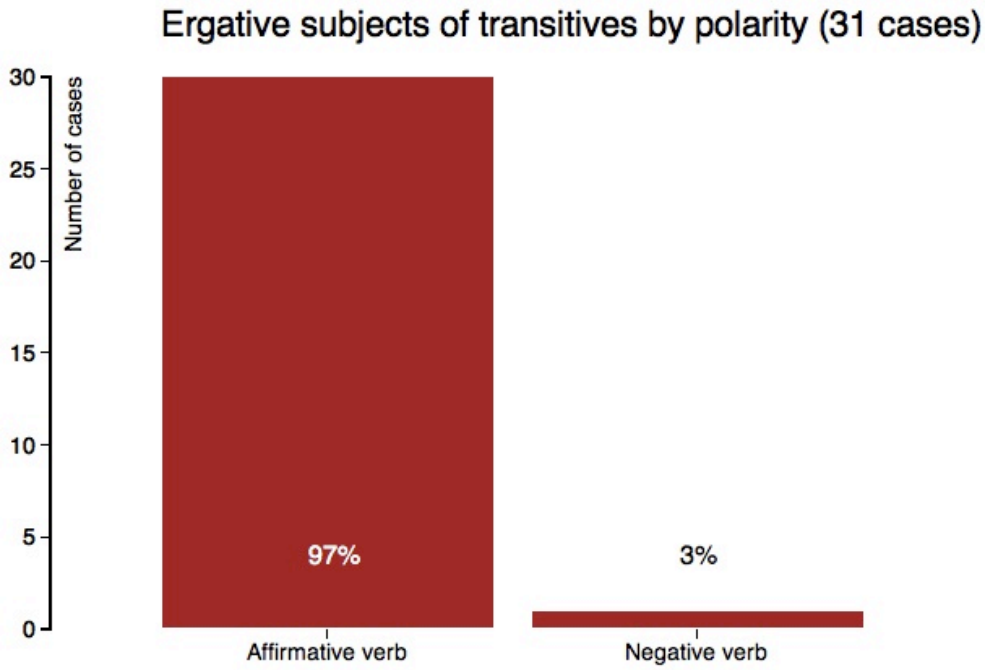
Manang Gurung (6 texts)			
Total verb forms	**470**	**100%**	
Verbs with covert A/S	344	73.2%	
Verbs with overt A/S	126	26.8%	ERG: 32
			NON-ERG: 94
Intransitive	**230**	**48.9%**	
With covert S	167	35.5%	
With overt S	63	13.4%	ERG: 1
			NON-ERG: 62
Complement-taking	**232**	**49.4%**	
With covert A	177	37.7%	
With overt A	55	11.7%	ERG: 31
			NON-ERG: 24
Zero-predication	**8**	**1.7%**	
With covert S	0	0%	
With overt S	8	1.7%	NON-ERG: 8

