

## ERGATIVITY vs. FIENTIVITY: A REPLY TO A REPLY

If in some language the “absolute” actant is concorded with the predicate, but the concord between the “ergative” actant and the predicate does not exist, then not the “ergative” but only the “absolute” actant can be the grammatical subject of the “ergative” sentence there. Note that this subject corresponds to the logical direct object, i.e. the conversion has taken place and the sentence is passive! Since the ergative actant must be the grammatical subject, the syntactical concord between it and the predicate must exist. If the concord between the “absolute” actant and the predicate is morphologically expressed, but that between the “ergative” actant and the predicate is not, such a sentence is nominative, i.e. either usual passive, or pseudo-ergative, as in Hindi. If each concord is not morphologically expressed or if both are expressed bilaterally, but the opposition between transitive and intransitive does not operate, then such a sentence is either ergative, or fientive (I use the term fientivity, not activity, in order one could not say that “there are no passive sentences, only active sentences” in the active language\*). The labile character of (some) verbs is either a relic (Avar, Dyrbal) of fientivity, or the implication of it (Guarani: no diathesis!). For all that see the study by G. Klimov of 1983, where the language type is defined not according to formal features but according to the ways in which the grammatical content is expressed. Thus ergativity takes place when the subject of the transitive action is treated in the same way as the indirect object, and is opposed to the subject of the intransitive action, or state, treated as the direct object, the morphosyntactical concord (if such exists!) being only bilateral.

*M. L. Palmaitis*

---

\* Cf. Schmalstieg W. R. // *Baltistica*. Vol. 18. P. 119; Vol. 23. P. 125