LUND UNIVERSITY

Case: abstract vs. morphological

Sigurðsson, Halldor Armann

[Link to publication](#)

8

Case: Abstract vs. Morphological

Halldór Ármann Sigurðsson[1]

Abstract

This paper explores the consequences of the universalist view of case. It argues, first, that all languages have the same set of deep cases, second, that morphological case is a PF exponent that basically has a distinctiveness function (like other PF elements) and not the function of 'making sense', and, third, that case is matched vP-internally, DPs thereby becoming amenable/visible to movement out of vP for the purpose of matching other features than case, most importantly Person.

1   Introduction

In this paper I shall discuss some consequences of the idea, advocated by Chomsky (1981 and subsequent work), that case is a universal feature of language. In particular, I shall address the question of how this basic idea affects our understanding of the nature of morphological case and its correlation with abstract case.

Typological research (Nichols 1992, 90) indicates that around 45% of the languages of the world are caseless, whereas around 50% might be case languages, the rest being case-poor languages of roughly the English/French type (i.e. with overt case marking only on pronouns).[2] Chinese is probably the best known caseless language, cf. the following examples (from Li and Thompson 1990, 825-827; for typographic convenience tones are not indicated; A, S and P are used in the usual typological sense of Agent, Subject, Patient, see e.g. Comrie 1989):

(1)   a.   **Ta** bu chi rou.   *Ta* = A
          s/he not eat meat
          'He/She does not eat meat.'

      b.   **Ta** bu kaixin.   *Ta* = S
          s/he not happy
          'He/She is not happy.'

      c.   Wo jiao **ta** mai juzi   chi.   *Ta* = P
          I   tell   s/he buy orange eat
          'I told him/her to buy oranges to eat.'

The question raised by languages of this sort is, simply: Is it meaningful to say that these languages have case, albeit only in a non-morphological or abstract sense? The same question is in part raised by languages of the English type. Consider (2):

(2)   a.   Mary loves Rose.   ('NOM' – V – 'ACC')

      b.   She loves her.   (NOM – V – ACC)

Three approaches to facts of this sort are a priori possible:

(3)   THE MORPHOLOGICAL APPROACH
          The notion of case is purely morphological, hence full DPs in
          English and all DPs in Chinese are caseless, whereas English pro-
          nouns are 'cased'.

---

(4)   THE LANGUAGE-SPECIFIC APPROACH
        A language either has or has not a case system. Thus, all English
        DPs are 'cased', overtly or covertly, whereas case is absent from
        Chinese.

(5)   THE UNIVERSAL APPROACH
        DPs are universally 'cased', at least abstractly.

However, as we shall see, the morphological and the universal approaches
are not really mutually exclusive. That is, one may conceive of abstract case
as a universal feature or phenomenon (as in e.g. Chomsky 1981, 1995, 2000,
2001a), and – in addition – as a prerequisite of structural morphological
case-marking in languages that have such marking. This is the conception
that I shall argue for. It should be noted however that 'case' is a somewhat
unfortunate misnomer for the universal feature in question, but, for exposito-
ry ease, I stick to the standard terminology until in section 5 (where I replace
abstract 'case' by Argument Licensing).

The Universal Approach to case leads to an understanding that is very
different from most traditional conceptions of case. In particular, it forces us
to conceive of morphological case as a PF exponent, whereas abstract case
is 'radically abstract' in the sense that it is a narrow syntax phenomenon that
is not necessarily reflected or expressed in PF (although it often is).[3] As we
shall see, this means that one and the same 'deep' case can have many sur-
face exponents (or, in some languages, none), and, conversely, that one and
the same morphological case can be an exponent of many deep cases. Thus,
cases relate to meaning and structure in a similar fashion as grammatical
morphemes do. While a morpheme like the English –s, for instance, relates
to meaning and structure, it does not relate exclusively to any single, con-
stant meaning or structure.

In more general, the universal view of language developed by Chomsky
(2000, 2001a, 2001b) is bound to profoundly change our conception of the
relation between the PHYSICAL FORM of language (PF in spoken languages,
'Sign Form' in sign languages) and its underlying mental system (LF or nar-
row syntax). Given that language is basically uniform (the Uniformity Prin-
ciple of Chomsky 2001a, p. 2), it is inevitably the case that PF is arbitrary to
a much higher degree than usually assumed, not only cross-linguistically but
even language-internally. On one hand, language is 'over-efficient', i.e. it is
evident that features and categories are commonly present in a particular

---

[3] In the present approach PF includes not only traditional phonology and morphology but also
all movement that is not motivated in LF or narrow syntax. – For our purposes there is no
relevant distinction between the traditional Logical Form, LF, and the 'semantic component'
of Chomsky 2001b, and thus I shall stick to the traditional label, LF.

structure without being expressed in PF (see e.g. many of the facts discussed by Cinque 1999). An obvious example of this is Tense in morphologically non-tensed contexts and another one is null-arguments in non-inflectional languages like Chinese. On the other hand, language may also be abundantly redundant, tolerating considerable amount of 'morphological noise', that is, morphological variation that has no linguistic function, although it arguably has some social function (most importantly that of signaling one's belonging to a certain ethnic/social group). Arbitrary inflectional classes are a clear example. Thus, the subdivision of Icelandic nouns into 27 inflectional classes (according to the analysis of Svavarsdóttir 1993) has for the most part no semantic or linguistic function at all. In comparison, case is one of the more regular or well-behaved morphological categories. But, as we shall see, it is nonetheless much less well-behaved than usually believed.

At the outset, clarification of some 'case-terms' is in place:

Case is a relation between a DP (or an argument) and its syntactic surrounding, and this relation may be semantically associated or not. Semantically associated case is *inherent* case, whereas case that is not so associated is *structural* case. Both inherent and structural cases may but need not be reflected by *morphological* case (m-case). Case that is not morphologically reflected is merely *abstract* case or *deep* case. In most European case-languages, abstract cases and m-cases are linked such that the abstract inherent cases are expressed by the dative or the genitive (and, less commonly, the instrumental, locative or ablative), whereas the abstract structural cases are expressed by the nominative or the accusative (and the genitive DP-internally).

There is plausibly a universal 'case space' or case continuum, comprising all the relations that DPs (or arguments) may enter into. Typological research (cf. Blake 1994, p. 157 ff.) reveals certain regularities or at least tendencies in the structuring of this continuum. Thus, if two languages, X and Y, have for instance a four case system of the familiar Icelandic/German type, then it is probably more likely than not that a DP relation R that is expressed by the dative in language X is also expressed by the dative in language Y. – Nonetheless, as mentioned above and as we shall see more clearly, the correlations between individual m-cases and abstract cases are usually arbitrary to a considerable extent.

The paper is organized as follows: Section 2 discusses the nature of universal inherent cases and their correlation with morphological case, claiming that the correlation is much more opaque and arbitrary than commonly believed. In section 3, it is illustrated that one and the same m-case may relate to a variety of different deep cases, even language-internally. Section 4 illustrates the opposite, namely that one and the same deep case may be reflected by various m-cases, not only cross-linguistically but also even language-

internally. Thus, it will be argued, m-case is a PF exponent serving the major purpose of distinctiveness, like other PF elements, and not the purpose of 'making sense' (although it typically relates to sense and/or structure). Sections 5 and 6 discuss structural case, arguing, first, that it is matched vP-internally, second, that vP-internal case-matching makes DPs visible to movement out of vP, and, third, that the vP-external 'work' that has standardly been attributed to nominative case and/or to EPP is brought about by Person (i.e. the primary 'purpose' of NP-movement is that of matching the Person feature of the Tense complex of the clause rather than to match nominative case or an EPP feature of Tense). Section 7 concludes the paper.

2   Inherent case

In an interview with Belletti and Rizzi, Chomsky (2002, p. 113) expresses his conception of case as follows:

> So, the inherent Cases, the ones which are semantically associated, are really not an imperfection: they are marking a semantic relation the interpreter has to know about (like plurality on nouns). On the other hand, why do we have Nominative and Accusative (or Ergative and Absolutive), what are they doing? They are not interpreted: nouns are interpreted exactly the same way whether they are Nominative or Accusative, and that is like inflectional features on adjectives or verbs: it looks as though they shouldn't be there … [but] they are there as perhaps an optimal method of implementing something else that must be there, namely dislocation.

We shall return to the structural cases in section 5. With respect to the inherent cases the most central question that arises is this:

> What are the universal inherent cases?

One of the best known attempts to come up with an answer to this question is that of Fillmore (1968, 1971), and there have been many more, of course (see Blake 1994, p. 63 ff.). I shall most certainly not try to improve on any of these. Our knowledge and understanding of language is as yet so limited that we are still far from being able to answer this 'straightforward' question – and it will in fact not be my concern here. However, some background speculations are in place.

Given a universalist view, it is clear that the traditional inherent m-cases, such as 'dative', 'genitive ' and so on, are *not* among the universal deep cases, since these, as will be discussed in sections 3 and 4, have multiple functions, varying not only cross-linguistically but also language-internally.

By definition, universal inherent cases must be constant across languages, which in turn means that they must be purely semantic in nature.

Thus, the following would seem to be among the a priori plausible candidates (and some of them are indeed among Fillmore's deep cases):

(6) a. The experiencer case (dative in many languages)

   b. The recipient case (dative in many languages)

   c. The possessor case (genitive in many languages)

   d. The partitive case (genitive or partitive in many languages)

   e. The instrument case (instrumental or dative in many languages)

In addition, local cases such as the 'at-case', the 'on-case', the 'in-case', the 'through-case' and so on, presumably belong to the universal inventory of deep inherent cases.

