CASE AND AGREEMENT

The Really Big Picture
Our Roadmap

(not necessarily in this order)

• A broad overview of case and the complexities in even a case-simple language such as English

• The complicated and elusive relationship between case and meaning

• Nominative-Accusative systems

• Ergative-Absolutive systems

• How case and agreement *generally* interact in both kinds of systems

• Empirical issues related to agreement

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CASE 101

IT’S GONNA GET A LOT MORE COMPLICATED!
“Case is a system of marking dependent nouns for the type of relationship they bear to their heads.” [Blake 2001:1]

Mehmet adam-a elma-lar – i ver-di
Mehmet.nom man-dat apple-plural-acc give-past.3sg
‘Mehmet gave the apples to the man.’ [Blake 2001:1]

• Here, the "head" is the verb and the cases indicate the relationship that each noun has to the verb.
  • We’ll see that the terminology and the relationships between different words get murkier.
• The nominative noun is the subject.
  • There’s no overt marking. We’ll come back to the idea of “abstract” case.
• The accusative noun is the direct object.
• The dative noun is the indirect object.

Turkish is spoken by about 72 million ppl. (ethnologue.com)
Languages that have case marking are generally classified as having a nominative-accusative pattern or an ergative-absolutive pattern.

- **Nominative**
  - A = subject of transitive
  - Ergative

- **Accusative**
  - S = subject of intransitive
  - Absolutive

- **Ergative**
- **Absolutive**

• Of course, this is an oversimplification.

• There are many more cases in the world’s languages.
  - Dative, Locative, Genitive, Partitive, Vocative, etc.

• AND, both nom-acc and erg-abs systems tend to be much more complicated than this categorization suggests.

• In particular, ergative languages tend to not be “purely” ergative. They show some other pattern in some contexts.
**LATIN: ANOTHER LANGUAGE WITH NOMINATIVE SUBJECTS AND ACCUSATIVE DIRECT OBJECTS**

PORTA ‘door’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Plural</th>
<th>Singular</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nominative</td>
<td>porta</td>
<td>portae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Genitive</td>
<td>portae</td>
<td>portarum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dative</td>
<td>portae</td>
<td>portis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accusative</td>
<td>portam</td>
<td>portas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ablative</td>
<td>porta</td>
<td>portis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocative</td>
<td>porta</td>
<td>portis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Butt 2006:3)

This is the declension for feminine nouns. There’s a different declension for masculine nouns.

In general...

- nominative = subject
- genitive = possessive
- dative = indirect object
- accusative = direct object
- ablative = expresses source, location, and instrument
  - e.g. – seen by the consul; in Italy; by hand
- vocative = person/thing being addressed
  - e.g. – John, are you ready?

Important: Each form in the paradigm does not have to be unique. **Syncretism** is when languages use the same morphological form to indicate different information.
**Person**

| 1st | The person(s) speaking |
| 2nd | The person(s) being addressed |
| 3rd | The person(s)/thing(s) being spoken about |

**Number**

- **singular**: One person/thing
- **plural**: More than one person/thing

**Gender**

- **masculine**: Male gendered thing or person
- **feminine**: Female gendered thing or person
- **neutral (neuter)**: Some animals, inanimate things, or a non-specific gender for a person

**Role in Sentence**

- **subject**: The doer of the action - Nominative
- **object of the verb**: The person/thing that the action is being done to - Accusative
- **object of the preposition**: The noun that follows a preposition - Accusative (or Dative, which has the same form)
- **owner/possessor**: The person/thing that possesses someone/something else - Genitive

Pronouns in English display these pieces of information.
## PERSONAL PRONOUNS IN ENGLISH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Subject (Nominative)</th>
<th>Object (Accusative)</th>
<th>Possessive (Genitive)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; person</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-singular</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>me</td>
<td>my/mine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-plural</td>
<td>we</td>
<td>us</td>
<td>our/ours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; person</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-singular</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>your/yours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-plural</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>your/yours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3&lt;sup&gt;rd&lt;/sup&gt; person</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-singular</td>
<td>he, she, it</td>
<td>him, her, it</td>
<td>his, her/hers, its</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-plural</td>
<td>they</td>
<td>them</td>
<td>their/ theirs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

She likes us. / *Her likes we.

