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The Viability of the Notion of Subject  
in  
Coast Tsimshian (Sm'algyax)

Jean Mulder  
University of Alberta

### 1. Introduction

The status of subject as a linguistic universal is commonly assumed. For example, the classification of the word order of a language as SVO, SOV, etc. presupposes the universal occurrence of subject; many language universals such as Mithun's (1984) hierarchy for noun incorporation are stated in terms of subject; and, some theories such as Relational Grammar take subject as a primitive.

However, it will be argued in this paper that this assumption is not correct in the case of a syntactically ergative language like Coast Tsimshian (Sm'algyax).<sup>1</sup> Specifically, in Section 2, I discuss the syntactic operations which operate on an ergative basis in Sm'algyax and, in Section 3, compare this language with other languages with varying degrees of syntactic ergativity such as Dyirbal, Yidin<sup>y</sup>, Chukchee, and Yup'ik Eskimo. Then, in Section 4, I examine the definitions for subject proposed by Dixon (1979) and Schachter (1976, 1977) with respect to the ergative orientation of the syntax in Coast Tsimshian.

### 2. Syntactic Ergativity in Coast Tsimshian

In exploring ergativity from a syntactic viewpoint, we are making a decision as to whether a particular syntactic process is ergative (S treated in the same way as O), accusative (S treated like A), or neither ergative or accusative (S, A and O are all treated alike or are all treated differently). This involves considering several different types of syntactic evidence which do not necessarily all give the same result. For example, within a syntactic construction all aspects of the process function in terms of S and O in some languages, whereas in other languages only some aspects of the process may be ergative while others may be accusative and still others may be neither ergative or accusative. Thus, a language will be said to show syntactic ergativity if any aspect of a syntactic operation is ergative and the degree of syntactic ergativity is taken as dependent on the number and extent of the syntactic operations which treat the S like the O.

There are three constructions which provide evidence for syntactic ergativity in Coast Tsimshian: imperatives, topicalization and relativization. However, in each case, as is shown in the following sections, only some aspects of the process operate on an ergative basis. In contrast, the morphology of this language is predominately ergative in that the connective system which is roughly analogous to case marking, the pronominal system, and person and number agreement on the verb are all highly ergative.<sup>2</sup>

#### 2.1 Imperatives

Imperatives, cross-linguistically, have a 2nd person pronoun as the stated or understood S or A who the speaker intends to get to perform an action. Thus, as Dixon (1979:112) states:

...the fact that S and A have the same possibilities of reference for the imperative constructions of some particular language (and the fact that, say, either can be deleted from surface structure) is no evidence at all for the placement of that language on a continuum of syntactic 'ergativity' vs. 'accusativity'. Even the

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most ergative language will treat S and A NPs of imperatives the same. This follows from the meaning of imperatives (addressee is told to be agent)...

In Sm'algyax, in addition to this universal S/A linkage, there is also one respect in which S and O are treated alike. In particular, in the main type of imperative construction the S and A must be 2nd person (the universal rule), but when the A is 2nd person singular it is always deleted whereas the S, like the O, is retained:<sup>3</sup>

- (1)a. Yüü duus. (E)<sup>4</sup>  
hide cat  
Hide the cat. (A = 2SG)
- b. Sm yüü duus. (E)  
2PL hide cat  
Hide the cat.
- (2)a. Liimi-n.  
sing -2SG  
S  
Sing.
- b. Liimi-sm.  
sing -2PL  
S  
Sing.
- (3)a. Lümoom-i.  
help -1SG  
O  
Help me. (A = 2SG)
- b. Babuud-it.  
wait -3  
O  
Wait for him. (A = 2SG)

In (1), the addressee is an A and where it is singular, as in (1a), it does not occur. When it is plural, as in (1b), though, it does occur and is marked with sm '2PL' which is part of the subjective dependent pronoun, m...sm '2PL'. Example (2) illustrates that when the addressee is an S it must occur. This is true whether it is singular, as in (2a), or plural, as in (2b). The obligatory presence of the S is like that of the O, as in (3a and b) where it is singular and plural, respectively.

In summary, Coast Tsimshian follows the universal rule of treating the S and A the same with respect to possibilities of reference for the imperative construction. However, with respect to deletion of the A in this construction, it is ergative.

