

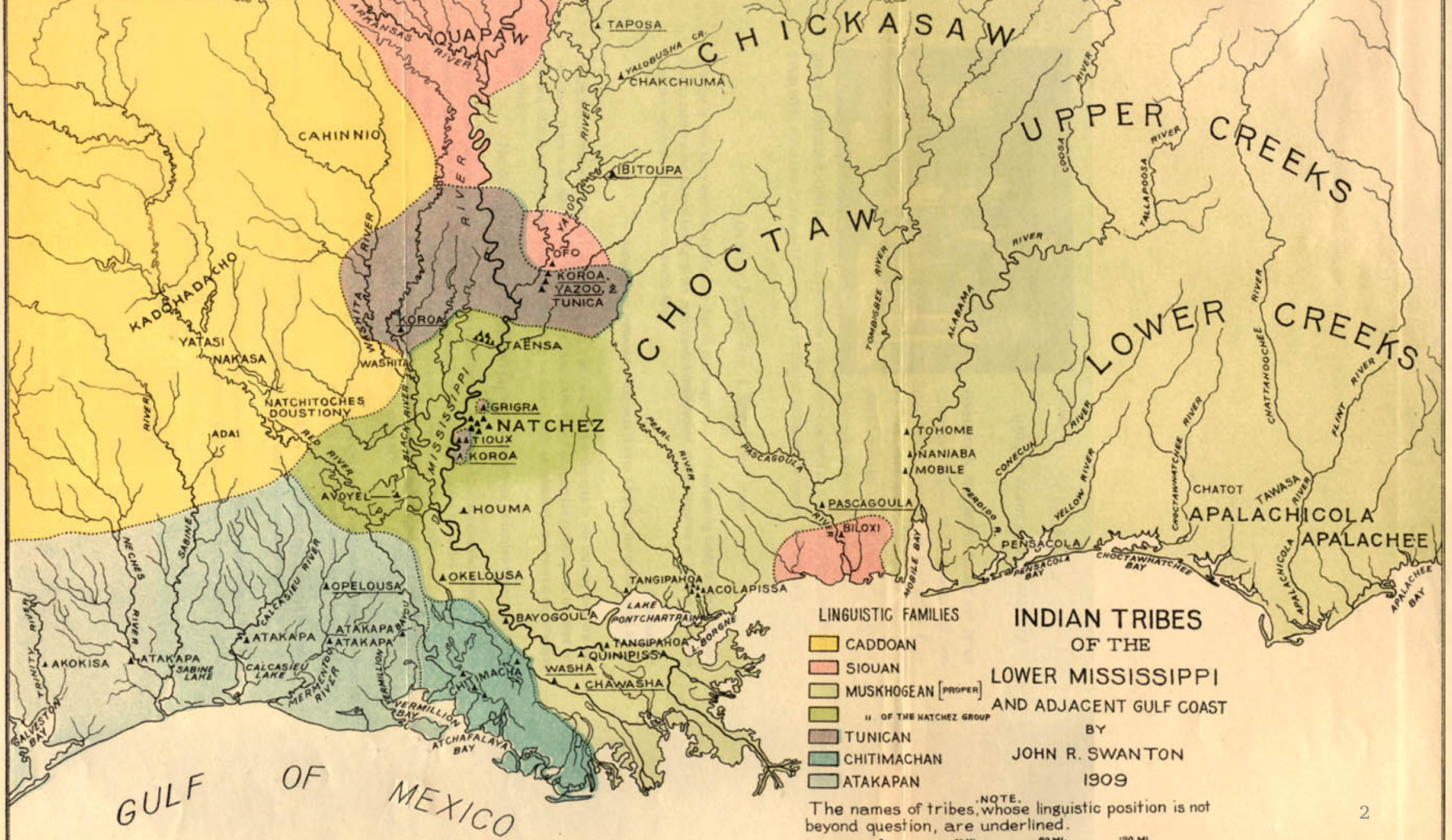
Ergativity in Chitimacha

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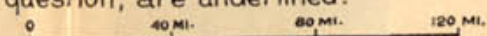


LINGUISTIC FAMILIES

- CADDOAN
- SIOUAN
- MUSKOGEAN [PROPER]
- " OF THE NACHEZ GROUP
- TUNICAN
- CHITIMACHAN
- ATAKAPAN

INDIAN TRIBES OF THE LOWER MISSISSIPPI AND ADJACENT GULF COAST BY JOHN R. SWANTON 1909

NOTE.
The names of tribes, whose linguistic position is not beyond question, are underlined.



