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Verbless Presentation and the Discourse Basis of Ergativity

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1.0 Introduction.

This paper is concerned with the use, in oral discourse, of verbless 'presentational' utterances. I define a verbless presentational utterance as a bare noun or noun phrase, often preceded by an adverbial element, which stands alone as an intonationally-defined unit, and which functions to 'present' a referent in natural discourse. In English, such utterances tend to have an informal flavor,¹ as in the following examples:

- (1) And so then this..then this..young guy,
who is...the guy who's supposed to go through your suitcases, you know.
He looks at me and he goes uh- "Why don't you open up that suitcase?"
- (2) A: Boy, that burrito the other day?
B: Mm
A: She said, "Do you want it with salsa?"

In these examples, the NP presented verblessly in the first utterance (*this young guy; that burrito*) is resumed pronominally in the following utterance (*he; it*). The first utterance introduces the referent into the world of the discourse, and the second utterance predicates something new of it.

This device, while rather restricted in occurrence in English, is exploited much more systematically in other languages. One such language is Tamil. Examples of verbless presentations in spoken Tamil are given in (3) - (5) below:

- (3) Añkiṭṭē iruntu, oru kuna keḷavi.
there from one hunchbacked old.lady
Anta keḷavi taṇṇi eṭuttukiṭṭe varrā.
that old.lady water carrying come-Pr-3fs
'From the other direction, a hunchbacked old lady.
That old lady comes carrying water'.
- (4) Añkē...araca kuṭumpattinarkku...nakai ellām ceyyaravan.
there king's family-DAT jewelry all one.who.makes
Avañ Kōvalaṇ koṇṭu-pōra cilampai pārttān.
he Kovalan hold-go anklet-ACC look-P-3ms
'There, the royal family's jeweler.
He looked at the anklet Kovalan was holding'.

- (5) Namma āl irukkān pārunka, turiyōṭaṇan. Avaṇṭaiya koṭi.
 our man be-Pr3ms TAG Duryodhanan. He-GEN flag.
 Koṭiyile ulḷa cinnam...
 flag-LOC be-AjP insignia...

'There's our man Duryodhanan, right? *His flag.*
 The insignia on his flag...'

The use of the verbless construction in Tamil is pragmatically conditioned. It correlates strongly with the introduction of *new* referents — that is, referents which have not yet been activated or which are otherwise inaccessible in the context of the immediate discourse — and thus functions as a device to monitor information flow. Moreover, the verbless presentational construction specializes in introducing new information, in a way that other devices in the language do not. This makes it of particular relevance to studies of information flow, especially those which make claims regarding grammatical structure on the basis of observed patterns in the encoding of new and given information.

A recent study of this type is Du Bois (1987), which advances two original and potentially important hypotheses. The first hypothesis is that there exists in all languages a Preferred Argument Structure (PAS), according to which speakers tend to introduce new nominal referents either as the *subject* of an intransitive clause, or as the *object* of a transitive clause, but rarely if ever as the subject (semantic *agent*) of a transitive clause. The restriction against encoding new information in the 'agentive' role follows from the pragmatic fact that agents are typically human protagonists who tend to be thematic (and hence treated as 'given') in the discourse, and a cognitive principle, elaborated in Chafe (1980, 1987) and Pawley & Syder (1977, 1983), which imposes a limit of one new piece of information per utterance unit. Du Bois' second hypothesis follows from the first: the tendency for intransitive subject (S) and transitive object (O) to group together in discourse, in contrast with transitive subject (A), constitutes a functional motivation for the grammaticalization of ergative morphology, which treats S and O similarly. Since Preferred Argument Structure (PAS) is claimed to be universal, the question naturally arises as to why *all* languages are not then ergative. Du Bois accounts for this in terms of competing motivations, pointing out ways in which S and A group together naturally as well (as in accusative languages): *pragmatically*, in that both are natural 'topics', and *semantically*, in that subjects of both transitive and intransitive clauses tend to be animate, while transitive objects are frequently inanimate.