## 2.2 Topicalization

Topicalization is a syntactic process that gives prominence to a particular NP within a sentence. The syntactic strategies for giving such prominence can be the same for an A, S or O (i.e., neither ergative or accusative), they can treat the S in the same way as an O (i.e., ergative), or they can treat the S in the same way as an A (i.e., accusative). The different strategies might distinguish between whether an A, S and O can all be topicalized, whether all types of NPs such as full NPs as well as pronominals can be topicalized, and how the different topicalized NPs are marked.

In Coast Tsimshian, the relevant parameters for topicalization are what type of NP is given prominence, whether or not there is a topic marker, and the marking of the connectives and person agreement. With regard to the first parameter, full NPs, independent pronouns, and the sentence initial demonstrative pronoun ni'nii can all be topicalized regardless of whether they function as an A, S or O. For example, the full NP that is topicalized is an A in (4), an S in (5) and an O in (6).

(4) 'Yagay 'wii gyisiyaasg-at in -t deen -tga  
instead great northwind -3 TOP-3 avenge-CN  
A A PRED  
Instead the great northwind avenged the little  
-sga ɬgu alasg-m yetsisk.  
-CN little weak -CN land  
PRED ADJ animal  
weak animal.

(5) Awta uks -haytg-it gi -sga lax maliitg  
porcupine toward-stand-3 DEM-CN top green  
S PREP  
Porcupine stood at the edge on the green grass.  
-m kyoox.  
-CN grass  
ADJ

(6) Waab -a awaan nah dzab-u.  
house-CN DET PAST make-1SG  
NP A  
That's the house that I built.  
(Dunn 1979b:342)

The location of the topic, in Coast Tsimshian, is preverbal position. In (4) the A, 'wii gyisiyaasg- 'great northwind', is in preverbal position, while in (5) and (6), the S, awta 'porcupine', and the O, waab 'house', occupy this position, respectively.

While there is no distinction between an A, S or O as to what type of NP is given prominence, there is a distinction made with respect to the presence of a topic marker. As is illustrated in (4), when an A is topicalized there is a topic marker in 'TOP', whereas with a topicalized S or O, as in (5)-(6), there is no topic marker.

The marking of person agreement and the connectives is also sensitive to whether the topicalized NP is an S, A or an O. First, when an S is topicalized, it occurs in preverbal position and the verb is suffixed with a 3rd person dependent pronoun, -t '3', as in (5). The -t can only be interpreted as showing person agreement and not as a connective.

When an A is topicalized, the A occurs in preverbal position and the subjective dependent pronoun, -t '3', marking person agreement with the A, shows some interesting variations which are discussed below. Connectives do not occur with a topicalized A except in one example, (4), where this connective is still present when the A is topicalized. In all of the other examples with a topicalized A that I have found in texts, the only predicative connective which is present marks the following O:

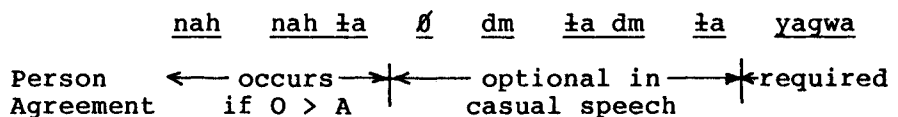
(7)a. T 'nüüyu dm -t in naks -ga ɬguuɬg -n -t.  
3 1SG FUT-3 TOP marry-CN daughter-2SG-DEM  
A A PRED POSS  
It is I who will marry your daughter.  
(Boas 1911:365)

b. "Nüüyu dm -t in naks -ga ɪguuɪg -n -t,  
 1SG FUT-3 TOP marry-CN daughter-2SG -DEM  
                   A                  PRED                  POSS  
 I am the one who will marry your daughter,  
 Gawo," daya ɪgu ts'apts'ap.  
                   say little wren  
 Gawo," said the little wren.  
 (Boas 1912:198)

There are several different variations with the subjective dependent pronoun -t '3' when the A is topicalized. The most formal version is illustrated in (7a), where the -t '3' occurs before the topicalized A, 'nüüyu '1SG', as well as in the usual place, suffixed to the word preceding the topic marker in. This 'double' marking of -t '3' has only been found with a topicalized A that is an independent pronoun. Further, this variation is restricted to the oratory style of speech and even here it is optional, as is shown in (7b) where the -t '3' only occurs suffixed to dm 'FUT'.

