

Sonja Riesberg

# Optional ergative, agentivity and discourse prominence – Evidence from Yali (Trans-New Guinea)

<https://doi.org/10.1515/lingty-2018-0002>

Received April 30, 2017; revised November 20, 2017

**Abstract:** A phenomenon often termed “optional ergative marking” is found in a number of genetically unrelated languages. Yali, a Trans-New Guinea language spoken in West Papua, shows striking similarities to optional ergative systems as described in the literature. This paper focuses on the relation between agentivity and discourse prominence, and argues in favour of a systematic distinction between semantic and syntactic contexts as conditioning factors for optional ergative marking. It further provides new evidence for the close interplay of ergative marking and what has been termed “discourse prominence” in descriptions of some other languages and shows that in Yali, optional ergative marking operates on both the global and the local level of discourse.

**Keywords:** optional ergative marking, agentivity, prominence, Trans-New Guinea, Yali

## 1 Introduction

Various types of differential case marking have aroused considerable interest in the typological literature. One type, often termed “optional ergative marking”, has been the subject of a number of publications in recent years. Though this terminology is not optimal, as will be discussed, it has become established in the literature, and so will be maintained here. The phenomenon seems to be particularly common in ergative languages, but it is also attested in some accusative languages (McGregor 2010: 1610). The following two

---

**Sonja Riesberg** [*ʔɔn.ja ʔi:s.ɣɛgʰ*], Abteilung für Allgemeine Sprachwissenschaft, Institut für Linguistik, Universität zu Köln, 50923 Köln, Germany; ARC Centre of Excellence for the Dynamics of Language, The Australian National University, Canberra ACT 0200, Australia,  
E-mail: [sonja.riesberg@uni-koeln.de](mailto:sonja.riesberg@uni-koeln.de)

examples show an instance of optional ergative marking in the Australian language Kuuk Thayorre (Paman); only in the first example is the agent argument of the transitive predicate marked by the ergative case suffix *-al*. In the second example, which constitutes the same syntactic context, this suffix is missing and the transitive agent argument remains unmarked. Gaby (2008) argues convincingly that the absence of the ergative marker in Kuuk Thayorre transitive clauses signals that the subject referent is expected, while an unexpected subject referent requires special marking.

- (1) a. *pamal      minh   patharra*  
       pam-al    minh   patha-rra  
       man-ERG meat   bite-PST.PFV  
       ‘the man bit the meat’ (Gaby 2008: 116)
- b. *pam   pelm   mong   werngr      ulp   thunpm*  
       man 3p   many boomerang the throw:PST.IMPV  
       ‘many men threw the boomerang’ (Gaby 2008: 122)

Yali (‘ja.li ISO 639–3:yac), a Trans-New Guinea (TNG) language of West Papua, exhibits a similar phenomenon. Yali belongs to the Dani subgroup of the West Trans-New Guinea linkage, and is spoken by approximately 30,000 people in the highlands north-east of the city of Wamena. The data below are parallel to the Kuuk Thayorre data in (1) in that only in the second example, (2b), is the transitive agent marked by the clitic *=en*. As the first example, (2a), illustrates, this marking is not obligatory – the agent of a transitive clause might just as well occur without any case marking. In marked word order as in (3), however, the marking of the agent argument is obligatory.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Two sources of Yali data are used in this paper: Those examples marked as [Zöllner Wörterbuch xxx] were taken from the Yali-German dictionary (Zöllner & Zöllner 2017). The word in italics refers to the respective lexical entry from which the example sentence was taken. All other examples originate from a corpus of spoken language compiled by the author and Kristian Walianggen (Riesberg et al. 2012–2016) as part of the Volkswagen Foundation-funded documentation project “Documentation Summits in the Central Mountains of Papua”. These examples are either referenced as *elicited* or *field notes*, or with the name of the recording they stem from, e.g. [quis\_task05\_Danius]. All audio/video recordings and their transcripts are accessible in The Language Archive (TLA) of the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics, Nijmegen, see <https://hdl.handle.net/1839/00-0000-0000-0017-EA2F-C@view>.

- (2) a. *hiyap tu wanggun seneg*<sup>2</sup>  
       *hiyap tu wanggun sen-eg*  
       woman DEM stick hold-ST.PART  
       ‘the woman (there) is holding a stick’ [quis\_task05\_Danius]
- b. *hiyap tuen wanggun fam wam watuk*  
       *hiyap tu=EN wanggun fam wam wat-tuk*  
       woman DEM=EN stick with pig hit-PROG  
       ‘the woman is hitting a pig with the stick’ [quis\_task05\_Danius]
- (3) *wam itno hiyap tuen ambolma watuk*  
       *wam itno hiyap tu=EN ambol=mu wat-tuk*  
       pig DET woman DEM=EN back=LOC hit-PROG  
       ‘the woman is hitting a pig on the back’ [quis\_task05\_Isak]

As it is predominantly the transitive A that is marked by the clitic *=en* (hereafter referred to as ‘EN’) in Yali, it seems legitimate to call it an optional *ergative* marker. As in many other languages that have been described as exhibiting optional ergative marking, Yali also allows for EN-marking on S arguments (cf. example (4)). The use of EN with intransitive subjects is less frequent, though, and restricted to specific contexts (cf. Section 2.1).

- (4) *meneen hilak suruk*  
       *mene=EN hilak su-turuk*  
       dog=EN bark do-PROG  
       ‘the dog is barking’ [-en\_elicited intransitives]

The optional marking of (predominantly transitive) subject NPs is a widespread feature of many TNG languages, and there is a rich literature on optional ergative marking in Tibeto-Burman languages and in the languages of Australia. McGregor defines optional case marking as “the situation in which, in specifiable lexical or grammatical environments, a case marking morpheme [...] may be either present or absent from an NP of a specifiable type without affecting the grammatical role borne by that NP” (McGregor 2010: 1610). Unlike ‘ordinary’ case marking, optional case marking is thus not determined by syntactic structure. Instead, a variety of semantic and pragmatic factors – and often a combination of these – have been found to be relevant for the use or non-use of optional case markers in different languages.

---

<sup>2</sup> The data in (2) and (3) were elicited using a picture task from the Questionnaire on Information Structure (QUIS), developed at the University of Potsdam (cf. Skopeteas et al. 2006). See below and footnote 15 for more information on the task.

At the beginning of the current decade, two special issues on optional ergative marking were published, one dedicated to Tibeto-Burman languages (Chelliah & Hyslop 2011), the other mainly to languages of Australia (McGregor & Verstraete 2010). The factors linked to ergative marking in the languages described in the two volumes are strikingly similar. They include agentivity<sup>3</sup> and, to a lesser extent, animacy, in addition to pragmatic factors which are often a little harder to grasp. Repeated mentions are made of (contrastive) focus and/or topicality, ‘foregrounding’, and ‘prominence’. In the Tibeto-Burman languages, aspect adds to the list of determining factors (in Lhasa Tibetan, e.g., marking of A is only optional in non-perfective clauses, but obligatory in perfective clauses (DeLancey 2011: 13)).

Basically the same observations have been made for the languages of New Guinea: Here, older descriptions have been complemented with new, detailed studies on optional case marking in more recent years, and it has become clear that the determining factors for the use versus the non-use of case marking differ from language to language. Again we find semantic factors such as animacy (e.g. Scott 1986 for Fore) and, more often, agentivity (e.g. Anderson & Wade 1988 for Folepa; Bromley 1981 for Dani; Christensen 2010 for Yongkom) to be decisive, but there are also a large number of languages for which it has been claimed that (optional) case marking is pragmatically determined, usually in addition to the previously mentioned semantic restrictions. Suter (2010), for example, calls the suffix *-zi* in Kâte a “rhematic ergative case marker” and uses a quantitative discourse study to show that its occurrence correlates with high rhematicity (i.e., new, non-topical elements are more likely to be marked). Pennington (2013), on the other hand, argues that subjects in Ma Manda are marked by the (nominative) case marker *=li*, while topic NPs remain unmarked. For Numanggang, Hynum argues that the marker *-di* has the function in discourse of “allowing speaker and hearer to know where to keep their attention” (Hynum 2010: 143).

Further properties shared among Papuan, Australian, and Tibeto-Burman languages with optional ergative marking are: 1) the fact that marking of A often becomes obligatory – or at least more frequent – with marked word order<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>3</sup> Note that *agentivity* here should be understood as a cover term. Different authors use different terminology, including *agent*, *force*, *intent*, *volition*, *control*, *cause*, *direct activity* (see Pennington 2013: 2ff for a good overview of the Papuan literature). In this paper, I am assuming a multi-dimensional role concept, and use the terms *agent* and *agentivity* as generalized proto-concepts in the sense of Dowty (1991), see Section 3.2 for further discussion.

<sup>4</sup> Though obligatory/more frequent marking of A in marked word order seems to occur very frequently, it does not hold for *all* optional ergative marking languages. An exception is, e.g.,

and 2) the presence in many languages of homophony of the optional ergative marker with other case markers (most often ablative and instrumental, but also, e.g., locative, allative, or comitative).

