Introduction

Looking at the WALS, a comparison of verbal alignment and case alignments identifies the following combinations (Comrie 2013a,b; Siewierska 2013):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbal alignment</th>
<th>NP case alignment</th>
<th>Pronoun case alignment</th>
<th>No. of languages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accusative</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Nom-Acc</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nom-Acc</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Nom-Acc</td>
<td>Nom-Acc</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erg-Abs</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erg-Abs</td>
<td>Nom-Acc</td>
<td>Erg-Abs</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erg-Abs</td>
<td>Erg-Abs</td>
<td>Erg-Abs</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ergative</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Erg-Abs</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erg-Abs</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Erg-Abs</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Erg-Abs</td>
<td>Erg-Abs</td>
<td>Erg-Abs</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>52</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this small sample, we see that:

- Accusative verbal alignment is accompanied by Nom-Acc case (37 languages) or Erg-Abs case (10 languages), or some combination thereof (1 language).
- Ergative verbal alignment is only accompanied by Erg-Abs case (4 languages).
- In languages with ergative case, it is more common for verbal alignment to be accusative rather than ergative (11 languages vs. 4 languages).

Thus, we have three attested case-agreement systems and one non-attested system:

(a) Accusative agreement, Nom-Acc case
(b) Accusative agreement, Erg-Abs case
(c) Ergative agreement, Erg-Abs cases
(d) *Ergative agreement, Nom-Acc case

In this talk, I will explore the underpinnings of this system.

ROADMAP:

- Cross-linguistic systems of case and agreement
- Case hierarchies and their role in case-agreement systems
- Case assignment: The inherent flavor of PP
- Fitting inherent case into systems of case and agreement: Ergative as both a structural and inherent case
2 Systems of case and agreement

(1) **Accusative:**

*Intransitive*  
\[ S \]

*Transitive*  
\[ A \quad O \]

**Ergative:**

\[ S \]

\[ A \quad O \]

Systems of case:

- **Nom-Acc case:** Transitive (A) and intransitive (S) subjects marked NOMINATIVE, objects (O) marked ACCUSATIVE.

(2) a. \( A_{\text{NOM}} \quad V \quad O_{\text{ACC}} \)  
   (transitive sentence)

   b. \( S_{\text{NOM}} \quad V \)  
   (intransitive sentence)

- **Erg-Abs case:** Intransitive subjects (S) and objects (O) marked ABSOLUTIVE, transitive subjects (A) marked ERGATIVE.

(3) a. \( A_{\text{ERG}} \quad V \quad O_{\text{ABS}} \)  
   (transitive sentence)

   b. \( S_{\text{ABS}} \quad V \)  
   (intransitive sentence)

Systems of agreement:

- **Accusative:** Agreement is with transitive (A) and intransitive (S) subjects.

(4) a. \( A \leftrightarrow V \quad O \)

   b. \( S \leftrightarrow V \)

- **Ergative:** Agreement is with objects (O) and intransitive subjects (S).

(5) a. \( A \quad V \rightarrow O \)

   b. \( S \leftrightarrow V \)

2.1 Language Type A: Accusative agreement, Nom-Acc case (Polish)

Language Profile:

(6) \[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{TP} \\
| \text{Subj} \quad T_{\varphi} \quad [v_{P/V} \quad \ldots \quad V \quad \ldots \quad \text{Obj}] \quad \text{ACC}
\end{array}
\]

(7) \[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{TP} \\
| \text{Subj} \quad T_{\varphi} \quad [v_{P/V} \quad \ldots \quad V \quad \ldots \quad ]
\end{array}
\]

Language Example: Polish

(8) **On** widział mnie.  
   
   He.NOM saw.3.SG.M me.ACC  
   ‘He saw me.’
(9) **On biegł.**  
He.NOM ran.3.M.SG  
‘He ran.’

(10) **On przybył.**  
He.NOM arrived.3.M.SG  
‘He arrived.’

- There are no dissociations between agreement target, case marking of the agreement target (NOM, ACC), and grammatical function of the agreement target (subject, object).
- Agreement targets subjects/NOMINATIVES (these being the same).
- *Mirror image A*: Languages where agreement only targets objects/ACCUSATIVES (unattested).