The occurrence of the person agreement marker -t is also conditioned by the tense/aspect of the sentence and by the semantic content of the A and O relative to each other. That is, with topicalized As the restrictions on the occurrence of t can be summarized as in (8):

(8) Person Agreement with a Topicalized A



Specifically, with nah 'PAST' and nah ɪa 'PAST just', the t only occurs if the O outranks the A in terms of the argument hierarchy; with ∅ 'NonFUT', dm 'FUT', ɪa dm 'about FUT' and ɪa 'PAST', the t is optional in casual speech; and, with yagwa 'PRES' the t is always required.

To summarize, with a topicalized A, connectives are not found to be part of the topicalization process, except in (4), whereas the person agreement marker, -t '3', does occur and is conditioned by the tense/aspect of the sentence, the semantic content of the A and O relative to each other, and whether the speech style is formal or casual.

When an O is topicalized, a predicative connective is optionally suffixed to the O and the subjective dependent pronoun t marks a full NP A, as is summarized in (8) above. In (9), the topicalized O, ni'nii 'DEM PRO' is suffixed with the predicative connective -sga. Here the A is a dependent objective pronoun, -t '3', so there is no person agreement with the A.

(9) Ni'nii-sga k'yin-k'yinam-t gi -sga ɪguuɪg-m  
 DEM -CN PL -give -3 DEM-CN young-CN  
 PRO PRED A PREP ADJ  
 That is what he gave to his son.  
 'yuuta-t -ga.  
 man -3 -DEM  
                   POSS  
 (Boas 1912:80)

However, in (10), the A, ol 'bear' is a full NP and -t is suffixed to ada 'and' to mark the agreement. The topicalized O, 'niit '3', is also suffixed with the predicative connective -a in this example:

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- (10) Ada-t 'niid-a nah niidz-a ol.  
 and-3 3 -CN PAST see CN bear  
 A PRED PRED  
 He's the one the bear saw.  
 (Dunn 1978b:343)

In conclusion, the various strategies involved in topicalization in Coast Tsimshian can be the same for an A, S or O (i.e., neither ergative or accusative), they can treat the S in the same way as an O (i.e., ergative), or they can treat the S in the same way as an A (i.e., accusative). First, it was shown that all three arguments, A, S and O, can be topicalized and that there is no restriction as to the type of NP that can be topicalized. In this respect, topicalization is neither ergative or accusative in Sm'algyax. Next, it was shown that when an S or an O is given prominence in a sentence there is no topicalization marker, but with an A there is. The use of a topicalization marker is, therefore, ergative in Sm'algyax. Connectives were found to be part of the topicalization process only with a topicalized O, where they are suffixed to the O. As the S and A are not specially marked with connectives, this is an accusative strategy. Finally, with regard to person agreement it was shown that a topicalized S or A is marked for agreement, although with different conditioning factors, whereas a topicalized O is not. This, then, is an accusative strategy. Thus, topicalization in Coast Tsimshian is a process which has both ergative and accusative characteristics as well as characteristics which are neither ergative or accusative.

### 2.3 Relativization

Relativization in Coast Tsimshian is similar to topicalization with regard to the various syntactic and morphological aspects of the process. These include what type of NP can occur as the head of a relative clause, whether or not there is a relative clause marker, and the marking of the connectives and person agreement. These aspects can be the same for an A, S or O (i.e. neither ergative or accusative), they can treat the S in the same way as an O (i.e. ergatively), or they can treat the S in the same way as an A (i.e. accusatively). As with topicalization, the following discussion shows that the strategies involved in relativization in Sm'algyax range over all three of these possibilities.

First, full NPs, independent and dependent pronouns can all occur as heads of relative clauses. There is no restriction as to whether the head functions as an A, S or O in the dependent relative clause. For example, the full NP that is relativized is an A in the relative clause in (11), an S in (12), and an O in (13). In (14), the head of the relative clause is a dependent pronoun.