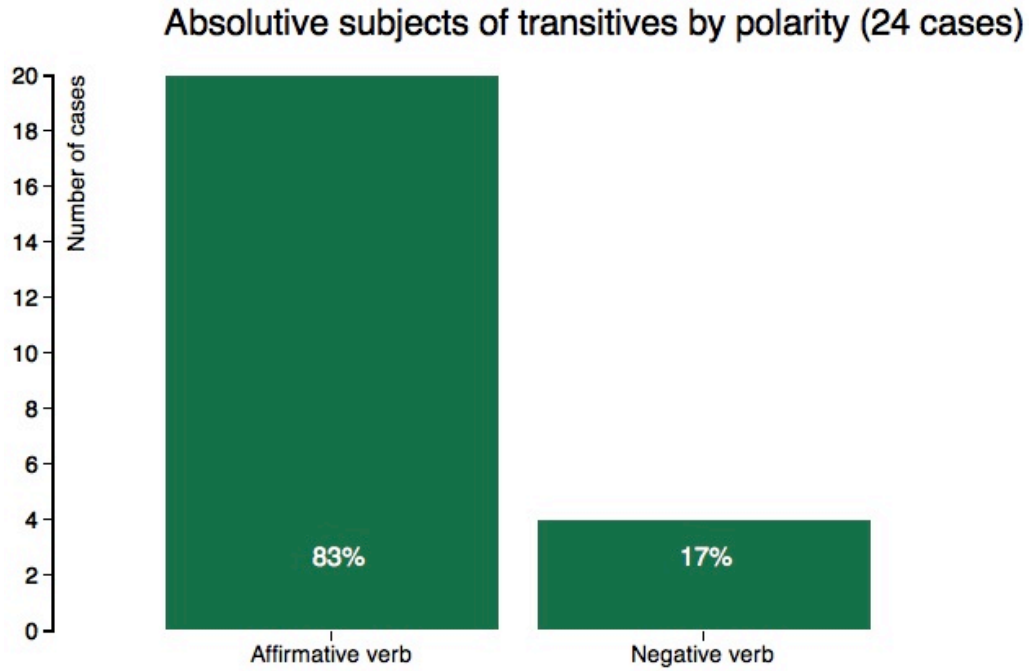
Distribution of case with different tenses





