

## Inverse marking without hierarchical agreement

The prototypical inverse construction is marked by two morphosyntactic phenomena: the verb indexes the Patient or “notional object” rather than the Agent or “notional subject” argument, and the verb has extra morphological marking. This is exemplified in the Nocte data (1), with 1<sup>st</sup> person A and 3<sup>rd</sup> person O, and (2), with 3<sup>rd</sup> person A and 1<sup>st</sup> person O. In both examples the 1<sup>st</sup> person argument is indexed; (2) is marked as inverse by the *h*-morpheme.

Hierarchical agreement can occur in languages without overt inverse marking, as in the Jinghpaw examples (3-4). As in the Nocte examples, both of these have 1<sup>st</sup> person agreement, indexing the A argument in (3), but the O in (4). This appears to be essentially the same phenomenon as we see in Nocte, so that we could interpret overt inverse marking in languages which have it as simply serving a disambiguating function, marking a verb form as indexing an argument other than the A.

However, there are also languages where we find inverse marking, or something very like it, without hierarchical agreement. Consider the Sizang Chin data (5). The morpheme (*h*)*ong*, originally a cislocative, marks all transitive verbs with 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> person O argument, as in (5a-b). But in both examples the verb has zero indexation, agreeing with the 3<sup>rd</sup> person A, not with the SAP O argument. We find the same phenomenon in the Dravidian languages Pengo and Kui; in example (6), the indexation shows that the subject A argument is 3<sup>rd</sup> person, while the inverse -d suffix indicates, without need of further specification, that the O argument is a SAP.

Givon and others have interpreted the inverse as motivated purely by the relative discourse-pragmatic prominence of the A and O arguments: inverse is the marked configuration where the O is more prominent than the A. In this view the classic inverse system, which primarily or exclusively marks the relative position of A and O on a hierarchy of person, is only a special case (the “semantic inverse”) of the discourse-pragmatic inverse. But the fact that inverse marking, sensitive only to the person hierarchy, can occur with subject (rather than hierarchical) agreement, shows that there are two distinct factors involved. If we interpret subject agreement as reflecting discourse prominence, inverse marking must reflect only the deictic category of person – an interpretation which is consistent with the association of inverse forms with cislocative marking in a number of languages.

This line of argument suggests that hierarchical agreement is likewise a grammaticalization of person as a deictic category, not simply a special case of verbal indexation of the most discourse-prominent argument.

Nocte (Tibeto-Burman)

- (1)  ${}^1\etaaa-{}^1m\varepsilon \quad {}^1?A{}^1te-{}^2nA\eta \quad vaat \quad A\eta$   
     I-ERG           s/he-OBJ       beat     1sg  
     'I beat him.'
- (2)  ${}^1?A{}^1te-{}^1m\varepsilon \quad {}^1\etaaa-{}^2nA\eta \quad vaat \quad h-A\eta$   
     s/he-ERG       I-OBJ       beat     INV-1sg  
     'He beat me.'

Jinghpaw (Tibeto-Burman)

- (3) ngai MaNaw hpe gumh praw jaw n- i? ai  
     I      PN        OBJ money       give n-1<sup>st</sup>  
     'I gave MaNaw money.'
- (4) MaNaw ngai hpe gumh praw jaw n-i? ai  
     PN      I        OBJ money       give  
     'MaNaw gave me money.'

Sizang Chin (Tibeto-Burman)

- (5a) hong-sá:t thê:i lê:  
     CIS-beat ever INTER  
     'Do [they] ever beat you?'
- (b) hong-sá:t lê: kâ-pe:ng tâl do\*ng kâ-ta:i tû:  
     CIS-beat if 1st-leg break until 1st-flee FUT  
     'If [they] beat me I'll run till my legs break.'

Pengo (Dravidian)

- (6) huR-d-av-at-an  
     see-INV-NEG-PAST-3m.s.  
     'He did not see (me/you/us).'