Documentary Materials

1802: Jefferson List (Duralde [1802](#))

1881–1882: lexicon, a few texts (Gatschet [1881](#))

1907–1921: dozen texts, sketch grammar (Swanton [1920](#))

1930–1934: 120 texts, 3,500-word lexicon, 200-page grammar (Swadesh [1939a](#))

Revitalization

- discourse optional = seemingly random
- no adequate descriptions in grammatical sketches

Revitalization

“*-k, -tk* (after /n/) indicates mild contrast or emphasis (‘on the other hand’). The meaning is often so attenuated that one can hardly be certain of the basis for use.” (Swadesh 1939b: 134)

Revitalization

“The -š under discussion has little or no positive meaning. Its only function appears to be to mark the end of the phrase.”
(Swadesh 1939b: 133)

Nominal Marking in Chitimacha

“Nouns are uninflected except for certain ones, including kinship terms and several others, which distinguish singular and plural.”
(Swadesh 1939b: 101)

- Swadesh and Swanton both describe various “postpositions” that sound suspiciously like case markers

Swadesh (1939b: 120) on *hiš*

1. indicating subject of an active verb
2. by means of [instrument]
3. made out of, consisting of [material]
4. occasionally used in place of *kin* 'with' [postposition]

Swadesh (1939b: 120) on *hiš*

“In connection with the first meaning, it is to be noted that the subject of active verbs need not be marked by any formal sign: *hiš* is a device for indicating the subject unambiguously.”
(Swadesh 1939b: 120)

Hypotheses

- ergative ?
- instrumental > ergative grammaticalization pathway ?
 - (Heine & Kuteva 2004: 180)
- discourse optional ?

Aside: $-(n)k$

- many functions (polygrammaticalization)
- locative postposition
- locative nominalizer
- nominative
- etc.

Data & Methods

- 29,000 words (tokens)
- FLEx database > DLx database (digitallinguistics.io)
- 424 occurrences of *hiš*
- Tagged different functions of *hiš*
- Tagged properties of clauses that *hiš* occurs in

Functions of *hiš*

- instrumental (n = 64)
- ergative (n = 357)

= *hiš* INSTR

(6) ko:š = **hiš** k'et-ki-:k'
stick = **INSTR** kill-1SG.P-SS
'they would have struck me **with** a switch'

(7) ku: heč'in = **hiš** hi popšmi-na?a
water holy = **INSTR** AND splash-NF.PL
'they splashed it **with** holy water'

= *hiš* INSTR

(8) ʔuč ke ʔiš = up ša:hken čipniš k'an = **hiš**
someone 1SG = to basket finished NEG = **INSTR**
ʔap neh-ki-naʔa
VEN strike-1SG.P-NF.PL

‘someone struck me **with** an unfinished basket’

(9) we ka:cpa = nk'iš = **hiš** ʔam k'ust-k
DET stick = only = **INSTR** thing eat-SS
‘**with** only that stick, I shall (be able to) eat something’

= *hiš* INSTR

(10) si:c = **hiš** wa:k'ipi ʔuči-:k = š
moss = **INSTR** pillow do-SS = TOP
'he made a pillow **with** moss'

(11) hus kanin = **hiš** wey hi ʔam-i
3SG eye = **INSTR** DEM DIST see-NF.SG
'he had seen that **with** his (own) eyes'

hiš ERG

- 357 tokens
- Only occur with 2- or 3-argument verbs
- No intransitives – not an agent marker

hiš ERG: Subject of Transitive

(12) ʔo:š = **hiš** we kipi kap k'ušmi-naʔa
buzzard = **ERG** DET meat up eat-NF.PL
'the buzzards ate the meat'

(13) we haksik'am = **hiš** hus kani = š ʔapš huktmi-ʔi
DET young.man = **ERG** 3SG eye = TOP together close-NF.sg
'the young man closed her eyes'

hiš ERG: Subject of Ditransitive

(14) we pu:p = **hiš** na:kšp'u hečma-?-i
DET rabbit = **ERG** children care.for-BEN-NF.SG
'the rabbit took care of the children for them'

