Core arguments and oblique arguments

- Core arguments: indispensable semantic participants
  - Subject and object
    
    Sam hit Pat.

- Oblique arguments
  - Object of a preposition
    
    Sam hit Pat with a hammer.

Semantic roles and grammatical relations

- Mapping between semantic roles and grammatical relations

- Subject, Object vs. Agent, Patient

Subjects

- Subjects tend to express the agent of the action.
- Subjects tend to appear first. (SVO, SOV)
- Subjects are omitted argument in imperative construction.

Subjects

- Subjects control reflexive and reciprocal NPs.
  - They hate themselves/each other.
- Subjects control the referential properties of an NP in another clause.
  - [Chrisi phoned Leej] and [øi meet himj later].
- Subjects control reference in equi subject construction.
  - Theyi tried øi to finish it.
Relationships within the clause

- Word order (constituent order)
- Agreement (cross-referencing)
- Case marking

Not mutually exclusive

Word order

- The order of subject, object and verb
- Subjects are made distinct from objects by appearing in a fixed position.
- SVO, SOV, VSO, VOS, OVS, OSV
- Basic word order vs. marked order

Word order

- SVO and SOV – most frequent
- Two generalizations
  - Subject-initial order
  - V adjacent to O
- Head-initial vs. head-final
  - VO vs. OV

Agreement or cross-referencing

- A verb is marked to reflect properties of its NP arguments.
  - Person, number, gender
Agreement

• No agreement
• Agree with some of its arguments
  French
  Nous avons mangé des pommes.
  ‘We have:1PL eaten INDEF PL apples’
• Agree with all of its arguments
  Inuktitut (Allen and Schröder 2003)
  Quïq-sî-qqikkiikt
  shoot-prospective aspect-causative1st person singular subject-
  2nd person singular object
  ‘(I)’m shooting (you).’

Case systems

• Relationship between verbs and arguments is indicated by case marking.
• Case is usually marked on the head noun.
  Japanese
  Kodomo-ga hon-o yon-da
  child-NOM book-ACC read-PAST
  ‘The child read the book.’

  German
  Der gross-e Hund knurrte
  the-NOM big-NOM dog growled
  ‘The big dog growled.’

Agreement

• If a language has object agreement, it also has subject agreement.

Case-marking systems

• The need to code semantic roles
• The need to code pragmatic function
• The need to code transitivity
Active-stative system

• Three-way distinction in Chickasaw: Agent, Patient, Dative
• Two-way distinction in Seneca: Agent, Non-agent
• However, grammatical relations can still play a role.

Nominative-accusative system

• Nominative and accusative
  – He hit him.
  – He ran.

Ergative- absolutive system

• Ergative and absolutive
  – He hit him.
  – Him ran.

Ergative language

Basque
Gixona-k liburu erosi dau
man: ERG book:ABS buy AUX:3SG
‘The man (A) has bought the book (O).’

Gixona etorri da
man:ABS come AUX:3SG
‘The man (S) has come.’

Gixona ikusi dot
man:ABS see AUX:1SG
‘I (A) have seen the man (O).’
Split ergative

- Ergative case marking for some constructions and accusative case marking for others.
  - Dyirbal: nouns have ergative case marking; 1st and 2nd person pronouns have accusative case marking.

Grammatical relations in ergative-absolutive system

- It is not uncommon for a language with ergative case-marking to show accusative syntactic patterns.
- Warlpiri: ergative case marking, but accusative agreement pattern.
- No language with accusative case marking and ergative agreement pattern
- Accusative agreement pattern predominates cross-linguistically.

Case systems

- It is generally S that lacks any overt marking.
- Case marking on accusative NP and ergative NP

Word order in languages with case marking

- Der Junge gab den Brief dem Lehrer.
- Den Brief gab der Junge dem Lehrer.
- Dem Lehrer gab der Junge den Brief.
- Der Junge gab dem Lehrer den Brief.

‘The boy gave the letter (to) the teacher.’
Case marking and agreement

• Case marking can also be seen in verb agreement
  
  Sacapultec Maya (Du Bois 1987)
  s-ax-war-ek
  CMP-1pl.ABS-sleep-IF
  ‘We slept.’