As the list in (6) would seem to suggest, I follow Fillmore in understanding the notion of deep case narrowly, assuming that the inherent deep cases are direct reflections of (or even tantamount to) theta-roles and local relations. However, as is well known, and as we shall see some examples of, morphological case-marking in many languages is sensitive to an array of other factors, most prominently aspect, mood and tense, but also other variables, such as lexical variation, style variation and the negation. Even though much of this 'extra' case variation is semantic in nature, I shall consistently distinguish it from case variation that reflects the deep cases.

Not only is morphological case variation dependent of various other factors than deep case. Some of the 'simple' and 'obvious' deep cases in (6) might in fact be complex, i.e. they might involve more than one layer of deep case. Consider the recipient case, as in the following examples:

English:
(7) a. John sends **me** the book at Christmas.

   b. John sends the book **to me** at Christmas.

Icelandic:
(8) a. Jón   sendir **mér**   bókina   á jólunum.
      John(N) sends   me(D) book.the(A) at Christmas.the(D)

   b. Jón   sendir bókina   **til mín** á jólunum.
      John(N) sends book.the(A) to   me(G) at Christmas.the(D)

As seen, the 'extra argument' of double object verbs like *send* and Icelandic *senda* may either be an indirect object (dative in Icelandic) or a prepositional object (genitive in Icelandic), and, as has been noted by many, there are

some subtle semantic and functional differences between the two. Thus, many linguists adhere to an analysis where the indirect object in the *a*-examples is a beneficiary, whereas the prepositional one in the *b*-examples is a plain recipient or goal. One way of conceiving of the alternation is therefore to say, simply, that some double object verbs can either select the 'beneficiary role/case' or the 'goal role/case'. Alternatively, however, one might want to propose that there is a correlation between the two argument structures, for instance such that the indirect object is also a goal, but additionally marked as beneficiary.[4] If so, the prepositional object has only the 'goal case', whereas the indirect object has the 'goal case' plus a second case layer, with the 'beneficiary case'.[5]

Similarly, many local cases involve more than one case layer (cf. e.g. the discussion in Kracht 2000). However, as already stated, exactly what the universal cases are will not be my concern here. Rather, my aim is to elucidate the nature of morphological case by showing, first, that one and the same deep case can be expressed by more than one m-case, even language-internally, and, second, that one and the same m-case can be an exponent of more than one deep case, also even language-internally. It follows that the correlation between deep case and surface case is to a considerable extent arbitrary, much more so than usually held. Secondly, it follows that m-case is strictly a PF phenomenon.

Before embarking on this undertaking, let us briefly consider the general correlation between the set of universal inherent cases and their exponents across languages. Given Chomsky's (e.g. 2000, 2001a) universalist view of language, and the universalist view of case examined here, we are forced to assume that the whole set of universal deep cases is present (in LF or narrow syntax) in all languages. However, as best seen by caseless languages of the Chinese type, the deep cases need not be overtly expressed at all (at least not by morphological or lexical means). Commonly, also, a particular deep case may be expressed in quite different ways in even closely related languages, as we shall see some examples of. In this respect, deep cases are no different from e.g. tense and aspect features that are plausibly present in LF or narrow syntax in all languages but are overtly expressed (or not) in a widely varying fashion across languages (Cinque 1999, Julien 2002 and many others).

The general view of universal deep cases and their surface exponents in individual languages assumed here may be sketched as follows (where the arrow reads 'is reflected by' or 'is realized as'):

---

[4] This entails that 'complex roles' are legitimate (cf. the discussion in Hornstein 1999).

[5] As we shall see in section 4.2, there are however instances of similar variation that do not seem to reflect or involve any differences with respect to deep case.

(9)   Deep case 1   → Exponents 0, 1, 2, 3, …
        Deep case 2   → Exponents 0, 1, 2, …
        …
        Deep case n   → Exponents n, …
        …

This should be understood such that: First, deep cases need not always have an overt exponent (= 'Exponent 0'), even in case languages; second, different deep cases may (but often do not) have some common exponents; third, one and the same deep case may have varying exponents (i.e. there is a many-to-many correlation between deep cases and m-cases). As we shall see, all these generalizations may hold even internal to a single language. I shall demonstrate these generalizations (or 'anti-generalizations', if one likes) in the next two sections, by using data from mainly Icelandic.

3   A single exponent of many deep cases: The Icelandic dative

The inherent morphological cases typically have multiple meanings or functions. Thus, for instance, the Icelandic dative is used in at least the nine ways or functions listed below:[6]

(10) a.   Subjects   (e.g. '**me** feels good' = 'I feel good')
     b.   Indirect objects   (e.g. 'she gave **me** the book')
     c.   Direct objects   (e.g. 'she invited **me**')
     d.   Free benefactives   (e.g. 'she wrote **me** a poem')
     e.   Possessors   (e.g. 'she looked into eyes **me**'
                                    ='my eyes')
     f.   Prepositional objects   (e.g. 'she stayed by **me**')
     g.   Objects of adjectives   (e.g. 'she was **me** nice' = 'nice to me')
     h.   Instrumentals   (e.g. 'she stuck him **a knife**'
                                    = 'with a knife')
     i.   Other adverbials   (e.g. 'she was **me** older'
                                    = 'older than me')

Moreover, even within these 'categories' the dative may reflect or relate to various semantics. In the following, I shall exemplify and elucidate the various 'categories', albeit only very briefly.

---

[6] Icelandic has four morphological cases, nom, acc, dat and gen (N, A, D, G in glosses). Nominative is the canonical case of subjects, predicate NPs and clause-external or isolated DPs (the dictionary form, etc.), accusative is the canonical case of verbal objects, dative the canonical case of indirect objects and of prepositional objects, genitive the canonical case of adnominal possessors – to mention only the most central or typical functions of the cases.

DATIVE SUBJECTS may for instance be experiencers, benefactives or themes (Jónsson 1997-1998, and many others), as illustrated in (11):

(11) a. **Henni** líkaði þessi hugmynd.
  her(D) liked this idea(N)
  'She liked this idea.'

 b. **Henni** hlotnaðist mikill heiður.
  her(D) got much honor(N)
  'She acquired great honor. / She was greatly honored.'

 c. **Rigningunni** slotaði.
  rain.the(D) abated/ceased

Although non-nominative subjects are a very characteristic and a robust trait of Icelandic (as has been discussed by many), by far the most subjects in the language are nominative.[7] – Accordingly, all subjects that are not explicitly marked as either accusative (A), dative (D) or genitive (G) in the glosses in the following are nominative.

DATIVE INDIRECT OBJECTS. Dative is the most common case of indirect objects, as in (12):

(12) Hún gaf **mér** bókina.
  she gave me(D) book.the(A)

In addition to this most common pattern of Nom-Dat-Acc in the double object construction, however, several other patterns are found as well, e.g. Nom-Dat-Dat and Nom-Acc-Dat, where the direct or 'second' object shows up in the dative (Yip, Maling and Jackendoff 1987).

DATIVE DIRECT OBJECTS. Accusative is the unmarked direct object case in Icelandic, but the dative is also quite common (cf. Barðdal 1993, 2001, Maling 2002), both as for instance benefactives and themes, as illustrated in (13):

---

[7] Around 94% of all subjects in the counts reported on in Barðdal (2001) were nominative. Jónsson (1998) contains a list of around 690 non-passive predicates that take a non-nominative subject, but many of them are 'complex' in the sense that they enter into more than one quirky construction (i.e. the number of quirky constructions is considerably higher). In addition, certain quirky constructions are productive and thus cannot really be listed, and many passives take a non-nominative subject.

(13) a. Við hjálpuðum **henni**.
         we   helped   her(D)

     b. Við köstuðum**boltanum**.
         we   threw   ball.the(D)

Dative marking of both object benefactives and object themes that are put into motion is productive (as demonstrated by Barðdal 2001).

DATIVE FREE BENEFACTIVES. For some reasons, free benefactives are more heavily constrained in Icelandic than in for instance English (cf. Holmberg and Platzack 1995, p. 201-204). As in many other languages, they are in the dative when found, as illustrated in (14):

(14) a. Ég lagaði **mér** kaffi.
         I   made me(D) coffee

     b. Hann orti   **henni** ljóð.
         he   wrote   her(D) a-poem

POSSESSIVE DATIVES. Genitive is the unmarked 'possessor-case' in Icelandic, as in many related languages. However, the possessor relation is sometimes expressed by the dative (see further below), as in (15):

(15) a. Hún horfði í augu   **honum**.
         she looked in eyes(A) him(D)
         'She looked in(to) his eyes.'

     b. Hún gekk   við hlið **mér**.
         she walked   at side(A) me(D)
         'She walked by my side.'

PREPOSITIONAL DATIVES. Some prepositions have a semantic choice between accusative and dative complements (see further below). However, most prepositions make an arbitrary selection of one of the three oblique cases, accusative, dative or genitive. Dative is the most common prepositional case, taken by e.g. *hjá* 'by', *frá* 'from', *að* 'toward' and *af* 'of' (as well as by many other prepositions), cf. the following examples:

(16) a. Hún stóð   hjá **honum**.
         she stood by him(D)

     b. Hún fór   frá **honum**.
         she went from him(D)

c. Hún fór að **húsinu**.
    she went toward house.the(D)

d. Hún fór af **hjólinu**.
    she went of bike.the(D)

DATIVE OBJECTS OF ADJECTIVES. Some adjectives take a DP comple-
ment (either postposed or preposed). Adjectival objects of this kind are most
commonly dative. Some examples:

(17) a. Hann er líkur **henni**.
         he is similar her(D)
         'He resembles her.'

b. Hún var trú **manninum sínum**.
    she was faithful husband self's(D)
    'She was faithful to her husband.'

c. Hann var **henni** ekki samboðinn.
    he was for-her(D) not good-enough

d. Skórnir voru **honum** alveg mátulegir.
    shoes.the were for-him(D) quite fitting

DATIVE INSTRUMENTALS. Instrumental DPs are regularly dative. Many
such instrumentals are somewhat stilted or archaic (as compared to the more
common prepositional instrumentals). The examples in (18) are however
(among many that are) relatively unmarked:

(18) a. Hann talaði **hárri röddu**.
         he spoke loud voice(D)
         'He spoke with a loud voice.'

b. Ég skildi þetta **mínum eigin skilningi**.
    I understood this my own understanding(D)
    'I understood this in my own way.'