Distribution of case with different polarities

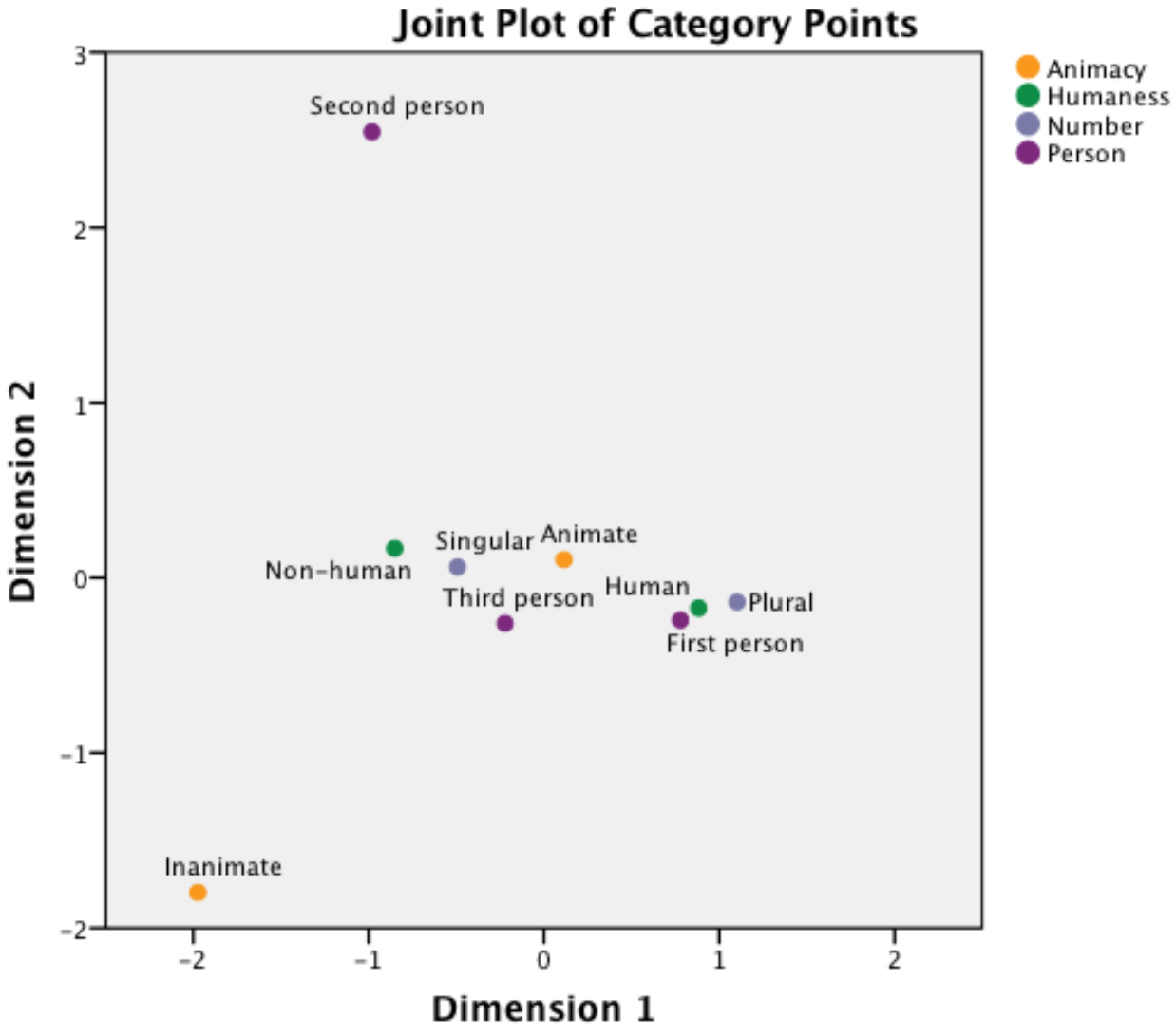




Multiple correspondence analysis

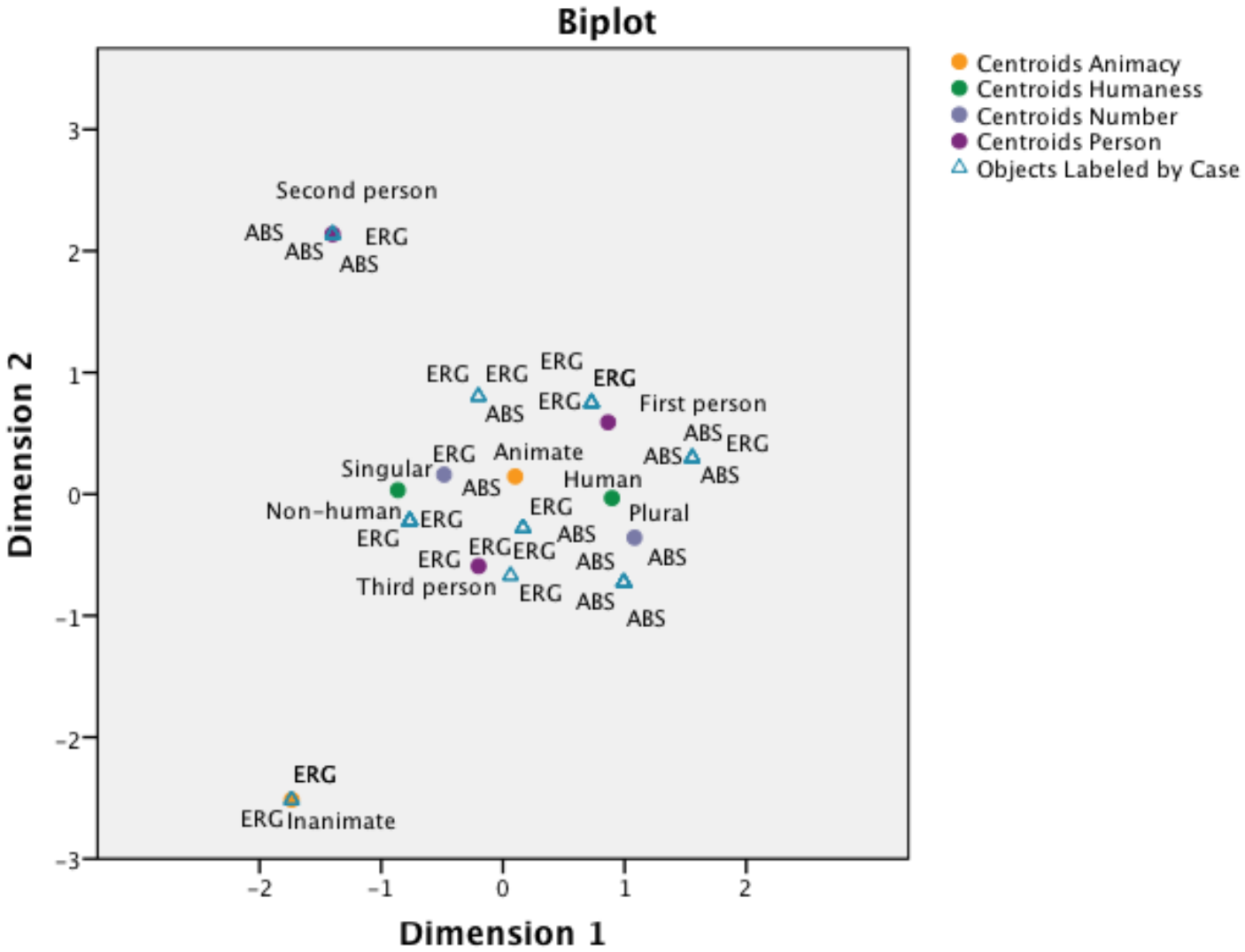
- Multiple correspondence analysis (MCA) is an **exploratory data analysis technique** for nominal categorical data, used to detect and represent underlying structures in a data set.
- It is performed by applying the **correspondence analysis algorithm** to an indicator matrix where the rows represent individuals and the columns are dummy variables representing categories of the variables.
- Structure is revealed visually by representing data as points in a low-dimensional **Euclidean space**.