It is also common for optional ergative marking to extend to intransitive subjects (as seen in (4)), though this is not necessarily the case in all languages that exhibit optional ergative marking<sup>5</sup> (cf., e.g., Kewa (Franklin 1971), Ku Waru (Rumsey 2010), or Enga (Li & Lang 1979)). The fact that marking is often not restricted to A has led some authors to analyze such markers as optional nominative markers (e.g., Donohue & Donohue (1997) for Fore; Pennington (2013) for Ma Manda; Meakins (2015) for Gurindji Kriol), or to use different terminology altogether, such as *pragmatic/pragmatically motivated agentive marking* (e.g., Chelliah & Hyslop 2011; Coupe & Lestrade 2017).<sup>6</sup> Authors who use the term optional ergative marking often do so somewhat reluctantly, for instance by using quotation marks to describe “optional” “ergative” marking (e.g., DeLancey 2011), hinting that optional ergative marking is neither really optional, nor syntactically ergative. I object to the term for exactly this reason: both its components, *optional* and *ergative*, are indeed misleading. Yet, for the Yali data, *pragmatic agentive marking* seems just as inappropriate, because in Yali non-agentive arguments can also receive ergative marking in certain contexts. In order to avoid using yet another term for a well-known phenomenon, and because it is established in at least parts of the linguistic community, I will therefore use the term *optional ergative marking*.<sup>7</sup>

Yali joins the ranks of the many languages that show optional ergative marking. Agentivity plays an important role, and in certain contexts only agentive phrases can be marked by EN. However, agentivity is only a necessary, not a sufficient, condition: In order for a phrase to be marked by EN, it has to bear certain agentivity features, yet not all agents are necessarily marked. Furthermore, there are instances in which the necessity of agentivity can be “overridden” and non-agentive phrases can also be marked. The decisive factor as to whether or not a phrase is marked thus seems to be pragmatic, in a similar way as has been pointed out for other languages (see above). A data set like the one illustrated in (2), for example, could also be interpreted in the light of topicality: (2a) and (2b) are two

---

Ku Waru, where marking of A in OAV clauses is not obligatory and is no more frequent than it is in AOV clauses (Rumsey et al. 2013: 149).

<sup>5</sup> I am grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out to me and providing references.

<sup>6</sup> Yet other terms are *subject marker* (Ross & Natu Paol 1978; Heeschen 1992), *source* (Bromley 1981; Heeschen 1998; Spaulding & Spaulding 1994), *effector of change* (Farr 1999), and *agent* (Årsjö 1999; Brown 2009).

<sup>7</sup> See McGregor (2007; 2010) for further arguments in favour of keeping the term *optional ergative marking*.

consecutive sentences that were uttered in a picture description task. In the first picture, the speaker sees a woman standing, holding a stick. In the second picture, the same woman is hitting a cow. The woman is thus new information in sentence (2a), but already introduced into the discourse when the speaker utters sentence (2b). In the latter case, NP *hiyap tuen* ‘the/this woman’ is thus marked by the (potential) topic marker EN. It could also be argued, as it has been for Warrwa (McGregor 2006), or for Light Warlpiri and Gurindji Kriol (Meakins & O’Shannessy 2010), that the ergative marker accords prominence to the agentivity of the action performed by the subject referent. We will see, however, that neither agentivity nor topicality alone is sufficient to account for the Yali data.

The goal of this paper is first to provide new, detailed data from a TNG language which will add not only to the understanding of optional case marking within this family, but also to the typology of (optional) case marking and information structure in general. Second, it aims to investigate in more detail the relationship between the optional marking of agents and agentivity on the one hand, and discourse prominence on the other hand. As we shall see, it will be necessary to associate these two factors with different semantic and syntactic contexts, and to systematically distinguish between them as conditioning factors. Special focus will be given to the concept of *discourse prominence*, which has been claimed to be relevant for the use of optional ergative marking in many languages (see above). The proof for this claim, however, is often hard to come by. In this respect, Yali provides one further interesting piece of evidence for the close relationship between ergative marking and discourse prominence: The same marker that optionally marks (prominent) subjects can also be attached to finite clauses. While these can be interpreted as causal or purposive structures, they in fact constitute thematized constructions, parallel to ergative-marked, topicalized noun phrases with high prominence status.

The paper will start by providing a thorough description of the different functions of the optional case marker EN in Section 2, with the aim of describing the usage contexts and possible restrictions as accurately as possible. It will be shown that there is a strong tendency for EN to only mark agentive participants (if attaching to nominal elements) and to occur with highly topical referents. Section 3 will revisit these two factors and look at them in more detail, proving their relevance while at the same time showing that they are not sufficient to explain optional ergative marking in Yali. The pragmatic factors of optional ergative marking will be taken up again in Section 4, in which the concept of (*discourse*) *prominence* will be introduced and Yali situated in relation to other languages for which discourse prominence has been claimed to be decisive. It will be argued that Yali EN operates on both the local and the global level of discourse. In this respect, Yali differs from

other languages, since optional ergative marking has been described elsewhere as operating on only one of these two levels.

## 2 The different uses of Yali EN

The use of the Yali clitic EN shows strong similarities to the use of optional ergative markers reported for many other languages. In addition to its (optional) marking of A and S, as shown in (2) and (4) in the introduction, EN displays quite a wide range of different functions. It is, for example, used to mark ablative and instrumental case relations, as shown in (5a) and (5b), respectively.

- (5) a. *yabukmuyente e anggen tahanik lahakek ari*  
 yabuk=mu=en=te e anggen tahan-ik laha-ehek ari  
 garden=LOC=EN=TOP fruit pick-DIR go.up-3s.IM.PST DEM  
 ‘from the garden he went up picking fruits’ [pear\_story\_Edo 022]
- b. *bola laruk lit amihen hililik lamin ulug<sup>8</sup>*  
 bola la-tuk lit amig=**en** hilil-ik la-min ulug  
 ball go-PROG while chest=**EN** move-DIR go-1s.IM.FUT SAY  
 ‘while the ball is rolling, he wants to push it with his chest’  
 [ECOM\_sr\_Nies 046]

The clitic EN can also evoke an interpretation of causality or purpose. In this function, it attaches either to predicates or to nominal arguments. Thus causal and purposive relations can, for example, hold between two verbal clauses, as in (6a), or between a noun phrase and a verbal clause, as in (6b).

- (6) a. *sani esebulen inggila waruk lahe*  
 sani eset-bul=**en** inggila wa-tuk la-ehe  
 stone.oven cook-1p.IM.FUT=**EN** leaf carry-PROG go-1p.IM.PST  
 ‘because we want to cook, we were getting leaves’ [field notes]
- b. *masahen an hite lahi*  
 masag=**en** an hite la-ih  
 landslide=**EN** 1s run go-1s.IM.PST  
 ‘because of the landslide I ran away’ [field notes]

---

<sup>8</sup> As in many Papuan languages, intentionality in Yali is expressed by direct speech: in (5b) the 1s immediate future form of the verb *laruk* ‘to go’ is embedded under the participle form of *uruk* ‘to speak’ (here glossed as SAY). A more literal translation of this sentence would thus be ‘while the ball is rolling, he says: “I will push it with my chest”’.

Causal EN also occurs on phrases headed by adjectives, as in example (7), and by nominalized verbs, as in (8), where the inflected verb *sehek* ‘he did’ is additionally marked by the nominalizing suffix *-on* and followed by the determiner *itno*.

- (7) *sahowon itno akolen laruk*  
 saho-on itno akol=en la-tuk  
 blue-NMLZ DET afraid=EN go-PROG  
 ‘because the blue one is afraid, he is walking away’ [ECOM\_sr\_KW 095]
- (8) *wat sehekon itnoen iyuk uken suruk*  
 wat su-ehék-on itno=en iyuk uken su-tuk  
 fall do-3s.IM.PST-NMLZ DET=EN foot hurt do-PROG  
 ‘because he fell over, his foot is hurting’ [pear\_story\_Edison 081]

This kind of “versatile case” (Aikhenvald 2008), i.e., case markers that not only mark nominal categories but also appear with verbal forms or predicative adjectives, are again attested for many Australian, Papuan, and Tibeto-Burman languages. Here, the same morpheme that marks case relations between a predicate and its arguments on the one hand, is, on the other hand, also used to mark temporal, causal, purposive, or conditional relations between two clauses (cf. Aikhenvald 2008 for an overview). Simpson (1988) shows for Warlpiri that one and the same suffix (*-kurra*) marks allative case when it attaches to nouns, but functions as a clause-linking element marking simultaneity of events and a switch of reference when attached to a (nominalized) verb. Rather than analyzing these two instances as two different morphemes, Simpson argues that we are dealing with one element that consists of a cluster of properties. Depending on which of these properties are present, *-kurra* might behave more like a case marker, or more like a clause-linking element (Simpson 1988: 206). In a similar manner, this paper will treat Yali EN as one multi-functional morpheme. Hence, all instances of *=en* are simply glossed as *=EN*, in order to demonstrate that we are dealing with the same morpheme that, depending on the context, receives different interpretations. Speaking of ‘causal EN’, ‘instrumental EN’, or ‘ergative EN’ is only done for expository reasons.<sup>9</sup> As we will see in Section 2.3, restrictions on the use of instrumental EN can be taken as indirect evidence for its inherent agentive semantics. Section 4

<sup>9</sup> Note that the description in this paper reflects a purely synchronic perspective, only. This does not mean ruling out a diachronic development. It is conceivable that EN started out as, e.g., an instrumental marker and from there gradually expanded to its other functions. There is currently no evidence on how a possible diachronic development in Yali might have taken place, and the diachronic perspective will therefore not be further considered in this paper.



shows that ‘ergative EN’ on the noun does the same thing as ‘causal EN’ on the clause: it assigns discourse prominence to the marked constituent.

The following four sub-sections will discuss the different uses of EN in more detail and describe possible restrictions in the different contexts. These contexts are the use of agentive EN in intransitive clauses (2.1), the use of EN in right or left dislocated structures (2.2), the use of instrumental EN (2.3), and certain restrictions on the use of causal EN with nouns (2.4). The data discussed in these sections reveal that important properties of the different functions of EN are shared across the different contexts, which justifies a unified analysis.