### 2.2 Language Type B: Accusative agreement, Erg-Abs case (Nepali)

**Language Profile:**

(11) \[ [\text{TP Subj} \; T_\emptyset \; [vP/VP \; \ldots \; V \; \ldots \; \text{Obj} \; \text{ABS} ] ] \]

(12) \[ [\text{TP Subj} \; T_\emptyset \; [vP/VP \; \ldots \; V \; \ldots ] ] \]

**Language Example:** Nepali

(13) **mai-le mero lugā dho-en.**  
I-ERG my clothes-ABS wash-PST.1.SG  
‘I washed my clothes.’ (Sharma and Deo 2002: 9)

(14) **ma bas-en.**  
I-ABS sit-PST.1.SG  
‘I sat.’ (Sharma and Deo 2002: 9)

- There is a dissociation between agreement target / grammatical function and case marking of the agreement target.
- Agreement targets subjects, regardless of the case (ERG, ABS).
- *Mirror Image B*: Languages where agreement only targets objects (unattested).

### 2.3 Language Type C: Ergative agreement, Erg-Abs case (Hindi)

**Language Profile:**

(15) \[ [\text{TP Subj} \; T_\emptyset \; [vP/VP \; \ldots \; V \; \ldots \; \text{Obj} \; \text{ABS} ] ] \]

(16) \[ [\text{TP Subj} \; T_\emptyset \; [vP/VP \; \ldots \; V \; \ldots ] ] \]
Language Example: Hindi

(17) Raam-ne roTii khaayii thii.  
Raam-ERG breadF.ABS eat.PERF.F be.PAST.F  
‘Raam had eaten bread.’ (Mahajan 1990: 73)

(18) Raam baazaar gayaa.  
RaamABS market go.PAST.M.SG  
‘Raam went to the market.’ (Mahajan 1990: 73)

- There is a dissociation between grammatical function and agreement target / case marking of the agreement target.
- Agreement targets a particular case (ABS), regardless of the grammatical function.
- *Mirror Image C*: Languages which target only ERG arguments (Coast Tsimshian?).
  - Three agreement sets, A, B, and C: A only occurs with transitives

(19) Coast Tsimshian:  
Tense-SetA(AGR)  Verb-SetB/C(AGR)

(20) a. ɬa wila-diduuls-u  
ASP be-alive-1SGB  
‘I am still alive.’

b. ɬa-dm baay-u.  
ASP-FUT run-1SGB  
‘I am going to run.’

c. Ada wil-m way-u.  
Transitive: Set A and B, pre- and post-verbal
  and then-2SGA find-1SGB  
‘And then you found me’ (Examples as cited in Gluckman 2012: 11)

2.4 *Language Type D*: Ergative agreement, Nom-Acc case (unattested)

Language Profile:

(21) [TP Subj NOM Tφ [vP/VP … V … Obj ] ]

(22) [TP Subj NOM Tφ [vP/VP … V … ] ]

- The agreement target is dissociated from both the grammatical function of the agreement target and the case marking on the agreement target.
- Agreement targets complete opposites (ACCUSATIVE objects in transitives, and NOMINATIVE subjects in intransitives).
- *Mirror Image D*: Languages where agreement only targets transitive NOMINATIVE subjects (unattested).
2.5 Summarizing (with a table):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Transitive</th>
<th>Intransitive</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AGR Target</td>
<td>Case of Target</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target some Matching GF/Case element</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type A</td>
<td>Subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type A’</td>
<td>Object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target a GF, regardless of case</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type B</td>
<td>Subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type B’</td>
<td>Object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target a Case, regardless of GF</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type C</td>
<td>Object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type C’</td>
<td>Subject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Target some Mismatching GF/Case element</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type D</td>
<td>Object</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type D’</td>
<td>Subject</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Types A, B, and C are attested, and D not.
- Types A’ and B’ (the mirror images of Types A and B) seem to be unattested. These might be ruled out by the universal that object agreement is not possible without subject agreement (cf. Bobaljik 2008, Bejar 2003, and other works).
- Coast Tsimshian might be an example of Type C’. According to Gluckman (2012), in this language, there are a set of agreement markers on T which only cross-reference transitive subjects (generally ergative).
- Type D’ might be ruled out independently, under the logic that allowing for agreement with a transitive nominative subject, but not an intransitive nominative subject would provide conflicting information about agreement targets to a child, making the language type unlearnable.

