

Ergative case

24.951 Recitation

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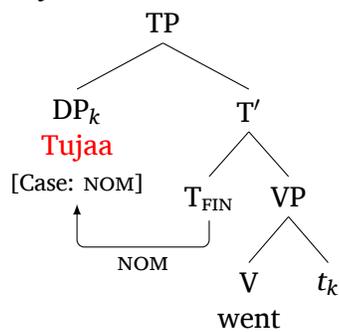
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November 6, 2020

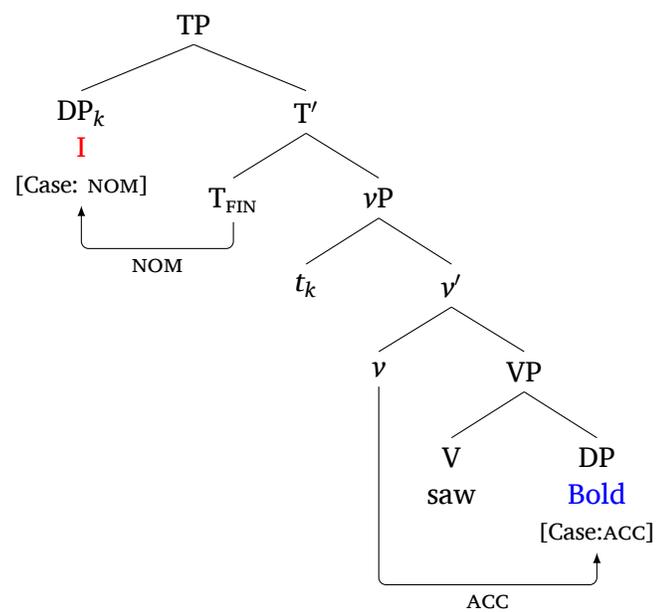
1 Two theories of ERG case

(1) *NOM/ACC in Mongolian*

a. **Tujaa** jav-san.
Tujaa.NOM go-PST
'Tujaa went.'



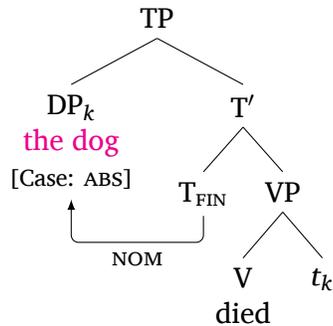
b. **Bi** **Bold-ig** khar-san.
I.NOM Bold-ACC see-PST
'I saw Bold.'



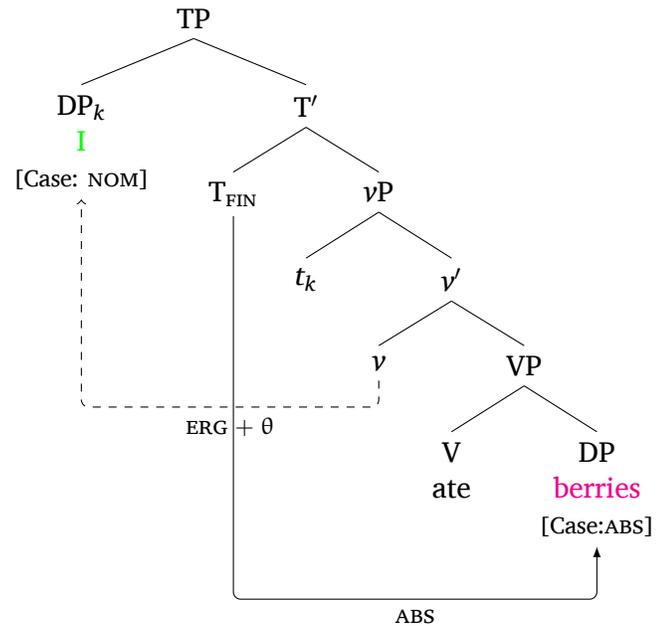
*Thank you to Rafael Abramovitz for sharing the Koryak typeset data with me!

(2) *ERG/ABS in Koryak*

- a. **ʔətʔ-ə-n** Ø-viʔ-i.
dog-EP-ABS 2/3.S/A.IND-die-AOR
'The dog died.'



- b. **ʔəm-nan** t-ə-nu-ne-w
1SG-ERG 1SG.S/A-EP-eat-3.O-3PL
ʔəvənʔ-u.
berry-ABS.PL
'I ate berries.'