OTHER DATIVE ADVERBIALS. Not only instrumental DPs but also itera-
tive and (DP-internal) comparative DPs are datives, as illustrated in (19)
and (20):

(19) Hún söng lagið **fjórum sinnum**.
      she sang song.the four times(D)

(20) a. Hún er **öðrum** duglegri.
        she is to-others(D) more-efficient
        'She is more efficient than others.'

    b. Hún er **tíu sentímetrum** hærri en þú.
        she is en centimeters(D) taller than you [are]

    c. Við eigum dóttur og **tveim árum** yngri son.
        we have a-daughter and a-two years(D) younger son(A)

All these facts illustrate, quite clearly, that the morphological dative in Icelandic represents or reflects many deep cases (and this can, at least to a certain extent, be illustrated for many other languages). This is not really surprising, considering the historical fact that the dative in Germanic is an amalgam of many Proto-Indo-European cases (ablative, instrumental, locative, dative).

Moreover, it even happens that the dative has almost entirely opposite meanings. Thus, the prepositional dative may have an *atelic* reading, whereas dative direct objects of certain verbs may have a *telic* or a 'completed' reading. Consider the familiar contrast between the prepositional accusative and the prepositional dative in (21) (found also in e.g. German):

(21) a. Hún hljóp í **bæinn**.
        she ran in town.the(A)
        'She ran (towards) downtown.'

    b. Hún hljóp (um) í **bænum**.
        she ran (around) in town.the(D)
        'She ran (around) downtown.'

The accusative in (21a) has a telic reading (the event coming to an end), whereas the dative in (21b) is 'durative' or *atelic*. The opposite is true of the direct objects in (22) (cf. Barðdal 1993, Maling 2002):

(22) a. Hann var allan daginn að sópa **ruslið**.
        he was all day.the to sweep garbage.the(A)
        'He was sweeping the garbage all day.'

    b. Hann var allan daginn að sópa **ruslinu** burt.
        he was all day.the to sweep garbage.the(D) away
        'It took him all day to sweep the garbage away.'

Here, the accusative has an 'affected' and a 'durative' atelic reading, whereas the dative has a 'completed' *telic* reading.[8]

Thus, it is not only the case that the Icelandic dative has multiple functions, its functions cannot even be said to have any common core or kernel.[9] This situation is not exceptional or odd in any way, I believe, but generally true of m-case and even of morphological variation in general. That is to say, any attempt, in e.g. the spirit of Hjelmslev (1935-1937) and Jakobson (1936), to find the 'basic meaning' of a particular morphological case is bound to be futile (much as any attempt to find the 'basic meaning' of e.g. English –*s*). This is certainly true of 'individual' m-cases such as 'the dative' and 'the genitive' cross-linguistically, and, as we have seen, it is even true language-internally in at least some languages.

This is of course not to say that m-cases are unrelated to deep case or other semantics (see further section 4.2), but it *is* to say that m-case is much less regular and predictable than usually believed by linguists: It usually does relate to meaning and structure, but it does so in many and partly contradicting ways.

4 Many exponents of a single deep case

4.1 Cross-linguistic variation: a few observations

It is of course a well known fact that one and the same deep case may have different exponents across languages. Thus, for instance, experiencer predicates such as *like* were Dat-Nom predicates in Older Germanic, including Old English (cf. e.g. Allen 1996, Eythórsson 2000), and still are in German and Icelandic, whereas they have become Dat-Acc predicates in (spoken) Faroese and plain Nom-Acc predicates in the other modern Germanic languages, including English. Compare:

(23) a. Mir   gefallen sie.   German (DAT-NOM)
        me(D)   like(3pl) they(N)
        'I like them.'

     b. Mér   líka   þeir.   Icelandic (DAT-NOM)
        me(D)   like(3pl) they(N)
        'I like them.'

     c. I like them.   English (NOM-ACC)

---

[8] Svenonius (2002) pursues a different approach to accusative/dative pairs of this sort, where the accusative is analyzed as a measure of the progress of the event.

[9] Or, if they have such core meanings at some level of abstraction, these can easily be masked and even wiped out by other factors.

(24)   Mær   líkar   henda filmin.   Faroese (DAT-ACC)
         me(D)   likes   this   film.the(A)   (from Barnes 1986, p. 18)
         'I like this film.'

Another source of cross-linguistic variation comes from the simple fact that deep case is often not expressed by morphological case in language X whereas it is in language Y. Thus, Swedish and German have 'zero partitive case' in the so-called pseudopartitive construction (cf. Delsing 1993, p. 185 ff.),[10] whereas both English and Icelandic must resort to a preposition:

(25) a. Tre flaskor **vin** var   på bordet.   *Swedish*
         three bottles wine were on table.the
         'Three bottles of wine were on the table.'

     b. Drei Flaschen **Wein** waren auf dem Tisch.   *German*
         three bottles(N) wine(N) were   on   the table
         'Three bottles of wine (were on the table).'

(26)   Three bottles ***(of) wine** were on the table.   *English*

(27) a. Þrjár flöskur   ***(af) víni** voru á borðinu.   *Icelandic*
         three bottles(N) (of) wine(D)   were on table.the

     b. *Þrjár flöskur **vín**   voru á   borðinu.
         three bottles(N) wine(N) were   on table.the

     c. ?Þrjár flöskur   **víns** voru á   borðinu.
         three   bottles(N) wine(G) were on table.the

This is particularly telling in view of the fact that Swedish is of the exceptional English/French type of case languages (with case-marking only on pronouns), whereas German and Icelandic have very similar systems of four cases.[11] One way of characterizing this Swedish/German vs. English/Icelandic dichotomy is to say that Swedish and German resort to purely structural means in phrases of the 'three bottles (of) wine' type, whereas Icelandic and English have to express the pseudopartitive relation by lexical and morphological means. However, deep 'cases' may be reflected by yet other means, for instance prosodic ones. Thus, while telicity can be ex-

---

[10] Alternatively, one could say that at least German applies case agreement in the pesudopartitive construction (cf. (25b)), but the difference between these two formulations is immaterial here.

[11] In the genuine partitive construction, Icelandic has 'zero partitive case' and sometimes it may also express the partitive relation with the genitive (in a somewhat similar fashion as Russian, cf. e.g. Neidle 1988, p. 89 ff.). – See further section 4.2.

pressed with case in locative phrases in e.g. German and Icelandic, it may be expressed by intonation in Swedish, as illustrated in (28):[12]

(28) a. Peter **'**körde på **'**muren.
　　　 Peter drove (up)on wall.the

　　 b. Peter körde **'**på muren
　　　 Peter drove into wall.the

Compare this to the Icelandic case-marking in (29):

(29) a. Pétur keyrði á **veggnum**.
　　　 Peter drove (up)on wall.the(D)

　　 b. Pétur keyrði á **vegginn**.
　　　 Peter drove in to wall.the(A)

　　 Yet another source of cross-linguistic variation arises from the fact that language may express deep cases by lexical or morphological variation of *non-DPs*. Thus locative adverbs in the Germanic languages display variation ('inflection') that is strongly reminiscent of some of the local cases in e.g. Finnish.[13] Consider the Finnish cases in (30), of the noun *talo* 'hus', and compare them to the Icelandic adverbial variation in (31):

(30) a. Inessive: *talossa* 'in(side) the house'
　　 b. Illative: *taloon* 'into the house'
　　 c. Elative: *talosta* 'from within the house'

(31) a. Reykurinn var **inni í** húsinu.
　　　 smoke.the was inside in house.the(D)
　　　 'The smoke was in the house.'

　　 b. Reykurinn fór **inn í** húsið.
　　　 smoke.the went into in house.the(A)
　　　 'The smoke went into the house.'

　　 c. Reykurinn kom **innan úr** húsinu.
　　　 smoke.the came within from house.the(D)
　　　 'The smoke came from within the house.'

A few of the most central adverbs that 'inflect' in this way are listed below:

---

[12] Cecilia Falk and Lars-Olof Delsing, p.c. This is a general phenomenon in Swedish.
[13] Thanks to Peter Svenonius for drawing my attention to this.

(32)

Place X	Toward X	From X
uppi 'up'	upp	ofan
niðri 'down'	niður	neðan
úti 'out'	út	utan
inni 'in(side)'	inn	innan
frammi 'in front'	fram	framan

As seen, these lexical items regularly express some of the same deep case relations that are expressed by the locative cases in languages like Finnish.

We conclude: Abstract or deep cases are not only expressed by different m-cases across languages but also by various other strategies than case-marking, for instance purely structurally, by prosodic means, by markers like prepositions, and even by 'inflection' of non-DPs. This is of course far from surprising – in view of the fact that languages differ widely with respect to their inventory of m-cases and other means to express deep case (see Blake 1994). More unexpectedly, however, one and the same deep case may be expressed by various means even within one and the same language. I shall now illustrate this for Icelandic.