3 Hierarchies


(23) Unmarked case (NOM, ABS) > Dependent case (ERG, ACC) > Lexical/Inherent case

He argues that case feeds agreement, where agreement targets the structurally highest nominal with an accessible case, where accessibility is language specific. Thus, language types A, B, and C would fall on the hierarchy as follows:

(24) Unmarked case (NOM, ABS) > Dependent case (ERG, ACC) > Lexical/Inherent case

Type A, C (Polish, Hindi)

Type B (Nepali) (Bobaljik 2008)

Evidence for this can be found in configurations in which there are multiple accessible cases within a single domain.
Hindi: Some verbs optionally mark ergative. When the ergative is present, agreement targets the absolutive object; when the ergative is absent, it targets the highest absolutive argument.

(25) a. Us-ne yah baat sāmjhii. \hspace{1cm} One Absolutive
   He-ERG(M) this matter.F understand.PERF.F
   ‘He understood this matter.’

b. Vo yah baat sāmjhaa. \hspace{1cm} Two Absolutes
   He.M this matter.F understand.PERF.M
   ‘He understood this matter.’ (Mahajan 2012: 207)

If no absolutive argument is present, default agreement surfaces.

(26) BaccoN-ne siita-ko dekhaa thaa. \hspace{1cm} No Absolutive
   childrenM-ERG Sita-DAT see.PERF.M.SG be.PAST.M.SG
   ‘The children had seen Sita.’ (Mahajan 1990: 73)

- Bobaljik’s system correctly predicts an ergative agreement pattern when ergative case is present, and default agreement when no absolutives are present.

Nepali: Both ergatives and absolutes are accessible targets. Thus, in a transitive clauses, agreement is with the highest of two accessible targets.

(27) a. mai-le mero lugā dho-en. \hspace{1cm} Two targets
   I-ERG my clothes-ABS wash-PST.1.SG
   ‘I washed my clothes.’ (Sharma and Deo 2002: 9)

b. ma bas-en. \hspace{1cm} One target
   I-ABS sit-PST.1.SG
   ‘I sat.’ (Sharma and Deo 2002: 9)

- Bobaljik’s system correctly predicts an accusative agreement pattern, even when ergative case is present.

Polish: Polish allows multiple nominatives in copular clauses. The prediction of the hierarchy is that the highest nominative will be targeted. In the copular constructions, however, the second nominative is the target, an apparent counterexample:

(28) Kraków to (byla / *był) stolica Polski.
   Krakow.M.SG.NOM to was.3SG.F / *was.3SG.M capital.F.SG.NOM Poland.F.GEN
   ‘Krakow was the capital of Poland.’

(29)  

\[ 
\begin{array}{c}
TP \\
T' \rightarrow \\
T \rightarrow \\
\pi P \rightarrow \\
\text{to} \rightarrow \\
\text{DP} \rightarrow \\
\pi' \rightarrow \\
\text{Kraków} \rightarrow \\
\pi \rightarrow \\
\text{była} \rightarrow \\
\text{stolica Polska} \rightarrow \\
\end{array} \]

Evidence for this structure comes from negative polarity items. Negation, which is presumed to be a verbal prefix (Witkoś 2008), does not c-command the first nominative in this structure, hence the ungrammaticality.

(30)  

\[ *\text{Nikt to nie jest student.} \]

Nobody.NOM TO not is student.NOM

\[ *\text{Nobody is not a student.' (Bondaruk 2012) } \]

Thus, the element which shows agreement directly c-commands the second nominative, bringing this construction in line with the predictions of the accessibility hierarchy.

**Type D Languages (Ergative agreement, Nom-Acc case):** The nature of the accessibility hierarchy makes this language type unformulable:

- By the accessibility hierarchy, if an ACCUSATIVE is an accessible agreement target, then so is a NOMINATIVE.
- In a Type D language, agreement bypasses a higher NOMINATIVE to agree with a lower ACCUSATIVE. This violates the generalization that agreement targets the highest accessible argument.