Joint plot of four subject variables



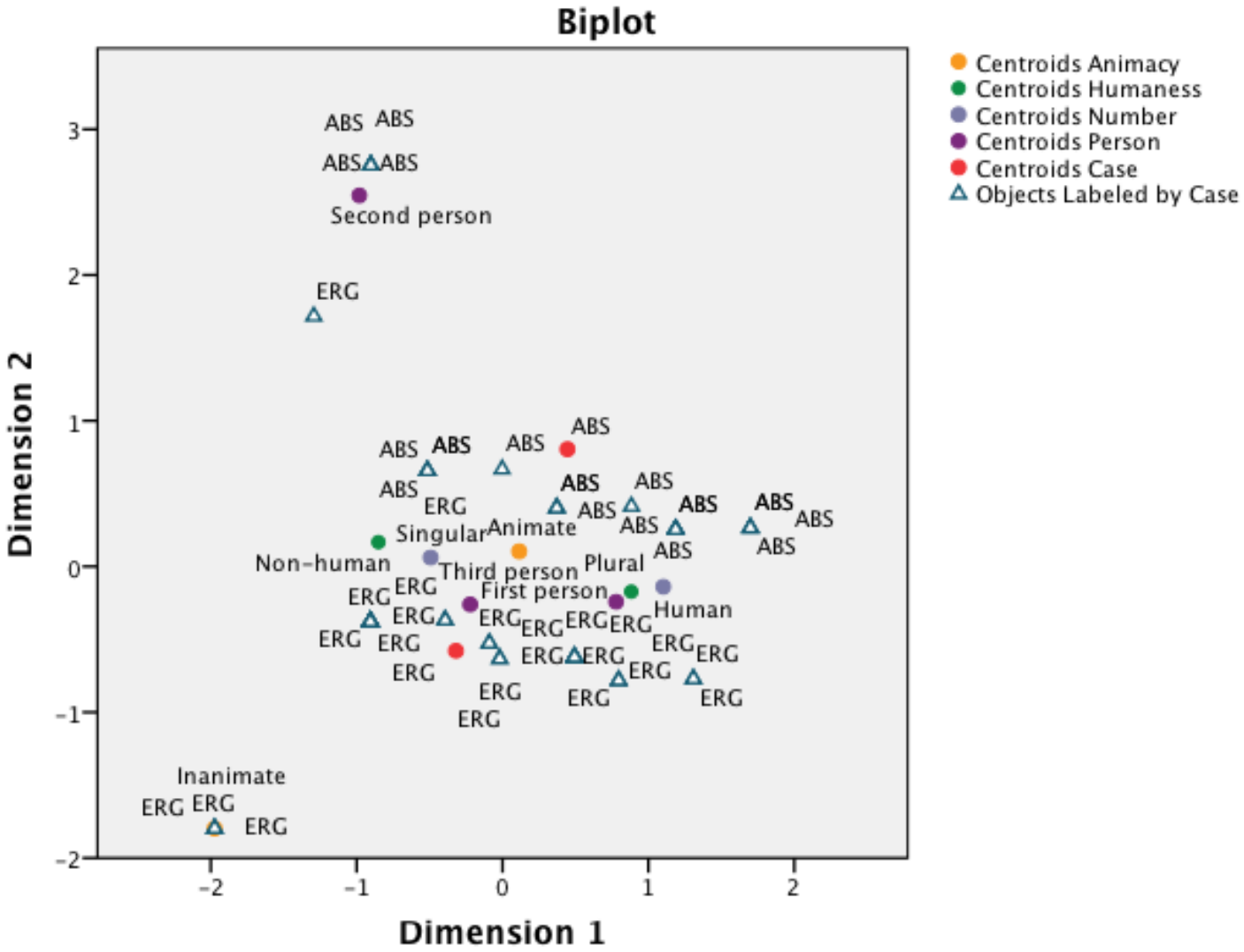
Variable Principal Normalization.

