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Unergative Predicates: Architecture and variation
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Transitive Unergatives in Pazar Laz♣

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1. Introduction

- This study argues that in Pazar Laz (PL) – an endangered South-Caucasian language spoken in Turkey, unergative predicates always involve an overtly filled object position and behave simply on a par with regular transitive verbs. We will argue that this pattern emerges from the peculiar nature of vP in PL which always bears a case feature to be checked by an overt object in syntax (cf. Coon and Preminger 2010) and at the same time requires its Spec to be filled by an initiator.
- We will show that all verbal predicates in PL project transitively in PL. Only non-verbal predicates can have an intransitive syntax. This implies that structurally both unergatives and unaccusatives have the same architecture and there are no true intransitives in the language. While unergatives have an overt initiator in Spec, vP, unaccusatives always involve an implicit initiator in PL. Thus, PL lacks the true unaccusative pattern (e.g. anti-causatives) found in languages like English, where no initiator is available syntactically.

2. Voice and Thematic Suffixes in PL

Taylan and Öztürk (2014) and Öztürk and Taylan (2017) argue that PL is a vP/VoiceP bundling language (cf. Pylkkänen 2002, Harley 2017) which exhibits three main voice patterns: Initiator Voice (IV), Undergoer Voice (UV) and Active Impersonal Voice (AIV), which are used to highlight different sub-parts of the event.

Table 1. Three-way voice system in PL

	Overt Arguments	Suffixal agreement	Valency marker	Thematic Suffix
Initiator Voice (IV)	Ergative Initiator Nominative Undergoer	*-s* set	------	*-am/-um*
Undergoer Voice (UV)	Nominative Undergoer	*-n* set	------	*-u(r)*
Active Impersonal Voice (AIV)	Nominative Undergoer	*-n* set	i-	*-e(r)*

As seen in Table 1, each voice type is associated with different case and agreement patterns, as well as with different Thematic Suffixes (TS), which are morphological markers simultaneously denoting information regarding imperfectivity, argument structure and lexical aspect.

In IV, transitives, agentive unergatives (1a) and verbs of emission (1b) always take an ergative subject which is encoded on the verb with the third person suffixal agreement from the *–s* set in present tense.[1]

Agentive unergatives and unergative verbs of emission take TS *–am*, while transitives choose between *–am* vs. *–um* depending on the affectedness of the form/constitution of the object/undergoer. In terms of lexical aspect,*–am* and *–um* are compatible with atelic activities (1a-b), (2a-b), as well as telic accomplishments (3a-b).

(1) a. Ali-k i**-**çaliş-**am**-s
Ali-erg val-work-TS-pres.3ps
Ali is working.

b. Ntsa-k gurgul-**am**-s
sky-erg clap-TS-pres.1ps
Thunder claps/is clapping.

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[1] The suffixes for first and second persons are zero in form in PL. Note that the *–n* set agreement suffixes are based on the copula *on* in PL.

(2) a. Amedi-k t'abaxi çx-**am**-s
Ahmet-erg plate wash-TS-pres.3ps
Ahmet is washing/washes the plate.

b. Ayla-k zimari şol-**um**-s
Ayla-erg dough kneed-TS-pres.3ps
Ayla is kneeding/kneeds the dough.

(3) a. Ahmedi-k dişk'a mo-ğ-**am**-s.
Ahmet-erg wood PV-bring-TS-pres.3ps
Ahmet is bringing the wood.

b. Ahmedi-k oxori tzopx-**um**-s
Ahmet-erg house build-TS-pres.3ps
Ahmet is building the house.

We find unaccusative predicates denoting change of state in UV. The subject in these constructions is always nominative and takes *–n set* suffixes in the present tense. Such predicates require the TS *–u(r)*. Achievements (4a), degree achievements (4b) and verbs of directed motion (4c) are in this group.

(4) a. Balon-epe t'vats-**u**-n
balloon-pl pop-TS-cop.3ps
The balloons are popping.

b. Mts'up-**u**-n
Get.dark-TS-cop.3ps
It is getting dark.

c. Bere nca-şe ey-ul-**u-**n
child tree-allat. PV-climb-TS-cop.3ps
The child is climbing the tree.