4.2 Language-internal variation

As we saw in section 3, the Icelandic dative is used in a wide array of functions and constructions. There is presumably more than one reason why this situation arises, the simplest one being the plain fact that there are many more deep cases than there are m-cases, i.e. each m-case is bound to represent more than one deep case. However, the anomaly is bidirectional and not merely unidirectional, so to speak. That is, even language-internally, one and the same deep case may be reflected by more than one m-case.

As in many related languages, the possessive relation in Icelandic is usually expressed by genitive case of the possessor, cf. the following examples:

(33) a. hugmynd **Ólafs**
   idea   Olaf's(G)
   'Olaf's idea'

   b. bróðir **hans**
   brother his(G)
   'his brother'

In the 'inalienable possession construction', however, there are two alternative ways of marking the possessor, as a bare dative (as mentioned in section 3) or as a prepositional dative. Thus, we get the following variation:

(34) a. Augu **hans** voru blá.   GENITIVE
eyes his(G) were blue
'His eyes were blue.'

b. Augun **í honum** voru blá.   PREPOSITIONAL DATIVE
eyes.the in him(D) were blue
'His eyes were blue.'

(35) a. Hún horfði í augu **hans**.   GENITIVE
she looked in eyes his(G)
'She looked in(to) his eyes.'

b. Hún horfði í augu **honum**.   BARE DATIVE
she looked in eyes him(D)
'She looked in(to) his eyes.'

Similarly, there is a three-way variation in the so-called pronominal partitive construction (cf. Delsing 1993, p. 187), as illustrated below:

(36) a. Sumir **mennirnir** fóru.   ZERO-PARTITIVE
some(N) men.the(N) left   ('case agreement')
'Some of the men left.'

b. Sumir **mannanna** fóru.   GENITIVE
some(N) men.the(G) left
'Some of the men left.'

c. Sumir af **mönnunum** fóru.   PREPOSITIONAL DATIVE
some(N) of men.the(D) left
'Some of the men left.'

In my discussion in section 2 of prepositional objects vs. indirect objects, I suggested that the surface difference between the two is a reflection of a deep case difference. In contrast, the variation in at least (36) does not seem to express any underlying LF differences, that is, the different surface markings do not convey any discernable differences in meaning (as suggested by the English translations).[14]

---

[14] On the other hand, there are subtle aspectual differences between at least the plain genitive and the bare dative in (35), as pointed out to me by an observant reviewer.

Historical development illustrates the same point. Thus, for instance, some Icelandic verbs may take a genitive object (cf. e.g. Einarsson 1949, 112). However, as genitive case-marking of objects is gradually getting more stilted and archaic, genitive objects are often replaced by prepositional objects. Thus, we get variation of the following sort (relating to formality and other similar 'style' factors):

(37) a. Hún beið **hans**.   GENITIVE OBJECT
       she waited him(G)
       'She waited for him.'

    b. Hún beið **eftir honum**.   PREPOSITIONAL OBJECT
       she waited for him(D)
       'She waited for him.'

(38) a. Hún leitaði **hans**.   GENITIVE OBJECT
       she looked him(G)
       'She searched/looked for him.'

    b. Hún leitaði **að honum**.   PREPOSITIONAL OBJECT
       she looked for him(D)
       'She searched/looked for him.'

As we saw in (22) above, dative verbal objects may express or relate to 'completeness' or telicity. In contrast, genitive verbal objects are often ANTI-TELIC (rather than merely atelic), taken by verbs like *biðja* 'ask for', *bíða* 'wait for', *krefjast* 'demand', *leita* 'look for, search for', *óska* 'wish for', *sakna* 'miss' and *spyrja* 'ask' (i.e. they are often taken by verbs that denote an unfulfilled feeling/anticipation or as yet an unsucceeded process).[15] Thus, the inherent m-cases may, at least in part, be analyzed as being matched against vP-internal aspectual heads (types or instances of 'small v', cf. Arad 1999; see also Josefsson 1998 for similar ideas).[16]

Interesting as observations of this sort may be, the fact remains that the Genitive/PP alternation in (37) and (38) does not relate to any discernable semantic variation (i.e. the PPs are just as antitelic as the genitives). Similarly, to mention only one additional case, many accusative subjects are being replaced by dative or nominative ones in the so-called 'dative/nominative-sickness' dialect of Icelandic, without any concomitant shift of meaning (cf. Eythórsson 2000, 2002 and the references cited there).

---

[15] Like so many other observations with regard to case-semantics, however, this is only a tendency, not a true generalization (cf. Einarsson 1949, 112-113); interestingly, though, those genitive verbal objects that have become obsolete are typically not anti-telic.

[16] Svenonius (2002) advocates a similar approach to the Icelandic accusative.

There is of course no denying that case variation of the sorts so briefly illustrated above often relates to some other variation, for instance lexical variation. Thus, the DP in the partitive construction in (36) above can be pronominalized in both the genitive and prepositional variants, but not in the 'zero partitive case' variant, as illustrated below:

(39) a. *Sumir   **þeir**   fóru.
          some(N) they(N) left

    b. Sumir   **þeirra** fóru.
          some(N) they(G) left
          'Some of them left.'

    c. Sumir   af **þeim**   fóru.
          some(N) of them(D) left
          'Some of them left.'

Similarly, interesting observations, both syntactic and lexical, can be made about the distribution of for instance the different variants in the 'inalienable possession construction' in (34)-(35), and the same holds of course true of e.g. the variation between a somewhat formal genitive object and a more neutral prepositional object. However, the lexical and/or syntactic generalizations that emerge from such observations do not result from any differences with respect to deep case as such, it seems. Thus, whatever the reason may be that *Sumir mennirnir* 'Some of the men' in (36a) is well-formed, whereas *Sumir þeir* in (39a) is ill-formed, it is plausibly not related to deep case. Similarly, deep case is reasonably not 'responsible' for the fact that *augun í honum*, 'eyes.the in him(D) = his eyes', is perfectly well-formed, whereas for instance *hugmyndin í honum*, 'idea.the in him(D) = his idea' is ill-formed.

Finally, arbitrary lexical case is of course not a reflection of deep case. Thus, for instance, some Icelandic transitive verbs 'choose' to take either a dative theme-object (quite common, cf. Barðdal 2001, Maling 2002) or a genitive theme-object (rare). Consider the examples in (40):

(40) a. Við   fengum **mikið fé**.
          we(N) got   much money(A)

    b. Við   söfnuðum **miklu fé**.
          we(N) collected much money(D)

    c. Við   öfluðum **mikils fjár**.
          we(N) obtained   much   money(G)

This is reminiscent of prepositional selection of cases, as in (41):

(41) a. Við   fórum í   **land**.
         we(N) went in land(A)
         'We went ashore.'

  b. Við   fórum að   **landi**.
      we(N) went toward land(D)
      'We went ashore.'

  c. Við   fórum til **lands**.
      we(N) went to land(G)
      'We went ashore.'

Clearly, there is no reason to assume any deep case differences between the DPs in at least (41) (nor is there presumably in (40)).[17] Rather, redundant form variation of this sort is purely morphophonological. Interestingly, the PF-processes involved may trigger 'inherent' morphological case-marking even where there is no inherent deep case, that is, we may get datives and genitives even where structural accusative would seem to be the straightforward and the expected option; see further section 5. Similarly, many verbs make an arbitrary selection of a dative or an accusative (quirky) subject case instead of the unmarked and otherwise expected nominative, as illustrated in (42):[18]

---

[17] There are certain aspectual differences between the readings in (41), but these are entirely dependent on the prepositions themselves.

[18] By referring to arbitrary case-selection of this sort as 'lexical', I am following tradition. It is worth noticing, however, that case-selection of this sort is reminiscent of purely phonological processes, like for instance assimilation, vowel harmony and the like. Thus, a DP complement of the preposition *að* 'toward' has to 'agree' with it by showing up in the dative, whereas a DP complement of the preposition *til* 'to(ward)' has to 'agree' with it by showing up in the genitive. As we have seen, the 'agreement' involved is obviously not controlled by the semantics of the prepositions in question. Hence, the traditional approach is to invoke special lexical features of the prepositions, requiring the dative vs. the genitive, respectively. However, features of this sort are of course both theoretically aribtrary and redundant. One could just as well say that the 'prepositional PF-string' /að/ requires dative whereas the 'prepositional PF-string' /til/ requires the genitive. In fact, Icelandic offers some interesting indications in favor of such an approach. Thus, the preposition *um* 'about, around' takes the accusative and so do all other prepositions that contain the string /um/, such as *umfram, gegnum* and *kringum* ('exceeding', 'through', 'around', respectively). Similarly, all prepositions that contain /-an/ take the genitive, for instance *innan* 'within' and *sunnan* 'south of'. – In order to avoid unnecessary complications, however, I shall keep on referring to case-selection of this sort as 'lexical'.

(42) a. **Hún** skelfist hættuna. NOM – ACC
she(N) is-terrified (by) danger.the(A)
'She is terrified/horrified by the danger.'

    b. **Hana** hryllir við hættunni. ACC – PP
her(A) is-horrified by danger.the(D)
'She is horrified by the danger.'

    c. **Henni** ógnar hættan. DAT – NOM
her(D) terrifies danger.the(N)
'She is terrified/horrified by the danger.'

    Let me at this point stress that I am *not* claiming that morphological case is blind to semantics. On the contrary, many interesting observations can be made about Icelandic 'case-semantics' (as well as 'case-semantics' in many other languages). Some such observations are stated below:

(43) a. Agentive subjects are nominative.

    b. Indirect objects are either dative or accusative.

    c. Most benefactive (indirect or direct) objects are dative.

    d. Most malefactive (indirect or direct) objects are accusative.

    e. Instrumental DP-'objects' are dative.

    f. If a lexical item has a choice between an accusative or a dative complement, then that choice is normally semantically controlled.