Distribution of subjects in biplot (excl. case)



Variable Principal Normalization.

Distribution of subjects in biplot (incl. case)



Variable Principal Normalization.

Ergative inanimate subjects

- All examples of inanimate subjects are the noun *kətha=i* 'story', as a **citation of a source of evidence for a world view**.
- The **speech predicate** may be responsible for its realization.

(5) a. tsu kətha=i ta pi-l mǝe-pǝ pi-sja
this story=ERG what say-PURP search-NMLZR say-COND
'This story is telling us that...'

b. tsu kətha=e pi-l mǝe-pǝ
this story=ERG say-PURP search-NMLZR
'This is what the story is trying to tell us.'

Absolutive second-person subjects

- Absolutive second-person subjects are all in **quoted speech**.

(6) a.

kjõ	ko	tsə-sjã	ŋjo	satõ	se	mo
2SG[ABS]	blood	eat–COND	1.PL	all[ABS]	kill	COP.NPST

‘If you suck the blood they all will kill us.’

b.

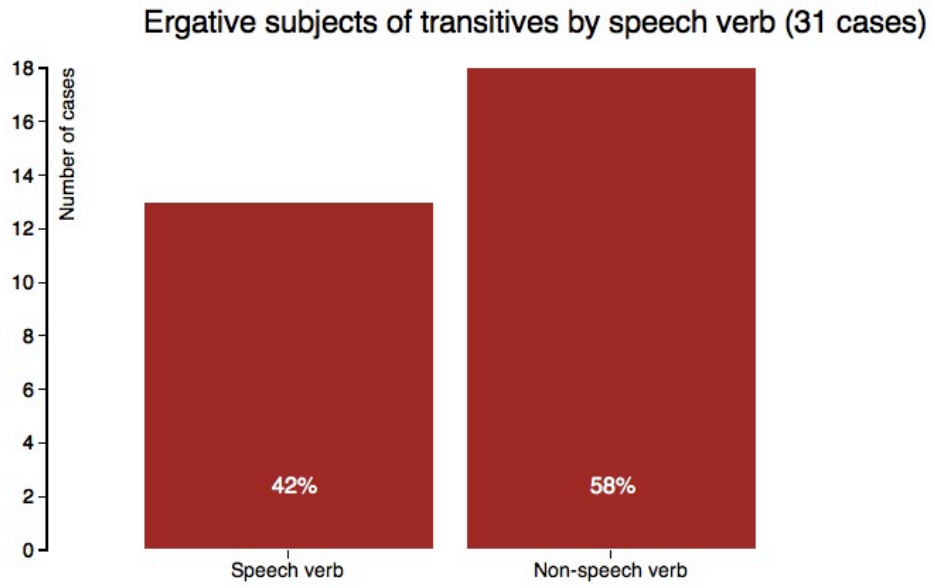
ʈi	ʈi	na	kjõ	mui	tiro	tsə̃i
stay	stay	PRTCL	2SG[ABS]	night	one.day	PRTCL