PL does not morphologically differentiate between passives, anticausatives and middles, instead it makes use of the AIV to meet these readings, which again exhibits an unaccusative pattern. In the imperfective, the TS *-e(r)* is used in combination with the valency marker *i-*. The subject in this construction is nominative and again the *–n set* agreement is used. The active impersonal voice strictly denotes an externally caused reading and necessarily an agentive interpretation.

(5) a. Dişk'a m-i-ğ-**e**-n.
wood PV-val-TS-pres.3ps
The wood is being brought.

b. Oxori i-tzopx-**e**-n
house val-build-TS-pres.3ps
The house is being built.

Depending on its semantics, it is possible to have a single predicate appear in all three voices as in (6). If one wants to highlight the natural property or the state of the undergoer (i.e. the metal has the intrinsic property of bending, e.g. copper, or it is in a bent state), then UV is used as in (6b). But if the presence of an external factor, i.e. typically a human agent that brings about the change needs to be highlighted then AIV is used (6c). This means that a verb with an object that does not have the intrinsic property of bending (e.g. steel) is typically used with AIV, but not with UV.

(6) a. Ali-k ham metali ndrikh-**um**-s. IV
Ali-erg this metal.nom bend-ts-pres.3ps
Ali is bending this metal.'

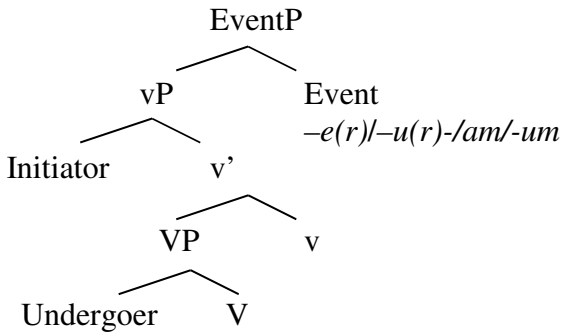
b. Ham metali ndrukh-**u**-n. UV
this metal.nom bend-ts-pres.3ps
'The metal is bendable/bending/can bend.'

c. Ham metali **i**-ndrikh-**e-n.** AIV
this metal.nom val-bend-ts-pres.3ps
'This metal is being bent/bending.'

As morphological markers, TSs alternate based on different voice types and simultaneously denote information regarding imperfectivity, argument structure and lexical aspect. Taylan and Öztürk (2014) and Öztürk and Taylan (2017) propose that TSs head a projection called EventP right above the vP introducing the initiator (cf. Ramchand and Svenonius 2013 and Ramchand 2017).[2] Dominating the lexical predicate and all the arguments, TSs depict different eventualities, reflecting information regarding the voice type, the argument structure and the lexical aspect of the verb as seen in (7).

[2] See Nash (2017) for a similar account of thematic suffixes in Georgian.

(7)



3. Transitivity in PL and Unaccusatives

In PL, AIV exhibits an unaccusative pattern, where the sole argument bears nominative case and agrees with the verb. We observe that the valency marker *i-* which obligatorily surfaces in AIV is identical to the reflexive marker in PL (8b), which cannot co-occur with the reflexive pronoun *çendi* (8d):

(8) a. Ma yali-s Ali b-dzir-i.
I mirror-dat Ali 1p-see-past.1ps
I saw Ali in the mirror.

b. Ma yali-s v-**i**-dzir-i.
I mirror-dat 1p-refl-see-past.1ps
I saw myself in the mirror.

c. Ma yali-s çendi b-dzir-i.
I mirror-dat self 1p-see-past.1ps
I saw myself in the mirror.

d. *Ma yali-s çendi v-**i**-dzir-i.
I mirror-dat self 1p-refl-see-past.1ps
I saw myself in the mirror.

AIV is compatible with purpose clauses, instruments and initiator-oriented adverbs but not with agentive *by*-phrases or by itself phrases. The language simply lacks such adjuncts.

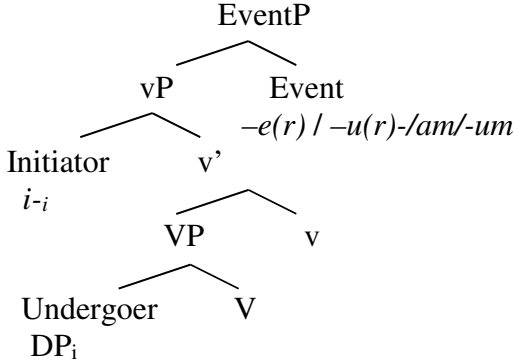
(9) Cami k'asi-te amolva şeni ç'ak'uç'i-te **i**-t'ax-e-n
glass intention-with enter for hammer-with val-break-TS-pres.3ps
The glass is intentionally broken with a hammer to enter.