## 2.1 The agentive use of EN with intransitives and statives

In spontaneous speech, EN seems to occur significantly more often in transitive clauses than in intransitive clauses. This is confirmed by a preliminary text count: In a recorded conversation of roughly 13 minutes consisting of 545 intonation units, 242 clauses were counted. Of these, 111 were intransitive and 102 could be classified as transitive.<sup>10</sup> Out of the 102 transitive clauses, only 30 exhibited an overtly realized subject, of which 11 were marked by EN.<sup>11</sup> For the 111 intransitive clauses, out of which 51 displayed an overt subject, only 2 were marked. Quite obviously, far more data are required to make reliable claims about the distribution of EN in Yali discourse (but see, e.g., Suter 2010 for a quantitative study in Kâte).

Nevertheless, marking the intransitive subject is possible, and the use of EN in these contexts reveals relevant information about its semantics. In most cases where ergative marking occurs with intransitive subjects, its referent is a volitional, controlling agent. As such, compare the following two examples: the first denotes an event in which a volitional agent performs an activity, whereas the second denotes an involuntary event.

- (9) a. *malik(en) tolum angge lahasa*  
       malik=en tolum angge la-ehesa  
       child=EN fast go-3p.IM.PST  
       ‘the child ran fast’ [-en\_elicited intransitives]

<sup>10</sup> 34 cases were considered problematic as they could not with certainty be claimed to be transitive or intransitive. These cases were not included in the count.

<sup>11</sup> It is conceivable that the low frequency of case marking with intransitives in the above-mentioned text count is actually an epiphenomenon of the agentivity restriction: In general, intransitive predicates are more apt to select a non-agentive argument as their subject. And indeed of the 51 intransitive clauses, 36 contained stative, non-agentive predicates.

- b. *malik* / \**maliken* *eluk* *aha*  
*malik* / *malik=EN* *eluk* *aha*  
 child / *child=EN* *awake* *become:3s.IM.PST*  
 ‘the child woke up’ [-en\_elicited intransitives]

In example (9a), the marking is optional. As described for transitive predicates in Section 2, both options – marked subject and unmarked subject – are grammatical, and native speakers are usually not able to pin down the difference between the two constructions. In (9b), however, speakers clearly rejected the marked subject, one of them explaining that in order for EN to occur “there would have to be an activity”. Interestingly, there are certain contexts in which EN marking with unaccusative verbs is possible. In these cases, originally non-volitional verbs receive a volitional reading, as in (10), where the yawning event is not interpreted as a non-volitional bodily reaction, but rather as an activity that is performed on purpose:<sup>12</sup>

- (10) *malik tohon arien elokan turuk*  
*malik tot-on ari=EN elokan tu-tuk*  
 child small-NMLZ DEM=EN yawn do-PROG  
 ‘the little child is yawning (on purpose)’ [-en\_elicited intransitives]

However, the referent of the case-marked NP does not necessarily have to be animate and, in those cases where it is not, it follows that we are not dealing with a volitional, controlling agent. Yet, in all instances discussed so far, the referent of an NP marked by EN shows at least some agentive features. In example (11) below, the inanimate subject referent *masag* ‘landslide’ causes a change of state in the object referent *yahongge* ‘crops’.<sup>13</sup> We will come back to similar examples, and to

<sup>12</sup> See Coupe (2007: 160f) for a parallel example with the verb ‘to cough’ in Mongsen Ao (Tibeto-Burman).

<sup>13</sup> Note that an inanimate NP can also occur *without* EN marking, as in example (i). An analysis in terms of Silverstein’s animacy hierarchy is thus not tenable. This would predict that inanimate referents obligatorily carry ergative marking, because they are least likely to function as agents and therefore require overt marking. (I am very grateful to an anonymous reviewer for pointing this out to me as a possible option.)

(i) *helep ino kinang min al pisang-teg latfag*  
*helep ino kinang min al pisang-tu-eg lat-fag*  
 stone DET soil and cave squash-do-ST.PART stay-3s.REM.PST  
 ‘stones and earth were squashing the cave’ [Zöllner Wörterbuch *pisang-turuk*]

the discussion of which kind of agentive features have to be present in order for an NP to be marked by the ergative, in Sections 2.4 and 3.2.

- (11) *masahen yohongge lul warehek*  
 masag=en yohongge lul wat-ehek  
 landslide=EN crops destroy do-3s.IM.PST  
 ‘the landslide destroyed the crops’ [-en\_elicited intransitives]

The data presented in this section strongly suggest that agentivity has a significant influence on whether or not an NP can be marked by EN. Further evidence for the interaction of agentivity and the occurrence of EN will be given in Section 2.4, which discusses restrictions on the use of causal EN.

## 2.2 EN in right dislocated position and thematization

One common use of the EN-marked NPs in discourse, especially in narratives, is in right dislocated position. In these cases, the marked subject NP occurs at the right edge after the clause.

- (12) a. *wathitmin ulugte ti itno ibag [hiyap*  
 wat-hit-min ulug=te ti itno ibag **hiyap**  
 kill-2s.BEN-1s.IM.FUT SAY=TOP song DET say:3s.REM.PST **woman**  
**itnoen]**  
**itno=en**  
**DET=EN**  
 ‘I will kill it for you, she sang (in) this song, the woman’ [man\_and\_pig  
 120f]
- b. *hali yup taloho embik libag ari*  
 hali yup tal-oho embe-ik le-sibag ari  
 banana dry.leaf even-ADV.PART put-DIR over.there-3s.REM.PST DEM  
**[ap itnoen]**  
**ap itno=en**  
**person DET=EN**  
 ‘they laid down dry banana leaves evenly, the people’ [man\_and\_pig  
 187]
- c. *we sok il wibag ari [he itnoen]*  
 we sok il wa-sibag ari **he itno=en**  
 only door close take-3s.REM.PST DEM **woman DET=EN**

sabu        Punding fam  
sabu        Punding fam  
k.o.rattan PN        with  
‘she closed the door, the woman, with a Punding string’ [man\_and\_pig  
098-100]

All three examples in (12) would be perfectly grammatical if the marked noun phrase was omitted, as all relevant information is included in the verbal morphology. The function of the right dislocated noun phrase thus seems to be to disambiguate potential unclear reference. In all three instances, the right dislocated noun phrase that is marked by the clitic EN is topical. Simard and Schultze-Berndt use the term *reactivated topic* (rather than *antitopic*, as used by Chafe 1976; Lambrecht 1994) for the same phenomenon in Jaminjung. They state that, in the Jaminjung data, “the first intonation unit is an independent complete clause, after which the speaker decides to reiterate the topical referent” (Simard & Schulze-Berndt 2011: 165f). This seems to be exactly what is happening in the Yali examples in (12), too. Example (12c) further shows that EN marked, right-dislocated noun phrases differ functionally from other right-dislocated material. In this example the postpositional phrase *sabu Punding fam* ‘with a Punding string’ is not topical, but rather introduces a new referent which adds further circumstantial information, but is not relevant for the ongoing story line. It could thus be considered to be an afterthought. Figure 1 below illustrates the fact that the two right-dislocated noun phrases in example (12c) also behave differently in terms of prosody: the reactivated topic phrase *he itnoen* ‘the

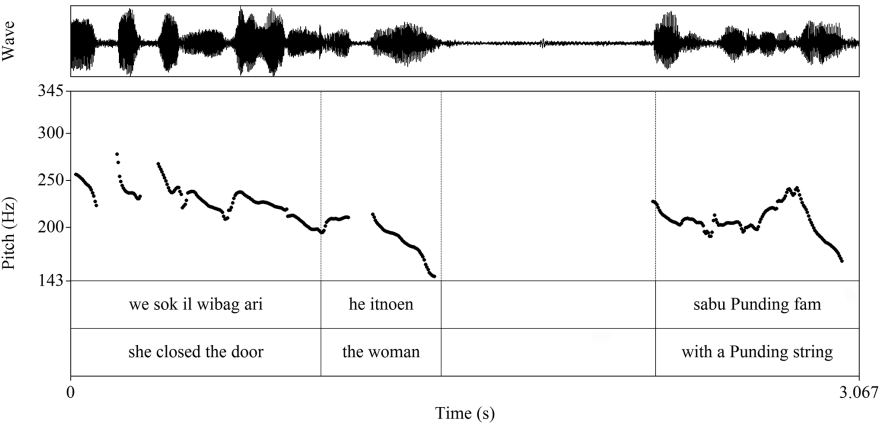


Figure 1: f0 and waveform for example (12c).

woman' is prosodically directly attached to the host sentence, while the after-thought clearly constitutes its own intonational unit, following a pause of more than 0.8 seconds and displaying its own phrase accent (here on the second syllable of *Punding*).

Another syntactic environment which frequently involves the use of EN is so-called thematization constructions. Thematization is a common discourse practice in many TNG languages (cf. Heeschen 1998: 298ff; de Vries 2006). It is mostly used either at the beginning of a paragraph in a discourse, in order to introduce participants, time, and place, or at the end of a paragraph, in order to summarize the previously given information. In Yali, thematization is established by left dislocation of the respective noun phrase or by so-called thematic subordinate structures, which often involve nominalized verbs/relative clauses. In the following example, an EN-marked noun phrase occurs in left dislocated position, outside the actual clause; the referent of this noun phrase is then realized additionally by a pronoun.<sup>14</sup>

- (13) [an not itnoen] at mabuk  
 an n-ot itno=en at mabuk  
 1s 1s.GEN-younger.sibling DET=EN 3s drunk  
*sehekteg*  
 su-ehək-teg  
 do-3s.IM.PST-SS.PRIOR  
 ‘(as for) my younger brother, he was drunk’ [conversation 1 078f]

The referent of the phrase *an not innoen* 'my younger brother' had not been mentioned in the previous discourse. Whether or not a referent introduced by a left dislocated NP can be 'brand new' or not, needs further investigation. In most other examples in the corpus, left dislocated NPs actually re-introduce a referent that has been mentioned at some earlier stage in the discourse. In the discourse that preceded the utterance in (13), the speaker was talking about a group of students. It is conceivable that 'my younger brother' was a member of that group and thus is at least accessible to become the new topic. In any case, left dislocations differ from right-dislocated material in that they do not serve to disambiguate reference but rather (re-)introduce a (new) discourse topic, which is then

**14** For now, I only consider those structures to involve left dislocation where an additional co-referential pronoun occurs in the nuclear clause. Whether left dislocation is possible without a pronominal subject (and how these potential left dislocated NPs could then be distinguished from ordinary subject NPs) is left for future research.

maintained for the following few intonation units. We will see in Section 4 that constructions with causal EN actually also constitute thematized structures.

