Ergative case

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1 Two theories of ERG case

(1) **NOM/ACC in Mongolian**

a. **Tujaa jav-san.**  
Tujaa.NOM go-PST  
‘Tujaa went.’

```
TP
  DP_k
  T
    NOM
    T_FIN
      VP
        V
        went
```

b. **Bi Bold-ig khar-san.**  
I.NOM Bold-ACC see-PST  
‘I saw Bold.’

```
TP
  DP_k
  T
    NOM
    T_FIN
      VP
        V
        saw
        DP
          Bold
            ACC
```

*Thank you to Rafael Abramovitz for sharing the Koryak typeset data with me!
2 ERG in Koryak

2.1 Verbs that assign lexical case to object, but optionally

(3) a. kajŋ-a ∅-peŋŋ-ə-nen ʔəlve-ʔal
   ‘The bear attacked the wild reindeer.’

b. kajŋ-ə-n 0-peŋŋ-e ʔəlva-ŋ.
   ‘The bear attacked the wild reindeer.’

c. * kajŋ-a 0-peŋŋ-ə-nen ʔəlva-ŋ.
   Int.: ‘The bear attacked the wild reindeer.’

2/5
1. ERG as inherent case assigned by \( v \):
   - We would have to assume two \( v \)'s, one that assigns ERG to *bear* and one that doesn’t.
   - Furthermore, we would have to postulate additionally that \( T_{\text{FIN}} \)'s ability to assign ABS to the object is correlated with which \( v \) is being used in the sentence.

2. ERG as upwards dependent case:
   - We would have to assume two homophonous instances of *peŋŋ* ‘attack’, one that assigns DAT to the object and one that doesn’t. Alternatively, we would have to assume that *peŋŋ*’s ability to assign DAT is optional.
   - Otherwise, the case pattern just follows the case assignment algorithm.

2.2 Antipassives

   - Antipassive: like passivization, decreases valency of verb by one. However, the argument demoted is not the subject but rather the object. The latter can still appear in the sentence, though as an oblique argument.

   

   (4)

   a. \( \gamma m\text{-}n\text{an} t\text{-}ek\text{mit-}\sigma\text{-}n \) \( \text{wala } st\text{o}\text{-}\sigma\text{-}\lambda g\text{-}\sigma\text{-}\eta\eta q\text{o}. \)
      ‘I took the knife from the table.’

   b. \( \gamma mm\text{o} t\text{-}in\text{-}ek\text{mit-}\sigma\text{-}k \) \( \text{wala-}k. \)
      1SG.ABS 1SG.S/A-AP-take-EP-1SG.S knife-LOC
      ‘I took/armed myself with a knife.’

   - The agent of *ek\text{mit}* ‘take’ is \( \gamma m \) ‘1SG’ in both cases. Nevertheless, the case of the agent changes in correlation with the case of the demoted object.

2.3 Wh-movement feeding ERG

   (5)

   a. \( \gamma mm\text{mo} t\text{-}\sigma\text{-}val\text{om-}\sigma\text{-}k, \) \( \text{[ } \emptyset \text{-}\eta w\eta t\eta t\eta 0\text{-}na\text{-}k } \)
      \( \emptyset\)-j-\( \sigma\)-\( \tilde{\text{t}}\text{\text{im}}\text{-}aw\text{-}n\text{n} \) \( \text{koj\text{-}j-o } \].
      ‘I heard that Hewngyto broke cups.’

   b. \( \text{jej-}u \) \( \{ \text{\( \gamma n\text{-}nan / *y\text{at\text{te}t\text{ci}} \) } \) \( \emptyset\)-valom-na-w, \)
      \( \text{[ } \emptyset w\eta t\eta t\eta 0\text{-}na\text{-}w, \text{ } \emptyset\)-j-\( \sigma\)-\( \tilde{\text{t}}\text{\text{im}}\text{-}aw\text{-}n\text{n} \) \( \text{koj\text{-}j-o } \].
      \( 2/3.S/A.IND\text{-}hear-3.O-3PL \) [ that \( \eta w\eta t\eta t\eta 0\text{-}na\text{-}k \) \( \emptyset\)-j-\( \sigma\)-\( \tilde{\text{t}}\text{\text{im}}\text{-}aw\text{-}n\text{n} \) \( \text{Hewngyto-OBL.SG-ERG } 2/3.S/A.IND-CS-EP-break-VBLZ-3SG.A>3.O \) ]
'What all did you hear that Hewngyto broke?'

