Case competition in Yimas∗

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1 Introduction
This paper investigates the case and agreement system of Yimas (Lower Sepik; Papua New Guinea), and shows that the case patterns in Yimas parallel those predicted by the Marantzian (1991) system of case assignment. The Yimas facts thus motivate and, in turn, support an analysis in which case is assigned according to a realization hierarchy and on the basis of competition between case-requiring elements. However, case in Yimas is assigned to doubled clitics, not the DPs cross-referenced by these clitics; moreover, clitic doubling is optional, and the absence of certain clitics may affect the case patterns surface on the clitics that are present. The case system of (Marantz 1991), originally meant to capture the distribution of morphological case (m-case) on syntactic DPs, is thus mirrored on the Yimas clitic morphology. I propose that this difference in case domains arises from the need to satisfy language-specific morphosyntactic well-formedness requirements.

2 The Yimas agreement system
All of the Yimas data in this paper come from Foley’s (1991) grammar of Yimas. I will cite Foley’s data using the abbreviation ‘F[p.#]’ throughout the paper. Yimas generally encodes grammatical relations on preverbal agreement morphology, which may be organized in the paradigms given in (1):1

(1) The Yimas agreement paradigms:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ergative</th>
<th>Dative</th>
<th>Absolutive</th>
<th>Pronoun</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1sg</td>
<td>ka-</td>
<td>ηa-</td>
<td>ama-</td>
<td>ama</td>
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<tr>
<td>1dl</td>
<td>ηkra-</td>
<td>ηkra-</td>
<td>kap-</td>
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<tr>
<td>1pl</td>
<td>kay-</td>
<td>kra-</td>
<td>ipa-</td>
<td>ipa</td>
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<tr>
<td>2sg</td>
<td>n-</td>
<td>nan-</td>
<td>ma-</td>
<td>mi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2dl</td>
<td>ηkran-</td>
<td>nkul-</td>
<td>kapwa-</td>
<td>kapwa</td>
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<td>2pl</td>
<td>nan-</td>
<td>kul-</td>
<td>ipwa-</td>
<td>ipwa</td>
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<tr>
<td>3sg</td>
<td>n-</td>
<td>-(n)akn</td>
<td>na-</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3dl</td>
<td>mpi-</td>
<td>-mpn</td>
<td>impa-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3pl</td>
<td>mpu-</td>
<td>-mpun</td>
<td>pu-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

∗Many thanks to Adam Albright, Karlos Arregi, Michael Erlewine, John Gluckman, Sabine Iatridou, Heidi Klockmann, Ethan Poole, Coppe van Urk, Martin Walkow, participants at CLS51, and especially David Pesetsky for helpful discussion and comments. I am also particularly indebted to William Foley for his correspondence and for writing the grammar in the first place. All errors are my own.

1Only the 3rd person DAT morphemes are suffixal. I will not discuss this difference—or 3rd person DAT in general—in this paper.
There is some disagreement in the literature concerning the organization of the paradigms. While some analyses take the paradigms to reference case in addition to agreement (Phillips 1993; Phillips 1995; Wunderlich 2001), others do not (Foley 1991; Woolford 2003; Gluckman 2014). As I will demonstrate, however, the distributions of the paradigms map to the case realization hierarchy proposed by Marantz (1991), suggesting that case is in fact relevant. The exact nature of the distributions is, however, lost under case-free alternatives.

Thus, the Yimas agreement morphology is divided into three cases: ergative (ERG), dative (DAT), and absolutive (ABS). The ABS paradigm is (nearly) morphologically identical to the independent pronouns of the language and, though not shown in (1), is the only paradigm to also make morphological distinctions for noun class (which cross-reference non-humans).2

In the straightforward cases, Yimas behaves like a typical ergative-absolutive language: ERG case encodes transitive subjects, ABS case encodes objects and intransitive subjects, and DAT case encodes indirect objects. This is shown in (2).

\begin{enumerate}
\item[(2)]
\begin{enumerate}
\item[(a)] \texttt{pu-wa-t} \\
\texttt{3PL.ABS-go-PERF} \hfill \text{(F195)}
\item[(b)] \texttt{pu-n-tay} \\
\texttt{3PL.ABS-3SG.ERG-see} \hfill \text{(F195)}
\item[(c)] \texttt{k-mpu-ŋa-tkam-t} \\
\texttt{1SG.ABS-3PL.ERG-1SG.DAT-show-PERF} \hfill \text{(F208)}
\end{enumerate}
\end{enumerate}