## 2.3 Instrumental EN as a marker of direct causation

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, the clitic EN also marks instruments. However, the use of EN as an instrumental marker is restricted to body parts. If the instrument is not a body part belonging to the actor who instigates the action, it is either marked by the instrumental suffix *-et*, as in (14a), or by the postposition *fam* ‘with’, as in example (14b). Compare these two examples with example (5b) and with the two examples in (15) below.

- (14) a. *aseramaonte nare we karo het pishet*  
 aserama-on=te n-are we karog-**et** piso-**et**  
 dormitory-NMLZ=TOP 1s.GEN-friend only machete-INST knife-INST  
*og naptuk larision ari wabul ulug*  
 og nap-tuk la-tisi-on ari wat-ul ulug  
 give 1s.OBJ-PROG do-3s.PST-NMLZ DEM kill-1p.IM.FUT say  
 ‘my friends from the dormitory, with machetes, with knives, (...)’  
 they wanted to kill the person who was accompanying me’ [conversation\_1 067ff]
- b. *aren helep fam mene watuk*  
 at=en helep **fam** mene wat-tuk  
 3s=EN stone **with** dog kill-PROG  
 ‘he is killing the dog with a stone’ [-en\_elicited INST]
- (15) a. *aren inggiken mene watuk*  
 at=en inggik=**en** mene wat-tuk  
 3s=EN hand=**EN** dog kill-PROG  
 ‘he is killing the dog with his hands’ [-en\_elicited INST]
- b. *nunggulente pohol leho lahi*  
 n-unggul=**en**=te pohol leho la-ih  
 1s.GEN-head=**EN**=TOP sky lift.up go-1s.IM.PST  
 ‘... with my head I supported the sky’ [Zöllner Wörterbuch *pohol*]

Note that *\*helepen* instead of *helep fam* in (14b) would be ungrammatical; the killing event here is not perceived as being accomplished by the stone, but rather by the person (using a stone). In direct contrast, the marking of *inggik* ‘the

hand' in (15a) is required. Note also that agentive EN and instrumental EN can co-occur in the same clause, as in (15a). (15b) clearly shows that the EN-marked NP *nûnggûl* 'my head' is not the subject of the clause, because the verb carries first person singular agreement marking, rather than third person singular marking. An interpretation of "my head supported the sky" is thus not possible.

## 2.4 Restrictions on the use of causal/purposive EN with nouns

At the beginning of this section it was shown that EN can – among other functions – be used to causally relate two clauses, which can be either verbal or adjectival (cf. (6a) and (7)). Further, it was illustrated that the clitic can have the same function when it attaches to nominalized verbs/clauses, as in (8), and to nouns, as in (6b) (repeated here as (16a) and (16b), respectively). There are, however, restrictions on what kinds of noun can be marked by causal EN: Only event nouns that have propositional content – particularly nouns denoting meteorological phenomena such as, e.g., *osit* 'rain', *siyelu* 'storm', *oluklag* 'earthquake', *masag* 'landslide' – can occur in causal and purposive constructions. Ordinary nouns are barred from directly occurring with causal/purposive EN, as illustrated by the data in (17). Thus, a phrase like *because of the snake* is ungrammatical. This state of affairs has to be expressed verbally, i.e., as *because there is a snake*, as shown in (17b).

- (16) a. *wat sehekon*                      *itnoen iyuk uken suruk*  
           *wat su-ehek-on*                    *itno=EN iyuk uken su-tuk*  
           fall do-3s.IM.PST-NMLZ DET=EN foot hurt do-PROG  
           'because he fell over, his foot is hurting' [pear\_story\_Edison 081]
- b. *masahen*                    *an hite lahi*  
           *masag=EN*                    *an hite la-ih*  
           landslide=EN 1s run go-1s.IM.PST  
           'because of the landslide I ran away' [field notes]
- (17) a. *\*waloen nakol*  
           *walo=EN*    *n-akol*  
           snake=EN 1s.GEN-afraid  
           for: 'because of the snake, I am afraid' [field notes]
- b. *walo werehen*                    *nakol*  
           *walo wereg=en*                    *n-akol*  
           snake exist:3s.PRS=EN 1s.GEN-afraid  
           'because of the snake, I am afraid' [field notes]

The restrictions on nouns occurring with causal EN are thus very similar to the restrictions observed with marked subjects of intransitive predicates: The ban on EN with unaccusative verbs, and the unergative reading induced if the subject phrase is marked (as discussed in Section 2.1) suggest that EN requires the subject referent to be an agent. Similarly, examples (16) and (17) illustrate that some abstract notion of agentivity (cf. Section 3.2) is a necessary feature for a noun to be marked with causal EN.

### 3 Topicality and agentivity revisited

The previous sections have illustrated the large variety of functions displayed by the clitic EN. As in most other languages with optional ergative marking, it has been shown that both semantic features (agentivity) and pragmatic features (topicality) have an impact on the occurrence or non-occurrence of EN. The following sections will revisit these two factors again, focusing on those contexts where EN is indeed optional for grammaticality, i.e. in its function as a marker of A or S. As we shall see, topicality is not the only information-structural feature that can be associated with EN-marked phrases. Rather, an EN-marked NP can occur in both topical and focal contexts. Furthermore, agentivity is also unable to predict with complete accuracy the amenability of an NP to be marked, because there are specific contexts in which clearly *non-agentive* referents also carry ergative marking.

#### 3.1 Topic and focus

Section 2.2 discussed two constructions, right dislocation and left dislocation (thematization), in which the dislocated NP is commonly marked by EN. In both these constructions, the marked NP is topical: right-dislocated material usually reactivates a given topic, whereas left dislocation is used to either introduce new (though possibly accessible) topics, or summarize and repeat given information at the end of a paragraph. Likewise, example sets like the one in (2), repeated here as (18), seem to provide evidence in favour of an analysis of EN as a topic maker, and were described in these terms in the introduction.

- (18) a. *hiyap tu wanggun seneg*  
           *hiyap tu wanggun sen-eg*  
           woman DEM stick hold-ST.PART  
           ‘the woman (there) is holding a stick’ [quis\_task05\_Danius]



- b. *hiyap tuen wanggun fam wam watuk*  
*hiyap tu=EN wanggun fam wam wat-tuk*  
 woman DEM=EN stick with pig hit-PROG  
 ‘the woman is hitting a pig with the stick’ [quis\_task05\_Danius]

But there is counter-evidence that speaks against an analysis of EN (solely) as a topic marker. Taking a closer look at example (18), it is important to note that the first sentence describes a stative state of affairs. Section 2.1 has shown, though, that EN usually does not occur with subjects of stative or unaccusative predicates. The reason why the NP *hiyap tu* ‘this woman’ is not marked in (18a) might thus not be because it is new, non-topical information, but rather because the situation described in (18a) presents a stative eventuality: The woman in the picture is simply standing there (holding a stick) – there is no activity taking place. And indeed in a different picture set of the same stimuli, in which both pictures depict dynamic transitive events, it is possible to start the description with an EN-marked NP, even though the referent has not been introduced to the discourse yet.<sup>15</sup> So, while topics *can* be marked, not all *are*, and, as (19a) shows, new, non-topical referents can also carry ergative marking.

- (19) a. *ap misihen sapi wanggun fam wam watuk*  
*ap misig=EN sapi wanggun fam wam wat-tuk*  
 man one=EN cow stick with pig hit-PROG  
 ‘a man is hitting a cow with a stick’ [quis\_task05\_Yorina]
- b. *hiyap misihen sapi wanggun fam watuk*  
*hiyap misig=EN sapi wanggun fam wat-tuk*  
 woman one=EN cow stick with hit-PROG  
 ‘a woman is hitting a cow with a stick’ [quis\_task05\_Yorina]

Furthermore, EN-marked NPs can constitute the answer to a wh-question, which, of course, is the most prototypical context for focal,<sup>16</sup> rather than topical,

<sup>15</sup> As mentioned above, the data in (18) and (19) were collected using the Questionnaire on Information Structure (cf. Skopeteas et al. 2006). Speakers were shown a pair of pictures and were asked to describe them, imagining that they depict sequential events and make up a short story. The instruction given was: “You will be shown two pictures that belong together, that is, they belong to the same story. Imagine that the first scene takes place first and the second scene some time later, e.g. after five minutes. Please give just a short description of each scene” (cf. Skopeteas et al. 2006: 78).

<sup>16</sup> Focus here is understood in the sense of Krifka, i.e. as indicating “the presence of alternatives that are relevant for the interpretation of the linguistic expression” (2007: 18).

material. Consider the question-answer pair below (for further examples see also (23) – (25) in Section 3.2 below).

- (20) a. *pesawat nonggeyen uruk?*  
           *pesawat nongge=EN u-tuk*  
           aeroplane what=EN speak-PROG  
           ‘What plane is making the noise?/ What plane is speaking?’ [conversation\_1 431]
- b. *ari Garudaen<sup>17</sup> uruk*  
           *ari Garuda=EN u-tuk*  
           DEM PN=EN speak-PROG  
           ‘It’s the noise of a Garuda plane/ Garuda is speaking’ [conversation\_1 432]

Note that both the question word *nongge* ‘what (kind of)’ and the answer to this – here the *Garuda* plane – are marked. The data in (19) and (20) provide clear evidence that an analysis of EN as a topic marker is not tenable. The clitic EN, in fact, is compatible with *both* information-structural categories: topic and focus.

