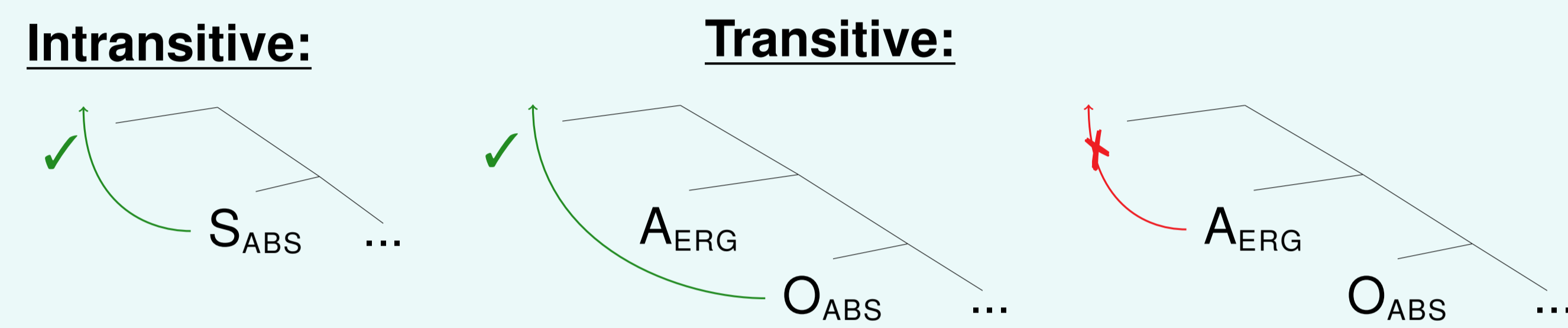




What is syntactic ergativity

Broadly defined: Syntactic rules which distinguish **S and O** vs. **A**
(= **ABS** vs. **ERG**)

Most common effect: ERG cannot \bar{A} -move
= Ergative Extraction Constraint (**EEC**)



