Ergativity

V \ NP_1 \quad \textbf{Intransitive} \text{ sentence (only 1 noun phrase)}

\textit{The dog walked.} \quad \textit{The door opened.} \quad \textit{Bill is asleep.} \quad \textit{Mary is a doctor.}

V \ NP_1 \ NP_2 \quad \textbf{Transitive} \text{ sentence (2 noun phrases)}

\textit{The man walked the dog.} \quad \textit{Bill opened the door.} \quad \textit{She read three books.}

V \ NP_1 \ NP_2 \ NP_3 \quad \textbf{Bitransitive} \text{ sentence (3 noun phrases)}

\textit{I sent Mary the book.} \quad \textit{Mary gave Bill a cold.} \quad \textit{We elected Tom chairman.}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Accusative System</th>
<th>Ergative System</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The dog-NOM walked.</td>
<td>The dog-ABS walked.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The man-NOM walked the dog-ACC.</td>
<td>The man-ERG walked the dog-ABS.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The door-NOM opened.</td>
<td>The door-ABS opened.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The man-NOM opened the dog-ACC.</td>
<td>The man-ERG opened the door-ABS.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textbf{Ergativity even in English}

a) &They objected to the shooting of the hunters. (\& = ambiguous)

\begin{align*}
\text{= (1) } & \text{the fact that somebody shot the hunters.} \quad \text{(Transitive shoot)} \\
\text{= (2) } & \text{the fact that the hunters shot.} \quad \text{(Intransitive shoot)}
\end{align*}

In choosing the prepositional object to appear with \textit{of} in an -\textit{ing} nominalization phrase (e.g, \textit{the V-\textit{ing} of NP}), V chooses its Absolutive – i.e, a Transitive V chooses its Direct Object, while an Intransitive V chooses its Subject.

b) The -\textit{ee} suffix.

\begin{align*}
\text{Bill has retired } & \rightarrow \text{ Bill is a retiree.} \quad \textbf{Intransitives} \\
\text{Bill has escaped.} & \rightarrow \text{ Bill is an escapee.} \\
\text{Bill is standing.} & \rightarrow \text{ Bill is a standee.} \\
\text{They employ Mary} & \rightarrow \text{ Mary is an employee.} \quad \textbf{Transitives} \\
\text{They inducted Mary.} & \rightarrow \text{ Mary is an inductee.} \\
\text{They appointed Mary.} & \rightarrow \text{ Mary is an appointee.}
\end{align*}

Adding the suffix -\textit{ee} to a verb produces a label for a person who is the Absolutive of the verb – i.e, a person who is the Direct Object of a Transitive verb, or the Subject of an Intransitive verb.

\textit{http://www.umich.edu/~jlawler/ergativity.pdf}

\textit{John Lawler}