She went to the store with him/*he.

That is her book./That book of hers is on the table./*That is hers book.

- The prepositional genitive is odd with non-humans and inanimates.
  - The dog had lost its bone.
  - ?That bone of its was in the backyard.

- We’ll see later that even English isn’t so straightforward.
The very general observation is that languages with lots of case marking – e.g. Latin, German – have freer word order and that languages with little/no case marking have more fixed word order – e.g. English, Mandarin.

But, Icelandic has lots of case and fairly fixed order and Bulgarian has little case and somewhat free order.

Tallerman 2005:155
DOES CASE MAP TO MEANING?

Again, it’s complicated...
• Grammatical Roles: subject, direct object, indirect object, object of preposition

• Basic Semantic/Thematic Roles (for now)
  • These are also called theta roles in the literature.

• Agent
  The performer of an action.

• Experiencer
  Non-volitional participants of an action.

• Theme/Patient
  The person or thing that an action/activity is done to.

• Source
  The starting point for a movement or a transfer of possession.

• Goal
  The end point for a movement or a transfer of possession.

• Location
  The place where an action occurs.

• Instrument
  The thing used to accomplish an action.

• Benefactor
  The person or thing that benefits from someone else’s actions.
SOME THEMATIC ROLES ARE REQUIRED AND OTHERS ARE OPTIONAL

(i) Most first-year college students buy expensive textbooks.
   agent         theme/patient

(ii) Eric admires his basketball coach.
     experiencer theme/patient

(iii) Julia traveled (from Beijing to Moscow).
     agent source goal

(iv) The butcher cut slabs of beef (in the walk-in fridge) (with a sharp knife).
     agent theme/patient location instrument

(v) The aspiring underling wrote the report (for her supervisor).
     agent theme/patient benefactor
     (meaning that the supervisor was supposed to write the report but the underling wrote it in order to earn brownie points)
The ice melted.
  • Intransitive
John melted the ice.
  • Transitive
John melted me some ice.
  • Ditransitive??

*Mary laughed Sue.
(Mary made Sue laugh.)

*Mary spoke Sue.
(Mary spoke for Sue.)

• Applicatives: “extra” objects of a verb that generally indicate possession, causation, or a kind of benefactive relationship.

• Languages can encode thematic roles in different ways.

**SEMANTIC ROLES ON VERBS**

- **Venda** is spoken by about 1.3 million people in South Africa and Zimbabwe.

a) Mahada o-nok-a.
   - snow 3sg.past-melt-fv
   - 'The snow melted.'

b) Mukasa o-nok-is-a mahada.
   - Mukasa 3sg.past-melt-cause-fv snow
   - 'Mukasa melted the snow.'

b) Mukasa o-nok-is-el-a Katonga mahada.
   - Mukasa 3sg.past-melt-cause-appl-fv Katonga snow
   - 'Mukasa melted Katonga the snow.'
   - (Mukasa melted the snow for Katonga.)

- **Our first taste of agreement on verbs.**
  - 3sg = 3rd person singular.

- The verb is agreeing with the subject in each sentence.

- AND, the verb shows semantic roles.

BACK TO NOUNS AND CASE

If the world were simple…

Agent/Experiencer → Subject → Nominative
Patient/Theme → Direct Object → Accusative

(i) Der Hund sah den Vogel.
the.nom dog.nom saw the.acc bird.acc
‘The dog saw the bird.’

(ii) Den Vogel sah der Hund
the.acc bird.acc saw the.nom dog.nom
‘The dog saw the bird.’ (Tallerman 2005:112)

• The bird has more emphasis with this word order.
• Topicalization in English.