(15) we pu:p = **hiš** hus po: č'iwin
DET rabbit = **ERG** 3SG hay
neki šiš k'amin nuku = nki kap pehčt-i?i
elephant back = LOC up put-NF.SG
'the rabbit put his hay on the elephant's back'

hiš with proper names

- (18) we Karankawe = **hiš** kap ʔo:knemi-:k'
DET Karankawa = **ERG** STAT steal-SS
'the Karankawa [people] would steal them [the children]'
- (19) Francis = **hiš** natma-:-ki [...]
Francis = **ERG** tell-BEN-1SG.P [COMP]
'Francis told me [...]'

hiš with independent pronouns

(20) ?iš = **hiš** wayt-iki
1SG = **ERG** surpass-1SG.A
'I had beaten him'

(21) him = **hiš** ?apš kim-pa-ki [...]
2SG = **ERG** REFL believe-CAUS-1SG.P [COMP]
'you remind me [...]'

Does not occur with third person independent pronouns

hiš with different NP types

Supernatural

(22) kutnehin = **hiš** ?apš nahw-i
God = **ERG** back send-NF.SG
'God sent him back'

Human

(23) panš ?ašinč'at'i ?apš ču:mam = **hiš**
person old.man about traveler = **ERG**
we ka:cpa = š ?ap ?a:-ki-?i
DET stick = TOP VEN give-1SG.P-NF.SG
'an old man gave me a stick'

hiš with different NP types

Animal

(24) ʔukš = **hiš** ha kičant'a = š k'aht-iʔi
snake = **ERG** DEM old.woman = TOP bite-NF.SG
'a snake has bitten this old woman'

Indefinite

(25) neškun = **hiš** wa:č-čuy-i-nk'
someone = **ERG** marry-IRR-NF.SG-DEB
'someone must marry her'

hiš with different NP types

Inanimates

(26) ?iš mahči = š ku: = k = **hiš** kap ni:-ki
1SG tail = TOP water = ?? = **ERG** STAT soak-1SG.P
'the water soaked my tail'

hiš with modifiers

Negation / Indefinites

- (28) ʔuč = hiš k'an ka:kw-iʔi ʔašt [...]
who = ERG NEG know-NF.SG how [COMP]
'nobody knows how [...]'

Numerals

- (29) haksik'ank = hiš ʔupa we k'imniš-k
young.men = ERG two DET young.girl-LOC.NZR
ʔap tut-k ʔam-ʔiš-na
VEN go-SS see-IPFV.NF.PL
'the two young men came to see the girl'

hiš with verbs of speaking

- In a sample of 200 instances of *hiš* (including instrumental uses), 111 (55%) occur with verbs of speaking ('say', 'tell', 'answer', 'ask', etc.).
- Characters are taking turns speaking, frequently switching the active topic.

hiš with verbs of speaking

(27)

wetkš	ni ti:km = iš	= hiš	ni	wopm-i?i,	[...].
then	Governor = TOP	= ERG	DEF	ask	[COMP]

‘The Governor asked, [...]’

hiš with verbs of speaking

wetkš heki ?atkank = **hiš** te:t-i?i, [...]
 then minister = **ERG** say-NF.SG [COMP]
 ‘The minister said, [...]

tutk we ni ti:km = iš = **hiš**, k’ayi, te:t-i?i, [...]
 then DET Governor = TOP = **ERG** no say-NF.SG [COMP]
 ‘The Governor said, “No, [...]”’

hiš in discourse

- Not many contexts for it to occur in
- Continuing topics are omitted from the clause
- When NPs are overt, *hiš* tends to appear
- Especially when both arguments are animate
- Of the 89 cases of *hiš* with non-speech verbs, 77 (86.5%) involve a change in the activated topic

Areal Connections

- Evidence of contact-induced change in verbal alignment (Hieber [2018](#))
- Natchez also has an ergative (Mithun 1999: 468)
- Discourse-optionalness suggests multilingualism as a mechanism

Conclusions

- **Analysis:** *hiš* is a discourse-optional ergative enclitic, conditioned by switch in activated topic
- **Areal:** Discourse optionality suggests influence from other Southeastern languages
- **Future Research:** $-(n)k$ nominative marker

Huya!

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