- (11) Ada-t 'nax'noo-da txa'nii na -gyed -a  
 and-3 hear -CN all POSS-people-CN  
 A PRED POSS  
 And all the people of the Skeena

ksian wil waal-sga t'apxadool-tga hana'ang-t  
 Skeena that do -CN two -CN women -3  
 river PRED ADJ A  
 heard what the two women who had found

in waay Hatsenas.  
 REL find  
 Hatsenas were doing.  
 (Boas 1912:80)

(12) Ada sgüü-t, siipg-it gi -sga n -ts'm-waab  
 and lie -3 sick -3 DEM-CN POSS-in -house  
 down S S PREP  
 And he laid sick in his lodge,

-t -ga gu haytg-it gi -sga na -süül  
 -3 -CN REL stand-3 DEM-CN POSS-middle  
 POSS PREP S PREP  
 which stood in the middle of the

-ga t'aa.  
 -CN lake  
 POSS  
 lake.

(13) Ada-t nii-sga gyik su -naks -ga naks  
 and-3 see-CN again new-spouse-CN marry  
 A PRED PREP  
 And she saw the new wife whom he had married.

-t-ga.  
 -3-DEM  
 A  
 (Boas 1912:160)

(14) Ada al gaks wil da -txalyaa gat-got'iks-at  
 and EMPH yet that with-increase PL -arrive -3  
 S  
 And still [the number of] those arriving who

in hu-waat -a txa'nii ligiwaal-ga.  
 REL PL-trade-CN all things -DEM  
 PRED  
 were trading all kinds of things increased.  
 (Boas 1912:80)

In (11), the head of the relative clause, t'apxadooltga hana'angt 'two women', is an A in the relative clause, in waay Hatsenas 'who had found Hatsenas' and in (12), the head, nts'mwaabtga 'his lodge', is an S in the relative clause, gu haytgit gisga nasüülga t'aa 'which stood in the middle of the lake'. The head in (13) is sunaksga 'new wife' which is an O in the relative clause, nakstga 'whom he had married', and the head in (14) is -at '3' which is an A in the relative clause, in huwaata txa'nii ligiwaalga 'who were trading all kinds of things' (the -a in -at '3' is an epenthetic vowel).

While there is no distinction between an A, S or O as to what type of NP is relativized, there is a distinction made with respect to a relative marker and whether one must be present. As is illustrated in (11) and (12), when an A is relativized, there is a relative marker in 'REL', whereas with a relativized S or O, as in (12)-(13), it is either gu 'REL', as in (12), or there is no relative marker, as in (13).<sup>5</sup>

The marking of person agreement and the connectives are also sensitive to whether the relativized NP is an S, O or A in the dependent relative clause. When the head is an S or O in the relative clause, there is either a prepositional connective suffixed to the S or O, as in (12) and (13), or, if the relative marker gu is present, the prepositional connective, da or ga, occurs after the relative marker. There are also examples where both prepositional connectives and the relative marker are present, as in (15). In casual speech, the prepositional connective does not occur, as in (16). In addition, when the head is an S in the relative

clause, the verb of that clause is optionally suffixed with a 3rd person dependent pronoun, -t '3', as in (12) and (16). There is no such marking when the head is an O, as in (13).

(15) ... dm -t ta'alaayu-sga ðimkdii-t -ga gu  
 FUT-3 visit -CN sister -3 -CN REL  
 A PRED POSS-PREP  
 ...they were going to visit their sister who

da dzag-a di -sda aamt da sganaktda.  
 CN dead-CN DEM-CN good CN some time  
 PREP PREP PREP POSS  
 had been dead there for some time.  
 (Boas 1912:162)

(16) Ada-t nii wil -t ludam -tga naks -t -ga  
 and-3 see that-3 comfort-CN spouse-3 -CN  
 A A PRED POSS PRED  
 And he saw that his wife was comforting his son

ðguðgm -m 'yuut, yawga 'wiihawtg-it.  
 young-CN man PRES cry -3  
 S  
 who was crying.

In (15), the head of the relative clause, ðimkdiiit 'their sister', is suffixed with the prepositional connective ga and the prepositional connective da occurs after the relative marker gu as well. In (16), the head of the relative clause, ðguðgm 'yuut 'young man', is not marked with a prepositional connective. In addition, there is no relative marker in this example.