In essence, then, Du Bois would have us believe that grammatical ergativity is the result of the specialization of two case roles (which together make up the 'absolutive' category) in the discourse function of introducing new nominal referents. He states:

[T]he absolutive position...bear[s] a special relationship to new information, by allowing for the speaker's processing which is associated with this status. ...[T]he absolutive syntactic position constitutes a sort of grammatically defined 'staging area' — reserved for accommodating the process...of activating a previously inactive entity concept (p.834).

In Tamil, as stated above, the device which 'bears a special relationship to new information' is the verbless presentational clause. Since the grammatical roles S, A, and O are defined relative to a verb, NPs presented via the verbless construction cannot be said to occupy any of these roles; they are not 'arguments' in any usual sense of the word. Moreover, although Tamil is a case-marking language, verblessly presented NPs are almost always in the ambiguous zero-marked ('nominative' or 'citation') form. What, then, is the significance of a language like Tamil for Du Bois' analysis? Specifically, does Tamil discourse exhibit Preferred Argument Structure, and if so, what place does the verbless construction occupy in the system? I will address these questions in what follows.

2.0 Information flow in Tamil.

Tamil is a Dravidian language spoken by about 70 million people in South India, Sri Lanka, and parts of Malaysia. Three features of Tamil grammar are relevant to the present discussion. First, it has nominative-accusative morphology, and inflects nouns for nominative (but see above), accusative, dative, genitive, locative, ablative, sociative, and instrumental cases. This is in contrast with Sacapultec (Mayan), the language on which Du Bois' claims are primarily based, which is ergative-absolutive. Second, Tamil is verb-final, with no more than one finite verb typically allowed per sentence. Third, Tamil tolerates verblessness in a wide range of constructions, from equational sentences (e.g. *John — a nurse*), to a variety of construction types which lack any surface predication whatsoever (cf. Herring, in progress). Of the latter, the 'presentational' variety is by far the most frequent in oral narrative, the type of discourse analyzed by Du Bois for Sacapultec, and also in the present study.

My findings are based on a corpus of 30 oral narratives, collected several years ago in Tamil Nadu, India. The narratives represent a range of genres: personal (and other 'non-fictional') narratives, informal retellings of folk tales, and professional or semi-professional performances of epic and mythological tales. Out of a judgement sample of 1507 utterances,² the verbless presentational construction was found to occur 36 times, or 2.4% of all finite clauses. In order to expand the data base, I then turned to the larger corpus, weeding out all texts in which no verbless presentation was used. In this way, I produced a 'saturated sample' of 20 narratives, each containing at least one instance of the construction. This brought the total number of tokens up to 55, distributed over 1686

finite utterances, for a percentage of 3.4%.

At first glance, the incidence of verbless presentation may seem rather unimpressive. I have stated that the device is specialized for the introduction of new nominal referents in Tamil. Yet surely this percentage represents only a portion of the 'new' NPs available in the corpus; by means of what devices are the others introduced?

In order to answer this question, I identified first mentions of all nominal participants in the saturated sample, noting the grammatical role in which each appears.³ Separating out 'new' mentions from those which are 'accessible' from context⁴ resulted in a total of 207 new mentions. Verbless presentations account for only about one-quarter of these; the remainder are introduced in predicate constructions in a variety of case roles.

Following Du Bois, I grouped the oblique cases (predominantly locatives and datives) together, and distinguished between S and A roles, despite the fact that in Tamil, both are morphologically 'nominative'. The distribution of first mentions across case roles is compared with new mentions in verbless constructions in figure 1 below.

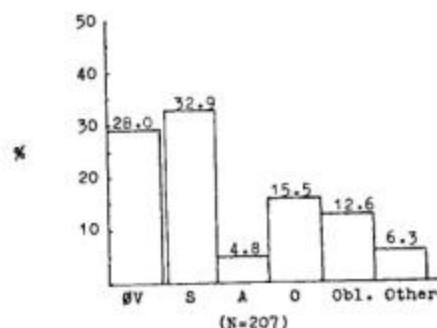


Fig. 1: New mentions (combined) by grammatical type

It will immediately be noted that the A (subject of transitive clause) role ranks lowest for the introduction of new NPs in narrative discourse, in keeping with Du Bois' first pragmatic principle, to wit:

Avoid new A's (p.827).