• In German, the determiner shows the case, not the noun. We’ll come back to this.
For instance, in passives, there’s a mismatch between syntactic role and semantic function. The case aligns with the syntactic role.

(i) Der Frost verdarb den Apfel.
   the.nom frost.nom spoil.past the.acc apple.acc
   ‘The frost spoiled the apple.’

(ii) Der Apfel wurde vom Frost verdorben.
    the.nom apple.nom became by.the.dat frost.dat spoil.past part
    ‘The apple was spoiled by the frost.’  (Tallerman 2005:190)

- The syntactic subject is nominative, even though “the apple” is still the patient/theme

(iii) a. She adores them.     b. They are adored by her. c.*Them are/is adored by she.
Icelandic (spoken by appr 330,000 people) is categorized as a nominative-accusative language. The overwhelming majority of sentences follow this pattern, but certainly not all.

Verbs agree in person and number with nominative nouns.

Adjectives agree in gender, number, and case with whatever noun they describe.

Speaking of complicated...hello Icelandic

\[ \text{Þið lásuð bókina.} \]
\[ \text{you.nom.pl read.2pl book.the.acc.masc.sg} \]
\[ \text{‘You read the book.’} \]

- Nominative subject and accusative object

\[ \text{Margir prófessorar klæðast dýrum skóm.} \]
\[ \text{many.nom.masc.pl professors.nom.masc.pl wear.3pl expensive.dat.masc.pl shoes.dat.masc.pl} \]
\[ \text{‘Many professors wear expensive shoes.’} \]

- Some verbs have a nominative subject and dative object

\[ \text{Mörgum prófessorum líkuðu dýrir skór.} \]
\[ \text{many.dat professors.dat liked.3pl expensive.nom.masc.pl shoes.nom.masc.pl} \]
\[ \text{‘Many professors liked expensive shoes.’} \]

- And others have a dative subject and nominative object. The dative subject is an experiencer...usually.

\[ \text{• NOTE: We’ll later learn that the verb here agrees with the nominative object, not the dative subject.} \]
Other languages also have dative experiencer subjects.

**Hindi-Urdu**

Tusaar khuś huaa.

Tushar.nom happy.nom become

‘Tushar became happy.’

Tusaar-ko khuśii hii.

Tushar-dat happiness.nom happen

‘Happiness happened to Tushar.’

**Japanese**

Sensei-ni eigo-ga wakaru.

teacher-dat English-nom understands

‘The teacher understands English.’

Mary-ga eigo-ga yoku dekiru.

Mary-nom English-nom well do.can.pres

‘Mary can speak English well.’
BUT SOMETIMES A DATIVE IS NOT AN EXPERIENCER…

Icelandic

Ritarinn sendi lögfræðingunum samningana.

secretary.the.nom.masc.sg sent.3sg lawyers.the.dat.fem.pl contracts.the.acc.masc.pl

‘The secretary sent the lawyers the contracts.

• Dative case is also used for indirect objects (sometimes), like we saw with Turkish.

• Indirect objects are often recipients or beneficiaries.
...and an experiencer is not dative.

(a) Við teljum frambjóðendurna vera frambærilega.
   we.nom believe.1pl candidates.the.masc.acc.pl be pretty good.acc.masc.pl
   ‘We believe the candidates to be pretty good.’

(b) Einum dómara sýnðust þessar athugasemdir vera óréttlátar.
   one.dat judge.dat.masc.sg understood.3pl these.pl comments.nom.fem.pl be unfair.nom.fem.pl
   ‘One judge understood these comments to be unfair.’

Note that the adjective agrees with the noun it modifies, like we saw earlier.

Memory Jogger from Syntax. What kinds of constructions are these?
BUT EVEN ENGLISH IS COMPLICATED: DEFAULT CASE

a. I am vulgar.
b. Me. I like beans.
c. The real me is vulgar.