More such observations can be made.[19] Notice, however, that all statements of this sort are at best implicational and involve multiple preconditioning (i.e. there seems *never* to be a one-to-one correlation between deep case and m-case). Thus, the statement in (43a) that agentive subjects are nominative has roughly the following logical form:

(44) $\forall$x: (DP(x) & subject(x) & agent(x)) $\rightarrow$ nominative(x)

Similarly, each of the other statements in (43) involves two ore more pre-conditions.

    However, what I *am* claiming is this:

---

[19] Thus, Jónsson (2001) develops arguments in favor of the claim that psych-verbs that denote 'strong positive feelings' must have a nominative subject, whereas some psych-verbs that denote strong negative feelings take a non-nominative subject. Obviously, however, the notions 'strong positive/negative feelings' are not easy to measure or evaluate.

I.   M-case is a (morphophonological) PF phenomenon.

II.   Like so many other morphophonological phenomena, m-case is preconditioned by many different factors. One of the factors is deep case, but other factors are for instance idiosyncratic lexical (or PF) case-selection, lexical semantics (of both 'case-assignees' and 'case-assigners'), aspectual semantics and even style or register factors like 'formal'.

III.   The function of m-case is thus not 'to make sense' (even though it often relates to sense) but 'to make a difference' (like other PF elements), that is, to make DPs more discernable or visible to their syntactic surroundings.

In other words, making a distinction between, say, datives and genitives is not only a cost but also a virtue, and the distinction so made may serve various purposes (depending on an array of other features present, most prominently deep case). Thus, certain lexical items may even 'choose' to select a 'differently' case-marked complement (say a genitive theme) plainly for the fun of it, as it were, much like certain verbs, for example, have an irregular past tense form and certain nouns an irregular plural form. Language is in a way like lego blocks: The more variation in shapes and colors, the more fun! – Notice that we cannot explain variation of this sort away by simply saying that they are historical relics or accidents; it is obviously of some value to the child to learn and imitate 'quirky features' of this sort (in fact of considerable value, since considerable learning efforts are often involved). Minimally, imitating such features accurately serves the purpose of confirming the child's unequivocal belonging to his/her ethnic group (but often a much more complex social marking is involved).

Of course, however, 'boring economics' tend to level out the variation and the fun. In other words, there is a tension between distinctiveness and economy, and the balance between these two basic shaping forces of PF is variable and unstable.

5 Structural case

In case languages, the structural cases have visible exponents, as in the Icelandic examples in (45):

(45) a. María   þekkir Rós**u**.
          Mary(N)   knows   Rose(A)

  b. Rós**a**   þekkir Marí**u**.
      Rose(N)   knows   Mary(A)

Given a universalist view, the same 'cases' should also be present in languages like Chinese, cf. (46) (=(1) above):

(46) a. **Ta** bu chi rou.
          s/he not eat meat
          'He/She does not eat meat.

  b. **Ta** bu kaixin.
      s/he not happy
      'He/She is not happy.'

  c. Wo   jiao **ta**   mai juzi   chi.
      I   tell s/he buy orange eat
   'I told him/her to buy oranges to eat.'

However, this raises the immediate question of whether Chinese should be analyzed as an accusative or an ergative language:

Analysis 1: *Ta* a, b = Nom
             Ta c   = Acc

Analysis 2: *Ta* a   = Erg
             Ta b, c = Abs

In other words: Does *ta* in (46b) have the same 'case' as *ta* in (46a) or as *ta* in (46c)?

Caseless languages of the Chinese type obviously illustrate that the universal structural 'case' features do *not* amount to the structural m-cases, nominative, accusative and so on. Let us therefore refer to the these abstract features as AR_1 and AR_2, respectively ('Argument Relation 1', 'Argument Relation 2'). The structural matching of these features, in turn, is ARGUMENT LICENSING (AL).

Adopting and developing the strictly local approach to Argument Licensing (or 'case' matching) argued for in Sigurðsson (2000), I assume that little v* (cf. Chomsky 2001a) licenses both the 'nominative' feature AR_1 and the 'accusative' one, AR_2, the former being licenced directly by v*, the latter indirectly via V (V activated by v*). This is sketched in (47):

(47)
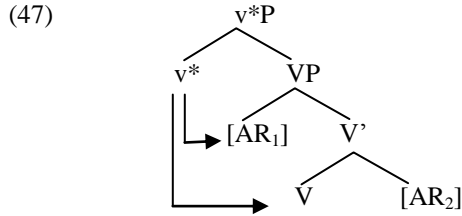
This deviates from the approach of Chomsky (2001a) in three ways: First, the subject is merged as Spec,VP and not as Spec,v*P. Second, the 'cases' or the Argument Relation features are 'siblings', having v* as their common source or 'parent'. Third, both features are locally and immediately matched by v* (and by v* plus V),[20] whereas AR_1 or nominative relates to Tense in Chomsky's approach. I shall return to these issues in section 6.

The most central question of structural case theory is whether Argument Licensing is tantamount to structural m-case marking in languages that have such marking, that is, whether there is a one-to-one correlation between nominative and accusative m-case and AR_1 and AR_2, respectively, in accusative languages like e.g. English and Icelandic, and, correspondingly, whether there is such a correlation between Argument Licensing (AL) and ergative and absolutive m-case in ergative languages. There is, of course, a correlation, but, as we shall see, it is only indirect and unidirectional. Thus, structural m-case marking of argument DPs is preconditioned by AL, whereas AL does not necessarily trigger structural m-case marking.

The evidence that Argument Licensing does not amount to structural m-case marking in even m-case languages is straightforward with regard to the 'accusative' feature AR_2, coming from the simple fact that not all direct objects in m-case languages are morphologically accusative, as we have already seen. Consider (40) = (48):

---

[20] In passive, unaccusative and other 'defective' constructions in the sense of Chomsky (2001a), AR_1 or the 'nominative' feature is matched by plain *v* (cf. Sigurðsson 2000).

(48) a. Við   fengum   **mikið fé**.
     we(N) got   much money(A)

    b. Við   söfnuðum **miklu fé**.
     we(N) collected much money(D)

    c. Við   öfluðum **mikils fjár**.
     we(N) obtained much money(G)

It is not clear that the inherent m-cases in examples of this sort are doing any linguistic 'work' that the structural accusative is not doing.[21] It is of course clear, though, that this is not usually the case, that is, the inherent m-cases normally do some 'extra linguistic job', for instance with respect to telicity or aspect, as we have seen. However, even when for instance a verbal theme object is in the dative or the genitive 'in order to' satisfy or match some aspectual features of the vP, it clearly also matches its structural 'accusative' feature, AR_2, as in e.g. (49b):

(49) a. Við fundum **hann**.
     we found   him(A)

    b. Við leituðum **hans**.
     we looked   him(G)
     'We looked for him.'

Similarly, evidence that the structural 'nominative' feature, AR_1, is not tantamount to nominative m-case comes from the fact that it can be matched by various types of morphologically non-nominative elements, for instance by locative PPs in English and by at least the locative *här* 'here' and *där* 'there' in (at least many varieties of) Swedish; notice the plural agreement of the verb in (50):

(50)   Under the table and behind the door are good places to hide.

(51)   Måste **här** städas   till jul?   (from Falk 1993: 273, 294)
      must here be-cleaned for Christmas
      'Is it necessary to clean here before Christmas?'

However, probably the most widely discussed evidence that 'subject licensing' is not equivalent to nominative case comes from Icelandic quirky

---

[21] Although they probably have a social function; by mastering the right cases the child signlas his/her 'rightful' belonging to a linguistic community/ethnic group.

subjects (i.e. accusative, dative and genitive subjects). Thus, as mentioned in section 4.1, certain verbs (and passives) in Icelandic have a Dat-Nom case frame that corresponds to a Nom-Acc frame in e.g. English:

(52)   **She** had not liked **them**.   NOM-ACC

(53)   **Henni** höfðu   ekki líkað **þeir**.   DAT-NOM
        her(D) had(3pl) not   liked they(N)
        'She had not liked them.'

As discussed by many (e.g. Thráinsson 1979, Zaenen, Maling and Thráinsson 1985, Sigurðsson 1989, 1992, Jónsson 1996), the dative in examples of this sort behaves syntactically as a prototypical subject, whereas the nominative behaves like a canonical object. Thus, it seems clear that the dative matches the structural 'nominative', AR_1, whereas the morphological nominative matches the structural 'accusative', AR_2. Contradictory as it may seem, however, the object nominative controls the agreement of the verb, thus being a 'true nominative' on at least the morphological level (see Sigurðsson 1996, 2000).

By far the most predicates in Icelandic are plain Nom or Nom-Acc predicates. Thus, the natural question arises whether quirky subjects are assigned invisible nominative, in addition to their visible non-nominative case.[22] Let us refer to this approach to quirky subjects as the DOUBLE CASE APPROACH (DCA, assumed by e.g. Jónsson 1996, 122 ff.). Alternatively, one might assume the SINGLE CASE APPROACH (argued for in e.g. Yip, Maling and Jackendoff 1987 and in many of my own works, e.g. 1989, 1992). On this latter approach, the structural m-cases are blocked from being assigned to DPs that already bear an inherent m-case (lexically or semantically selected), i.e. the inherent m-cases bleed the structural ones. At first sight, these alternatives might seem to be only notational variants of each other, but, as we shall see, they are not and do in fact give rise to both language-internal and cross-linguistic variation.