When the head is an A in the relative clause, connectives do not occur as part of relativization. As with topicalization, the dependent pronoun -t '3' occurs with several different variations. For example, in (11), the dependent pronoun -t '3' is suffixed to the head of the relative clause, t'apxadooltga hana'angt 'two women'. In other cases, the -t is suffixed just to the relative marker, in, or just to a tense/aspect marker such as dm 'FUT', as in (17a). In casual speech the -t does not occur, as in (17b).

(17)a. Nah ða 'niidz-d-u 'yuuta dm -t in baa  
 PAST just see -3-1SG man FUT-3 REL run  
 O A A  
 I just saw the man who will run the boat.

- 'n boot. (E)  
 -CAUS boat

b. Nah ða 'niidz-d-u 'yuuta dm in baa  
 PAST just see -3-1SG man FUT REL run  
 O A  
 I just saw the man who will run the boat.

- 'n boot. (E)  
 -CAUS boat

In summary, relativization, like topicalization, in Sm'algyax, is a process which has characteristics that are ergative, accusative and neither ergative or accusative. First, since all three arguments, A, S and O, can be relativized and there is no restriction as to the type of NP

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that can be relativized, this aspect of relativization is neither ergative or accusative. Next, the relative marker is in 'REL' with a head that is an A in the relative clause, whereas the relative marker is gu or 0 with a head that is an S or O in the relative clause. In this respect, relativization is ergative in Coast Tsimshian. Connectives were found to be part of the relativization process with an S or O but not with an A. In this respect, relativization is also ergative. Finally, it was shown that person agreement marking occurs with a head of a relative clause that is an S or A in the relative clause, but not with an O. This aspect of relativization, then, is accusative.

### 3. Other Syntactically Ergative Languages

The splits between accusative, ergative and neither ergative or accusative aspects of the various syntactic constructions in Coast Tsimshian are in sharp contrast to the syntactic ergativity of a language such as Dyirbal (Dixon 1972). Morphologically, Dyirbal has a split ergative/accusative system. And syntactically, while the only operations which are ergative are the language-particular syntactic operations (i.e., coordination, subordination, topicalization and relativization), each of these operations is ergative in all aspects of the process. In addition, there is an antipassive construction which serves to bring the A into S function for these processes.

In comparison, then, the Coast Tsimshian data suggest that while the syntax of Coast Tsimshian is clearly not "highly" ergative, there are a number of respects in which it is still definitely ergative. As such, along the syntactic ergative/accusative continuum, Coast Tsimshian lies somewhere between a language like Walmatjari, which Dixon (1979:125-6) describes as having a split ergative/accusative morphology, but an entirely accusative syntax, and a language like Dyirbal, in which the syntactic constructions with a language particular basis are completely ergative.

Three other languages with morphological ergativity which lie between the two ends of the syntactic ergative/accusative continuum are Yidin<sup>y</sup>, Chukchee and Yup'ik Eskimo. In Yidin<sup>y</sup> subordinate clauses (Dixon 1977), for example, any NP coreferential with an NP in the main clause must be in an S or O function in that subordinate clause. Thus subordination is an ergative syntactic process in Yidin<sup>y</sup>. However, coordination in this language has some aspects which are ergative and some which are accusative. There appear to be two main kinds of coordination in Yidin<sup>y</sup>. In each case the two (or more) clauses that are joined together involve a common NP. With non-pronominal NPs, the common NP must be in S or O function in each clause, whereas with pronominal NPs, the common NP must be in S or A function in each clause. In each case the common NP will normally only occur in the first clause. In contrast, when a transitive sentence with a pronominal A and nominal O is coordinated with an intransitive sentence, the resulting sentence is ambiguous as to whether the omitted S of the second sentence is coreferential with the A or O of the first clause. Thus coordination in Yidin<sup>y</sup> is ergative for nouns and accusative for pronouns.

In Chukchee (Comrie 1979), the only vestige of ergative syntax is in relativization. In this language, relative clauses are formed using various participial verbal forms (analogous to the English the woman knitting the sweater as compared with the woman who is knitting the sweater). Logically, the head noun of this construction can function as the S, A or O within the non-finite clause. However, the negative participle can be used in Chukchee to relativize on S or O, but not on A. To relativize on A with the negative participle, the non-finite verb must be marked with a detransitivizing prefix which in effect changes the A in a transitive clause into an S in an intransitive clause. Thus, the syntax of the negative participle in Chukchee works on an ergative basis.



