Case filter

laundry list of case positions: spec of tensed TP, somewhere in sister of transitive v, sister of P… but not, e.g., sister of A, N

Vergnaud's conjecture; these conditions on NP distribution are about 'case'
we already knew that 'case' and case morphology couldn't be identical; English pronouns have morphology, but other Ns don't, and the distribution is (almost) the same.

today: two other cases where morphology and syntactic notion of Case diverge. pedagogical mistake: there are problems here that haven't been solved. Just want to show you a way in which the world is more complicated. Worst-case: "Case" is a bad name for the force that drives the distribution of NPs. Best case: we can work out some way for "Case" and morphological case to be related. either way, we can't have a theory where X needs to move to Spec TP so that X can have its morphological form determined; not only because of English non-pronouns and Russian kangaroos, but because you can get a double dissociation between position and Case: NPs in position X without case X, and case X showing up on NPs which aren't in position X.

icelandic

ergativity:

syntactic effects? not big ones, so these aren't passives.
Icelandic, with a side of Ergativity

1 Thanks to Omer Preminger and Höskuldur Thráinsson for providing and organizing most of these facts (apart from the ones I made up).

(1) **Stelpurnar** fóru í skólann
    girls.the.NOM went to school.the.ACC
    'The girls went to school'

(2) **Stelpunum** leiddist í skólanum
    girls.the.DAT got.bored in school.the.DAT
    'The girls got bored in school'

...so subjects are usually Nominative, but can sometimes be Dative?

*a reasonable worry*: maybe the Dative subject isn't really a subject?

(3) Álfurinn hefur étið ostinn
    elf.the.NOM has eaten cheese.the.ACC
    'The elf has eaten the cheese'

(4) Ostinn hefur étið álfurinn
    cheese.the.ACC has eaten elf.the.NOM
    'The elf has eaten the cheese'

Subject-aux inversion

(5) Fóru **stelpurnar** í skólann?
    went girls.the.NOM to school.the.ACC
    'Did the girls go to school?'

(6) Leiddist **stelpunum** í skólanum?
    got.bored girls.the.DAT in school.the.DAT
    'Did the girls get bored at school?'

(7) Hefur **álfurinn** étið ostinn?
    has elf.the.NOM eaten cheese.the.ACC
    'Has the elf eaten the cheese?'

(8) *Hefur ostinn étið álfurinn?*
    has cheese.the.ACC eaten elf.the.NOM
    'Has the elf eaten the cheese?'
Expletives and definiteness

(9) það förustelpur/*stelpurnar í skólann
   THERE went girls.NOM/*girls.the.NOM to school.the.ACC
   'Girls went to school'

(10) það leiddist stelpum/*stelpunum í skólanum
   THERE were.bored girls.DAT/*girls.the.DAT in school.the.DAT
   'Girls were bored in school'

(11) það hefur álfur/*álfurinn étið ostinn
   THERE has elf.NOM/*elf.the.NOM eaten cheese.the.ACC
   'An elf has eaten the cheese'

VP coordination

(12) Stelpunum [ leiddist í skólanum] og [fóru heim]
    girls.the.DAT were.bored in school.the.DAT and went home
    'The girls were bored in school and went home'

(13) Stelpurnar [fóru í skólann] en [leiddist þar]
    girls.the.NOM went to school.the.ACC but were.bored there
    'The girls went to school but were bored there'

Sig

(14) Álfurinn sagði stelpunum [að þú elskir sig]
    elf.the.NOM told girls.the.DAT that you love SIG
    'The elf told the girls that you love him/*them'

(15) Hana grunar [að þú elskir sig]
    she.ACC suspects that you love SIG
    'She suspects that you love her'

ECM (Exceptional Case Marking)

(16) I believe [her to like horses]

(17) Ég tel [álfinn hafa stolið ostinum]
    I believe elf.the.ACC to.have stolen cheese.the.DAT
    'I believe the elf to have stolen the cheese'

(18) *Ég tel [ostinum hafa álfurinn/álfinn stolið]
    I believe cheese.the.DAT to.have elf.the.NOM/elf.the.ACC stolen
    'I believe [the cheese, the elf to have stolen]'
"Quirky case": some verbs get to decide, apparently just for the heck of it, that (for example) their subjects are going to be Dative, rather than Nominative. But these Datives really are subjects.

Consider some English facts; tell me why the boldfaced pronoun has the Case it does.

(20) a. We saw him
b. He was seen
c. We believe [him to have been seen]
d. He is believed [to have been seen]

And in Icelandic:

(21) a. Þeir hafa étið fiskinn
    they.NOM have eaten fish.the.ACC
    'They have eaten the fish'

b. Fiskurinn hefur verið étinn
    fish.the.NOM have been eaten
    'The fish have been eaten'

c. Við teljum [fiskinn hafa verið étinn]
    we.NOM believe fish.the.ACC to.have been eaten
    'We believe the fish to have been eaten'

d. Fiskurinn er talið [hafa verið étinn]
    fish.the.NOM is believed to.have been eaten
    'The fish is believed to have been eaten'

and yet:

(22) a. Þeir hafa hent fiskinum
    they.NOM have discarded fish.the.DAT
    'They have discarded the fish'

b. Fiskinum hefur verið hent
    fish.the.DAT have been discarded
    'The fish have been discarded'

c. Við teljum [fiskinum hafa verið hent]
    we.NOM believe fish.the.DAT to.have been discarded
    'We believe the fish to have been discarded'
d. **Fiskinum** er talið [hafa verið hent]
   fish.the.DAT is believed to.have been discarded
   'The fish is believed to have been discarded'

→ quirky case is apparently 'sticky'; once you're Dative, you're Dative, no matter what happens to you. And yet "case-driven movement" applies to you as usual.

okay, now objects:

(23) **Henni** líkuðu hestarnir
    she.DAT liked horses.the.NOM
    'She liked the horses'

very generally, if the subject's not Nominative in Icelandic, and there's an object, the object is Nominative.

__________________________________________________________

*a popular conclusion:*

"**Case** and morphological case are not the same thing."

We can continue to call the syntactic force that conditions the distribution of NPs "case", just for old time's sake, but we should remember that it's not the same thing as actual case morphology.

a popular account of morphological case (in Icelandic and elsewhere) (Marantz 1991):
   • first, assign quirky cases
   • then, if there's more than one NP in (a certain domain), assign Accusative to the lower one. [dependent case]
   • then assign Nominative to whatever's left.

try this out on Icelandic.
(other ideas?)
Why "assign Accusative to the lower one"? What if it were the higher one?

answer: we would call that case "Ergative":

(24) **kurdu** ka wanka-mi
    child AUX speak-NONPAST
    'The child is speaking'

(25) **ngarrka-ngku** ka wawirri panti-mi
    man-ERG AUX kangaroo spear-NONPAST
    'The man is spearing the kangaroo'

…so on Marantz' theory, there's a parameter; dependent case is assigned either to the higher or the lower NP.