(McFadden 2006, EX 13)
d. Poor him never got a word in edgewise.

(Hristov 2013: 575)

- In English, hanging topics are accusative = b
- AND, we have accusative subjects! = c/d
- Accusative is the default case.
- And, in expletive (dummy subject) sentences, nominative and accusative are good.
  
  - This is she/her.

- "Hanging topics" in German, Russian, and Icelandic are nominative. They don’t share the case of the noun they coreference.
- Nominative is the default case.

German


the. Nom/*Dat Hans with him.Dat speak I not more

‘Hans, I don’t speak with him anymore.’

Russian

b. Vanja/?Vanju, ego ja ne ljublju.

John.Nom/?Acc him.Acc I don’t like

‘John, I don’t like him.’

Icelandic

c. Strákarnir, við þá hafði aldrei verið talað.

boys-the.Nom with them.Acc had never been spoken

‘The boys, they had never been spoken with.’

(McFadden 2006, EX 3)
WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

• There is not a perfect pairing of case, grammatical role, and semantic (thematic) role.

• Passives
• Different variants of ditransitives
• Dative subjects in Icelandic (and other languages)
• Pronouns in English
BACK TO THE BASIC DIVISION BETWEEN CASE SYSTEMS

NOTE: The abbreviations A, S, and O get used a lot in case literature.
West Greenlandic is a dialect of Greenlandic (Inuktitut) and is spoken in Greenland by appr. 44,000 people.

Chukchee (Chukchi) is spoken in Eastern Russia by appr. 5,100 people.

**West Greenlandic**

*Intransitive*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oli</td>
<td>sleep.ind.intr.3sg</td>
<td>‘Oli sleeps.’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Transitive*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oli-p</td>
<td>neqi</td>
<td>nerivaa.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Oli-abs sleep.ind.intr.3sg

‘Oli eats meat.’ (Butt 2006 Ch. 6, EX 1)

**Chukchee**

*Transitive*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ətləg-a</td>
<td>ən-in l’ulqəl rə-gtəkwannen.</td>
<td>father-erg 3sg-poss face.abs cause-freeze</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘Father suffered frost-bite on his face.’

*Intransitive*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verb</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Pronunciation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ətləg-ən</td>
<td>l’o-na-gtəkwatg’e.</td>
<td>(father-abs face-cause-freeze3sg)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

‘Father got face frost-bitten.’

**The canonical ergative-absolutive pattern**

Notice the agreement on the verbs.
FREE WORD ORDER AND ERGATIVITY

• Like some nominative-accusative languages that have lots of case marking, some ergative-absolutive languages also allow for various word orders.

Warlpiri (spoken in Australia by appr. 2,500 people)
   man-erg aux:present kangaroo.abs spear-nonpast
   ‘The man is spearing the kangaroo.’

b. Wawirri ka panti-rni ngarrka- ngku.
   kangaroo.abs aux:present spear-nonpast man-erg
   ‘The man is spearing the kangaroo.’

c. Panti-rni ka ngarrka-ngku wawirri
   spear-nonpast aux:present man-erg kangaroo.abs
   ‘The man is spearing the kangaroo.’ (Tallerman 2005:158)
ERGATIVE LANGUAGES ARE REALLY COMPLEX!!

Ergative case marking doesn’t necessarily depend on the transitivity of the verb.

Most (maybe all) ergative languages have a “split” system. Sometimes they pattern like nominative-accusative languages.
(i) Regular nouns follow an ergative-absolutive system.

a. ŋuma  banaga-nŋu
   father.abs  returned
   ‘Father returned.’

b. yabu  banaganŋu
   mother.abs  returned
   ‘Mother returned.’

c. ŋuma  yabu-ŋŋu  buran
   father.abs  mother-erg  saw
   ‘Mother saw father.’

d. yabu  ŋuma-  ŋŋu  buran
   mother.abs  father-erg  saw
   ‘Father saw mother.’