We argue that this follows from the presence of the valency marker *i-*, which saturates the external argument of the predicate, disallowing the introduction of another initiator into the structure. Similar to the *i-* standing for the undergoer in reflexives, the *i-* in structures like (9) semantically closes the initiator (cf. Chierchia 1995).

We argue that *i-* acts as an syntactically active external argument in these constructions, as it can license the reflexive pronoun *çendi* in the object position in (10a) both in IV and AIV:

(10) a. Ali-k çendi var msk'v-am-s. IV
Ali-erg self.nom neg praise-ts-pres.3ps
'Ali does not praise himself.'
b. Çendi var i-msk'v-e-n. AIV
self.nom neg val-praise-ts-pres.3ps
'One does not praise himself. (Lit:*Himself/herself is not praised.)'

(11)



Thus, as shown in (11) we argue that the clitic *i-* stands for an initiator in Spec, vP and this implies that these constructions always involve an the initiator in their syntax and cannot consitute anti-causatives.

Now we turn to UV which also surface with an unaccusative pattern. Note that UV lacks the valency marker *i-*, yet just as in AIV, it is again possible to detect the implicit initiator with initiator-oriented adverbs, purpose clauses, and instrumentals in UV, where the verbs take *–u(r)*:

(12) a. Ham metali matzindi oyapu şeni ndrukh-u-n.
this metal.NOM ring.NOM make for bend-TS-PRES.3PS
'*This metal is bending to make a ring.'

b. Yağı xalva oyapu şeni ndgul-u-n.
butter.NOM halva.NOM make for melt-TS-PRES.3PS
'*The butter is melting to make halva.'

Internally caused change of state verbs, such as *bloom*, *rot*, *decay*, (13a) and also agentive verbs of directed motion (13b) are also compatible with the undergoer voice.

(13) a. Ombri purk-u-n.
plum.tree.NOM bloom-TS-PRES.3PS
'The plum tree blooms/is blooming.'

b. Hak Ali m-ul-u-n.
here Ali.NOM PV-come-TS-PRES.3PS
'Ali comes here/is coming here.'

The evidence for the presence of such an initiator comes from the data in (14). As seen in (14), it is possible to use the internally caused predicate *bloom* in IV, which would then take an ergative subject and the TS*–um*, denoting that the undergoer has a physical change in form. The pattern in (14) with the initiator voice looks very similar to unergatives, with the presence of the ergative case and the third person agreement marker *–s*. This pattern implies that internally caused change of state predicates also involve a syntactically active initiator position:

(14) Ombri-k purk-**um**-s.
plum.tree-ERG bloom-TS-PRS.3SG
'The plum tree blooms.' (e.g. in winter due to some internal control)

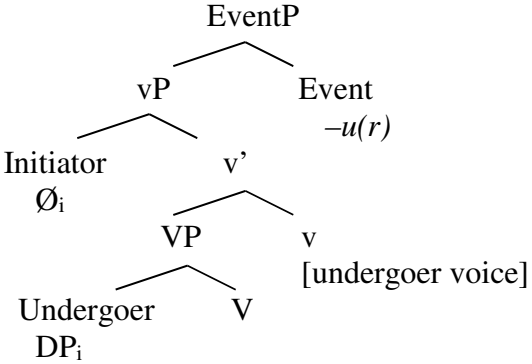
Agentive verbs of directed motion as in (13b), on the other hand, can be used with AIV and take the valency marker *i-* and the TS *–e(r)*, in the same way agentive unergatives do, as shown in (15). The compatibility with AIV indicates that verbs of directed motion in PL also involve a vP layer introducing the initiator just like unergatives.

(15) a. Ali m-ul-u-n.
Ali.NOM PV-come-TS-PRES.3PS
'Ali is coming.'

b. Mo-**i**-lv-in-**e**-n.
PV-VAL-come-CAUS-TS-PRES.3PS
'People come/One is coming.'