DCA is not a priori implausible. It is at least clear that m-case is not always visible even if it plausibly 'is there'. Thus, for instance, complex NPs usually only show their case partially. Consider (54):

---

[22] And, similarly, whether non-accusative objects are assigned an invisible accusative in addition to their visible non-accusative case. For simplicity, however, I limit the following discussion to subjects.

(54) a. Ég las   [**bókina**   [**nýútkomna**]].
      I   read book.the(A) new-out-come(A)
      'I read the book when it had just come out.'

    b. Ég las   [**bókina**   [í   kápunni]].
      I   read book.the(A)   in cover.the(D)
      'I read the book in the cover.'

    c. Ég las [**bókina**   [sem þú   sagðir mér frá]].
      I   read book.the(A) that you(N) told   me(D) from
      'I read the book you told me about.'

In all these cases, the whole object DP of *lesa* 'read' carries accusative. However, only in (54a) does the accusative 'spread' into or show up within the complement of N, the reason being that the N-complement in (54a) does not contain any case 'assigner', whereas the N-complements in (54b) and (54c) do contain such 'assigners'. In other words, the accusative 'is there' on the whole object DP in (54b) and (54c), but it is only 'partly visible', due to relativized minimality with respect to morphological case-marking.

Plausibly, complement clauses (of both verbs and prepositions) in case languages are assigned invisible m-case (or, exceptionally, visible m-case, cf. Blake 1994, 111 ff.), and there is evidence that subject clauses are assigned nominative case in accusative languages like English and Icelandic, coming from examples of the following sort:

(55)   [That Julia would ever marry Romeo] struck **us** as implausible.

(56)   [Að María skyldi segja þetta]   truflaði   **mig**.
        that Mary should say this   disturbed me(A)

The boldface accusatives indicate that the clausal subjects in examples of this sort are assigned nominative.[23] The reason why this is so is that structural accusative is contingent on structural nominative, that is:

(57)   Structural accusative (as opposed to inherent and default accusative) is licensed only if nominative is also 'active'.

This is roughly the reformulation of Burzio's generalization argued for by Yip, Maling and Jackendoff (1987) and later adopted by many others (e.g. Woolford 1997, 2003).

---

[23] Clauses are plausibly ungrammatical in 'Spec,IP' in e.g. English (*Was that Peter had arrived not strange?*) because of nonapplication of Person Raising (see section 6).

The correlation between the structural m-cases is like the one between an older and a younger sibling: You can be an only child and hence also a potential older sibling (= nominative) without having a younger sibling, but there is no way of being a younger sibling (= structural accusative) without having (or having had) an older sibling. This Sibling Correlation (SC) can be stated as an implication and the negation of its opposite, as in (58) (where '¬' denotes the negation):

(58) $(Acc \rightarrow Nom) \;\&\; \neg\,(Nom \rightarrow Acc)$

I shall return to SC in section 6.

It follows from this correlation that the clausal subjects in examples like (55) and (56) must be assumed to bear an invisible nominative case. In contrast, Icelandic quirky subjects do *not* bear any such invisible case, as seen by the fact that such subjects differ from clausal subjects in not 'triggering' accusative case marking of a second DP, the second DP instead showing up in the nominative (whether it is a nominative object or a subject of an infinitival complement). Hence, the following judgements:[24]

(59) a. Kjartani   líkuð**u**   **þessir bílar**/*þessa bíla.
          Kjartan(D) liked(3pl)   these   cars(N/*A)

    b. Honum þótt**u**   [**bílarnir**/*bílana vera góðir].
          him(D) thought(3pl)   cars.the(N/*A) be   good
          'He found/thought the cars to be good.'

In (spoken) Faroese, on the other hand, corresponding verbs have a Dat-Acc case frame.[25] The following examples are from Barnes (1986, 18-19, 34):

(60) a. Mær   líkar   henda **filmin**.
          me(D) likes   this   film.the(A)

    b. Kjartani   dámar   væl **nýggja bilsín**.
          Kjartan(D) likes   well   new   car his(A)

    c. Honum nýtist **fleiri bókahillar**.
          him(D) needs   more   bookshelves(A)

---

[24] Icelandic Dat-Nom constructions have been widely discussed in recent years, see Sigurðsson 1989, 95 ff., 1990-1991, 1992, 1996, 2000, Taraldsen 1995, Jónsson 1996, Chomsky 2000, 2001a, Boeckx 2000 and many others. For an earlier discussion, see e.g. Thráinsson 1979.

[25] Faroese has Dat-Nom passives (a fact to which I shall return shortly), showing, however, some tendency to replace them with Dat-Acc (see Barnes 1986).

(61) a. Henni tókti **bátin** ringan.
her(D) thought boat.the(A) bad

b. Honum tókti **skattin** vera ov lítlan.
him(D) thought tax.the(A) be too small

This 'Dat-Acc stage', instead of an older 'Dat-Nom stage', is also found in the history of English, i.e. the relevant case frames underwent the change Dat-Nom > Dat-Acc (or Oblique-Oblique) > Nom-Acc (Allen 1996, 10 ff.).[26]

The Icelandic-Faroese dichotomy is accounted for if the SIBLING CORRELATION applies to both languages and if quirky (non-passive) subjects in Faroese are assigned invisible nominative case, in contrast to Icelandic quirky subjects. It thus seems that the correlation between Argument Licensing (AL) and the structural m-cases varies across languages depending on several variables:

A   Languages like Chinese do not have any m-case, and hence there is no question of a correlation between AL and m-case.
B   Languages like English have only a PF-layer of structural m-case in addition to AL, hence showing an almost one-to-one correlation between AL and the structural cases.
C   Languages like German, Icelandic and Faroese have not only a layer of structural m-cases but also a layer of inherent m-cases; in German and Icelandic the inherent cases block or bleed the structural ones but in Faroese they do not.

The correlation between AL and phonological form in Chinese may be sketched as the simple translation or mapping rule in (62), where we disregard clausal arguments (and where the arrow is not inplicational, but instead reads: 'translates as'). The variable α ranges over the 'nominative' vs. the 'accusative' values (i.e. the Argument Relation (AR) values 1 and 2 in the diagram in (47) above):[27]

(62) $AR_\alpha \rightarrow DP_\alpha$

---

[26] On the other hand, Old Swedish had both a Dat-Nom pattern and a Dat-Acc pattern (the latter at least for the raising predicate *thykkia* 'think, find'), and the development of these patterns did not obviously go through a homogeneous Dat-Acc stage (for a thorough discussion, see Falk 1997).

[27] And, of course, over 'the subject DP' vs. the 'object DP' on the PF-side. This is however an oversimplification, as not only the relational features of the arguments but all their 'visible' features are PF-translated, but we disregard this for expository ease.

In English, the correlation is slightly more complex, with an extra layer of structural m-case, C_{Str} ('tier' in the terminology of Yip, Maling and Jackendoff 1987):

(63) C_{Str}
        $AR_\alpha \rightarrow DP_\alpha \quad \rightarrow \quad DP/C_\alpha$

Languages like Icelandic, German, Russian and so on have both a layer or a cycle of inherent and structural m-cases, the former blocking or bleeding the latter ('¬' stands for 'not applied' or 'blocked'):

(64) C_{Inh} C_{Str}
a. $AR_\alpha \rightarrow DP_\alpha \rightarrow DP/C_{Inh} \rightarrow \quad ¬ \quad = DP/C_{Inh}$
b. $AR_\alpha \rightarrow DP_\alpha \rightarrow \quad ¬ \quad \rightarrow \quad DP/C_\alpha = DP/C_\alpha$

In contrast, structural m-case marking may apply to inherently case-marked DPs in Faroese (and earlier stages of at least English), albeit only invisibly so (i.e. invisibly on the doubly cased DP itself); 'Ø' denotes the morphologically invisible structural case:

(65) C_{Inh} C_{Str}
a. $AR_\alpha \rightarrow DP_\alpha \rightarrow DP/C_{Inh} \rightarrow DP/C_{Inh}\text{-}C_{\alpha=Ø} = DP/C_{Inh}\text{-}Ø$
b. $AR_\alpha \rightarrow DP_\alpha \rightarrow \quad ¬ \quad \rightarrow \quad DP/C_\alpha \quad = DP/C_\alpha$

Moreover, it has been argued (by e.g. Yoon and Yoon 1991, Yoon 1996) that Korean allows visible double case-marking ('case stacking') of the type $DP/C_{Inh}\text{-}C_\alpha$ and the same claim has been made for certain Australian languages (see Blake 1994, 103 ff.).[28]

All these patterns can be subsumed under a single one, as follows:

(66)
              C_{Inh} C_{Str}
a. $AR_\alpha \rightarrow DP_\alpha \rightarrow \quad ¬ \quad \rightarrow \quad ¬ \quad = DP_\alpha$
b. $AR_\alpha \rightarrow DP_\alpha \rightarrow \quad ¬ \quad \rightarrow DP/C_\alpha \quad = DP/C_\alpha$
c. $AR_\alpha \rightarrow DP_\alpha \rightarrow DP/C_{Inh} \rightarrow \quad ¬ \quad = DP/C_{Inh}$
d. $AR_\alpha \rightarrow DP_\alpha \rightarrow DP/C_{Inh} \rightarrow DP/C_{Inh}\text{-}C_{\alpha=Ø} = DP/C_{Inh}\text{-}Ø$
e. $AR_\alpha \rightarrow DP_\alpha \rightarrow DP/C_{Inh} \rightarrow DP/C_{Inh}\text{-}C_\alpha = DP/C_{Inh}\text{-}C_\alpha$

There seems to be a hierarchical correlation between the m-case strategies: $e >> d >> c >> b$. That is to say: If a language has the strategy in *e* then it probably has all the other m-case strategies as well, under less

---

[28] For arguments against case-stacking in Korean, however, see Schütze (1997, 164 ff.).

constrained or less specific conditions; if a language has the strategy in *d*, then it probably also has the strategies in *c* and *b* as more general ones, and if a language has the inherent m-case strategy in *c*, it normally also has the structural one in *b* (cf. Blake 1994, p. 157 ff.). Thus, according to e.g. Yoon (1996), Korean does not only have the stacking in *e* but also the non-stacking strategies in *c* (plain inherent case-marking) and in *b* (plain structural case-marking). Simliarly, Faroese does not only apply *d* but also *c* (in Dat-Nom passives), as well as *b*, of course.