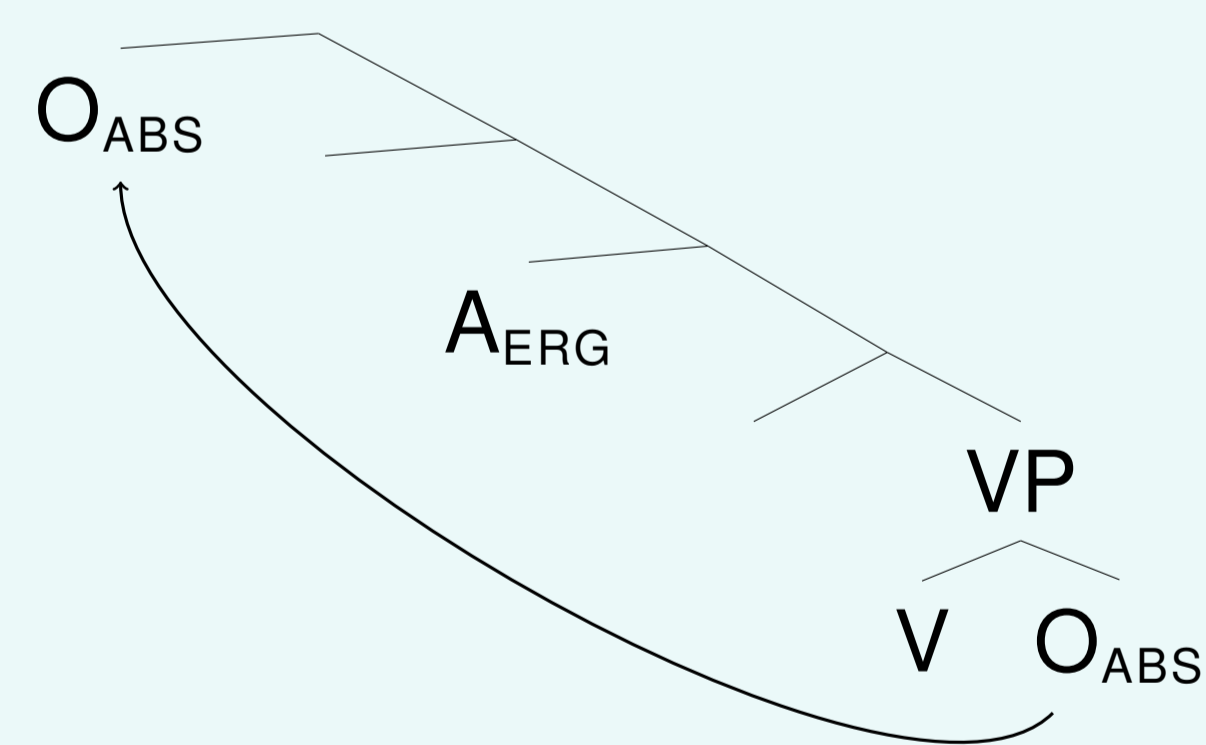
→ handout: example (1) and references

Implicational hierarchy:

All syntactically ergative languages display the EEC.

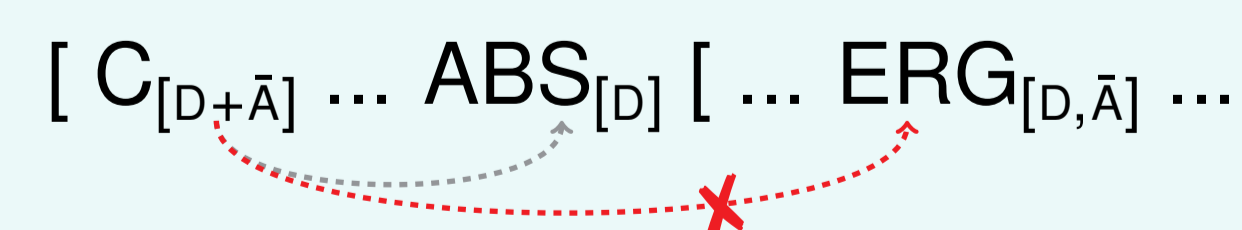
Theory says: EEC \neq syntactic ergativity

• (Broad) syntactic ergativity is typically explained with **high absolutive** syntax.
→ handout: references



• High ABS analyses do not predict a universal correlation between EEC and syntactic ergativity.

• For example, Coon et al. 2021: ABS **intervenes** for ERG movement because C probes for $[D+\bar{A}]$



⇒ **EEC = high ABS + additional parameter**

→ handout: details and references

Data confirm: Syntactic ergativity \neq EEC

West Circassian (=Adyghe; Northwest Caucasian) displays syntactic ergativity in:

- **Anaphor binding** (Ershova 2023)
- **Parasitic gap licensing** (Ershova 2021)
- **Possessor extraction** (Ershova 2024)

But does not display the EEC.

Reciprocal binding in West Circassian

- is expressed morphologically as **agreement**
- is subject to **Condition A**

(5) t̩- q̩- ze- d- e- šʷe
1PL.ABS- DIR- RECP.IO- COM- DYN- dance

‘We are dancing with each other.’

ABS(S) binds IO(COM)

(6) senehatxer Ø- zer- a- ʷe- ʷet̩əx̩
professions.ABS 3ABS- RECP.IO- 3PL.ERG- CAUS- obtain.PST

‘They let/helped each other obtain professions.’

ERG(A) binds IO(Causee)

- does not affect case, agreement or transitivity

(7) axe-me zañč'ew zewəže Ø- ze- r- a- ʷetež'əš't̩ə
they-PL.OBL directly all 3ABS- RECP.IO- DAT- 3PL.ERG- tell.IPF.PST

‘They certainly told the whole truth to each other.’

ERG binds IO(DAT)

Reciprocal binding is **syntactically ergative**:

