# Coding grammatical relations in Afroasiatic: a typological approach

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*As a working definition, the term 'grammatical relations' refers only to the categories 'subject', object', and 'indirect object'. We know now that not all languages have the three types of grammatical relations. Afroasiatic languages code these relations through position with respect to the verb, through prepositions, through case marking on the noun, and through inflectional coding on the verb.*

*The aim of the present study is to discover whether there are any correlations between the way grammatical relations are marked and other characteristics of the grammatical system.*
*Preliminary results indicate that for the category subject and object the crucial factor determining the coding of grammatical relations is the position of the verb.*
*For verb-initial only languages, the subject is coded by the position after the verb. The object is coded by prepositions or by position after the subject (Egyptian, some Chadic languages).*

*For verb final only languages, there are two options. Either the subject or the object is coded by inflectional means. There is a fundamental distinction between the two types of coding. The former ('marked nominative') is obligatory if the language has it ( a number of Cushitic languages). The latter, the accusative, is not obligatory unless one of the two conditions is met: (a) the object is definite or (b) the object is in the position other than the one immediately preceding the verb (some Ethiosemitic languages, some Omotic languages).*
*For languages that are verb initial in one aspect but subject initial in another, grammatical relations are coded either by case system (many Semitic languages) or by inflectional coding on the verb (some Central Chadic languages).*
*As a result of this study, case marking in Afroasiatic discussed in Sasse 1984 receives a synchronic rather than a historic explanation.*