In conclusion: Argument Licensing (or abstract structural 'case') is entirely independent of morphological case. Conversely, morphological case-marking of argumental DPs and clauses, whether structural or inherent, is plausibly preconditioned by Argument Licensing. Nonetheless, m-case 'lives its own live' in PF and is by no means tantamount to or a simple reflection of Argument Licensing in narrow syntax. The Icelandic Dat-Nom construction vs. the Faroese Dat-Acc construction vs. the corresponding English Nom-Acc psych-verb construction offers simple evidence in favor of that conclusion.

6   NP-movement and Person Prominence

Reconsider Chomsky's (2002, p. 113) reflections on structural case in his interview with Belletti and Rizzi:

> On the other hand, why do we have Nominative and Accusative (or Ergative and Absolutive), what are they doing? They are not interpreted: nouns are interpreted exactly the same way whether they are Nominative or Accusative, and that is like inflectional features on adjectives or verbs: it looks as though they shouldn't be there … [but] they are there as perhaps an optimal method of implementing something else that must be there, namely dislocation.

Most generative approaches (at least within the Principles and Parameter paradigm and the subsequent Minimalism) have or have had the ambition of explaining EPP in terms of structural case. Thus, the most widespread conception of nominative case has been that it relates to a specific position in a universal syntactic structure (Spec,IP type of a position, cf. e.g. Chomsky 1981, 1995). Recast into a feature matching approach this amounts to saying that nominative case is a feature of the Tense complex of the clause, matched by NP-movement into Spec,IP (see in particular Holmberg and Platzack 1995, p. 31 ff.). However, as I have argued for many years (in e.g. Sigurðsson 1989), NP-movement or DP-displacement is evidently not case-driven (see also Chomsky 2001a, p. 17).

NP-movement is arguably not a 'simple' phenomenon, matching only a single feature. Thus, indefinite subjects can show up in various positions in e.g. Icelandic, as illustrated in part for dative subjects in (67) and (68):[29]

(67) a. Það   mundi **einhverjum bátum** þá   sennilega verða
          there would some   boats(D) then probably   be
          stolið á uppboðinu.
          stolen at auction.the
          'Some boats would then probably be stolen at the auction.'

      b. Það mundi þá **einhverjum bátum** sennilega verða stolið á
          uppboðinu

      c. Það mundi þá sennilega **einhverjum bátum** verða stolið á
          uppboðinu.

      d. Það mundi þá sennilega verða stolið **einhverjum bátum** á
          uppboðinu.

(68)   *Það mundi þá sennilega verða **einhverjum bátum** stolið á
          uppboðinu.

The striking fact about this SUBJECT FLOATING phenomenon is that the actual case of the subject plays *no role* at all, i.e. exactly parallel facts are found for nominative subjects:

(69) a. Það   mundu **einhverjir bátar**   þá   sennilega verða seldir
          there would some   boats(N) then probably   be   sold
          á   uppboðinu.
          at   auction.the
          'Some boats would then probably be sold at the auction.'

      b. Það mundu þá **einhverjir bátar** sennilega verða seldir á upp-
          boðinu.

      c. Það mundu þá sennilega **einhverjir bátar** verða seldir á
          uppboðinu.

      d. Það mundu þá sennilega verða seldir **einhverjir bátar** á
          uppboðinu.

(70)   *Það mundu þá sennilega verða **einhverjir bátar** seldir á
          uppboðinu.

---

[29] See also Sigurðsson 2000, 78 ff.; the judgments there are more varied because of the presence of the negation.

Moreover, even accusative subjects in ECM infinitives can either take a high or a low position (whereas they are excluded from the interverbal position, like other elements):

(71) a. Ég taldi   [**einhverja báta**   hafa verið selda á uppboðinu]
        I   believed   some   boats(A) have been sold at auction.the
        'I believed there to have been some boats sold at the auction.'

    b. Ég taldi   [hafa verið selda **einhverja báta** á uppboðinu].
        I   believed   have been sold some boats(A) at auction.the

    c. *Ég taldi [hafa verið **einhverja báta** selda á uppboðinu].

Whatever is going on here, it is evidently unrelated to morphological case.

    Not only is NP-movement independent of m-case, it is also independent of Argument Licensing or abstract structural 'case'. That is, arguments do not have to move in order to be licensed, as seen by the grammaticality of (67c), (69c) and (71b), where the subject stays in its basic object position. Similarly, indefinite subjects of even transitive verbs may remain 'low', as in (72b):[30]

(72) a. Mundu **margir stúdentar**   þá   kannski ekki   hafa lesið
        would many   students(N) then   perhaps not   have read
        bókina?
        book.the(A)

    b. Mundu þá kannski ekki **margir stúdentar** hafa lesið bókina?

    c. *Mundu þá kannski ekki hafa **margir stúdentar** lesið bókina?

Evidence in favor of Argument Licensing without movement is found in many other languages, for example Modern Greek, Romance languages, Finnish and Swedish (see e.g. Belletti 1988, Holmberg 1993, Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou 1998, 2001). Consider for instance the following Modern Greek examples (from/modelled on Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 1998, 495, 497):

(73) a. … oti   **o Petros**   episkeftike tin Ilektra
        … that   the-Peter visited   the Ilektra
        '… that Peter visited Ilektra.'

---

[30] Presumably, the 'low' position in question is Spec,v*P.

b.   … oti episkeftike **o Petros**   tin Ilektra
'…that visited   the-Peter   the Ilektra.'

(74)   An ehi idhi   diavasi_j kala **o Petros** [t_j]   to mathima …
if has already read   well the-Peter   the lesson …
'If Peter has already read the lesson well ….'

The fact remains, however, that pronominal and other informationally 'light' subjects move obligatorily in languages like e.g. English and Icelandic, irrespective of case:

Dative subject:

(75)   a.   Mundi **þeim**   þá   kannski hafa verið stolið
would them(D)then perhaps have been stolen
á   uppboðinu?
at   auction.the
'Would they then perhaps have been stolen at the auction?

b.   *Mundi þá **þeim** kannski hafa verið stolið á uppboðinu?

c.   *Mundi þá kannski **þeim** hafa verið stolið á uppboðinu?

d.   *Mundi þá kannski hafa verið stolið **þeim** á uppboðinu.

Nominative subject:

(76)   a.   Mundu **þeir**   þá   kannski hafa verið seldir
would they(N)   then perhaps have been sold
á   uppboðinu?
at   auction.the
'Would they then perhaps have been sold at the auction?

b.   *Mundu þá **þeir** kannski hafa verið seldir á uppboðinu?

c.   *Mundu þá kannski **þeir** hafa verið seldir á uppboðinu?

d.   *Mundu þá kannski hafa verið seldir **þeir** á uppboðinu?

As seen, also, 'light' subjects must move to the highest possible DP-position ('Spec,IP'), a fact that suggests that this position has or relates to a property or a feature that is different from the features of the lower potential DP-positions. – What is this feature?

Chomsky (2001a) takes Tense to be the relevant element or feature in two indirect ways: First, it hosts a (parametric) EPP feature, triggering NP-movement, and, second, it agrees with a nominative argument, thereby matching its *phi*-features. For closely related approaches, see Sigurðsson

(1989, 1996) and, more recently, e.g. Pesetsky and Torrego (2001), Platzack (2001).

Two issues are at stake here: Whether or not the Tense complex of the clause relates to nominative case, and whether or not it relates to NP-movement. I will argue for the following answers:

A   Nominative case, like Argument Licensing, is vP-internal, i.e. it does not relate to Tense and hence it does no 'work' outside of vP.

B   In contrast, NP-movement of at least 'light' subjects ('high' NP-movement, as in (75)-(76)), *is* driven by a feature of the Tense complex, but the relevant feature is not Tense itself but PERSON.

The idea that nominative case should somehow be inherently related to Tense (or Infl or Agr) has long been very influential, and the major reason why it has been so widely accepted is probably that it seemingly accounts for the distribution of PRO in an elegant fashion. However, as demonstrated in e.g. Sigurðsson 1989, 1991, and as we shall see examples of below, nominative case is abundantly found in non-tensed environments, i.e. the distribution of PRO cannot be accounted for in terms of case. More generally, the idea that nominative case is contingent on Tense meets both conceptual and empirical problems. The major conceptual problem is, plainly, that it is not clear why there should be any specific correlation between Tense (or tense) and case. Tense is one of several speaker-anchored 'point of view' features, like for instance person and modality, but unlike case. As we have seen, the major function of m-case is not to relate DPs to the speaker but to make them more visible to their syntactic surroundings (most importantly by marking distinctions between event participants). It is odd, to say the least, to think of this visibility function as being preconditioned by Tense or even indirectly related to Tense.