(31)  

\[ [TP \text{ Subj NOM T}_0 \text{ [vP/VP} \ldots \text{ V} \ldots \text{ Obj ACC } ] ] \]

- Hence, it is unformulable in the system, and predicted not to exist.

Concluding,

- Bobaljik’s system appears to capture the main facts of the case-agreement systems considered here (although Type C’, if Coast Tsimshian is a true example, is unexpected).
- The formulation of the hierarchy suggests that each language has encoded in its system information such as “ergative is accessible,” “ergative is not accessible,” etc., which resembles a global constraint over derivations in a language.
• **Question:** Is such information actually encoded as a global constraint, as the use of a hierarchy would suggest, or does the hierarchy derive from other factors?

• For the remainder of this talk, we will adopt the view that there is no global constraint (i.e. the hierarchy does not exist), and instead, search for independent factors which could derive these differing systems on the level of a single derivation.

4  **Case Assignment: Inherent case as a PP-case**

4.1  **Structural and Inherent Case**

**Question:** How are inherent and structural case assigned?

**Answers:**

• **Standard Minimalism** (Chomsky 1981, 2000, 2001; Řezáč 2008):
  Structural case is assigned as a reflex of agree. NOMINATIVE case is assigned through agreement with T and ACCUSATIVE through agreement with v. Inherent case is related to theta role assignment (Chomsky 1981), assigned through a P-head (Řezáč 2008).

  **Dealing with ergativity:** Ergative can be treated as an inherent case (Woolford 1997, Legate 2008, Stepanov 2004). Alternatively, agreement heads can assign multiple cases (see Stepanov 2004 for discussion), or target nominals of different cases (Woolford 2006).

• **Dependent case** (Marantz 1991; McFadden 2004; Bobaljik 2008; Preminger 2011; Baker in progress):
  Cases are assigned in a particular order, given in the hierarchy below. Dependent and unmarked case are computed on the basis of structural configuration.

(32) Lexical/Inherent case > Dependent case (ERG, ACC) > Unmarked case (ABS, NOM)

(33) Dependent Case Assignment (roughly):
  a. **Accusative:** If two nominals are present in the same domain, mark dependent case (ACC) on the lower one and unmarked case (NOM) on the higher one. If there is only a single nominal, mark it with the unmarked case (NOM).
  b. **Ergative:** If two nominals are present in the same domain, mark dependent case (ERG) on the higher one and unmarked case (ABS) on the lower one. If there is only a single nominal, mark it with the unmarked case (ABS).

  **Note:** Lexical/Inherent cased nominals are invisible to this operation.
MIT Ling Lunch  
December 4, 2014

(34) a. Transitive (ACC)  b. Transitive (ERG)  c. Intransitive (ACC/ERG)

\[
\text{TP} \quad \text{XP}_{\text{NOM}} \quad \text{ZP}_{\text{ACC}} \\
\text{TP} \quad \text{XP}_{\text{ERG}} \quad \text{ZP}_{\text{ABS}} \\
\text{TP} \quad \text{XP}_{\text{NOM/ABS}}
\]

Questions:

a. Why is lexical/inherent case assigned first?
b. Why is lexical/inherent case invisible to the case computation?
c. Why is lexical/inherent case not assigned through a case computation?

\Rightarrow \text{As an answer to these questions, suppose lexical/inherent case involves a P-head which creates a barrier to external processes (McFadden 2004). Plausibly, this P-head makes the embedded nominal invisible to case computations, regardless of when it is assigned.}

- **Case spreading/stacking** (Richards 2007; Matushansky 2008, 2010; Pesetsky 2013): Case assignment spreads downwards from the head which initiates the assignment until some barrier is reached. If a language does not allow multiple Spell-Out of case, some mechanism will determine which case appears overtly.

**Dealing with ergativity:** Predicts there to be some head which triggers assignment of ergative case; perhaps related to the transitivity markers in some languages.