However, there are also problems. Once we have excluded accessible mentions (which are especially common in O and oblique roles), it becomes apparent that the O role does *not* group together naturally with S in Tamil, as per the predictions of PAS. Rather it falls out approximately half-way between S and A, and if anything, is slightly closer to A.

The relationship of O to S is even more problematic when we consider animate and inanimate referents separately, as shown in figures 2 and 3.

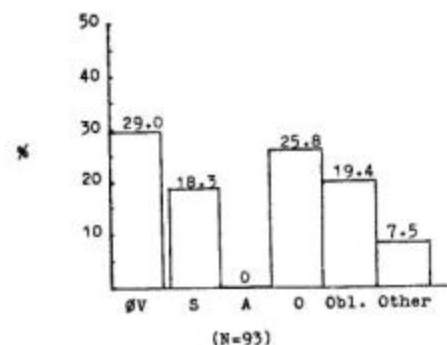


Fig. 2: New mentions (inanimate) by grammatical type

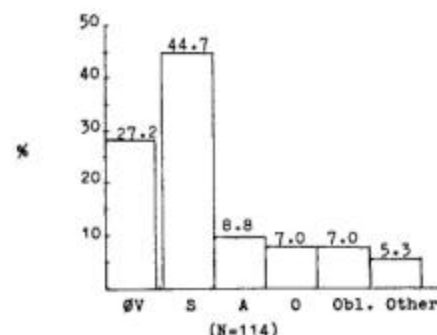


Fig. 3: New mentions (animate) by grammatical type

Inanimate participants tend to be introduced for the first time either verblessly, or in the O role; following that, S and obliques are about equally preferred. When we turn to the animates, however, a completely different picture emerges. The preferred position for the introduction of new animate protagonists is as the subject of an intransitive clause; verbless clauses hold steady; but both O and obliques have dropped down below A.

The radically divergent statuses of O in animate and inanimate introductions give rise to a number of questions. The first and most important of these is whether they can legitimately be grouped together to support

the claim of a functional similarity between S and O, when in the case of animates — which we might reasonably take to be the more central of the two classes of narrative participants — S and O are in fact functionally opposed. Methodologically, this does not seem entirely justified, and I will have more to say on this point later.

From the general distribution of first mentions across various grammatical roles, we now turn to the extent to which each role specializes in introducing new referents — that is, the percentage of all nominal referents in each role which are new. Figure 4 below shows the relative degrees of specialization of the verbless construction and of the major argument roles in Tamil.⁵

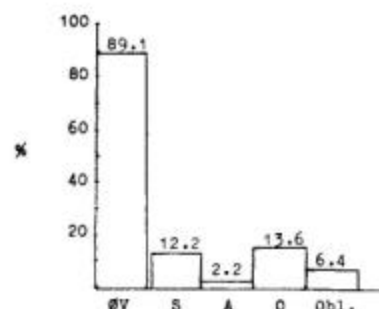


Fig. 4: Specialization of grammatical roles for new mentions

The figures speak for themselves. 89.1% of all presentational verbless utterances present 'new' NPs — a remarkable degree of specialization, as can readily be seen by comparing this figure with the percentages for the major argument positions. Both S's and O's present new information only 13% of the time, on the average, and the figure for the A category is so low as to be insignificant. If we exclude verbless presentation, we may discern a pattern which is reminiscent of PAS; yet the actual values of S and O are so low that it is highly improbable that a speaker of Tamil would be motivated to perceive of them as functionally similar in bearing 'a special relationship to new information'. Given, moreover, the high degree of specialization of the verbless construction, we may conclude that there is no support in the Tamil data for the notion of a functionally specialized S and O category.