Finally, in Yup'ik Eskimo (Payne 1982), coordination and relativization operate on an ergative basis. For example, with coordination, sentences can be constructed such that when a transitive and an intransitive clause occur together in a coordinate construction the S of the intransitive clause can logically be interpreted as coreferential with either the A or O of the transitive clause. However, in Yup'ik Eskimo the zero-nominalized single argument of the intransitive clause can only be interpreted as being coreferential with the O of the transitive clause in these types of sentences. For example in a Yup'ik equivalent of a sentence like Tom kissed Doris and then coughed, the S of cough can only be coreferential with the O, Doris, of the first clause, and not with the A, Tom. With relativization in Yup'ik Eskimo, three different nominalizing strategies are used. These three strategies, which each involve a different verbal suffix, nominalize on either S or O, only on S, or only on O, but in none of the strategies on A. Thus, relativization operates on an ergative basis in this language.

To summarize, then, Dyrbal, YidinY, Chukchee and Yup'ik Eskimo, like Coast Tsimshian, all contain syntactic operations of which some or all aspects are ergative rather than accusative. That is, as listed in the following chart, some of the syntactic processes in these languages have an ergative rather than an accusative orientation:

(18) Summary of Syntactic Ergativity

Dyrbal:	coordination subordination topicalization relativization
Chukchee:	relativization
YidinY:	coordinations subordination
Yup'ik Eskimo:	coordination relativization
Coast Tsimshian:	imperatives topicalization relativization

4. Implications for the Notion of Subject

Turning to the definition of subject, syntactically ergative languages such as Coast Tsimshian, Dyrbal, YidinY, Chukchee and Yup'ik Eskimo clearly pose a problem for the identification of subject with a single noun phrase since various syntactic operations in these languages do not identify the same noun phrase as subject across the different operations. To handle this problem, two suggestions have been made for identifying the subject in syntactically ergative languages. The first, proposed by Dixon (1979), involves the distinction between syntactic operations which have a universal accusative basis and those which have a language particular basis. Those with a universal accusative basis operate at the deep structure level where they follow the universal category of 'subject':

'Subject' is defined as a universal deep structure category, involving functions A and S. Languages cannot be characterized as either 'accusative' or 'ergative' in deep structure.

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The operation of optional singulary transformations on deep structures yields shallow structures. It is at this level that generalized transformations operate, forming coordinate and subordinate constructions. These rules may treat (derived) S and A in the same way, or they may treat (derived) S and O in the same way; we refer to S/A and S/O pivots respectively. If a language has an S/O pivot, it can be said to have 'ergative' syntax. (Dixon 1979:132)

This proposal works well for a language like Dyirbal which has an S/A pivot and for languages like Yidin<sup>y</sup>, Chukchee and Yup'ik Eskimo which can be classified as having an S/A pivot for some syntactic operations and an S/O pivot for others. In all of these languages the syntactic operations which have a universal accusative basis do indeed operate in an accusative manner. However, in Coast Tsimshian, even imperatives have an ergative aspect. Thus, this proposal does not work well for a language like Coast Tsimshian, where some of the syntactic operations with a universal accusative basis also have an ergative aspect.

The second proposal involves the functional approach to clause structure taken by Schachter (1976, 1977) for Philippine languages, which divides subject traits into role and reference related properties. In the Philippine languages, the actor noun phrase expresses the role related properties, as it has the central role in the clause from the perspective of the speaker, whereas the topic noun phrase expresses the reference related properties, as it has prominence due to its presupposed referentiality with respect to other nominals in the sentence.<sup>6</sup> For Yup'ik Eskimo, Payne (1982) shows that for five subject properties the division of these properties into role and reference properties corresponds to the division of subject properties in Yup'ik Eskimo between those which identify the S/A as subject and those which identify the S/O as subject. For example, the role-related subject properties of leftmost NP in an<sub>7</sub>S, imperative addressee and pivot for elliptical infinitival complements all identify the S/A as subject in Yup'ik Eskimo, just as they identify the actor as subject in Philippine languages. Correspondingly, the reference-related subject properties of pivot across coordinate constructions and relativizability identify the S/O in Yup'ik Eskimo and the topic in the Philippine languages as the subject.