(35) **Bardi (Nyuhnyulan language of Australia**

a. Aalin-nim i-rr-oo-moogar-n maalbarnd-0 garndi.
   Sea.eagle-ERG 3-AUG-TR-make-CONT nest-ABS on.top rock.LOC
   ‘Eagles make their nests on top of rocks.’ (Bowern 2012: 468)

b. I-m-boonkoonkooma-na jiirlanboo.
   3-PST-swell.up-REM.PST porcupine.fish
   ‘The porcupine fish swelled up.’ (Bowern 2012: 463)

(36) **Garifuna (Arawakan language of Central America**

a. Èiha n-umu-tibu.
   See  P1.SG-aux.tr.nfut-T2.SG
   ‘I see you.’ (Barchas-Lichtenstein 2012: 166)

b. Óumuga-tina.
   Sleep-T1SG
   ‘I sleep.’ (Barchas-Lichtenstein 2012: 172)

With regards to the question of structural case, we have three answers:

- **Minimalism:** It is assigned through an agreement relation with some functional head.
- **Dependent case:** It is calculated on the basis of the structural configuration.
- **Case stacking:** Percolation of it is triggered by some head.

With regards to the question of inherent case, the approaches appear to converge:

- **Minimalism:** It is assigned through a P-head (Řezáč 2008).
• **Dependent case:** It is embedded within a P-head (McFadden 2004).
• **Case stacking:** Percolation of it is triggered by some head (a P-head in Pesetsky 2013)

**Assumption:** Inherent/lexical cased nominals are embedded within PP-like elements which are trigger inherent/lexical case.

### 4.2 The opacity of inherent case (PP-case)

Taking inherent case to be realized by some PP-like element (e.g. Řezáč 2008, McFadden 2004, 2014), it is generally opaque to external processes.

**Dependent case assignment in Icelandic:**
• When two non-inherent cased nominals are involved, both NOM and ACC are assigned:

(37) Við kusum stelpuna.
    We.1.PL.NOM elected.1.PL girl.ACC
    ‘We elected the girl.’ (Sigurðsson 1992: 2)

• When an inherent cased nominal is involved, NOM surfaces on the object, as if the dative subject is invisible to the case computation:

(38) Konunginum voru gefnar ambáttir.
    King.3.MG.DAT were.3.PL given.F.PL slaves.F.PL.NOM
    ‘The king was given maidservants.’ (McFadden 2004: 25)

**Polish Genitive of Negation:**
• Negation obligatorily marks ACC objects as GEN:

(39) a. Łukasz widział dziewczynę.
    Łukasz.NOM saw.3.MG girl.ACC
    ‘Lukas saw a girl.’

b. Łukasz nie widział dziewczyny.
    Łukasz.NOM not saw.3.MG girl.GEN
    ‘Lukas did not see a girl.’

• Inherent cased objects are invisible to the genitive of negation and remain unaffected:

(40) a. Łukasz ufa dziewczynie.
    Łukasz trusts.3.SG girl.DAT
    ‘Lukas trusts the girl.’

b. Łukasz nie ufa dziewczynie.
    Łukasz not trust.3.SG girl.DAT
    ‘Lukas does not trust the girl.’

• PP objects are also invisible to the genitive of negation:

(41) a. Łukasz czekał na autobus.
    Łukasz waited.3.MG for bus.ACC
    ‘Lukas waited for the bus.’
b. Łukasz nie czekał na autobus / *autobusu.
Łukasz not waited.M.SG for bus.ACC / *bus.GEN
‘Lukas did not wait for the bus.’

Agreement:
• Polish inherent cased nominals cannot be agreed with, leading to default agreement (Dziwirek 1990; Preminger 2011).

(42) Nudziło mi się. Polish
Bored.3SG.N me.DAT sIE
‘I was bored (lit. ‘It was boring to me.’)

• Icelandic dative subjects cannot be agreed with either (leading instead to object agreement):

(43) Konunginum voru gefnar ambáttir. Icelandic
King.M.SG.DAT were.3.PL given.F.PL slaves.F.PL.NOM
‘The king was given maidservants.’ (McFadden 2004: 25)

(44) [ SubjectDAT V3.PL participleF.PL ObjectF.PL.NOM ]

AGREE

• Although, this construction shows PCC effects, suggesting that at some level, the agreement probe is sensitive to the person features of the dative subject. See Řezáč (2008) for a discussion of when PPs can become transparent, and see Alexiadou, Anagnostopoulou, and Sevdali 2013 for an analysis of the PCC effects under a PP approach to Icelandic datives.