At this point, one might be tempted to conclude that the specialization of the verbless construction in introducing new information in Tamil has somehow "interfered" with Preferred Argument Structure. The hypothesis could be advanced that first mentions are diverted into the

verbless construction which might otherwise be expressed as S's or O's, and hence that in languages which have not developed such a device, we should expect to find stronger evidence of PAS. Since Tamil is after all *not* an ergative language, the lack of pronounced ergative patterning in information flow is at least consistent; there may even be a relationship of cause and effect.

I will argue, however, that such is not the case. Rather, I assert that the problems pointed out here for Tamil are problems for PAS and for the proposed discourse basis of ergativity in general. In order to demonstrate this claim, let us reconsider Du Bois' analysis of Sacapultec.

3.0 Sacapultec revisited.

I will first address the problem of the semantically-based 'split' patterning of the O argument role. In Tamil, the O role was found to favor new mentions when the referent was inanimate, but to disfavor new mentions of animate referents. In fact, a similar pattern exists in Sacapultec, as Du Bois himself notes: "When speakers have a human protagonist to introduce, it seems they frequently select the S role to do this" (p.830). In contrast, "in the O position, ...we tend to find inanimate patient arguments in much greater variety" (p.829). Later, in describing 'competing motivations' which relate S to A *as opposed to* O, he makes the same observation in more precise terms:

In the S role, a substantial majority of mentions are of human referents (69.8%). But in the O role, far less than half the mentions are of human referents (10%).

Despite these figures, Du Bois chooses to down-play the implications of this discrepancy for his claims — his graphs show only a single O, with the categories of animate and inanimate conflated — and it is not difficult to understand why. He himself states that "human protagonists tend to be the central participants in most narratives" (p.829); they have a privileged status over inanimate objects, both linguistically and cognitively. This being so, statistical results which widely separate S from O in this important area of reference could potentially undermine the hypothesized "functional unity" of S and O, which in turn is the very cornerstone of PAS. This is not to say that animacy is *necessarily* bound to the pragmatic notion of 'new' information; in theory, speakers might overlook distinctions of animacy in favor of making a broader generalization regarding favored grammatical roles for introducing new referents of *any type*. However, this is a separate question which would need to be independently demonstrated.

The second point to be addressed is the degree of specialization of the S and O roles in presenting new information. We have seen that in Tamil, evidence for this claim is lacking. Tamil S and O roles introduce new referents only about 13% of the time (cf. figure 4); the

remaining 87% of their uses are associated with given and accessible NPs. How specialized is the 'absolutive' case in introducing new referents in Sacapultec?

The answer, I submit, is "not very" — or at least, the evidence is weak enough to invite us to reconsider how "powerful" a motivating force PAS really is. The structure of my argument will be to point out two methodological choices — one large and conscious, the other small, and probably unconscious — made by Du Bois in his analysis, and to show the extent to which his conclusions hinge on these choices.

The varying degree of specialization of each case role for new mentions is illustrated graphically in Du Bois (1987:828), and I reproduce that graph as figure 5 below:

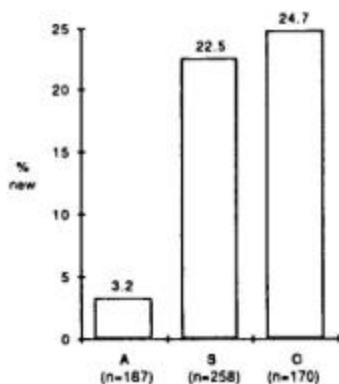


Fig. 5: Specialization of major argument roles for new mentions (Sacapultec; Du Bois 1987, p.828, figure 7)

Du Bois restricts his sample of case roles to A, S, and O, an important methodological choice which he justifies as follows:

Given the centrality of grammatical relations for this study, it is necessary to attend consistently to the distinction between elements which bear a direct grammatical relation to the verb, and those which do not... Argument nominals (A, S, O) bear this relation, and thus participate in the *ergative/absolutive structural opposition*. Obliques, not bearing such a relation, remain outside the structural system. Thus, in relating discourse patterns in the texts, I distinguish 'core' or 'direct' arguments (i.e. A, S, and O) from non-arguments (primarily obliques and possessives, but also various minor roles...) (p.815; italics mine).