I take these agreement morphemes to be \textit{doubled clitics}, rather than exponents of true agreement. This is based on much recent work reanalyzing agreement as clitic doubling (Preminger 2009; Preminger 2011; Kramer 2014), based on various diagnostics differentiating between the two. In Yimas, this assumption is based on the properties in (3). The idea that the Yimas agreement morphology instantiates doubled clitics runs counter to most previous analyses of Yimas (Phillips 1993; Phillips 1995; Woolford 2003; Gluckman 2014), but is central to the present analysis.

\begin{enumerate}
\item[(3)] \textit{Diagnostics of clitic doubling in Yimas:}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[(a)] The ABS paradigm is morphologically identical to the independent pronouns of the language.
\item[(b)] The agreement morphology is non-obligatory, and its presence is regulated by discourse factors.
\end{enumerate}
\end{enumerate}

First, the identity between doubled clitics and pronouns is attested in various languages. Based on this diagnostic, both Coon (2010) and Preminger (2011) argue...
that the ABS agreement morphemes in Mayan languages Chol and Kichean are doubled clitics. The morphological similarity is illustrated with Kichean (from Preminger (2011)):

(4) *Kichean:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1sg</th>
<th>1pl</th>
<th>2sg</th>
<th>2pl</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absolutive</td>
<td>-i(n)-</td>
<td>-oj-</td>
<td>-a(t)-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronoun</td>
<td>yîn</td>
<td>röj</td>
<td>rat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Similarly, in Yimas, the ABS paradigm is morphologically nearly identical to the independent pronouns.3

(5)  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1sg</th>
<th>1dl</th>
<th>1pl</th>
<th>2sg</th>
<th>2dl</th>
<th>2pl</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Absolutive</td>
<td>ama-</td>
<td>kapa-</td>
<td>ipa-</td>
<td>ma-</td>
<td>kapwa-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronoun</td>
<td>ama</td>
<td>kapa</td>
<td>ipa</td>
<td>mi</td>
<td>kapwa</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A second and more crucial argument for clitic doubling in Yimas comes from its optionality. This optionality is attested in other languages with clitic doubling, such as Greek and Bulgarian (Franks & Rudin 2005; Anagnostopoulou 2006), though clitic doubling in these languages is obligatory under particular circumstances (and we will see later that this is true for Yimas as well). As shown below, Yimas allows verbs with no clitic doubling (6a), partial clitic doubling (6b), and full clitic doubling (6c); though these constructions all have two DPs each, they differ in the number of DPs actually doubled.

(6) a. numn-mat Kampramanan wapal-cap-mpi
    villager-PL place name climb-CMPL-IRR
    ‘The villagers all climbed Kampramanan.’ (F471)

b. m-n impa-tay-mpi-kwalca-k paympan
    DEM-SG 3DL.ABS-see-SEQ-rise-IRR eagle
    ‘He, the eagle, saw them both and took off.’ (F453)

c. kacmpt payum ya-mpu-yamal-wat
    canoe.VIII.PL man.PL VIII.PL.ABS-3PL.ERG-carve-HAB
    ‘The men usually carve the canoes.’ (F228)

In Yimas, whether clitic doubling takes place is controlled by subtle pragmatic factors, a property also seen in certain dialects of Inuktitut (Eskimo-Aleut) (Johns & Kučerová to appear). As Foley (1991) shows, in Yimas the clitics typically cross-reference discourse-established referents and are thus often omitted with new referents. As a result, Yimas allows minimal pairs like the following:

(7) a. [impram pay-cu-mpwi] pia-n-kacapal
    [basket.VIL.SG carry-NFN-COMP] COMP.ABS-3SG.ERG-forget
    ‘He forgot to carry the basket’ (F389)

---

3The only non-identical form is 2SG: ma- vs. mi.
b. [impram pay-cu-mpwi] na-kacapal
   [basket.VII.SG carry-NFN-COMP] 3SG.ABS-forget
   ‘He forgot to carry the basket’ (F389)