### 3.2 Agentivity

It has been stressed throughout this paper, and most notably in Section 2.1, that agentivity and the marking of a phrase with the clitic EN are closely interrelated. The influence of agentivity could be particularly well observed in the ban on EN-marked S with unaccusative predicates (cf. (9b)), and the fact that these kinds of predicates – if used with a marked subject – receive an unergative reading, as illustrated in example (10). It has thus been concluded that agentivity is a necessary condition for a noun phrase in Yali to be marked by the clitic EN.

The other uses of EN also require agentivity. As shown in Section 2.4, agentivity is the decisive factor in the distribution of causal EN with nouns: only with those nouns that to a certain extent denote an activity or an event – especially those denoting meteorological phenomena – can EN receive a causal interpretation. All other nouns are ungrammatical in this context, as shown by the difference between examples (16b) and (17a).

Finally, the uses of EN as an instrumental marker also show agentivity features in that they require (indirect) animacy and the control of body parts, as opposed to inanimate tool instruments which are marked by *-et*. This distinction is

---

<sup>17</sup> Garuda is the national airline of the Republic of Indonesia.

not uncommon; it can be found in other TNG languages such as, e.g., Yali's direct neighbour language Dani (Bromley 1981: 81), as well as in unrelated languages like Takelma, Finnish, and, to a certain extent, also in French (cf. Stolz et al. 2006). It is also conceivable that a body-part instrument is placed higher in the causal chain (cf. Croft 1991, 1993), in that the transmission of force (Talmy 1976) from the (volitional) agent to the body-part instrument is more direct than to a tool instrument.

Obviously, all instances mentioned above involve different 'kinds' of agentivity. The term 'agent' as it is used in this paper should not be understood as a monolithic semantic role but rather as a generalized proto-role in the sense of Dowty (1991). As such, it also subsumes agentive arguments that might not display all of Dowty's proto-agent features. Generally, the optional marking with EN only occurs with transitive As and unergative S arguments, i.e. with agents of prototypical activity predicates. If used with unaccusative predicates, it evokes notions of volitionality and control, which in turn cancels the unaccusativity and leads to an unergative reading. In event nouns (such as meteorological expressions) that occur with causal or purposive EN, as well as in EN-marked inanimates such as the *Garuda* air plane in example (20), volitionality and control are absent. Yet, the former involve Dowty's proto-agent entailment (*autonomous*) *movement*, which is absent in the non-event nouns presented in (17), while the latter is clearly the source of the noise, thereby causing the 'speaking' event and, as such, again exhibiting one of Dowty's proto-agent entailments (Dowty 1991: 572). Finally, body-part instruments involve animacy and a more direct transmission of force, two properties that distinguish them from tool instruments, which are incompatible with EN marking and which have to take *-et* instead. Obviously, animacy in itself is not an agent feature *per se*, and the *Garuda* example illustrates that animacy is not a necessary condition for a phrase to be marked by EN. The body-part instrument, however, is clearly an inseparable part of the agent acting volitionally. It is therefore not surprising that agents and body-part instruments are treated morpho-syntactically alike.<sup>18</sup>

A final observation to be briefly mentioned at this point is the fact that native speakers regularly translate an EN-marked phrase with a prepositional phrase in Indonesian, which in English translates as 'from/by'. Thus, for example, (21a) was originally translated by one of my collaborators into Indonesian as (21b):

---

<sup>18</sup> Note also that body parts are inalienably possessed in Yali and never occur without possessive marking (cf. (15b); third person singular remains unmarked with vowel initial stems, such as *inggik* 'hand' in (15a)) – A further indication of the close (morpho-syntactic) interrelation between the agent and its body parts.

- (21) a. *huluon itnoen sahowon filig isehekma*  
 hulu-on itno=**en** saho-on filig i-su-ehék=mu  
 red-NMLZ DET=**EN** blue-NMLZ arrange 3s.OBJ-do-3s.IM.PST=DS.PRIOR  
*laha*  
*laha*  
 go:3s.IM.PST  
 ‘the red one pushed the blue one and it (the blue one) moved’  
 [ECOM\_sr\_Edison\_W 002]
- b. ***dari** yang merah geser yang biru dan itu pergi*  
**by** NMLZ red move NMLZ blue and DET go  
 ‘from/by the red one moves the blue one, and that (the blue one) moves’

The Indonesian sentence in (21b) is just as ungrammatical as the given English translation. Yet, these kinds of translations were given frequently and independently by three different speakers I worked with, all of whom are bilingual in Yali and the Papuan variety of Indonesian (Papuan Malay).<sup>19</sup> Note that *dari* in standard Indonesian marks source arguments, rather than agents. Yet, in non-standard varieties it is sometimes used to introduce the agent in a passive construction, as illustrated in the Papuan Malay example in (22).

- (22) *dan anak yang jatuh tadi itu*  
 dan anak yang jatuh tadi itu  
 and child REL fall recently DEM
- dia ditolong **dari** bertiga anak kecil itu*  
 dia di-tolong **dari** ber-tiga anak kecil itu  
 3s PASS-help **by** VBLZ-three child small DET  
 ‘and the child that just fell, he was helped by those three little children’

Though this might constitute only indirect evidence, I interpret these uses of the Indonesian preposition *dari* as a direct translation of EN as an indication that Yali speakers perceive the marking of the agent as one of the most prominent functions of EN.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> All speakers grew up in a Yali village and started learning Indonesian when they moved to the city to attend secondary school at the age of about 12. All have been living in a predominantly Indonesian/Papuan Malay speaking environment for at least ten years now (going to school, visiting university, and starting their work lives in the city of Manokwari).

<sup>20</sup> Note also that *dari* in its Papuan Malay use described above also displays the same multi-functionality as Yali EN, marking (passive) agents as well ablative relations.

However, there are contexts in which the necessity for agentivity can be “overridden”, and a non-agentive NP can be marked. The attentive reader will have noticed this in example (13) which translates as ‘(as for) my younger brother, he was drunk’. Further examples are presented in (23)-(25).

- (23) a. *huli ari / \*arien fano*  
           *huli ari / ari=EN fano*  
           girl DEM DEM=EN good  
           ‘this girl is good’ [-en\_elicited intransitives]
- b. *suburu esetukon huli arien fano*  
           suburu eset-tuk-on huli ari=EN fano  
           sweet.potato cook-PROG-NMLZ girl DEM=EN good  
           ‘the one who is cooking sweet potatoes, this girl is good’ [-en\_elicited intransitives]
- (24) *anten nakol harikik*  
       an=EN n-akol ha-tikik  
       1s=EN 1s.GEN-afraid 3s.OBJ-1s.PST  
       ‘I am the (only) one who is afraid of him’ [-en\_elicited intransitives]
- (25) a. *saen angge sue?*  
       sa=EN a-ngge sue  
       who=EN 3s.GEN-possession bird  
       *Setien angge ano Silpaen angge*  
       Seti=EN a-ngge ano Silpa=EN a-ngge  
       PN=EN 3s.GEN-possession or PN=EN 3s.GEN-possession  
       ‘who has got the bird? Seti or Silpa?’ [quis\_task17]
- b. *Setien angge sue misig wereg*  
       Seti=EN a-ngge sue misig wereg  
       PN=EN 3s.GEN-possession bird one exist:3s.PRS  
       ‘Seti has got the bird’ [quis\_task17]

Usually, the stative predicate *fano* ‘(to be) good’ cannot occur with a subject that is marked by EN, i.e. when uttered in isolation, speakers reject a phrase like *\*huli arien fano* in (23a). One of my consultants, however, remarked that this phrase could constitute the second part of a more complex clause, and he offered the construction in (23b). Another speaker, when confronted with the sentence in (24), provided the translation ‘I am the only one who is afraid of him’, explaining that this would be an appropriate sentence in a situation where there is a group of people, but only the speaker himself is scared, while all the others are

brave and intrepid. Marking the subject of a stative, non-agentive predicate is thus possible if the marked phrase singles out a referent from a group of alternative referents, i.e. if the referent is in (contrastive) focus. This is also confirmed by the question-answer pair in (25). Here, the question offers a set of two NPs as possible answers and both these options, as well as the *wh*-question word *sa* ‘who’, are marked by the clitic EN. Also in the answer sentence, which selects one of the two options as the correct choice, the NP is marked. Note that this is the case even though the predicate in both question and answer is a relational nominal ‘(to be in) the possession of’, which clearly involves no agentivity features on the side of its subject referent.

## 4 Putting the pieces together – EN as a marker of prominence

It should be clear by now that different factors determine the use of the clitic EN. These factors are not easily brought together in a straightforward way. This section will try to do so by making use of the notion of *prominence*.