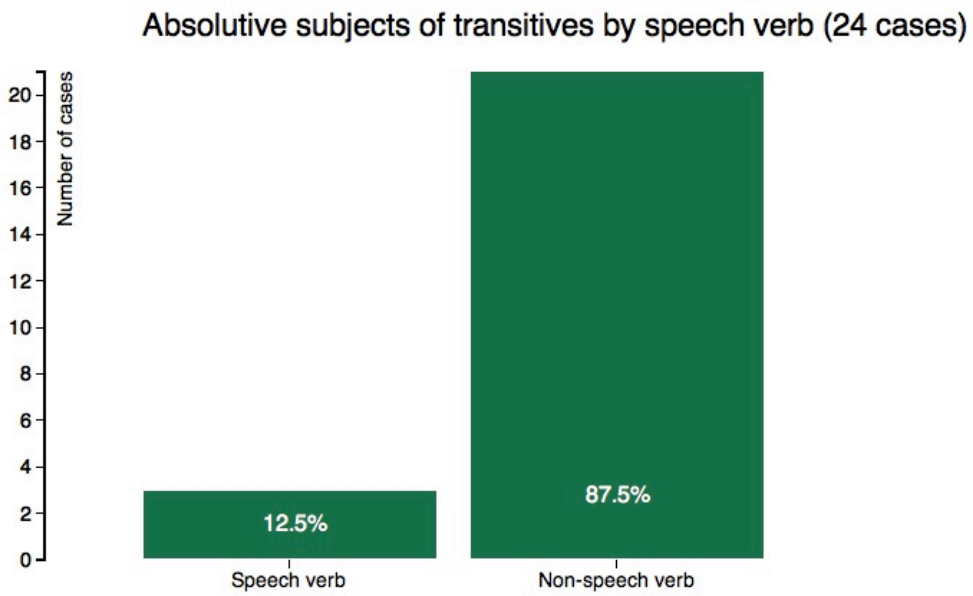
‘You may stay here for one night.’

- The only deviation from this pattern is an ergative marked subject of a **verb of speech**.

Distribution of case with speech predicates

- Peterson (2011), Lidz (2011), Morey (2011) all note that the distribution of agentive marking is associated with **speech predicates**.





Absolutive subjects of speech predicates

- While there is a strong tendency for speech predicate to have an ergative marked subject, this is **not categorical**.
- A number of different factors may be at play including the **position/status** of the subject and **pragmatic parameters**.

(7)

tini	tiro	mrũ-e	ko	tsə-l	pi-no	pi-i	the
today	one.day	king-GEN	blood	eat-PURP	give-IMP	say-PST	3[SG.ABS]

'He said, "Allow me to suck the blood of a king one day".'

(8)

mrũ	ro-l	a-ŋe-mne	məi	the	ta	pi
king[ABS]	sleep-PURP	NEG-agree-CVB	COP.PST	3[SG.ABS]	what	say

'What did he say when the king did not agree to sleep?'
(speaker thinking out loud while narrating)

Conclusion

- We have highlighted the **methodological challenges** for investigating a complex distributional problem in the discourse of an under-described variety.
- Like many other Tibeto-Burman languages, Manang Gurung shows evidence for the **interaction of several different parameters** affecting DSM that could noT be determined strictly through elicitation.
- **Multiple correspondence analyses** allow us to explore our data set, but it is still instructive to look closely at individual tokens to interpret which dimensions will be fruitful for revealing **structure in the "mess".**

Thanks

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