In (7a), there are two clitics on the verb, cross-referencing both the 3SG external argument and the embedded clause; this is the full clitic doubling pattern. In (7b), however, only the matrix subject is encoded on the verb; this is the partial clitic doubling pattern. Note also that different morphology is used to cross-reference the 3rd person singular external argument in the two sentences—n- (ERG) in (7a) and na- (ABS) in (7b); this will be addressed in §3. The two constructions are used in slightly different contexts, which map roughly to the aforementioned established vs. new referent distinction. In (7a) “the intention expressed by the complement has been stated explicitly,” (Foley, 1991:390) whereas this is not necessarily the case for (7b).

The partial doubling constructions play an important role in this paper, because they yield a mismatch between the number of clitics on the verb and the total number of DPs in the syntax. Crucially, the case patterns that surface over the clitics differ in full vs. partial doubling constructions, revealing that case is sensitive to the number of clitics present, and, in turn, that case is directly calculated over the span of clitics after clitic doubling takes place. Moreover, when and where the individual cases (ERG, ABS, and DAT) surface in full vs. partial doubling constructions determine where exactly these cases fit on the Marantzian (1991) case realization hierarchy, to be elaborated upon below.

3 Case competition
3.1 Overview
As noted in the introduction, the model of case developed by Marantz (1991) (and elaborated upon in subsequent work by McFadden (2004) and others) is directly observable in Yimas. The main claim of Marantz (1991) is that the spellout of case on nominals is a morphological (postsyntactic) phenomenon, rather than assigned by functional heads in the syntax. Exactly how case is realized on a given nominal is determined configurationally and on the basis of competition. The case calculation follows the hierarchy given below:

\[(8) \quad \text{The case realization disjunctive hierarchy} \]
\[
a. \quad \text{lexically governed case (quirky case)} \\
b. \quad \text{dependent case (ergative, accusative case)} \\
c. \quad \text{unmarked/default case (realized on any NP otherwise assigned case)}
\]

Nominals are in competition to be spelled out with one of the cases in (8), in the or-
der given. Cases with more particular (e.g. lexical or configurational) requirements are prioritized (spelled out earlier) than those with less particular requirements. Finally, once a nominal receives case, it leaves the competition and is thus excluded from the rest of the competition.

*Lexical case* is assigned idiosyncratically, and is generally assumed to be assigned under sisterhood or First Merge by a lexical head, starting with McFadden (2004). Its assignment overrides other case specifications that one might expect instead. This is shown below with Icelandic quirky case—the object of ‘help’ in (9a) is DAT. Moreover, as (9b) shows, lexical case is preserved on the nominal when passivized.

(9) *Icelandic*
   a. Ég hjálpaði honum
      I.NOM helped him.DAT
      ‘I helped him.’
   b. Honum var hjálpað
      him.DAT was helped
      ‘They/he were/was helped.’ (Zaenen et al. 1985)

Next in the hierarchy is *dependent case*, which is assigned based on the structural (c-command) relationship between two case-requiring DPs. Languages are parameterized as having an ergative or accusative alignment, depending on whether dependent case is assigned upward or downward; specifically, ERG case is assigned to the higher of two nominals (the c-commander), while ACC case is assigned to the lower of two nominals (the c-commandee). The realization of dependent case therefore requires a *case competitor*—an element in the same case assignment domain that has also not yet received case. In the absence of such a competitor, dependent case is unavailable. One way to remove a case competitor, and thus bleed dependent case assignment, is by assigning case to the competitor. Again, we may look to Icelandic for an illustration:

(10) *Icelandic:*
    eg tel [henni hafa alltaf þótt Olafur leiþinlegur]
    I believe [her-DAT to-have always thought Olafur-NOM boring-NOM]
    ‘I believe her to have always thought Olafur boring.’ (Marantz 1991)

In (10), the embedded subject has been assigned lexical DAT case, meaning that it can no longer act as a case competitor for the embedded object. As a result, the object cannot be assigned dependent ACC case, and surfaces with NOM case instead.