2 ERG in Koryak

2.1 Verbs that assign lexical case to object, but optionally

- (3) a. **kajŋ-a** Ø-peŋŋ-ə-nen **ʔəlve-ʔəl**
bear-ERG 2/3.S/A.IND-attack-EP-3SG.A > 3.O wild.reindeer-ABS.SG
'The bear attacked the wild reindeer.'
- b. **kajŋ-ə-n** Ø-peŋŋ-e **ʔəlva-ŋ.**
bear-EP-ABS.SG 2/3.S/A.IND-attack-AOR wild.reindeer-DAT
'The bear attacked the wild reindeer.'
- c. * **kajŋ-a** Ø-peŋŋ-ə-nen **ʔəlva-ŋ.**
bear-ERG 2/3.S/A.IND-attack-EP-3SG.A > 3.O wild.reindeer-DAT
Int.: 'The bear attacked the wild reindeer.'

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_{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 *penŋ* 'attack', one that assigns DAT to the object and one that doesn't. Alternatively, we would have to assume that *penŋ*'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. **yəm-nan** t-ekmit-ə-n wala stoʌ-ə-ʌq-ə-ŋqo.
1SG-ERG 1SG.S/A-take-EP-3SG.O knife.ABS.SG table-EP-SUP-EP-ABL
'I took the knife from the table.'
- b. **yəmmo** t-in-ekmit-ə-k wala-k.
1SG.ABS 1SG.S/A-AP-take-EP-1SG.S knife-LOC
'I took/armed myself with a knife.'

- The agent of *ekmit* 'take' is *yəm* '1SG' in both cases. Nevertheless, the case of the agent changes in correlation with the case of the demoted object.

1. ERG as inherent case assigned by v :

- Difference between case assignment and θ -role not expected.

2. ERG as upwards dependent case:

- Alternation between ERG and ABS in the external argument of *take* in correlation with the case of object predictable.

2.3 Wh-movement feeding ERG

- (5) a. **yəmmo** t-ə-valom-ə-k, [əno ʔewŋəto-na-k
1SG.ABS 1SG.S/A-EP-hear-EP-1SG.S [that Hewngyto-OBL.SG-ERG
Ø-j-ə-t̃ɕim-aw-nin kojŋ-o].
2/3.S/A.IND-CS-EP-break-VBLZ-3SG.A > 3.O cup-ABS.PL]
'I heard that Hewngyto broke cups.'
- b. *jej-u* { **yə-nan** / ***yət̃ɕt̃ɕi** } Ø-valom-na-w, [əno
what-ABS.PL { 2SG-ERG / *2SG.ABS } 2/3.S/A.IND-hear-3.O-3PL [that
ʔewŋəto-na-k Ø-j-ə-t̃ɕim-aw-nin _]
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
 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 θ -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.¹
 - Assumption: *Wh*-movement is successive-cyclic, i.e. it passes through intermediate Spec-CP positions (cf. previous recitations).

¹Abramovitz 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.

(5a') *Declarative sentence*

- i. [TP I_[Case: _] heard [CP that [TP Hewngyto_[Case: _] broke cups_[Case: _]]]]
- ii. [TP I_[Case: _] heard [CP that [TP Hewngyto_[Case: ERG] broke cups_[Case: _]]]]
- iii. [TP I_[Case: _] heard [CP that [TP Hewngyto_[Case: ERG] broke cups_[Case: ABS]]]]
- iv. [TP I_[Case: ABS] heard [CP that [TP Hewngyto_[Case: ERG] broke cups_[Case: ABS]]]]
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(5b') *Interrogative sentence*

- i. [TP I_[Case: _] heard [CP that [TP Hewngyto_[Case: _] broke what all_[Case: _]]]]
- ii. [TP I_[Case: _] heard [CP that [TP Hewngyto_[Case: ERG] broke what all_[Case: _]]]]
- iii. [TP I_[Case: _] heard [CP what all_[Case: _] that [TP Hewngyto_[Case: ERG] broke t]]]
- iv. [TP I_[Case: ERG] heard [CP what all_[Case: _] that [TP Hewngyto_[Case: ERG] broke t]]]
- v. [TP I_[Case: ERG] heard [CP what all_[Case: ABS] that [TP Hewngyto_[Case: ERG] broke t]]]
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- 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.