In Coast Tsimshian, however, for each of a number of the role and reference related properties, the particular syntactic process does not identify a single noun phrase as the subject. For example, with imperatives the addressee is the S/A, but with respect to deletion only the A can be deleted. Thus, one aspect of the construction is role related while another aspect is reference related. The problem is further compounded in syntactic operations like relativization where some aspects are ergative, some are accusative and some treat all three noun phrases, S, A and O, alike.

In conclusion, while the definitions proposed by Schachter (1976, 1977) and Dixon (1979) apply to languages with accusative syntax and even to syntactically ergative languages like Dyirbal and Yup'ik Eskimo, none of the proposed definitions can account for the Coast Tsimshian facts. Rather it seems that the notion of subject does not play an important part in explaining the syntactic properties of this language. Thus, in terms of a cross-linguistic definition of subject, it seems that while subject operates in the vast majority of the world's languages which have a fully accusative syntax and to syntactically ergative languages like Dyirbal and Yup'ik Eskimo, subject does not appear to operate in the syntax of Coast Tsimshian.

1. Coast Tsimshian is spoken in the northwest coast of British Columbia in the reserve villages of Hartley Bay, Kitkatla, Lax Kw'alaams (Port Simpson), and Metlakatla, as well as in (New) Metlakatla, Alaska. Sm-'algyax is the name that the Coast Tsimshian use for their language.

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2. For a fuller discussion of morphological and syntactic ergativity in Coast Tsimshian see Mulder (1987a, 1987b, 1988).
3. The only exception I am aware of is in (i):

(i) Baa-(n).	(ii) Koł-sm.
run-2SG	run-2PL
S	PL S
Run.	Run.

In (i) the S is optional rather than obligatory, whereas in (ii), as is the general case, the S must occur.

The optionality of the 2nd person singular S in this case may be due to the fact that the singular and plural forms of this intransitive verb are suppletive. Thus, the number of the S can be determined from the form of the verb rather than being dependent on the form of the dependent pronoun as is the case when the singular and plural forms of the verb are the same.

4. An (E) indicates that the example has been directly elicited from a native speaker rather than being from a text or observed in natural discourse.
5. That gu 'REL' can not be interpreted as marking only S and  $\emptyset$  as marking only O is shown by examples such as the following:

Ada-t wil aayt -gi -sga na -waa -t gu  
 and-3 then call.out-DEM-CN POSS-name-3 REL  
 A name PREP POSS  
 And then she named the name which

nak'yinam-s nagwat-gas 'niit, Gunaxniismgyad.  
 give -CN father-CN 3SG  
 PRED PREP  
 his father had given to him, Gunaxniismgyad.  
 (Boas 1912:170)

Here, the head of the relative clause, nawaat 'his name' is an O in the relative clause, nak'yinams nagwatgas 'niit 'his father had given to him' and is marked with gu 'REL'. Thus, when an S or O is relativized it is marked with  $\emptyset$  or gu 'REL'.

6. As Schachter (1976:494) summarizes, the term "topic", in the usage of Philippinists, applies to the constituent noun phrase which is marked

either by the use of a topic pronoun form or by a pronominal topic marker and is semantically always interpreted as definite. There is also a case-marking affix on the verb, which indicates the case role of the topic noun phrase. For the term "actor", Schachter (1976:498) states that:

While I know of no really satisfactory generalization about the semantic characteristics associated with the actor... I find that the following characterization (taken from Benton 1971:167) will, if interpreted charitably enough, cover most cases: "the entity to which the action of the verb is attributed." (The requisite charitable interpretation allows "action" to serve as a cover term for actions, happenings, and conditions in general.)

- 7. The elliptical infinitival complements occur in constructions with finite main verbs and express actions which are perceived as being part of the action of the main verb (e.g. Randy left, kissing his children). What is relevant to the discussion here, is that coreferentiality between a participant of an elliptical infinitival complement and a participant of the matrix clause is controlled by the A and S rather than the S and O.

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