Wh Movement and Ergativity

Examples from Christopher D. Manning (1996) *Ergativity: Argument Structure and Grammatical Relations*. Stanford, Calif.: CSLI Publications.

This page has examples of the restriction of "*Wh* Movement" (or Long-Distance Dependency) constructions to S/P (i.e. the pivot) in some syntactically ergative languages

(1)   West Greenlandic Inuit (Eskimo-Aleut, Greenland)
   a.   nanuq   [Piita- p   tuqu- ta-   a]
          polar.bear Peter- ERG   kill- TR.PART- 3SG
          'a polar bear that Peter killed'
   b.   miiraq   [kamat- tu-   q]
          child.ABS angry- REL.INTR- SG
          'the child who is angry'
   c.   *angut   [aallaat   tigu- sima- sa-   a]
          man.ABS gun.ABS take- PRF-   REL.TR- 3SG
          'the man who took the gun'

(2)   Mam (Mayan, Guatemala and México)
   a.   Alkyee x-   hi   b'eet?
          who   RECENT- 3plABS walk
          'Who walked?'
   b.   Alkyee- qa x-   hi   tzaj t-   tzyu- 7n   Cheep?
          who-   PL RECENT- 3pABS DIR 3sERG- grab- DIRS José
          'Who did José grab?'
   c.   *Alkyee saj   t-   tzyu 7n   kab' xiinaq?
          who   RECENT.3sABS.DIR 3sERG- grab- DIRS two   man
          'Who grabbed the men?'
   d.   Alkyee saj   tzyuu- **n**   ky- e   kab' xiinaq?
          who   RECENT.3sABS.DIR grab- **APASS** 3PL- OBL two man
          'Who grabbed the men?'

(3)   Chukchee (Chukotko-Kamchatkan, Russia)
   a.   E   tipʔeyŋe- kə- lʔ-   in   ŋewəčqet   ragtə-   gʔə.
          NEG- sing-   NEG- PART- ABS.SG woman.ABS.SG go.home- 3SG
          'The woman who was not singing went home.'
   b.   Iigər a-   yoʔ- kə- lʔ-   etə enm- etə mən- əlqən- mək.
          now NEG- reach- NEG- PART- to   hill- to   1PL- go-   1PL
          'Now let us go to the hill which (someone) didn't reach.'
   c.   **En-**   agtat- kə- lʔ-   a   qaa-   k   ʔaaček- a
          APASS- chase- NEG- PART- ERG reindeer- LOC youth-   ERG
          winret- ərkən- inet   ŋewəčqet- ti.
          help-   PRES- 3sERG.3pABS woman-   ABS.PL
          'The youth who does not chase the reindeer is helping the women.'