(ii) Pronouns follow a nominative-accusative system

a. ŋana  banaga-nŋu
   we all.nom  return-nonfut
   ‘We returned.’

b. nŋurra  banaganŋu
   you all.nom  returned
   ‘You all returned.’

c. nŋurra  ŋana-na  buran
   you all.nom  we all-acc  saw
   ‘You all saw us.’

d. ŋana  nŋurra-na  buran
   we all.nom  you all-acc  saw
   ‘We saw you all.’

I’m not sure that Dyirbal is still with us. There were only 29 speakers in 2006.
In Hindi-Urdu, case depends on the meaning of the sentence, NOT on the transitivity of the verb.

(i) Nominative subject: Not perfective. We don't know if the action was completed.

Rahul kitiab parh-taa thaa
Rahul.masc.nom book.fem.acc read-hab.masc.sg be.past.masc.sg
‘Rahul used to read (a/the) book.’

(ii) Ergative subject: Perfective. The action has been completed.

Rahul-ne kitiab parh-ii thii
‘Rahul had read the book.’

AND, we see that the verbs do not agree with the ergative in (ii) even though it is the subject. The verbs agree with the subject in (i) but with the object in (ii).
Case and Aspect in a Nominative-Accusative language

- Finnish is spoken by appr 5.67 million people in Finland, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Western Russia.
- It has a “general” nominative-accusative pattern, but there’s *lots* of case in Finnish – 16 of them!
- In Finnish, direct objects are accusative if the activity is necessarily complete – it’s *telic*.
- Direct objects are *partitive* if the activity isn’t necessarily complete – it’s *atelic*.

(15) *Telic*

Ostaa (‘buy’), ottaa (‘take’), pudottaa (‘drop’), suorittaa (‘carry out’), kadottaa, menettää, hukata (‘lose’ (possession)), hävitää (‘lose’ (a game or fight)), löytää (‘find’), hyväksyä (‘accept’), panna, asettaa (‘put’), tappaa (‘kill’), antaa, lahjoittaa (‘give’), kaataa (‘fell’) … (Kiparsky 1908, 281.)

(16) *Atelic*

Halkeusia (‘despise’), ihailia (‘admire’), kadehtia (‘envy’), rakastaa (‘love’), mathia (‘imitate’), ravistaa (‘shake’), keinuttaa (‘rock’), koskettaa (‘touch’), hieroa (‘massage’) … (Kiparsky 1908, 281.)

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From Kratzer 2002

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Form</th>
<th>Partitive</th>
<th>Accusative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Ammu-i-n karhu-a. shoot - past -1sg bear - part I shot at a bear. I shot at the bear.</td>
<td>Partitive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Ammu-i-n karhu-n. shoot - past -1sg bear - acc I shot the bear. I shot a bear.</td>
<td>Accusative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Ammu-i-n karhu-t. shoot - past -1sg bear - pl - acc I shot the bears.</td>
<td>Accusative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHAT HAVE WE
LEARNED?

Case can reflect different kinds
information of – the grammatical
role of a particular noun, the
semantic role of a noun, or the
meaning of the entire sentence.
ANOTHER SPLIT: GEORGIAN

Student-i mivida.
student-ABS went
'The student went.'

Student-ma Ceril-i daCera
student-ERG letter-ABS wrote
'The student wrote the letter.'

http://www.nthuleen.com/papers/L12paper.html

Theoretical Issue: Nominative is used here in the gloss. We'll come back to this idea.

Georgian distinguishes between intransitive verbs that are unaccusative and intransitives that are unergative.
ISSUES RELATED TO AGREEMENT

What is “agreement”?
What kinds of words show agreement?
What are the properties of agreement?

“Canonical agreement is redundant rather than informative.” (Corbett 2006:26)
• I cook fantastic food.
• You (sg/pl) cook fantastic food.
• She/he cooks fantastic food.
• We cook fantastic food.
• They cook fantastic food.