On the flipside, adding a case competitor to the structure feeds dependent case assignment, as Poole (to appear) demonstrates for Finnish. According to Poole, all DPs in Finnish except the highest one may receive GEN case, and adjunct nominals may act as case competitors for non-adjunct nominals. GEN is therefore dependent, assigned to a DP so long as it is c-commanded by another caseless DP. In (11a), the two adjunct DPs compete for GEN, with only the lower adjunct able to receive it; the higher adjunct surfaces as NOM. In (11b), however, both adjuncts are realized with GEN case, due to the addition of a higher case competitor, the subject ‘Tarja.’
(11) Finnish
a. Kekkose-en luote-ttiin [yksi vuosi] [kolmannen]
   Kekkonen-ILL trust-PASS.PST one.NOM year.NOM [third.GEN
terran]
time.GEN]
   ‘Kekkonen was trusted for a year for a third time.’

b. Tarja luotti Kekkose-n [yhden vuoden]
   Tarja.NOM trusted.3SG Kekkonen-ILL [one.GEN year.GEN]
   [kolmannen terran]
   [third.GEN time.GEN]
   ‘Tarja trusted Kekkonen for a year for a third time.’ (Poole to appear)

Finally, nominals that have not yet received case at this point are realized with un-
marked or default case, i.e. nominative/absolutive. For instance, the embedded
object in the Icelandic data in (10) surfaces as NOM because dependent ACC case
cannot be assigned to it; similarly, the highest DP in the Finnish data in (11) can-
not receive GEN case due to the downwards directionality of dependent GEN case
assignment, so it too surfaces as NOM.

In what follows, I show that the distributions of the clitic paradigms in Yimas
mirror the case hierarchy described here, as in (12):

(12)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Realization hierarchy</th>
<th>M-case in Yimas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lexical</td>
<td>DAT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent</td>
<td>ERG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unmarked/default</td>
<td>ABS</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The DAT paradigm is invariably assigned to clitics cross-referencing 1st/2nd person
(participant) internal arguments, and is preserved in various morphological environ-
ments, e.g., in partial clitic doubling constructions. In contrast, the ERG paradigm
behaves like dependent case, in that it surfaces only when there is an ABS clitic
present, and is unavailable otherwise. Finally, the ABS paradigm has an ‘elsewhere’
distribution, surfacing only where DAT and ERG are unavailable.

3.2 Ergative

Our point of departure is the behaviour of ERG case, because it best illustrates the
competition-driven nature of case assignment in Yimas. I argue that ERG case in
Yimas is dependent, assigned to subject clitics only in the presence of a case com-
petitor (another caseless clitic).

(13)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Realization hierarchy</th>
<th>M-case in Yimas</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lexical</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent</td>
<td>ERG ←</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unmarked/default</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

In other words, ERG case on a given clitic is sensitive to—and, in turn, controlled
by—the other clitics present. As I showed earlier, transitive and intransitive subjects in Yimas are generally cross-referred with ERG and ABS morphology, respectively. This is repeated below:

(14)  

\begin{align*}  
\text{a. } & \text{pu-wa-t} \\
& 3\text{PL.ABS-go-PERF} \\
& \text{‘They went.’} \quad (F195) \\
\text{b. } & \text{pu-n-tay} \\
& 3\text{PL.ABS-3SG.ERG-see} \\
& \text{‘He saw them.’} \quad (F195) 
\end{align*}

However, there are multiple contexts in which this pattern fails to surface. First, participant internal arguments in Yimas are always cross-referenced with DAT clitic morphology. In such constructions, the agent clitic cannot bear ERG, but must surface instead as ABS; however, ERG case on the agent clitic is possible when the clitic cross-references a 3rd person internal argument. This is shown in (15).

(15)  

\begin{align*}  
\text{a. } & \text{na-mpu-tay} \\
& 3\text{SG.ABS-3PL.ERG-see} \\
& \text{‘They saw him.’} \quad (F195) \\
\text{b. } & \text{pu-\[na\]-tay} \\
& 3\text{PL.ABS-1SG.DAT-see} \\
& \text{‘They saw me.’} \quad (F196) 
\end{align*}

I propose that this follows from the overall proposal, if we assume that DAT case on the participant object clitic bleeds ERG case on the subject clitic (the status of DAT as lexical case will be evidenced shortly). The unavailability of ERG in this context results in the clitic being realized as ABS instead.