Thus, even in the absence of a valency marker indicating the presence of an initiator, as was observed in AIV, the unaccusative verbs selecting TS *–u(r)* in UV appear as having a transitive syntax as shown in (16) below:

(16)



To summarize, all types of unaccusatives require a transitive syntax in PL, requiring a syntactically active initiator in Spec, vP.

4. Unergatives

Unergatives in PL comprise agentive single argument verbs (17a) and non-agentive verbs of emission (17b). Such predicates always appear in IV which require ergative subjects and take the TS *–am*, which we also find in transitives as illustrated in (18). Recall that the use of ergative case in PL implies the presence of a causer/initiator in the structure. Just like in transitives the ergative argument acts as the subject of the clause. Thus, the case and agreement patterns of unergatives are very similar to those of transitives:

(17) a. Ali-**k** i-çaliş-**am**-s.
Ali-ERG VAL-work-TS-PRES.3PS
'Ali is working.'

b. Ayna-**k** farfal-**am**-s.
mirror-ERG shine-TS-PRES.3PS
'The mirror is shining.'

(18) Amedi-**k** toyç'i zd-**am**-s
Ahmet-ERG rope.NOM pull-TS-PRES.3PS
'Ahmet is pulling/pulls the rope.'

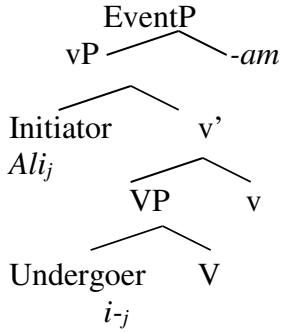
Let us first focus on the transitive nature of agentive unergatives in PL. Such unergatives differ from verbs of emission morphologically, as they obligatorily bear the valency marker *i-*, which occurs immediately preceding the verbal root in parallel to the case in AIV. Recall that the same valency marker *i-* surfaces in reflexive constructions in PL and stands for the suppressed undergoer (19b). The sole argument bears ergative case implying that it is the undergoer which is suppressed rather than the initiator.

(19) a. Ali-k yali-s Ayşe dzir-am-s.
Ali-erg mirror-dat Ayşe see-TS-pres.3ps
Ali is seeing Ayşe in the mirror.

b. Ali-**k** yali-s **i**-dzir-**am**-s.
Ali-erg mirror-dat val-see-TS-pres.3ps
Ali is seeing himself in the mirror.

We take the presence of this valency marker in agentive unergatives to perform a similar function as the one in reflexive constructions, implying that the event is acted upon one's self. For example, (17a) can be taken to mean *Ali is making/causing himself work*, where Ali is the initiator of this internally instigated event. This then would imply that the valency marker *i-* in such constructions acts like an undergoer co-indexed with the initiator as depicted in (20).

(20)



There is supporting evidence for the status of the valency marker *i-* as a reflexive undergoer from Georgian, a close relative of Laz. In Georgian this marker surfaces only when the unergative is used in perfective contexts (Cyrino 2012) as in (21):

(21) a. Bavshv-i tamash-ob-s balax-ze.
child-NOM play-TS-3PS grass-on.DAT
'The child plays on the grass.'

b. Bavshv-ma i-tamash-a balax-ze.
child-ERG REFL-play-3PS.AOR grass-on.DAT
'The child played on the grass.' (Cyrino 2012)

This is reminiscent of the pattern in English unergatives:

(22) a. *John is walking himself.
b. John walked himself out.

Therefore, the use of the reflexive marker *i-* in unergative verbs in PL is not unexpected. What is surprising is that its use is not restricted to perfective or telic contexts but is always obligatory with agentive single argument verbs. Thus, we argue that *i-* in all agentive unergative verbs stands for a syntactic undergoer, implying a transitive syntax.

As stated above, one property of unergative verbs cross-linguistically observed is that they can take cognate object arguments. However, if *i*-stands for an undergoer filling up the object position then the prediction would be that unergative verbs in PL would not take cognate objects. This prediction is borne out as shown in (23a). Note that even though all Laz speakers are Turkish-Laz bilinguals, they cannot use cognate objects, even if argument type cognate objects are frequently used in Turkish as in (23b).

(23) a. *Ali-k nciri i-ncir-s.
Ali-ERG sleep.NOM VAL-sleep-PRES.3PS
'Ali sleeps a sleep.'
b. Ali uyku uyu-yor. (Turkish)
Ali sleep sleep-impf
Ali is sleeping (a sleep).