• The 3rd person singular agreement marker doesn’t contribute to the meaning of the verb or to the meaning of the sentence. (And some dialects of English don’t use it.)
Agreement is displaced information, even in a language with a lot of agreement.

Agreement is information about one (or more) word that shows up on a different word.

Icelandic verbs agree in person and number with nominative nouns and agreement is obligatory in sentences with nominative subjects.

a. Við lásum bókina.
   we.nom read.1pl book.the.acc.neut.sg
   ‘We read the book.’

b. Þið lásuð bókina.
   you.nom.pl read.2pl book.the.acc.neut.sg
   ‘You read the book.’ (Sigurðsson 1996, EX 14/15a)

c. Hún klæðist dýrum skóm.
   she.nom wear.3sg expensive.dat.masc.pl shoes.dat.masc.pl
   ‘She wears expensive shoes.’

d. Margir prófessorar klæðast dýrum skóm.
   many professors.nom wear.3pl expensive.dat.masc.pl shoes.dat.masc.pl
   ‘Many professors wear expensive shoes.’
ICELANDIC HAS NON-NOMINATIVE SUBJECTS. VERBS DO NOT AGREE WITH THESE SUBJECTS. IF THERE IS AN OBJECT, IT IS NOMINATIVE AND THE VERB AGREES WITH IT...OPTIONALLY.

e. Okkur vantaði bókina.
   us.dat.pl lacked.3sg book.the.nom.sg
   ‘We lacked the book.’

f. Ykkur vantaði bókina.
   you.dat.pl lacked.3sg book.the.nom.sg
   ‘You lacked the book.’ (Sigurðsson 1996, EX 16/17a)

In (h), both nouns are plural, so when the verb is singular, it is agreeing with nothing.

h. Mörgum prófessorum líkuðu/ líkaði dýr í skór.
   many.dat.masc.pl professors.dat.masc.pl liked.3pl/3sg expensive.nom.masc.pl shoes.nom.masc.pl
   ‘Many professors liked expensive shoes.’

➢ The sentence means the same thing, whether or not the verb agrees with the nominative object.
In Icelandic (and in lots of languages), words such as adjectives, determiners, quantifiers, participles, etc. display features of nouns they modify.

Different kinds of agreement can behave differently. [We'll return to this later.]

Here, the agreement does affect the meaning.

Sigurðsson 2006, ex 29
QUANTIFIER AGREEMENT IN ICELANDIC

IN FINITE CLAUSES, THE QUANTIFIER SHOWS THE CASE, GENDER, AND NUMBER WITH THE NOUN IT MODIFIES

a. Strákarnir komust allir í skóla.
   boys.the.nom.masc.pl got.3pl all.nom.pl.masc in school.acc.masc.sg
   ‘The boys all got to school.’

b. Strákana vantaði alla í skólann.
   boys.the.acc.masc.pl lacked.3sg all.acc.pl.masc in school.the.dat.masc.sg
   ‘The boys were all absent from school.’

c. Strákunum leiddist öllum í skóla.
   boys.the.dat.masc.pl bored.3sg all.dat.pl.masc in school.acc.masc.sg
   ‘The boys all felt bored in school.’

d. Strákanna var allra getið í ræðunni.
   boys.the.gen were.3sg all.gen.pl.masc mentioned in speech.the.fem.sg
   ‘The boys were all mentioned in the speech.’ (Sigurðsson 1991:331)
...AND THE QUANTIFIER AGREES IN NON-FINITE EMBEDDED CLAUSES AS WELL.

a. Strákarnir vonast til að komast allir í skóla.
   boys.the.nom hope.3pl for that to get all.nom.pl.masc to school
   ‘The boys all hope to get to school.’

b. Strákarnir vonast til að vanta ekki alla í skólann.
   boys.the.nom hope.3pl for that to lack not all.acc.pl.masc in school.the
   ‘The boys all hope not to be absent from school.’

