

More on Case
24.902, 2017

Vergnaud and much subsequent work:

- there are generalizations about possible positions for NPs:
 - * overt NP subject of an infinitive (mostly)
 - NP objects in English must be adjacent to the verb
 - some NP must generally move to Spec TP (in English, some other lgs)
 - N, A can't have ordinary NP complements
- Vergnaud's idea: these are generalizations about where nominals can get *Case*:
 - no Case in specifier of a nonfinite TP, English vP, complement of a verb that doesn't have an external subject position, complement of a noun...
 - Case in specifier of finite TP (Nominative), complement of a transitive verb (Accusative)...

Some Case systems

Icelandic

- (1) a. Jón kyssti Maríu.
Jon.NOM kissed Mary.ACC
'Jon kissed Mary'
- b. María var kysst.
Mary.NOM was kissed

"quirky case"

- (2) a. Eldingu sló niður í húsið
lightning.DAT struck down in house-the
'Lightning struck the house'
- b. Þeir luku kirkjunni.
they.NOM finished church-the.DAT
'They finished the church'
- c. Kirkjunni var lokið.
church-the.DAT was finished

"abstract Case" vs. "morphological Case"

Russian

((nominative-)accusative system)

- (3) a. Eta devočka včera kupila gazetu
this.NOM girl.NOM yesterday bought newspaper.ACC
'This girl bought a newspaper yesterday'
- b. Eta devočka krasivaja.
this.NOM girl.NOM beautiful
'This girl is beautiful.'

Inuktitut (ergative system, part 1)

- (4) a. Arna -p angut takuva-a [transitive]
woman ERG man-ABS see-3SG.3SG
'The woman saw the man'
- b. Arnat mirsurpu-t [intransitive]
women-ABS sew-3PL
'The women are sewing'

Basque (ergative system, part 2 ("active"))

- (5) a. Miren-ek ni jo n -au [transitive]
Miren ERG me-ABS hit 1SG-have.3SG
'Miren hit me'
- b. Miren-ek hitz egin du [unergative]
Miren ERG word done have.3SG
'Miren spoke'
- c. Miren erori da [unaccusative]
Miren-ABS fallen be.3SG
'Miren fell'

Nez Perce (three-way system)

- (6) a. Wewúkiye-ne pée- 'wi -ye háama-nm
elk ACC 3SUBJ.3OBJ shoot PERF man ERG
'The man shot an elk'
- b. Hi- páayn-a háama
3SUBJ arrive PERF man.NOM

Hindi (split-ergative, split conditioned by aspect)

- (7) a. Raam rotii khaataa thaa
Raam-NOM bread-ACC eat-IMPREF. was
'Raam ate bread (habitually)'
- b. Raam-ne rotii khaayii thii
Raam ERG bread-ABS eat-PRF. was

Warrgamay (split-ergative, split conditioned by person/number)

- (8) a. Ngaja gaga-ma
I-NOM go FUT
'I will go'
b. Ngaja nginba nyuunja-lma
I-NOM you-ACC kiss FUT
'I will kiss you'
c. Gajiya gaga-ma
girl-ABS go FUT
'The girl will go'
d. Gajiya-nggu muyma nyuunja-lma
girl ERG boy-ABS kiss FUT
'The girl will kiss the boy'

- 1st, 2nd person are nominative/accusative; 3rd person is ergative
(person splits always go this way, never the other way around)

Warlpiri (ergative DPs, nominative-accusative agreement)

- (9) a. Nyuntulu -rlu ka -npa -ju ngaju nya-nyi
you ERG PRS 2SGNOM 1SGACC me-ABS see-NONPAST
'You see me'
b. Nyuntu ka -npa parnka-mi
you-ABS PRS 2SGNOM run NONPAST
'You run'

Back to Icelandic

- (10) **Stelpurnar** fóru í skólann
girls.the.NOM went to school.the.ACC
'The girls went to school'
(11) **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?

- (12) **Álfurinn** hefur étið ostinn
elf.the.NOM has eaten cheese.the.ACC
'The elf has eaten the cheese'
(13) Ostinn hefur étið **álfurinn**
cheese.the.ACC has eaten elf.the.NOM
'The elf has eaten the cheese'

Subject-aux inversion

- (14) Fóru **stelpurnar** í skólann?
went girls.the.NOM to school.the.ACC
'Did the girls go to school?'
- (15) Leiddist **stelpunum** í skólanum?
got.bored girls.the.DAT in school.the.DAT
'Did the girls get bored at school?'
- (16) Hefur **álfurinn** étið ostinn?
has elf.the.NOM eaten cheese.the.ACC
'Has the elf eaten the cheese?'
- (17) *Hefur ostinn étið **álfurinn**?
has cheese.the.ACC eaten elf.the.NOM
'Has the elf eaten the cheese?'

Expletives and definiteness

- (18) Það fóru stelpur/*stelpurnar í skólann
THERE went girls.NOM/*girls.the.NOM to school.the.ACC
'Girls went to school'
- (19) Það leiddist stelpum/*stelpunum í skólanum
THERE were.bored girls.DAT/*girls.the.DAT in school.the.DAT
'Girls were bored in school'
- (20) 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

- (21) **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'
- (22) **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

- (23) **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'
- (24) **Hana** grunar [að þú elskir **sig**]
she.ACC suspects that you love **SIG**
'She suspects that you love her'

ECM (Exceptional Case Marking)

- (25) I believe [her to like horses]
- (26) 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'
- (27) *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]'
- (28) Ég tel [honum vera vorkunn]
I believe **him.DAT** to.be a.pity
'I believe that he can be forgiven'

"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.

- (29) 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:

- (30) 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:

- (31) 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:

- (32) **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) that doesn't yet have case, 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":

(33) kurdu ka wanka-mi [Warlpiri]
child AUX speak-NONPAST
'The child is speaking'

(34) ngarrka-**ngku** ka wawirri panti-rni
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.