However, this choice can be objected to in the context of Du Bois' larger analysis. It is true that the A, S, and O roles enjoy a privileged status in the grammars of ergative languages, and (to the extent that the thematic roles 'agent', 'patient', and 'experiencer' are preferentially grammatically encoded cross-linguistically), in language in general. What is not clear, however, is that they are similarly privileged with respect to the pragmatic principle of information flow. According to Du Bois' argument, the functional distribution of new nominal mentions in discourse gives rise to a recognizable pattern, or PAS. This pattern, in turn, motivates the grammaticalization of ergative morpho-syntax, particularly in those languages where there are few competing forces. Given that PAS logically precedes ergativity in this scheme, it is circular, at best, to select in advance the case roles for analysis, on the basis of their known correlation with ergativity.

Again, however, it is easy to see why this choice was made. The specialization levels of 22.5% (for S) and 24.7% (for O) seem high when contrasted with 3.2% for the A role, as in figure 5 above. When contrasted with the higher degrees of specialization of the oblique (38.7%) and the 'other' (36.1%) categories — which Du Bois does not depict graphically — S and O do not look as specialized. This is represented in figure 6 below (Du Bois' graph, plus the 'oblique', 'possessor', and 'other' categories).

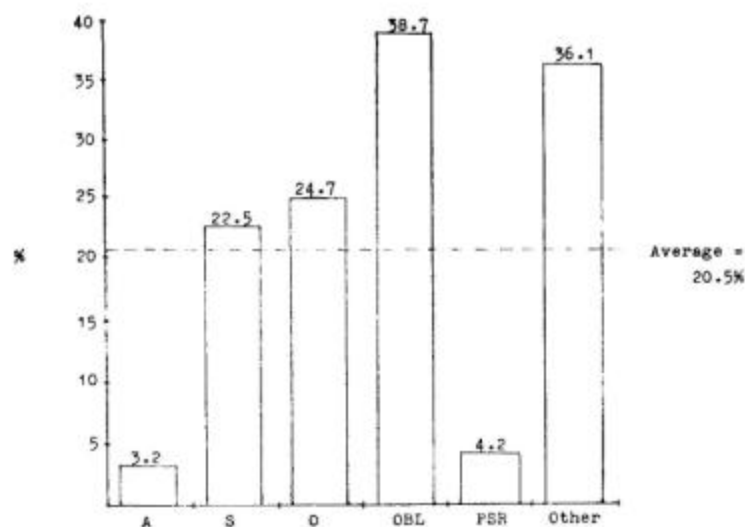


Fig. 6: Specialization of grammatical roles for new mentions (Sacapultec)

This impression is borne out statistically as well. Du Bois notes that the average percentage of new mentions in the corpus as a whole (cf. Du Bois 1987; table 6, p.826) is 20.5%. Applying this figure back to each case role, we find that the greatest deviation from the average is evidenced by the A role (and secondly, the human 'possessor' category), which falls short of average by a factor of more than six. This of course bears out Du Bois' principle of avoiding new mentions in A role; it is also the finding which is most strongly supported by the Tamil data. At the other extreme, the oblique⁶ and the 'other' categories are nearly two times more specialized than the average. The categories which most closely approach the average or predictably random distribution of new mentions are S and O. In other words, far from being "reserved" for the introduction of new information in Sacapultec as Du Bois claims, the absolutive case is the least marked for this function, according to his data. Thus, unless it can be demonstrated that there is something inherently salient about new mentions in S and O roles that makes them stand out even in relatively small proportions, the claim that S and O are "specialized" in this task stands on shaky empirical ground.

The second, smaller methodological point concerns the category labelled 'other' in Du Bois' study. In a footnote on p.814, he lists the phenomena included in 'other':

...vocatives (proper names used in address); marked topics (NP's which are topicalized and set off in a separate intonation unit without a verb, and usually precede a predication about the same referent in the immediately following clausal intonation unit); and predicate nominals (non-referential nouns functioning as predicates in an equational construction).