c. Strákarnir vonast til að leiðast ekki öllum í skóla.
   boys.the.nom hope.3pl for that to bore not all.dat.pl.masc in school
   ‘The boys all hope not to be bored in school.’

d. Strákarnir vonast til að verða allra getið í ræðunni.
   boys.the.nom hope.3pl for that to be all.gen.pl.masc mentioned in speech.the
   ‘The boys all hope to be mentioned in the speech.’ (Sigurðsson 1991:332)

The quantifier agrees with the silent subject of the infinitive, NOT with the pronounced subject of the main clause.
**Spanish**

*Hablo.*

talk.1.sg

“I talk.”

---

**Verbs Can Also Agree with Silent Nouns**

---

Spanish is called a pro(noun)-drop language because the subject of the sentence does not have to be said. The subject is known because the verb shows agreement with it.

---

### English vs. Spanish Verb Conjugation

(present tense)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>English to talk</th>
<th>Spanish hablar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>singular</td>
<td>plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>talk</td>
<td>talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>talk</td>
<td>talk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>talks</td>
<td>talk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

From Ling 100 presentation, Fall 2010, Paul Mains
OTHER KINDS OF WORDS THAT DISPLAY AGREEMENT WITH NOUNS

We’ve seen agreement on verbs and adjectives.

Other words, such as articles (determiners) and complementizers, can also agree with nouns.

German

Ich habe [den ganzen Tag] gearbeitet
‘I worked the whole day.’ [Butt 2006: 7]

West Flemish

a. K-peinzen dan-k (ik) morgen goan.
   1sg-think that-1sg (I) tomorrow go.1sg
   ‘I think that I’ll go tomorrow.’

b. K-peinzen da-j (gie) morgen goat.
   1sg-think that-2sg (you) tomorrow go.2sg
   ‘I think that you’ll go tomorrow.’

c. K-peinzen da-se (zie) morgen goat.
   1sg-think that-3sg.fem (she) tomorrow go.3sg
   ‘I think that she’ll go tomorrow.’ [Corbett 2006:50]

West Flemish is a dialect of Dutch spoken by appr. 1 million people in Belgium, The Netherlands, and France.

In the main clause, the verb is conjugated to agree with the subject. In the embedded clause, pronouncing the subject is optional. The verb and the complementizer agree with the subject.
WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED?

• A variety of words show agreement with nouns – verbs, adjectives, articles/determiners, complementizers.

• Words can agree with nouns that are overt (pronounced) and with nouns that are silent.

• Sometimes agreement interacts with meaning, and sometimes not.
THE INGREDIENTS FOR A SUCCESSFUL AGREEMENT RELATIONSHIP

- **Controller**: The item that determines what another word will look like.
- **Target**: The item whose form is determined by the controller.
- **Features**: The pieces of “information” of the controller that are displayed on the target.
- **Domain**: The syntactic environment in which the controller-target relationship is established.
- **Conditions**: The particular factors that induce or fail to induce an agreement relationship.
A BRIEF LOOK AT STANDARD ARABIC

In standard Arabic, the subject can appear either at the beginning of a sentence or after the verb.

- When the subject is sentence-initial, the verb agrees in person, gender and number with the subject.
- When the subject is post-verbal, the verb agrees only in person and gender.

Remember, in Icelandic, the verb may or may not agree with the nominative noun when the noun is post-verbal.

Controller: verb
Target: subject noun
Domain: the sentence
Features and Conditions
  • Person, gender, number when the subject is preverbal
  • Person and gender when the subject is post-verbal.
Back to our drunken friends...