The concept of *discourse prominence* has been used before to account for optional ergative marking phenomena in other languages. Meakins and O’Shannessy, for example, claim that ergative marking in Light Warlpiri and Gurindji Kriol “accords prominence to the agentivity of the A argument, i.e. it foregrounds information about the agentivity of this argument” (2010: 1694). McGregor calls one of three optional ergative markers in Warrwa a “focal ergative marker” that “accords prominence to the transitive subject NP, singling it out as especially noteworthy” (2006: 395), and Verstraete convincingly shows for Umpithamu that (animate) A arguments only receive ergative marking when they are in focus, which he defines as “a principle of local prominence” (2010: 1637).<sup>21</sup> While the situation described for Umpithamu involves ‘traditional’ focus contexts (e.g., contrastive focus and question-answer pairs), the Warrwa, Light Warlpiri, and Gurindji Kriol data cannot easily be described in terms of ‘topic’ or ‘focus’ as defined in the literature on information structure. The Warrwa focal ergative marker is only applied when the referent’s identity is unexpected, and it shows an exceptionally high degree of agentivity (McGregor 2006: 399). In Light Warlpiri and Gurindji Kriol only the latter factor – a high level of agentivity – is

---

<sup>21</sup> In the Tibeto-Burman literature, the term ‘prominence’ is less commonly found, though the pragmatic factors, described as ‘contrastive topic’, ‘contrastive focus’, or ‘foregrounding’ would in many cases probably be compatible with the concept of prominence.

relevant; in Kuuk Thaayorre, it is only unexpectedness (Gaby 2008, 2010, cf. example (1) in the introduction). Especially for these cases, the concept of prominence seems a useful one because, as Meakins and O’Shannessy note, it “cuts across the categories of topic and focus” (2010: 1704). As shown in Section 3.1, a concept that covers both these information-structural categories is exactly what is needed to describe the Yali data.

I will use the notion of prominence as defined in Himmelmann & Primus (2015), i.e. as a *relational property* that singles out one element from a set of elements of *equal type and structure*.<sup>22</sup> Prominence defined in this way applies on different linguistic levels. On the phonetic level, prominence relations may hold, for example, between syllables, in that one syllable is more prominent than the others. Which syllable receives prominence status depends on its acoustic characteristics, i.e. the *prominence lending features*, which could be f0 excursions, increased duration, etc. In morpho-syntax, prominence relations hold between arguments. In the literature, different prominence hierarchies have been proposed, such as the animacy hierarchy, the semantic role hierarchy, the referentiality hierarchy, etc. The more prominent one argument is on a given hierarchy, the more likely it is to become the pivot of certain *prominence dependent operations*. Thus, agents are often the only arguments that can control the reference of anaphoras, are more likely to occur in prominent, sentence-initial position, are more likely to be linked to the most prominent syntactic function, etc. In discourse, the relevant level for this paper, prominent discourse referents are, for example, “more apt to be referred to, or be the target of discourse-structural links” (Jasinskaja et al. 2015: 134). As we will see, this also holds for those discourse referents that are marked by EN.

## 4.1 Discourse prominence on the global and on the local level

The pragmatic function of EN can be seen most clearly when looking at non-agentive arguments. These are, as we have seen in Sections 2.1 and 3.2, in principle not apt to be marked with EN. Yet, in certain discourse contexts, non-agentive referents can be marked. These contexts are those in which the non-agent referent is either highly topical, as in the left-dislocated construction

---

<sup>22</sup> Himmelmann and Primus propose two more defining properties of prominence, the ability to shift in time and being a structural attractor (Himmelmann & Primus 2015: 43ff), which will not be further discussed here. Note, however, that the use of the concept of prominence in this paper is also compatible with this extended definition.

(illustrated, e.g., in example (13), repeated here as (26)), in question-answer pairs (as illustrated in example (25)), or if the non-agent referent is in focus, as in (27) (cf. also examples (23) and (24)).

- (26) [*an not* *itnoen*] *at mabuk*  
*an n-ot* *itno=en* *at mabuk*  
*1s 1s.GEN-younger.sibling DET=EN* 3s drunk  
*sehekteg*  
*su-ehek-teg*  
*do-3s.IM.PST-SS.PRIOR*  
 ‘(as for) my younger brother, he was drunk’ [conversation\_1 078f]
- (27) *iyuhen at sobeg*  
*iyug=en at sop-eg*  
*foot=EN only step.on-ST.PART*  
 ‘only his feet are touching (the ground)’<sup>23</sup> [frog\_story\_Silpa\_Fince 092]

Verstraete distinguishes languages in which optional ergative marking operates on a local level, involving interclausal relations with the immediately preceding clause(s), like Umpithamu, and languages where it operates on a more global level of discourse organization, as in Warrwa and Kuuk Thaayorre (Verstraete 2010: 1648). The two examples above suggest that in Yali, optional ergative marking operates on both these levels, i.e. globally, as in (26), as well as locally, as in (27). In both contexts above, the EN-marked referent is discourse prominent. In the first example, it is newly introduced into the discourse and then becomes the topic that is talked about for the next few intonation units. In the second example, one referent – the feet – is in focus, and singled out from a set of alternative referents (cf. Krifka 2007), in this case feet versus hands.<sup>24</sup> The clitic EN thus reflects the prominence status of a given referent in discourse, either globally, or locally. In the two examples above, the high prominence status of the referent is further marked by (morpho-) syntactic means, i.e. in (26) by left dislocation and in (27) by the focus particle *at* ‘only’. While not marking

<sup>23</sup> At first sight, example (27) looks parallel to example (26), as the third singular pronoun *at* is homophonous with the focus particle *at*. However, the left-dislocated material in (26) is clearly separated from the rest of the clause by a prosodic break (0.178s), which is not the case for *iyuhen* in (27). The latter therefore does not allow for a reading like ‘as for his foot, it is touching (the ground)’.

<sup>24</sup> Or, more precisely: hind paws and front paws. The utterance describes a scene in which a dog wants to climb a tree. His front paws are already up on the trunk of the tree, and only his hind paws are still touching the ground.



information-structural categories itself, as argued in Section 3.2, EN-marking on an NP clearly brings about an effect compatible with what has been called ‘topic’ and ‘focus’ in the literature (for similar lines of argumentation see Matić & Wedgwood 2013; Ozerov 2015; Schnell *forthc.*). The notion of prominence, as defined above, covers both these traditional information-structural concepts and therefore seems to be the best choice to account for the pragmatic function of the optional ergative marker in Yali.

When it comes to agentive arguments, things become less tangible. This is due to the fact that, unlike with non-agentive arguments, there are no inherent restrictions on the use of EN that can only be overridden in certain contexts. We have seen in the previous sections of this paper that in the same syntactic context, agents can either be marked or not. Marking an agentive phrase with EN does not require any specific syntactic construction, though it is compatible with, and frequently occurs in, right and left dislocation structures. Given the argumentation above that non-agent arguments can only be marked with EN if they are discourse prominent, it is conceivable that the same holds true for agent arguments. This would then mean that those agentive phrases that are marked with EN are to be interpreted as particularly prominent. This clearly holds for those syntactically marked constructions discussed in Section 2.2, but can we find any evidence for prominence status in those instances where no additional morpho-syntactic marking is available?

In elicitation – e.g., when translating sentences, or when participating in description tasks – speakers will most certainly produce EN marked agents when describing or translating a transitive event. It is usually only in discourse that we find marked and unmarked forms in syntactically equivalent contexts.<sup>25</sup> Of course, this is to be expected if EN has a discourse structuring function, or is at least sensitive to prominence relations in discourse. And indeed, when looking at narratives, we can see a pattern similar to those observed by Givón (1983), who showed that the form of a referential expression depends on its activation status in discourse (and thus its prominence status). Consider the following extended excerpt from a re-telling of the children’s book *Frog, where are you?* (Mayer 1969), also known as ‘the frog story’ to many field linguists.

- (28) *mene itno imen eneluk ahasareg*  
       mene itno im=**en** in-eluk aha-ehesa-teg  
       dog DET together=**EN** 3p.GEN-alive become-3p.IM.PST-SS.PRIOR

<sup>25</sup> DeLancey nicely describes how the use of elicited data has led to incorrect or incomplete analyses with respect to optional ergative marking in Lhasa Tibetan (DeLancey 2011: 13).

yet *hehesama*

yet ha-ehesa=mu

see 3s.OBJ-3p.IM.PST=DS.PRIOR

*toples itno eneg toples amu eneg wereg*

toples itno eneg toples a-mu eneg wereg

jar DET only jar 3s.GEN-self only exist:3s.PRS

*e yahiye horiyeg lahaon itno eleg*

e yahiye horiye-eg laha-on itno eleg

INTJ frog sit-ST.PART stay:3s.IM.PST=NMLZ DET NEG.EX

*wilip ahama wilip ahamare*

wilip aha=mu wilip aha=mu=re

out become:3s.IM.PST=SIT out become:3s.IM.PST=SIT=TOP

*wilip aha ari ulug pehesa*

wilip aha ari ulug pe-ehesa

out become:3s.IM.PST DEM SAY think-3p.IM.PST

*pehesareg*

pe-ehesa-teg

think-3p.IM.PST=SS.PRIOR

*itanoen malik itnoente yahiye itno hira suruk ari*

itanoen malik itno=en=te yahiye itno hira su-tuk ari

then child DET=EN=TOP frog DET look.for do-PROG DEM

‘after **(the boy) together with the dog** have woken up, they see it. (There is) only the jar, there is only the jar itself. Eh, the frog that had been sitting there isn’t there anymore. It escaped. It escaped. They thought that it escaped. After they thought like this, **then the child** is searching for the frog’ [frog\_story 066ff]

At this point of the story, all participants have already been introduced. The section starts with the boy and the dog discovering that the frog, which they had been keeping in a jar, has escaped overnight. The NP that refers to the two of them, the boy and the dog, is marked by EN. The speaker then goes on to describe what the two protagonists see and how they wonder what might have happened. During this part, no overt nominal expressions are used to refer to the boy and the dog. Only when the next line of action starts – the actual search for the frog – is the boy referred to as a full, EN-marked NP. Though in this example there is at least a partial topic change, i.e. from the boy and the dog to the boy only, a change of topic is not a necessary condition for EN to occur in this

environment. Rather, it seems to be the beginning of a new thematic paragraph (Givón 1983: 8) and the necessity to (re-)introduce the most prominent referent that triggers the use of EN. Subsequent to (28), 41 intonation units follow which describe how the boy (together with the dog) is searching for the frog. This story line is then interrupted by a scene in which the boy is holding the dog in his arms after it fell out of the window. This scene interrupts the account of the search, and is described by the speaker in quite some detail. Again, this new thematic paragraph is introduced by an EN-marked NP referring to the boy.