Of the 36 instances of this assorted category, a surprisingly high percentage (36.1%) introduce new narrative participants. Why this should be so is a question of some interest, given that the description of the second phenomenon — what Du Bois calls the 'marked topic' — sounds strangely like what I have been calling 'verbless presentation' for Tamil. Unfortunately, the 'marked topic' construction is nowhere illustrated in the paper, and since it accounts for only 19 instances of nominal reference, Du Bois relegates it to the grab-bag category, concluding early on that "it was not possible to arrive at a significant characterization of [its] distinctive role" (p.814, fn.11). By piecing together figures and comments from various parts of the paper, however, we can reconstruct the following:

1) The 19 instances account for 4.3% of all clauses in the Sacapultec corpus (19/443)⁷. Comparing this with the figure (2.4%, or 3.4% in the saturated sample) for Tamil, we can see that the 'marked topic' construction is actually *more* frequent in Sacapultec than its counterpart in Tamil.

- 2) The 'predicate nominal' construction, of which 13 instances are noted, only introduces a new referent once.⁸ This means that out of the 13 new mentions in "other" roles, as many as 12, and no fewer than 8, are associated with the 'marked topic' construction. (The indeterminacy here is due to not knowing whether any new mentions were introduced for the first time as vocatives. On the basis of the Tamil corpus, where a vocative never constitutes a first mention, we might predict that it is unlikely; however, I cannot be certain that it does not occur in Sacapultec).
- 3) Thus, the percentage of specialization of the 'marked topic' construction for new mentions is between 63% (if no vocatives are 'new') and 42% (if all vocatives are 'new'). That is, it is by far the most specialized construction for this function in Sacapultec, as indeed the verbless construction is in Tamil. This is represented in figure 7.

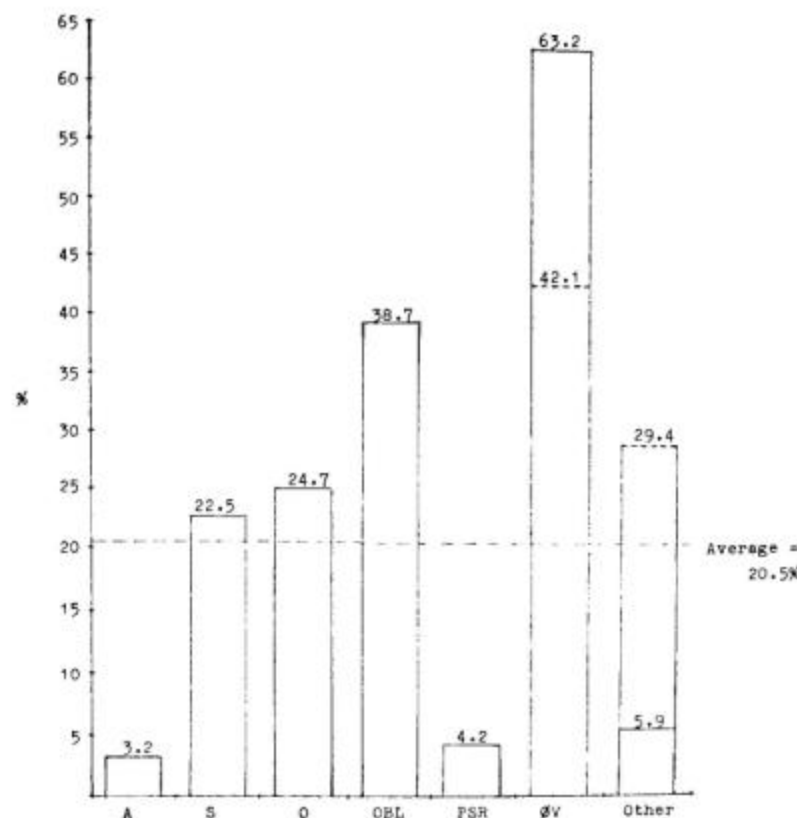


Fig. 7: Specialization of grammatical roles for new mentions, with 'marked topics' (QV) separated from 'other' (Sacapultec)

Whether the 'marked topic' construction in Sacapultec is comparable in every detail with the Tamil verbless construction remains, of course, to be demonstrated. In the meantime, however, the evidence is highly suggestive of a functional, as well as a structural, parallel between the two.