- The nouns are syntactic dependents of the verb and the preposition in (d).
- But in the noun-adjective relationship, the noun is the controller.
- Person, gender, number are “direct” features of a noun/noun phrase. [Corbett 2001:194]
- Case is imposed on a noun/NP by some other element. [Corbett 2001:195]

“THE AGREEMENT CONTROLLER MAY BE A SYNTACTIC DEPENDENT.” [CORBETT 2001:192]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a.</th>
<th>Prestarnir</th>
<th>hittu biskupinn</th>
<th>drukknir.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>priests.the.N.M.PL</td>
<td>met</td>
<td>bishop.the.A.M.SG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘The priests met the bishop drunk (i.e. the priests were drunk).’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>Prestarnir</td>
<td>hittu biskupinn</td>
<td>drukkinn.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>priests.the.N.M.PL</td>
<td>met</td>
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</tr>
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<td>‘The priests met the bishop drunk (i.e. the bishop was drunk).’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>Prestarnir</td>
<td>sýndu</td>
<td>biskupnum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>priests.the.N.M.PL</td>
<td>showed</td>
<td>bishop.the.D.M.SG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘The priests showed the bishop disrespect (when he was) drunk.’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>Prestarnir</td>
<td>fóru</td>
<td>til</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>priests.the.N.M.PL</td>
<td>went to</td>
<td>bishop.the.G.M.SG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘The priests went to the bishop (when he was) drunk.’</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sigurðsson 2006, ex 29

The verbs are all 3pl
AND IN ICELANDIC, SOMETIMES THE DOMAIN IS *REALLY* BIG

The participles agree with the noun they modify, even if the noun is really far away!

Sigurðsson 2006, ex 34-35
Recall, Hindi-Urdu is a split ergative language. The subject is ergative when the sentence has perfective aspect. The activity is necessarily over.

When there is an embedded infinitival clause and the subject in the main clause is ergative, the main clause verb may agree with the embedded object.

Main clause verb and infinitive agree with embedded object

Shahrukh-ne [tehnii kaat-nii/*naa] chaah-ii thii.
Shahrukh(masc)-erg branch.fem cut-inf.fem/*masc want-pfv.fem be.past.fem.sg
‘Shahrukh had wanted to cut the branch.’ [Bhatt 2005, EX 6]
• Brackets indicate the embedded clause

Main clause verb and infinitive do not agree with the embedded object. Why not??

Shahrukh [tehnii kaat-naa] chaah-taa thaa.
Shahrukh(masc) branch.fem cut-inf.masc want-impfv.masc.sg be.past.masc.sg
‘Shahrukh wants to cut the branch.’
NOUN CLASSES AND AGREEMENT

• Noun classes are like genders.
  • You may have heard of noun classes in discussions about Bantu languages (we’ll get to those).
• In Archi, other words in the sentence agree in noun class with the absolutive noun.
• In (c), 'mother' is in noun class II and 'bread' is in noun class III.
• The verb, adverb, and indirect object agree with 'bread' because 'bread' is the absolutive noun.
• We see the same pattern in (d).
  ▶ In Archi, the absolutive is the controller for agreement.
  ▶ The verb, adverb, and indirect object are the targets.
  ▶ The domain is the clause.
  ▶ The feature is noun class.
  ▶ Based on these examples, we don’t have special conditions.

Archi is spoken by appr. 1,000 people in Dagestan.
SUMMARY

• There are two basic types of case systems – nominative/accusative and ergative/absolutive.

• But…this is an oversimplification.
  • Ergative languages generally have some kind of split. They behave like nominative-accusative languages under certain conditions.
  • Nouns in nominative-accusative languages don’t always have the expected case.

• The relationship between case and meaning is complex and varies according to language.

• Agreement sometimes maps to meaning and sometimes doesn’t.

• In languages with a lot of agreement, different words can show different features.

Topics We’ll Cover:

- Case, Agreement, and syntactic Structures
- A deeper look at nominative-accusative systems
- The Dative
- A deeper look at ergative-absolutive systems
- The complexity of pronouns
- Different kinds of agreement: how different categories of words behave
- Noun classes
- Agreement from an experimental perspective