(45) a. *Honum likum við.
Him.DAT like.1.PL we.NOM
Intended: ‘He likes us.’

b. *Honum likið þið.
Him.DAT like.2.PL you.NOM.PL
Intended: ‘He likes you(pl).’ (Sigurðsson and Holmberg 2008: 254)

Conclusion: PP-cases are generally opaque to processes such as external case assignment and agreement.

5 Fitting Inherent Case into Systems of Case and Agreement

5.1 Putting the pieces together

Proposal:
• Inherent case is a PP-case.
• Languages can differ in their inventory of PP-cases.
  o For example, a language might have both a structural and an inherent ACC, or only a structural ACC.
- PP-cases are generally invisible to external processes, such as agreement.
- **Hypothesis:** The variation found in systems of case and agreement is a result of the inventory of PP-cases within a language, where PP-cased nomininals are invisible to agreement, and non-PP-cased nomininals are not.
- Agreement probes for the first accessible target.
- Hindi versus Nepali? Ergative is a PP-case in Hindi, but a structural case in Nepali.

**Hindi (Type C):**

(46) a. **Raam** baazaar gayaa.
   Raam\textsubscript{ABS} market \textit{go.PAST.M.SG}
   ‘Raam went to the market.’

b. Raam-ne **roTii** khaayii thii.
   Raam-ERG bread\textsubscript{F.ABS} eat.PERF.F be.PAST.F
   ‘Raam had eaten bread.’

c. BaccoN-ne siitaako dekhaa thaaa.
   children\textsubscript{M-ERG} Sita\textsubscript{F-DAT} see.PERF.M.SG be.PAST.M.SG
   ‘The children had seen Sita.’ (Mahajan 1990: 73)

(47) (a) Transitive (= 46b)  (b) Intransitive (= 46a)

(c) Semi-transitive: Ergative subject and dative object (= 46c)

**Nepali (Type B):**

(48) a. **mai-le** mero lugā dho-en.
   I-ERG my clothes-ABS wash-PST.1.SG
   ‘I washed my clothes.’ (Sharma and Deo 2002: 9)

b. **ma** bas-en.
   I-ABS sit-PST.1.SG
   ‘I sat.’ (Sharma and Deo 2002: 9)
(49) (a) Transitive (= 48b)  (b) Intransitive (= 48a)

Unattested (Type D):

(50) (a) Transitive  (b) Intransitive

- Type D languages are unformulable in this system.
  - Agreement targets the highest accessible argument.
  - Nominatives are never embedded in PPs.
  - Hence, nominatives are always an agreement target.
  - In this configuration, agreement skips over an accessible target. This is impossible, hence Type D languages cannot be derived.

5.2 The PP nature of (some) ergatives

Gojri (Indo-Aryan) is another language which shows a Hindi agreement pattern, i.e. a PP-like ergative. Agreement occurs with the object when the subject is ergative:

(51) Us ǰan-ā ne wā betk-ī hèr-0-ī.
    3SG.DIST.OBL man-OBL.M.SG ERG 3SG.DIST.NOM.F girl-F.SG see-PERF-F.SG
    ‘That man saw the girl.’ (Losey 2002: 117)

The ergative marker *ne* requires the nominal to be an oblique form. Oblique forms are also required by many postpositions in the language, for example, the ablative (source/origin):

(52) Is ǰel te hū~ kis-šāne nas-ū~.
    3SG.PROX.OBL jail from 1SG.NOM INDEF.OBL-way run.away-1SG
    ‘How shall I escape from this jail?’ (Losey 2002: 118)

Assuming the ergative marker to be a P which selects for oblique case, the morphological and agreement facts can be captured.
Hindi:

- Nominals also have an oblique form, which is required with all cases except the absolutive. This is a P-like behavior. (Butt and King 2005)
- In coordinations, oblique morphology must be present on each nominal, while the case morpheme can scope over the coordination.

(53) a. *[kott or gh[or]-e]=ko
dog and horse-M.SG.OBL=ACC
b. *[kott-a or gh[or]-e]=ko
dog-M.SG and horse.M.SG-OBL=ACC (Butt and King 2005: 17)

(54) Yasin-ne [kutt-e or gh[or]-e]=ko dek[a]-he.
Yassin.M.SG-ERG dog-M.SG.OBL and horse.M.SG.OBL=ACC see.PF.M.SG be.PRS3SG
‘Yassin saw the dog and the horse.’ (Butt and King 2005: 17)

- Focus clitics can intervene between the case marking and the nominal, but not between the oblique marking and the nominal.