4.0 Conclusion.

The conclusions to be drawn from this are, I believe, two-fold. First we must evaluate, in light of the critique presented here, the validity of Du Bois' claims regarding PAS and the discourse basis of ergativity. In addition — and in some sense largely independent of the above — there is the issue of the relationship between methodology and results which my (re)analysis raises.

Regarding PAS, it is certain that the A argument role is pragmatically constrained, in a way which sets it apart from the other major argument roles. This is partially accounted for in terms of the 'one new piece of information per utterance unit' (cf. Chafe; Pawley & Syder) principle, but not entirely, since that principle merely predicts that only A or O can be new information, without selecting one role or the other for the task. The additional determining factor seems to be that semantic agents, typically human protagonists, are more likely to function thematically in a narrative than are inanimate objects, and accordingly are carried over from utterance to utterance as old or 'given' information.

The aspect of PAS which groups S and O together as functionally specialized, however, is largely unsupported by the present analysis. In contrast with the 'avoid new A's' constraint, which is reinforced by both cognitive and semantic factors, the supposed natural grouping of S and O is based exclusively on pragmatic usage. Cognitive restrictions on amount and rate of information flow do not differentiate between the various argument roles, as pointed out above. And the hypothesized grouping assumes that speakers take the semantic feature of animacy to be *irrelevant*, i.e. by treating O as a single unified category. However, the absence of supporting motivation would not in and of itself undermine the notion of an affinity between S and O, if the pragmatic evidence were sufficiently compelling. I have argued here that it is not: out of all nominal mentions in the S and the O roles, less than one-fifth (in Tamil) and one-quarter (in Sacapultec) are new. Moreover, they are surpassed in this function by other case roles, and most notably, by a presentational construction which has neither verb nor arguments.

This brings us back to the question of methodology. By excluding all 'non-arguments' of the verb, Du Bois was able to infer a natural grouping of S and O *relative to A*. From this he concluded that S and O are functionally specialized for the presentation of new information. By comparing *all* case roles and grammatical constructions which introduce new information, however, it emerges that S and O are virtually neutral with respect

to this function. Thus a very different interpretation arises when a less restricted methodology is employed. The alternative interpretation in this case is that PAS — broadly defined as a cross-linguistic pattern in natural language use according to which speakers avoid introducing new referents in A role, but exhibit no such avoidance in S and O roles — is not the powerfully motivating force for the grammaticalization of ergativity that Du Bois claims. This does not of course rule out the possibility that PAS may be one of a larger set of factors which, taken together, results in the grammaticalization over time of the ergative pattern in any given language. It seems unlikely, however, that it is the sole, or even the most influential, factor in this process.

As regards verblessness and information flow, a different methodological problem arises. Given the relatively infrequent use of 'marked topics', Du Bois can hardly be faulted for having excluded them from his analysis — part of the rigor of linguistic analysis is that one avoids drawing conclusions from insufficient data. However the fact that he did exclude them, and long before approaching the analysis of first mentions, belies a methodological bias of the same sort noted above. That is, rather than taking the investigation of information flow to be primary, and demonstrating how the ergative pattern falls out naturally from that, Du Bois takes the phenomenon of ergativity to be primary, then looks for a way in which to account for it functionally.

One consequence of this approach is that devices which genuinely *do* specialize in introducing new information in Sacapultec are entirely overlooked. Although I have had little to say here regarding the role of obliques in this function, it is a phenomenon which I feel is worthy of further investigation. Of more immediate relevance is the confirmation which the Sacapultec data provide of the cross-linguistic validity of verbless presentation, a strategy with important implications for the theory of cognitive processing and information flow (cf. Herring, in progress).