(8) a. te- zere- λeʷəx̩
1PL.ABS- RECP.ERG- see.PST

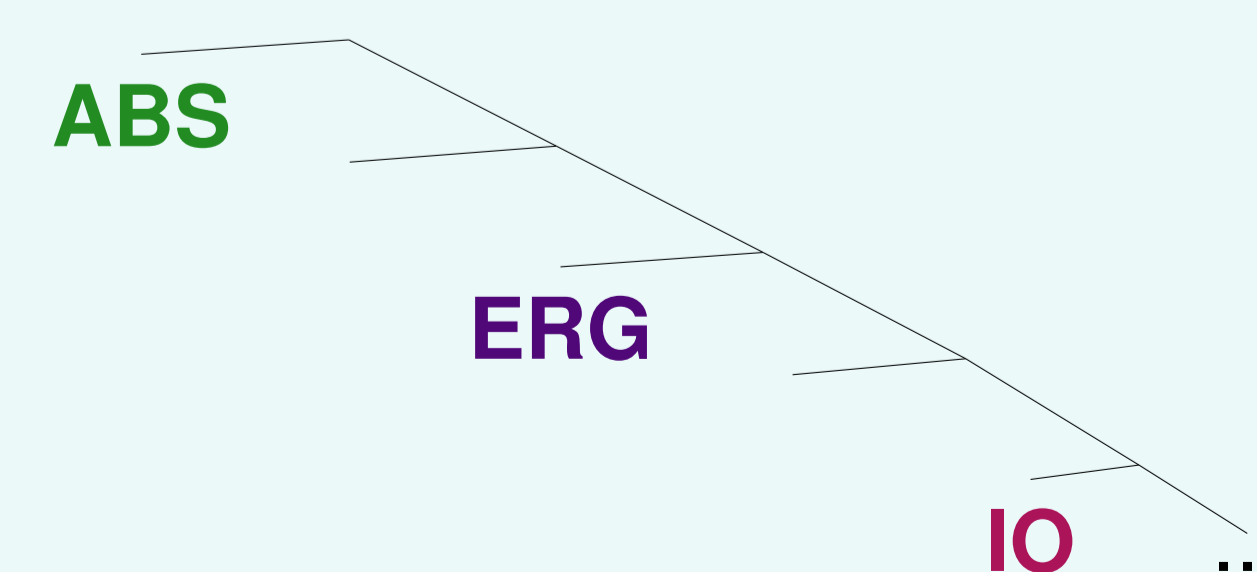
ABS(O) binds ERG(A)

b. *ze(re)- t- λeʷəx̩
RECP.ABS- 1PL.ERG- see.PST
lit. ‘Each other saw us’

ERG(A) cannot bind ABS(O)

(+ ABS(O) binds IO → handout)

Explained by **high ABS** syntax: ABS > ERG > IO



No EEC: Ergative can \bar{A} -move

All core arguments can be relativized: for example, **IO**

(11) mə sabəjə-m qeʷakəx̩-r [jə-šəpχʷə-me] Ø- a- r- jə- t̩əx̩
this child-ERG flowers-ABS 3PL.PR-sister-PL.OBL 3ABS- 3PL.IO- DAT- 3SG.ERG- give.PST.PL

‘This child gave flowers to his sisters.’

(12) [Op̄ t̩əλə-r̄ IO Ø- ze- r- jə- t̩ə-ʷe] çəfə-r̄
book-ABS 3ABS- WH.IO- DAT- 3SG.ERG- give-PST person-ABS

‘the person to whom s/he gave the book’ (Lander 2012:276)

ERG is relativized in the same way:

(13) č'alew [Op̄ apč'ə-r̄ ERG Ø- zə- qʷət̩əx̩]
boy glass-ABS 3ABS- WH.ERG- break.PST.OBL

‘the boy that broke the glass’ (Lander 2012:274-276)

Relativization displays **movement properties**:

- Island sensitivity

(15) * mə č'ale-r̄ arə [RC Op̄ se Ø-s-š̩e-re-r̄ [CP ERG
this boy-ABS PRED I 3ABS-1SG.ERG-know-DYN-ABS
deʷ-ew̩ wered Ø- q̩- zere- zə- ʷere-r̄]
good-ADV song 3ABS- DIR- FACT- WH.ERG- say.DYN-ABS

lit. ‘This boy is the one I know [that _ sings well].’

- Crossover effects and parasitic gaps → handout

Implicational hierarchy: EEC \nleftrightarrow syntactic ergativity

The correlation between EEC and syntactic ergativity is:

- theoretically unexpected
- empirically incorrect

Confirmed by EEC without high ABS syntax

(Otsuka 2006; Legate 2012; Polinsky 2016; Deal 2016; Deal, Mikkelsen, and Thrane 2024)

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