Note that, though the data above resembles a person-based ergative split or transitivity alternation, it is neither. In contrast to the clitics, Yimas DPs are organized under a ‘two term case system’ (Arkadiev 2008), in that the DPs are either morphologically bare or marked with oblique -\(n(an)\). This distinction has certain morphosyntactic correlates: bare DPs have ‘core’ grammatical functions, and may undergo clitic doubling, while -\(n(an)\)-marked DPs are oblique and cannot be targeted by clitic doubling processes. As shown below, syntactic deextranitivization in Yimas triggers oblique case on the internal argument, which blocks clitic doubling:

(16)  

\begin{align*}  
\text{a. } & \text{irpm mu-n-wapal} \\
& \text{coconut palm.IV.SG IV.SG.ABS-3SG.ERG-climb} \\
& \text{‘He climbed the coconut palm.’} \quad (F234) \\
\text{b. } & \text{irpm-\[un\] na-wapal} \\
& \text{coconut palm-OBL 3SG.ABS-climb} \\
& \text{‘He climbed up on the coconut palm.’} \quad (F234) 
\end{align*}

In contrast to (16), that there is an object clitic on the verb in (15b) means that the ABS-DAT pattern does not reflect a change in argument structure, but only a change in clitic case morphology. The appearance of DAT on the object clitic blocks ERG on the subject clitic by removing its realizational environment.

A further argument for this idea comes from the optionality of clitic doubling in Yimas. Importantly, the case on a particular clitic fluctuates with the total number of clitics on the verb—i.e., whether the verb exhibits a full or partial clitic doubling pattern. The relevant data is repeated below:
In (17a), a full doubling construction with two clitics in total, the subject clitic is ERG. However, in (17b) the clitic cross-referencing the embedded complement is missing; accordingly, the subject clitic is not ERG, but ABS. This effect mirrors that in (15), and reinforces the idea that ERG is a dependent case, available only in the presence of another caseless clitic.

Finally, as illustrated earlier with Finnish, introducing a case competitor may feed dependent case assignment where otherwise unavailable. This is seen in applicative constructions in Yimas, in which an oblique internal argument is promoted to core status, allowing it to be clitic doubled. As a result, unaccusative subjects may be cross-referenced with ERG clitic morphology.

To sum up, this section has shown that subjects of transitive clauses are not inherently associated with ERG morphology, and ERG case is not always, or exclusively, assigned to subjects of transitive clauses; this runs counter to treatments of ERG case as inherently assigned to subjects of transitive clauses (Woolford 1997; Woolford 2006; Aldridge 2008; Legate 2008). The Yimas data does, however, support a view under which ERG case assignment is dependent on its environment.

### 3.3 Dative

In contrast to ERG, the DAT paradigm in Yimas behaves like lexically-assigned case.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Realization hierarchy</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lexical</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent</td>
<td>ERG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unmarked/default</td>
<td>DAT</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clitics cross-referencing 1st/2nd person (participant) internal arguments bear DAT.

(20)  a. **tma-mpu-[na]-na-kiantut**

   \[V.DL.ABS-3PL.ERG-[1SG.DAT]-give-FR.PST\]

   ‘They gave me two pairs of them (trousers).’

(243)
Crucially, these clitics always surface as DAT. This is again made evident by examining the case patterns in full vs. partial clitic doubling constructions. Earlier, I showed that dependent ERG case may fail to surface in the partial doubling constructions due to the loss of a case competitor; in contrast, DAT case is retained, regardless of the number of clitics present.

(21) a. makaw wa-mpi-ŋkul-ŋa-t
   makaw.IX.SG IX.SG.ABS-3DL.ERG-2DL.DAT give-PERF
   ‘They two gave [you two] makau.’ (F213)

b. patn pu-ŋn-ŋa-t
   betelnut.V.SG 3PL.ABS-2SG.DAT give-PERF
   ‘They gave [you] betelnut.’ (still DAT) (F233)

c. Mitchell kra-tay
   Mitchell 1PL.DAT see
   ’Mitchell saw [us]’ (still DAT) (F.p.c.)