- (5a): the subject of a verb that takes a clause as its complement takes ABS.
  1. There is no $v$ that assigns ERG or ABS.
  2. Clauses do not count as case competitors.

- (5b): when Wh-movement occurs from the embedded clause, the matrix subject cannot be ABS (as in the declarative baseline), but must be ERG.

  1. ERG as inherent case assigned by $v$:
     - The $\theta$-role of the matrix subject (the HEARER) remains the same.
     - No expectation that it should alternate between ERG/ABS or that case should be correlated with Wh-movement.
  2. ERG as upwards dependent case:
     - Wh-movement is not expected to be correlated with case either.

- (5) is surprising for any theory of case. Consider the English equivalent, where Wh-movement from the embedded clause does not alter the case of the matrix subject:

  (6)  
  a. She said [that Taylor knows Jaimie].
  b. Who did she say [t that Taylor knows t]?
  c. *Who did her say [t that Taylor knows t]?

- Abramovitz’s (2020) proposal: in Koryak, Wh-movement (of an ABS object) can feed case assignment under a dependent case view.\footnote{Abramovitz also demonstrates that some instances of DAT can be dependent (while others are lexical) and that Wh-movement can also feed the occurrence of this type of dependent case.}

  - Assumption: Wh-movement is successive-cyclic, i.e. it passes through intermediate Spec-CP positions (cf. previous recitations).
(5a') Declarative sentence
   i. \([\text{TP} \text{ I}_{\text{Case: }\_} \text{ heard } [\text{CP} \text{ that } [\text{TP} \text{ Hewngyto}_{\text{Case: }\_} \text{ broke cups}_{\text{Case: }\_}]]]\)
   ii. \([\text{TP} \text{ I}_{\text{Case: }\_} \text{ heard } [\text{CP} \text{ that } [\text{TP} \text{ Hewngyto}_{\text{Case: }\_} \text{ broke cups}_{\text{Case: }\_}]]\)
   iii. \([\text{TP} \text{ I}_{\text{Case: }\_} \text{ heard } [\text{CP} \text{ that } [\text{TP} \text{ Hewngyto}_{\text{Case: }\_} \text{ broke cups}_{\text{Case: }\_}]]\)
   iv. \([\text{TP} \text{ I}_{\text{Case: }\_} \text{ heard } [\text{CP} \text{ that } [\text{TP} \text{ Hewngyto}_{\text{Case: }\_} \text{ broke cups}_{\text{Case: }\_}]]\)

(5b') Interrogative sentence
   i. \([\text{TP} \text{ I}_{\text{Case: }\_} \text{ heard } [\text{CP} \text{ that } [\text{TP} \text{ Hewngyto}_{\text{Case: }\_} \text{ broke what all}_{\text{Case: }\_}]]\)
   ii. \([\text{TP} \text{ I}_{\text{Case: }\_} \text{ heard } [\text{CP} \text{ that } [\text{TP} \text{ Hewngyto}_{\text{Case: }\_} \text{ broke what all}_{\text{Case: }\_}]]\)
   iii. \([\text{TP} \text{ I}_{\text{Case: }\_} \text{ heard } [\text{CP} \text{ what all}_{\text{Case: }\_} \text{ that } [\text{TP} \text{ Hewngyto}_{\text{Case: }\_} \text{ broke t]]]]\)
   iv. \([\text{TP} \text{ I}_{\text{Case: }\_} \text{ heard } [\text{CP} \text{ what all}_{\text{Case: }\_} \text{ that } [\text{TP} \text{ Hewngyto}_{\text{Case: }\_} \text{ broke t]]]]\)
   v. \([\text{TP} \text{ I}_{\text{Case: }\_} \text{ heard } [\text{CP} \text{ what all}_{\text{Case: }\_} \text{ that } [\text{TP} \text{ Hewngyto}_{\text{Case: }\_} \text{ broke t]]]]\)

• Why can an ABS Wh-phrase feed dependent ERG?
  ○ Recall: once a DP is assigned case, it no longer counts as a case competitor and is ignored by the case assignment algorithm.
  ○ This is indeed what happens generally in Wh-movement (cf. the English examples (6)).
  ○ ABS (and NOM): unmarked case, which Kornfilt & Preminger (2015) analyze as the exponent of an unvalued case feature (original idea from Preminger 2011).
  ○ The same idea can be applied to some instances of hyperraising.