We claim that since such predicates cannot take cognate objects, *i-* must be saturating the object position of these verbs. Based on this, we assume that agentive unergatives in PL naturally involve a vP layer and are syntactically transitive involving an overt initiator and an undergoer.

Unergative verbs in PL also include verbs of emission, which do not take the valency marker *i-*. Verbs of emission have been argued to have a causal implication, where their sole argument is taken as the causer of the event (Rappaport Hovav and Levin 2000, Potashnik 2012):

(24) a. The flower smells.
b. The flower causes the smell.

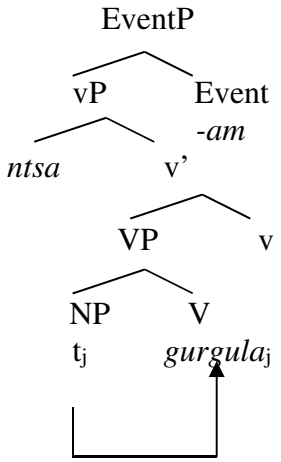
PL provides further evidence that the sole argument of such verbs are causers as the subject bears ergative case, which is always associated with the semantic role initiator/causer. However, since verbs of emission lack the marker *i-*, there is no overt morphological evidence for the presence of an undergoer. Verbs of emission as in (25a) have nominal counterparts as illustrated in (25b). It is possible to paraphrase (25a) as (25c) with the overt light verb 'make/do', having the nominal form of the verb of emission as the object. However, the nominal form cannot be used as the cognate object of the verb of emission, as in (25d), which is a pattern observed in Turkish as shown in (26). Thus, PL behaves differently from Turkish.

(25) a. Ntsa-k gurgul-am-s.
sky-ERG clap-TS-PRES.3PS
'The sky is thundering.'
b. Gurgula ce-xt-u.
thunder.NOM PV-fall-PAST.3PS
'Thunder struck.'
c. Ntsa-k gurgula ik'-um-s.
sky-ERG thunder.NOM make-TS-PRES.3PS
'The sky is making thunder claps.'
d. *Ntsa-k ar didi gurgula gurgul-u.
sky-ERG a big thunder.NOM clap-PAST.3PS
'The sky thundered a big thunder.'

(26) Çiçek güzel bir koku kok-uyor.
Flower nice a smell smell-impf
The flower smells a nice smell.

This data leads us to the conflation model proposed for unergatives by Hale and Keyser (2002) as shown in (27). Thus, if we assume the conflation model, verbs of emission involve a conflation of the object into a light verb. However, the conflated object is still visible as an object in syntax and hence saturates the argument structure of the light verb, which blocks the use of the cognate object.

(27)

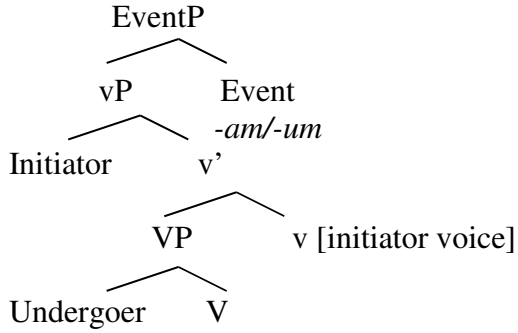


Recall that agentive single argument verbs also do not allow for cognate objects in PL. The same pattern holds for verbs of emission as well. We conclude that the lack of cognate objects stems from the fact that at the syntactic level the object position is already full either with the reflexive *i-* as in the case of agentive verbs, or with the trace of the conflated object as in the case of verbs of emission. Note that it would not be expected for verbs of emission to have the reflexive *i-,* as the causer and the undergoer are not co-indexed as in reflexives and agentive single argument verbs.

The transitive nature of unergatives also follows from the availability of ergative case. If ergative is considered to be a dependent case, i.e. it surfaces in the presence of an undergoer checking nominative case (Marantz 1991, Baker and Bobaljik 2017), in order to have ergative morphology an object position associated with a case feature has to be present.

In short, the evidence presented in this section argues for the lack of true unergative verbs in PL which do not have an object position and illustrates that both types of unergative verbs in PL have a transitive syntax. Thus, there is no syntactic difference between unergatives, unaccusatives and transitives.

(28)



5. PL as an I-language

Even though there are no true single argument verbs in PL, the unaccusative-unergative split is still achieved through different voice perspectives associated with different TSs, case and agreement patterns.