The preservation of DAT case in different clitic environments is reminiscent of the preservation of quirky case in languages like Icelandic, which, as shown earlier, survives syntactic processes such as passivization.

However, while lexical case is typically taken to be oblique case assigned by P₀ to its nominal complement, this is not a possible analysis for Yimas. As discussed in §3.2, oblique-marked nominals—i.e., nominals enclosed in PPs—cannot be clitic doubled. That DAT case is realizable on a clitic at all, then, indicates that it is not associated with P₀. Rather, I propose that lexical case in Yimas is assigned in the presence of certain features; specifically, a clitic bearing the features [PARTICI-PANT, OBJ] will always be realized as DAT.

In conclusion, DAT and ERG case in Yimas are not assigned uniformly, as evidenced by their different distributional patterns; whereas ERG case is often lost in partial clitic doubling environments, DAT is invariably preserved. Moreover, the presence of DAT may bleed ERG case assignment, suggesting that DAT is assigned earlier. This provides support for the existence of hierarchy in case assignment (Marantz 1991), and for the idea that the Yimas paradigms are indeed organized by case.

3.4 Absolutive

Finally, clitics that have still not received m-case after DAT and ERG are calculated are realized as ABS. The behaviour of ABS thus parallels that of unmarked case in Marantz’s case assignment system.
As (23) below shows, ABS has the distribution of an ‘elsewhere’ case, only sur-
facing where the other cases are unavailable; it is realized on clitics that lack case
competitors, whether this is due to the absence of other clitics or due to the other
clitics all having been assigned case at some earlier point.

(23)  a. pu-ŋa-tay
      3PL.ABS-1SG.DAT-see
   ‘They saw me.’ (F196)

   b. nawn ma-tpul
      who 2SG.ABS-hit
   ‘Who did you hit?’ (F235)

In summary, the distributions of the DAT, ERG, and ABS paradigms in Yimas are
exactly as predicted under a Marantzian (1991) model of case assignment: DAT case
is lexically assigned to clitics cross-referencing participant internal arguments, ERG
case is dependently assigned to subject clitics only in the presence of another clitic,
and ABS surfaces elsewhere. In what follows, I develop the case assignment rules
that generate these distributions, and discuss why morphological case distinctions
are made over the clitics at all.

4 Case assignment
4.1 Morphological rules
Under the standard Marantzian system of case assignment, m-case assignment rules
reference the structural configuration between DPs. In Yimas, however, we saw
that the distribution of case often depend on the clitic environment, regardless of
the positions of the DPs in the syntax.

On the basis of this, I suggest that the case assignment rules in Yimas need
not refer to the syntactic configuration of DPs (though they are amenable to such
treatments), so long as it is assumed that grammatical function may be represented
as formal features, e.g., [SUBJ] and [OBJ] (see for instance Embick & Halle (2005)
on Hupa). In Yimas, though individual cases do not necessarily encode a particular
grammatical function, the case alternations do:

(24)  |      SUBJ. | 3RD PERSON OBJ. | PARTICIPANT OBJ. |
     | No competitor |   |   |   |
     | ABS          | ABS | DAT  |
     | Has competitor | ERG | ABS | DAT  |

As (24) illustrates, subject clitics alternate between ABS and ERG, depending on
the clitic environment; object clitics alternate between ABS and DAT, depending on
person specification. Crucially, subject and object clitics are never simultaneously
ABS, because ERG surfaces on the subject clitic in such contexts. This motivates
the following case assignment rules (abstracting away from the fact that clitics also
encode φ-features):
Case assignment rules in Yimas:

a. \([\text{OBJ, PART}] \rightarrow \text{DAT}\)
b. \([\text{SUBJ}] / \text{Cl } \_ \rightarrow \text{ERG}\)
c. (Elsewhere \(\rightarrow \text{ABS}\))

These rules are purely morphological, formulated without direct reference to the structural configuration of the arguments in the syntax. In other words, case assignment in Yimas is a morphological phenomenon. I address this latter point in greater detail below.