- (29) *itanoente            malik itnoente            amene            itno hambog*  
       itanoen=te    **malik itno=en=te**    a-mene            itno hambog  
       then=TOP    **child    DET=EN=TOP**    3s.GEN-dog    DET    hold.in.arm  
       *sehek*  
       su-ehek  
       do-3s.IM.PST  
       ‘**then the boy** was holding his dog in his arms’ [frog\_story 118ff]

Examples (28) and (29) illustrate the use of EN as a marker of prominence in (global) discourse in Yali narratives. Unlike in Warrwa, Kuuk Thaayorre, or Gurindji Kriol, expectations about the identity or agency of the referent do not seem to be relevant. Rather, the global discourse function of EN is to flag the most prominent discourse referent at the beginning of a thematic paragraph, which then becomes the topic for this particular part of the text. It should be noted, however, that no systematic, quantitative discourse study has been undertaken, and it remains to be shown whether all instances of agentive EN-marked NPs in Yali discourse can be explained in terms of discourse prominence in the way described above.

## 4.2 Ergative marking and clause linking as a means of according prominence

Finally, let us look at one further piece of evidence for the claim that EN is a marker of discourse prominence: the instances that have been called the ‘causal’ and ‘purposive’ uses of EN in the previous sections of this paper. On closer inspection, it becomes apparent that there is a close relation between discourse prominence on the one hand, and ‘causal’ and ‘purposive’ EN on the other hand, in that the proposition expressed by the phrase or clause marked by EN sets the scene for whatever is expressed in the second clause. This is also reflected in the

syntactic structure: the causal phrase or clause always precedes the semantically associated clause. As the cause of, or purpose for, something that has happened, is happening, or will happen, the marked proposition is thus by definition topical, and therefore discourse prominent. In fact, clauses (and phrases) marked by EN are ambiguous between denoting causal or purposive semantics, and simply being topical. Compare example (16a), repeated here as (30a), with the example in (30b). The two sentences show the same syntactic structure and behave morpho-syntactically alike; both involve a nominalized verb phrase marked by EN. Consequently, it seems reasonable to claim that the primary function of EN in both examples is to mark the first clause as being topical/prominent, with the causal semantics of (30a) simply being inferred. Thus, a more literal translation would rather be ‘as for the one who fell over, his foot is hurting’ with the causal relation between the two clauses being inferred by the respective context. Accordingly, if uttered in a different context, (30b), too, could receive a causal reading, such as: ‘because the other people stayed, they took it’.

- (30) a. *wat sehekon itnoen iyuk uken suruk*  
       *wat su-ehék-on itno=EN iyuk uken su-tuk*  
       fall do-3s.IM.PST-NMLZ DET=EN foot hurt do-PROG  
       ‘because he fell over, his foot is hurting’ [pear\_story\_Edison 081]
- b. *ap winon wilahasonen hilehesa*  
       *ap winon wilat-ehesa-on=EN hila-ehesa*  
       person other stay-3p.IM.PST-NMLZ=EN take-3p.IM.PST  
       ‘(as for) the other people who stayed, they took (it)’ [pear\_story\_Edison 023]

Both of the examples above constitute thematization structures (cf. Heeschen 1998: 162ff), and, as mentioned in Section 2.2, these kinds of structures have been observed to be preferred discourse strategies in many Papuan languages. de Vries (2006: 811) notes that “thematization occurs especially in discourse initial paragraphs when the time, place, participant and main themes are introduced, and in discourse final paragraphs with summarizing and concluding functions”. He discusses the following Korowai example and argues that the given English translation is actually misleading. Rather than a relative clause, the example constitutes a thematized subordinate clause. A better translation would thus be ‘given that they killed that pig, (it) is ours’ (de Vries 2006: 815).

- (31) *wa gol ülme-tél-e-kha-fè nokhu-gol*  
       that pig kill-3p.REAL-TR-SUB-TOP our-pig  
       ‘the pig that they killed, is our pig’ (Korowai, de Vries 2006: 815)

de Vries goes on to argue that – very similarly to the Yali examples in (30) – the actual interpretation depends on the given context. Thus, if the second part of the clause were ‘we were angry’, the first part would receive a causal interpretation, i.e. ‘because they killed the pig, we were angry’ (de Vries 2006: 815). Both the Korowai example in (31) and the Yali examples in (30) seem to confirm that in many Papuan languages certain meaning components are not directly encoded by structure (or morphology). Rather, they are induced by context and do not necessarily give any information about the structure of a given sentence (cf. de Vries 2006: 826). As a clause linking element, EN can thus be claimed to exhibit exactly the same function as when it (optionally) occurs with subject NPs; namely, reflecting discourse prominence.

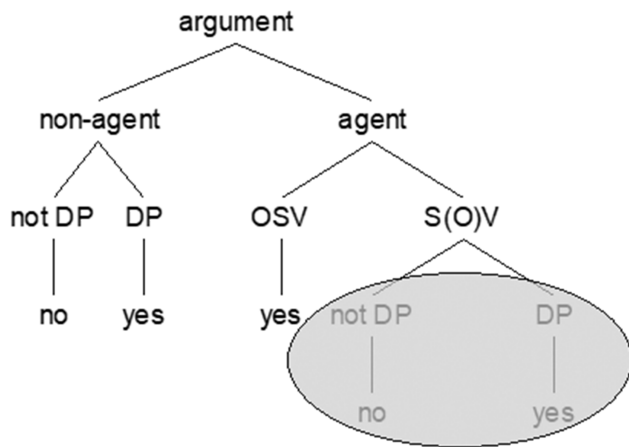
## 5 Conclusion

This paper discussed in detail the use of the Yali clitic EN and framed it in relation to the use and function of optional ergatives in other languages. It was demonstrated that the Yali system shows striking similarities with other optional ergative marking systems, both in other TNG languages and in languages of unrelated language families. As in many other optional ergative marking languages, agentivity and discourse prominence were shown to be the decisive factors for the occurrence of ergative marking in Yali. The aim of this paper was to investigate if and how these two factors interact. The following points summarize the most important observations:

- if an argument is an agent, it is apt to be marked with EN;
- non-agent arguments are marked if they are topical or focal, i.e. if they are discourse prominent (DP), otherwise they cannot be marked;
- (in marked word order, marking of A is obligatory);
- EN is sensitive to discourse prominence, and agentive arguments, as well as non-agent arguments, are marked if they take a prominent role in discourse.

Figure 2 visualizes these points in a tree structure diagram, illustrating the interrelation of semantic, syntactic and pragmatic factors. The grey circle marks those environments where further, probably quantitative analyses are needed to make more reliable claims.

It was further argued that the prominence status of an ergative-marked referring expression can originate from different factors, such as high topicality of a referent in discourse, or because the referent is in (contrastive) focus. Both



**Figure 2:** Distribution of EN with subject NPs.

the global and the local discourse levels are relevant domains in which optional ergative marking operates in Yali.

A closer look was taken at the clause linking function of EN, where EN attaches to nouns, (nominalized) inflected verbs, or adjectives, and evokes a reading of a causal or purposive relation between the two clausal elements. It was argued that in fact this causal/purposive reading is not part of the meaning of EN. Rather, the EN-marked clause should be analyzed as a thematized structure, similar to EN-marked, topicalized NPs. Its causal/purposive reading is induced by the respective context only. The use of EN as a clause linking element was therefore taken as further evidence for the claim that it flags the prominence status of a referent in discourse.

**Acknowledgments:** The main research and field work reported in this paper was funded by the Volkswagen Foundation as part of the DoBeS documentation project “Documentation Summits in the Central Mountains of Papua” (2012–2016, AZ 85 892). During revision and finalization I have been generously supported by the Australian Research Council (ARC) as a member of the “Centre of Excellence for the Dynamics of Language” at the Australian National University, and by the German Research Foundation (DFG) within the SFB 1252 “Prominence in Language” at the University of Cologne.

An early version of this paper was presented at the 11th Meeting of the Association for Linguistic Typology in Albuquerque 2015, and I thank the

audience for helpful comments and suggestions. I gratefully acknowledge the constructive criticism and detailed comments by three anonymous reviewers. The quality of the published paper has greatly benefited from their feedback. I am also grateful to Birgit Hellwig, Nikolaus P. Himmelmann, Gertrud Schneider-Blum and Stefan Schnell for fruitful discussions on the topic and for useful comments on earlier drafts. Thanks to Katherine Walker for proofreading the manuscript and improving English grammar and style, and to Gabriele Schwiertz for help with Figure 1 and other phonetic issues. The responsibility for all remaining errors, including any remaining dangling participles, is of course mine.

**Abbreviations:** 1 = first person; 2 = second person; 3 = third person; ADV = adverbial; BEN = benefactive; DEM = demonstrative; DET = determiner; DIR = directional; DS = different subject; ERG = ergative; FUT = future; GEN = genitive; IM = immediate; IMPFV = imperfective; INST = instrument; LOC = locative; NEG.EX = negative existential; NMLZ = nominalizer; OBJ = object; p = plural; PART = participle; PASS = passive; PN = personal name; PFV = perfective; PRIOR = prior (to the event denoted in the previous clause); PROG = progressive; PRS = present; PST = past; REAL = realis; REL = relative; REM = remote; s = singular; SAY = quotative; SIT = situational; SS = same subject; ST = stative; SUB = subordinator; TOP = topic; TR = transitional sound; VBLZ = verbalizer.