In spite of its bias, Du Bois' article is commendable in many respects. The insights it contains are original, and clearly presented. Moreover, if it were not for the fairly complete statistical representation of the data provided, it would not have been possible to reinterpret it and evaluate the methodology employed. One shudders to imagine how many influential works, equally ingenious but not as responsibly presented, couch significant biases which even the most scrupulous reader is in no position to evaluate. The moral of the story is perhaps that it is not enough to be faithful to one's data; even the best-intentioned fall prey to investigative bias.

ENDNOTES

1. Verbless sentences are also found in written literary genres in English and in numerous contemporary languages; a classic example is the opening of novels with sentences such as *A dark and stormy night*. *A lone freighter off the coast of Madagascar*, etc. Highly stylized literary uses of this type will not be considered here, both because of the emphasis I wish to place on functional motivations in spontaneous discourse, and because of space limitations.
2. A judgement sample made up of 16 of the best (i.e. most successful in performance) and most typical of the narratives, representing each of the three types, had already been selected prior to this investigation, and I used this sample to determine the overall frequency and distribution of verbless presentational utterances.
3. Here, and in the analysis that follows, I do not continue to distinguish between the three narrative genres, in that they pattern roughly alike. The only exception is that longer narratives (e.g. epics) tend to have more nominal participants, but a somewhat lower 'information pressure quotient' (Du Bois 1987:834) — that is, new mentions are spread out over larger portions of the text. The information pressure is not low enough, however, to affect the distributional pattern of new mentions across grammatical type.
4. While it is possible to rate degrees of accessibility along a continuum (cf. for example Gundel, Hedberg, and Zacharski, this volume), for the purposes of this paper I follow the 3-way system employed by Chafe (1987), who distinguishes between 'active', 'inactive', and 'semi-active' concepts, and Du Bois (1987), who applies the terms 'given', 'new', and 'accessible' to the same categories. Examples of accessible mentions include a participants' body part, when the participant has already been introduced, and stock characters within an established genre (e.g. if it is a 'Tenaliraman story', it will necessarily involve the comic hero Tenaliraman and the king he works for). Around 30% of first mentions in the Tamil corpus were classified as 'accessible' according to this system.

In contrast, Du Bois notes that in his study, "accessible mentions were by far the least common" (816). The discrepancy between this statement, and the relatively high incidence of accessible mentions identified in my data, may well be an artifact of the differing methodologies used in the two studies. The Sacapultec subjects described a film — Chafe's 'Pear Film' — which contains a relatively restricted set of focused participants, in contrast with some of the Tamil folk tales, which are highly complex in this respect. Second, the artificialness of the Sacapultec narrative context — speakers (some of whom, as Du Bois himself observes, had never seen a film before) being asked to describe a film, made in a culture other than their own, to an

interviewer who had *not* seen it — may have militated against the notion that any information was mutually 'accessible'.

5. The percentage indicated for verbless presentations is based on the entirety of the corpus; out of 55 instances previously identified as 'presentational', 49, or 89.1%, were found to be first mentions. (An additional 7 first mentions are verbless but not 'presentational'; most of these are instances of elipsis). However, daunted by the task of identifying all nominal mentions in S, A, O, and oblique roles in a corpus of 1686 utterances, I based my analysis of these roles on 8 representative narratives, or approximately one-third of the sample (541 utterances).
6. One possible explanation for this is the tendency for temporally and spatially-orienting NPs to be introduced in oblique (especially locative and dative) cases in numerous languages; e.g. *The king lived | for twenty years | in a cave | in the forest*.
7. This calculation is based on the total clause number given in Figure 1, p.818 of Du Bois 1987.
8. Cf. Du Bois 1987, p.826, Table 5.
9. A number of Mayan languages — for example, Chuj and Chol — are known to make use of 'verbless presentational sentences' (Judith Maxwell, personal communication). It would not be surprising to discover that Du Bois' 'marked topics' are an instance of this more general phenomenon.

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