4.2 Case on clitics

Recall that, though the Yimas clitics make multiple case distinctions, the DPs they cross-reference are case-invariant, regardless of their grammatical function—specifically, they always resemble the ABS paradigm. This is illustrated in (26).

\[(26)\]

a. kapwa常态kapwa-wa-t
\hspace{1cm} 2DL.ABS-go-PERF

‘Where have you gone?’ (S) (F458)

b. kapwa-na-ŋkran-a-aykapiŋa-n
\hspace{1cm} 3SG.ABS-2DL.ERG-DEF-know-PRES

‘Do you two know him?’ (A) (F462)

c. kapwaŋkut-ŋa-ira-kwalca-kia-k
\hspace{1cm} 2DL.DAT-DEF-ALL-rise-FUT-IRR

‘I will come up on you.’ (O) (F460)

I propose that this be tied to the general mechanisms of clitic doubling. Most analyses of clitic doubling take the doubled clitic to be a (reduced) copy of its DP associate (Uriagereka 1995; Anagnostopoulou 2003; Arregi & Nevins 2012), meaning that, if Yimas DPs are ABS, then the clitics are also ABS upon adjunction to the verb. In other words, while DAT and ERG are cases assigned to the clitics in the postsyntax, the ABS paradigm is simply the default state of a clitic prior to case assignment. See Kornfilt & Preminger (to appear) for a similar treatment of ABS/NOM case.

A question that arises here is why DAT and ERG are assigned on the clitics. I argue that lexical and dependent case assignment occur for different reasons. As shown below, lexical DAT case is not only obligatorily assigned to clitics encoding participant internal arguments, but such DPs are obligatorily doubled. That is, while other DPs are optionally doubled, modulo the discourse factors discussed in §2, participant internal arguments must be cross-referenced on the verb as DAT clitics (Foley, p.c.).

\[(27)\]

a. na-kra-tay
\hspace{1cm} 3SG.ABS-1PL.DAT-see

‘He saw us.’ (F205)

b. *ipa na-tay
\hspace{1cm} 1PL 3SG.ABS-see

\text{Intended: ‘He saw us.’} (F,p.c.)
While I cannot at this time provide a full analysis of these facts, I note that participant arguments are often assumed to require formal licensing (Béjar & Rezac 2003; Coon & Preminger 2012). This, in turn, might translate to the obligatoriness of clitic doubling in Yimas. Under this view, lexical case assignment in Yimas is a morphological reflex of participant feature licensing.

Conversely, ERG case assignment is dependent on case competition between clitics. Recall that a clitic may bear ERG only if another case-requiring clitic is present, and that the latter is ultimately realized as ABS. As mentioned above, doubled clitics are by default ABS upon adjunction to the verb, prior to the application of the case assignment rules in (25). Consequently, clitic doubling multiple DPs yields a clitic sequence consisting of multiple ABS clitics. I argue that this yields a morphosyntactic OCP, or anti-identity, effect (Grimshaw 1997; Richards 2010; Nevins 2012)—a ban on multiple featurally identical elements within a specific domain. In Yimas, then, ABS-ABS clitic sequences are banned. This is resolved as a byproduct of lexical DAT assignment, and is also resolved by dependent ERG assignment. The latter point is schematized in (28).

\[
*\text{Cl}_{[\text{ABS}]}\text{-Cl}_{[\text{ABS}]} \rightarrow \text{Cl}_{[\text{ABS}]}\text{-Cl}_{[\text{ERG}]}
\]

This idea has some theoretical corollaries. First, it redefines the notion of case competition: clitics are not competing to receive case per se; rather, case is necessarily assigned to certain clitics as a response to morphosyntactic well-formedness issues, such as [PARTICIPANT] licensing and featural anti-identity. Moreover, it recasts dependent case as a strategy to dissimilate between otherwise morphosyntactically identical elements.

5 Conclusion

In summary, I showed that the agreement system in Yimas also references case, and that the case patterns that surface follow the Marantzian (1991) realization hierarchy. Thus, while this paper provides support for dependent theories of case, it also necessitates an extension to such theories: case may be assigned within different domains across languages, since, in Yimas, the domain of case assignment is the span of doubled clitics. Moreover, though dependent case is generally assumed to reference syntactic configuration, the Yimas data suggest that this is not always the case, as dependent case may also be assigned based on morphological environment.

References


Preminger, O. *Agreement as a fallible operation*. Massachusetts Institute of Technology dissertation.