(55) a. os=hi=ne kam ki-ya
3.SG=FOC=ERG work.M.SG.NOM do-PERF.M.SG
‘That one himself/only did (the) work.’
b. *kott-hi-e
dog-FOC-OBL (Butt and King 2005: 17)

- (Note: According to Butt and King, these markers also differ from the more semantic postpositions, and they suggest a three-way distinction between oblique marking, case markers, and postpositions.)

Nepali: Does the ergative differ on these facts in Nepali? I lack the data to answer this now…

5.2 Counterexamples:

The system predicts Type D languages not to exist, and this is a generally accepted conclusion.

However, Deal (to appear) cites two counterexamples in the literature to this:

Kutchi Gujarati, family Indo-Aryan (Patel 2007), past perfectives:

(56) a. Reena aav-i
Reena.NOM came-F.SG
‘Reena came.’
b. Reena chokra-ne mar-ya.
Reena.NOM boys-ACC hit-PFV.M/N.PL
‘Reena hit the boys.’ (Deal to appear: 16)
Canela, family Jê (Gildea and Castro Alves 2010), pronouns:

(57) a. wa ha i-wrik narε.
   1 IRR 1-descend NEG
   ‘I will not descend.’

b. wa ha iʔ-pɨr na.
   1 IRR 3-grab.NF NEG
   ‘I will not grab it (e.g., the knife). (Deal to appear: 16)

We can either try to explain these away or incorporate the possibility into our system, under strict circumstances.

- **Explaining it away:** Bobaljik (p.c.) notes that Kutchi Gujarati has some remnants of the ergative, which might be enough motivation for a learner to posit an abstract ergative in (56). He also makes the suggestion that the ACC is not actually a case marker, but a DOM marker, as its presence is sensitive to properties of the nominal.

- **Incorporating it:**
  - We have assumed there to be only one agreement probe so far, on T.
  - Some languages can have multiple probes, agreeing with subjects and objects.
  - Suppose a second agreement probe can sit on v (cf. Bejar 2003 on Georgian and Nishnaabemwin (Algonquian)).

  **Blackfoot** (Algonquian): Nominative-accusative agreement on T. But, verb stems show an ergative agreement pattern in marking animacy:

  (58) a. áakspákksskaawa. *Animate Intr.*
      aak-ipakksskaa-wa
      FUT-burst.AI-3SG
      ‘He will burst.’

  b. áakspákkksiwa. *Inanimate Intr.*
      aak-ipakksii-wa
      FUT-burst.II-3SG
      ‘It will burst.’

  c. áakspakkapiniyiiwa. *Animate Tr.*
      Aak-ipakkapini-yii-wa
      FUT-rupture.eyeball.TA-DIR-3SG
      ‘She will rupture his eyeball.’
      (Frantz and Russell 1995, glosses: Gruber 2013: 60)

  d. áakspakksstsiwa. *Inanimate Tr.*
      aak-ipakksstsi-m-wa
      FUT-burst.TI-3:INAN-3SG
      ‘She will burst it.’

  o Assuming Cyclic Agree (Řezáč 2003)), ergative agreement would be derived as follows (Bejar 2003):

  (59) (a) Transitive          (b) Unergative intransitive          (c) Unaccusative intransitive

  ![Diagram](image)

  - Béjar (2003) proposes that v can only carry an agreement probe if T also carries one.
If so, we predict that counterexamples only arise in systems which show evidence of having both a T and v probe; the pattern in (57) is restricted to pronouns – there may be some extra factor that leads to a deletion of the T probe.

6 Conclusion

- We have seen examples of at least three case-agreement system, as well as a discussion of the nature of structural and inherent case assignment.
- I have proposed that inherent case is the realization of some form of a P-head, and that languages can differ in their inventories of P-headed cases.
- P-cases are generally opaque to external processes, such as agreement.
- Putting this together, we can derive the systems of case and agreement by assuming that some cases are PP-cases and others not, leading to differences in patterns of agreement cross-linguistically.

7 References