## References

- Aikhenvald, Alexandra Y. 2008. Versatile cases. *Journal of Linguistics* 44. 565–603.
- Anderson, Neil & Martha Wade. 1988. Ergativity and control in Folepa. *Language and Linguistics in Malenisia* 19. 1–16.
- Årsjö, Britten. 1999. *Words in Ama*. SIL Manuscript. [http://www01.sil.org/pacific/png/pubs/928474531105/Ama\\_Words.pdf](http://www01.sil.org/pacific/png/pubs/928474531105/Ama_Words.pdf) (accessed 28 April 2017).
- Bromley, H. Myron. 1981. *A grammar of Lower Grand Valley Dani*. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics.
- Brown, Janessa L. 2009. *A brief sketch of Urama grammar with special consideration of particles marking agency, aspect, and modality*. University of North Dakota M.A. Thesis.
- Chafe, Wallace L. 1976. Givenness, contrastiveness, definiteness, subjects, topics, and point of view. In Charles N. Li (ed.), *Subjects and topics*, 25–56. New York: Academic Press.
- Chelliah, Shobhana L. & Gwendolyn Hyslop. 2011. Introduction to special issue on optional case marking in Tibeto-Burman. *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area* 34(2). 1–7.
- Christensen, Steve. 2010. Yongkom discourse: Ergativity and topic. In Joan Hooley (ed.), *Papers on six languages of Papua New Guinea*. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics.
- Coupe, Alexander R. 2007. *A grammar of Mongsan Ao*. Berlin & New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

- Coupe, Alexander R. & Sander Lestrade. 2017. Non-structural case marking in Tibeto-Burman and artificial languages. *Linguistic Discovery* 15(1). 1–34.
- Croft, William. 1991. *Syntactic categories and grammatical relations*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Croft, William. 1993. Case marking and the semantics of mental verbs. In James Pustejovsky (ed.), *Semantics and the lexicon*, 55–72. Dordrecht, Boston & London: Kluwer Academic Publishers.
- de Vries, Lourens. 2006. Areal pragmatics of New Guinea: Thematisation, distribution and recapitulative linkage in Papuan narratives. *Journal of Pragmatics* 38. 811–828.
- DeLancey, Scott. 2011. “Optional” “ergativity” in Tibeto-Burman languages. *Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area* 34.2. 9–20.
- Donohue, Cathryn & Mark Donohue. 1997. Fore case marking. *Language and Linguistics in Malenesia* 28. 69–98.
- Dowty, David. 1991. Thematic proto-roles and argument selection. *Language* 67(3). 547–619.
- Farr, Cynthia J. M. 1999. *The interface between syntax and discourse in Korafe, a Papuan language of Papua New Guinea*. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics.
- Franklin, Karl J. 1971. *A grammar of Kewa, New Guinea*. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics.
- Gaby, Alice. 2008. Pragmatically case-marked. Non-syntactic functions of the Kuuk Thaayorre ergative suffix. In Ilana Mushin & Brett Baker (eds.), *Discourse and grammar in Australian languages*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Gaby, Alice. 2010. From discourse to syntax and back: The lifecycle of Kuuk Thaayorre ergative morphology. *Lingua* 120. 1677–1692.
- Givón, Talmy. 1983. Topic continuity in discourse: An introduction. In Talmy Givón (ed.), *Topic continuity in discourse: A quantitative cross-language study*. Amsterdam & Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Heeschen, Volker. 1992. *A dictionary of the Yale (Kosarek) language (with sketch of grammar and English index)*. Berlin: Reimer.
- Heeschen, Volker. 1998. *An ethnographic grammar of the Eipo language spoken in the central mountains of Irian Jaya (West New Guinea), Indonesia*. Berlin: Reimer.
- Himmelmann, Nikolaus P. & Beatrice Primus. 2015. Prominence beyond prosody – A first approximation. In A. De Dominicis (ed.), *pS-Prominence: Prominence in Linguistics. Proceedings of the International Conference*. Viterbo: DISUCOM Press.
- Hynum, David. 2010. Ergativity in Numanggang. In Joan Hooley (ed.), *Papers on six languages of Papua New Guinea*. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics.
- Jasinskaja, Katja, Sofiana Chiriacescu, Marta Donazzan, Klaus von Heusinger & Stefan Hinterwimmer. 2015. Prominence in discourse. In Amedeo De Dominicis (ed.), *pS-Prominence: Prominence in Linguistics. Proceedings of the International Conference*. Viterbo: DISUCOM Press.
- Krifka, Manfred. 2007. Basic notions of information structure. In Caroline Féry, Gisbert Franselow & Manfred Krifka (eds.), *The notions of information structure. Working Papers of the SFB 632*. Potsdam: Universitätsverlag Potsdam.
- Lambrecht, Knud. 1994. *Information structure and sentence form*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Li, Charles N. & Rainer Lang. 1979. The syntactic irrelevance of an ergative case in Enga and other Papuan languages. In Frans Plank (ed.), *Ergativity*, 307–324. London: Academic Press.



- Matić, Dejan & Daniel Wedgwood. 2013. The meaning of focus: The significance of an interpretation-based category in cross-linguistic analysis. *Journal of Linguistics* 49.1. 127–163.
- Mayer, Mercer. 1969. *Frog, where are you?* New York: Dial Books for Young Readers.
- McGregor, William B. 2006. Focal and optional ergative marking in Warrwa (Kimberley, Western Australia). *Lingua* 116. 393–423.
- McGregor, William B. 2007. Ergative marking of intransitive subjects in Warrwa. *Australian Journal of Linguistics* 27(2). 201–229.
- McGregor, William B. 2010. Optional ergative case marking systems in a typological-semiotic perspective. *Lingua* 120. 1610–1636.
- McGregor, William B. & Jean-Christophe Verstraete. 2010. Optional ergative marking and its implications for linguistic theory. *Lingua* 120. 1607–1609.
- Meakins, Felicity. 2015. From absolutely optional to only nominally ergative: The life cycle of the Gurindji ergative suffix. In Francesco Gardani, Peter Arkadiev & Nino Amiridze (eds.), *Borrowed morphology*, 189–218. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Meakins, Felicity & Carmel O'Shannessy. 2010. Ordering arguments about: Word order and discourse motivations in the development and use of the ergative marker in two Australian mixed languages. *Lingua* 120. 1693–1713.
- Ozerov, Pavel. 2015. Information structure without topic and focus. Differential object marking in Burmese. *Studies in Language* 39(2). 386–423.
- Pennington, Ryan. 2013. Topic as evidence for nominative case in Ma Manda. *Language & Linguistics in Melanesia* 31(2). 1–26.
- Riesberg, Sonja, Kristian Walianggen & Siegfried Zöllner. 2012–2016. *DoBeS Documentation Summits in the Central Mountains of Papua*. The Language Archive MPI Nijmegen, <http://dobes.mpi.nl/>.
- Ross, Malcolm & John Natu Paol. 1978. *A Waskia grammar sketch and vocabulary*. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics.
- Rumsey, Alan. 2010. 'Optional' ergativity and the framing of reported speech. *Lingua* 120. 1652–1676.
- Rumsey, Alan, Lila San Roque & Bambi B. Schieffelin. 2013. The acquisition of ergative marking in Kaluli, Ku Waru and Duna (Trans New Guinea). In Edith L. Bavin & Sabine Stoll (ed.), *The acquisition of ergativity*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Schnell, Stefan. forthc. Attention focus and information packaging in Vera's demonstratives. In Sonja Riesberg, Asako Shiohara & Atsuko Utsumi (eds.), *A cross-linguistic perspective on information structure in Austronesian languages*. Berlin: Language Science Press.
- Scott, Graham. 1986. On ergativity in Fore and other Papuan languages. *Papers in New Guinea Linguistics* 24. 167–175. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics.
- Simard, Candide & Eva Schultze-Berdt. 2011. Documentary linguistics and prosodic evidence for the syntax of spoken language. In Geoffrey L. J. Haig, Nicole Nau, Stefan Schnell & Claudia Wegener (eds.), *Documenting endangered languages. Achievements and perspectives*. Berlin/Boston: De Gruyter.
- Simpson, Jane. 1988. Case and complementizer suffixes in Warlpiri. In Peter Austin (ed.), *Complex sentence constructions in Australian Aboriginal languages*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Skopeteas, Stavros, Ines Fiedler, Sam Hellmuth, Anna Schwarz, Ruben Stoel, Gisbert Franselow, Caroline Féry & Manfred Krifka. 2006. Questionnaire on information structure (QUIS): Reference manual. *Working Papers of the SFB 632*. Potsdam: Universitätsverlag Potsdam.

- Spaulding, Craig & Pat Spaulding. 1994. *Phonology and grammar of Nankina*. Ukarumpa via Lae: SIL.
- Stolz, Thomas, Cornelia Stroh & Aina Urdze. 2006. On comitatives and related categories. A typological study with special focus on the languages of Europe. Berlin & New York: De Gruyter.
- Suter, Edgar. 2010. The optional ergative in Kâte. In John Bowden & Nikolaus P. Himmelmann (eds.), *Festschrift for Andrew Pawley*. Canberra: Pacific Linguistics.
- Talmy, Leonard. 1976. Semantic causative types. In Masayoshi Shibatani (ed.), *Syntax and semantics 6: The Grammar of causative constructions*, 43–116. New York: Academic Press.
- Verstraete, Jean-Christophe. 2010. Animacy and information structure in the system of ergative marking in Umpithamu. *Lingua* 120. 1637–1651.
- Zöllner, Siegfried & Ilse Zöllner. 2017. A Yali (Angguruk) – German dictionary. Wörterbuch Yali (Angguruk) – Deutsch. In Sonja Riesberg (ed.), in collaboration with Carmen Dawuda, Lucas Haiduck, Nikolaus P. Himmelmann & Kurt Malcher, *A Yali (Angguruk) – German dictionary. Wörterbuch Yali (Angguruk) – Deutsch*, 45–212. Canberra: Asia-Pacific Linguistics.