The initiator and the undergoer cannot be dissociated from one another in syntax. In terms of event structure, it is not possible to conceptualize the subevent which the undergoer is associated with independent of the subevent the initiator is associated with in PL. As seen in (29), in PL the adverb

almost cannot scope over only the subevent involving the undergoer as in (i), but has to take scope over the whole event as in (ii):

(29) Ali-k t'ora ek'na gontz-u.
Ali-ERG almost door open-PAST.3PS
'Ali almost opened the door.'
i. *Ali started openning the door but could not open itcompletely.
ii. Ali was going to open the door, but he changed his mind and did not do it.

Even though the initiator and the undergoer cannot be syntactically dissociated in PL, they can be foregrounded or backgrounded via different voice mechanisms. We argue that such a voice system is in line with PL being an I(nitiation)-language as defined by Ritter and Rosen (2000) (R&R). They propose that languages can be split into two: I(nitiation)-languages and D(elimitation)-languages. I-languages base event status to the initial bound, while D-languages focus on the terminal bound of the event. Given this split, I- and D-languages exhibit different clustering properties:

<u>D-languages can:</u>

- group accomplishments with achievements
- exhibit sensitivity to the semantic and syntactic properties of the object, such as specificity, definiteness, case marking, person, etc.
- use accusative for delimiting objects
- show ergative splits based on perfective aspect/past tense
- have object agreement not specified for person features

<u>I-languages can:</u>

- group accomplishments with activities
- exhibit sensitivity to semantic and syntactic properties of the subject, such as agentivity and animacy
- make grammatical distinction between topic and subject
- show ergative splits on the basis of the properties of the subject
- have subject and object agreement specified for person features
- have quirky case subjects, animacy hierarchies

PL exhibits almost all the I-language properties listed in Table 2, and thus comes across as a good example of an I-language:

- PL groups accomplishments and activities together in terms of TS, case and agreement suffixes.
- PL exhibits ergative splits based on the macro roles of the subject. Only initiators can take ergative case, while undergoer subjects appear as nominative.
- PL also exhibits subject and object agreement specified for only person features, morphologically encoded in the preverbal domain.

(30) Ko'çi-k si bere g-u-ncğon-u.
man-ERG you.DAT child.NOM 2OBJ-APPL-send-PAST.3PS
'The man sent the child to you.'

- Fourth, experiencer subjects surface with dative morphology and behave as a quirky case subject as extensively discussed in Demirok (2013):

(31) Bere-s Ali a-cer-u.
child-DAT Ali.NOM APPL-believe-PAST.3PS
'The child believed Ali.'

- Fifth, PL does not exhibit any differentiated object marking which can function as a marker of delimitation. As all undergoers surface with nominative case, such a delimitation can only be done through adverbial prefixes on the verb as in (532b):

(32) a. Ali-k past'a şk'om-u.
Ali-ERG cake.NOM eat-PAST
'Ali ate (some) cake.'

b. Ali-k past'a **o**-şk'om-u.
Ali-ERG cake.NOM PV-eat-PAST
'Ali ate the (whole) cake.'

As such, PL exhibits almost all the properties associated with I-languages by R&R (2000). We believe that how the event is defined in PL under R&R's typology has a direct reflection on the voice system. As only the initial bound is used to define an eventuality as eventive, all eventive predicates should involve a layer introducing the initiator in syntax. The ergative pattern which is also correlated with the I-language nature of PL furthermore necessiates the projection of an object position. Thus, neither the initiator layer nor the object position can be canceled out if the predicate is to be interpreted as eventive. Cancelling out the initiator is only possible if the construction is to be interpreted as deverbal, hence non-eventive. The deverbal form can be used with a regular copula as in (33a) and also as the complement of the verb *remain*, as in (33b), indicating that it is truly adjectival in nature:

(33) a. Cami t'ax-eri on.
glass.NOM break-PART cop.PRES.3PS
'The glass is broken.'

b. Cami t'ax-eri do-sk'ud-u.
glass.NOM break-PART PV-remain-PAST.3PS
'The glass remained broken.'

Conclusion:

To conclude, in terms of mapping between event structure and argument structure PL comes across as a typologically rare I-language, where all verbal predicates including unergatives and unaccusatives project transitively in syntax.

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