The empirical problems are perhaps even more obvious and acute. First, nominative case is cross-linguistically quite commonly the case of DPs in isolation and other clause-external contexts (Blake 1994, p. 31), a fact that would be peculiar if nominative is contingent upon Tense.[31] Second, nominative is also commonly the case of predicate DPs (cf. e.g. Sigurðsson 1989, Maling and Sprouse 1995). Third, as we have seen, NP-movement evidently relates to various features, other than nominative case and Tense, that is, relating nominative and Tense does not even give any clear descriptive gain with respect to overt NP-movement. Fourth, and most problematically, many case languages have vP-internal or 'low' nominatives, not only in

---

[31] For the sake of fairness, it should however be pointed out that this does not obviously follow from our vP-internal approach to nominative case either.

tensed environments, as we have already seen examples of, but also in untensed environments, as in the Icelandic (77)[32] and the German (78):[33]

(77) a. Hana   langaði ekki   til [að   leiðast þeir/*þá].
          her(A) longed not   for to PRO bore   they(N)/*them(A)
          'She did not want to find them boring.'

      b. Mér   virtist/*virtust [henni hafa leiðst þeir/*þá].
          me(D)   seemed(3sg/*3pl) her(D) have bored they(N)/*them(A)
          'It seemed to me that she had found them boring.'

(78) a. Sie haben beschlossen [**einer** nach dem anderem
          they have   decided PRO one(N) after the   other
          wegzugehen].
          away-to-go
          'They decided to leave one after the other.'

      b. … dass mir [dem Fritz   **ein Buch**   abhanden gekommen
              that me the Fritz   a   book(N) lost   come
          zu sein] scheint.
          to be seems
          '… that it seems to me that Fritz has lost a book.'

In view of facts of this sort, I adopt the strictly local approach to Argument Licensing in (47) above. The corresponding case matching structure is shown in (79):

(79)
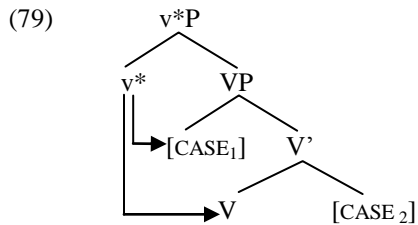
If *V* selects no inherent case, the higher argument will show up in the nominative, whereas the lower one will show up in the accusative.[34] If *V* selects

---

[32] The infinitive marker *að* 'to' is arguably a complementizer (see e.g Sigurðsson 1989), hence the order *to-PRO* in the glosses in (77a).

[33] Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing (78a) out to me and to Gisbert Fanselow, p.c., for providing (78b).

[34] A reviewer points out that [+human] accusatives normally precede [−human] nominatives in German (as in *dass meinen Onkel(Acc) die Fliegen(Nom) geärgert haben*: that my uncle the flies annoyed have). I have no account of this interesting pattern.

inherent case for one of the arguments, the other one will show up in the nominative (in Icelandic, as opposed to Faroese).[35] – I shall refer to this approach as the vP-CASE SHELL APPROACH (formulated slightly differently here than in Sigurðsson 2000, 72 ff.).

Now, reconsider Burzio's generalization or the SIBLING CORRELATION (SC) between nominative and accusative case in (58) = (80):

(80) $(\text{Acc} \rightarrow \text{Nom}) \,\&\, \neg\,(\text{Nom} \rightarrow \text{Acc})$

This is the same correlation as that between objects and subjects (covert as well as overt ones): subjects may do without objects while objects cannot do without subjects. That is: if there is an object there has to be a subject as well (but not vice versa), and, in a parallel manner, if there is a structural accusative there has to be a nominative as well (but not vice versa). It follows that Burzio's generalization in its usual formulation (Burzio 1986, 178) is, plainly, a tautological truth.

SC follows from the vP-case shell approach: v^*-V cannot successfully match accusative case unless v^* matches nominative case. – As for ergative case, I adopt the inherent m-case approach of e.g. Woolford (1997, 2003).

As we have seen, NP-movement seems to be unrelated to case.[36] Plausibly, however, dislocations of DPs out of vP *are* feature-driven, and since dislocated DPs may show up in more than one position it also seems plausible to assume that more than one feature may be involved. However, the most prominent of the features in question seems to be Person, that is, many or most languages seem to adhere to the PERSON PROMINENCE PRINCIPLE (PPP):[37]

---

[35] In 'defective' constructions (in the sense of Chomsky 2001a), like passives and unaccusatives, the sole argument is matched against plain v via V (getting nominative case unless V selects inherent case).

[36] As discussed by Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou (2001), there seems to be a general requirement that VP do not contain more than one argument at PF, that is, in case VP has two core argument at least one of them has to 'leave' it. As a matter of fact, though, Icelandic differs from e.g. English, French and the mainland Scandinavian languages in not tolerating any argument in Spec,VP. Thus, if vP is generated with two arguments, the subject has to raise out of VP (to Spec, v*P or a higher position), and if vP is generated with only one argument it has to either stay in the object position or raise out of VP, across Spec,VP. Contrary to what Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou suggest, it is not clear that this ban against lexicalizing Spec,VP (in Icelandic) relates to case.

[37] Chomsky (2001a, p. 7) tentatively suggests that the EPP feature on Tense is person. The present approach raises many intriguing questions that I cannot address here; one, raised by a reviewer, is the question of why most languages visualize only one Person head. A possible approach to that particular problem is to assume that the Speaker Ego (see e.g. Sigurðsson 1990) 'binds' Person and that the argument that visualizes/agrees with Person, in turn, 'binds' all other arguments in its domain, thereby providing them with referential interpretation that relates to the Speaker Ego.

(81)   **PPP:** Visualize Person at the left edge of 'IP' (=PersP, see below)

Speaker-anchored 'point of view features' such as topic, number, person, force, mood and tense link the external universe of discourse to the internal world of the clause and hence these features are naturally visualized at the 'bridge' between these two worlds, namely the left periphery or the Comp/Infl domain of the clause. Person, in particular, links the clause-external 'actors' of the discourse universe and the situation of utterance to the clause-internal 'actors'.[38]

   PPP is satisfied by PERSON RAISING (PR):

(82)   **PR**: Move an element containing Person into the left edge of the clause, either to Pers or to Spec,PersP

Notice that I assume a radically split Comp/Infl approach, where each of the above mentioned speaker-anchored point of view features is hosted by or constitutes a separate functional head: Force, Pers, Num, Mood, Tense, …[39]

   Languages like Italian apply PR to the inflected verb, whereas English applies it to the subject (= 'high' NP-movement).[40] Languages like Icelandic, on the other hand, are PERSON AGREEMENT (PA) languages. That is, they basically apply the 'Italian' verb-raising strategy, but, in addition, they apply PA:

(83)   **PA**: Pers agrees with another element, X, in Spec,PersP

By PA, Person becomes doubly visible: Person itself is already made visible by verb-raising and then it becomes 'extra' visible through an element that is licensed in Spec,PersP in the presence of the inflected verb. Thus, PA is of course costly and is only found in a minority of the world's languages (see e.g. Gilligan 1987, Nichols 1992, Blake 1994, Palmer 1994). Even among this minority, Icelandic is a true 'quirk': While PA is confined to Nominative DPs in most PA languages, Icelandic applies it to even non-nominatives. That is, Icelandic quirky subjects enter into a Spec-head

---

[38] This is perhaps most obvious in logophoric contexts. See Sigurðsson 1990 and the references cited there.

[39] One way of conceptualizing this idea is to view these features as items of a universal 'lexicon´, realized (or not) by various lexical strategies in individual languages, different types of such 'lexicalizations' giving rise to or amounting to parametric variation.

[40] Needless to say, this approach owes important insights to Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulou 1998. Subject-drop clauses in languages like Chinese should presumably be accounted for along similar lines as PRO-infinitives – as having anaphoric Pers, resisting visualization, I assume.

agreement relation with Pers, albeit only a morphologically 'defective' one.[41] See further below.

In passing, notice that global principles or constraints like PPP are conceptually dubious and should, presumably, be replaced by a derivational understanding. However, in the absence of such an analysis, our generalizations, PPP, PR and PA, are, as yet, the best available approximations to an understanding of the problems under consideration.

Evidence in favor of the present approach comes from agreement asymmetries in Dat-Nom constructions of the following sort (Sigurðsson 1990-1991 and subsequent work, Taraldsen 1995, Boeckx 2000):

(84) a. *Mér höfð**um** leiðst **við**.
 me(D) had(1pl) bored we(N)
 [i.e. 'I had found ourselves boring.']

 b. *Mér höfð**uð** leiðst **þið**.
 me(D) had(2pl) bored you(N)
 [i.e. 'I had found you boring.']

 c. Mér höfð**u** leiðst **þeir**.
 me(D) had(3pl) bored they(N)
 'I had found them boring.'

As seen in (84c), the finite verb shows number agreement with 3rd person nominative objects, whereas it is blocked from agreeing with 1st and 2nd person objects, as in (84a, b). This asymmetry is accounted for if, first, 3rd person is not 'true' person ((84c) thus involving only number agreement, not true person agreement), and, second, if the finite verb has to enter into a (3rd person) 'defective agreement' relation with the quirky subject and is thus blocked from agreeing in person with the nominative object. This is sketched in (85):[42]

---

[41] Both merger of expletive *það* 'it, there' and Stylistic Fronting (cf. Maling 1980, Holmberg 2000) also instantiate PA, I assume. V1 declaratives, in contrast, pose a potential problem. However, discussing these issues would take us much too far a field.

[42] I disregard those features/heads of the Comp/Infl complex (Mood, Force, …) that are irrelevant for our purposes. I assumed Num to be higher than Pers in Sigurðsson 2000, but have since come across accumulating evidence against that view. – I assume that quirky constructions involve plain little *v* rather than *v** (quirky subjects always being non-agentive). The raising of the dative to Spec,VP and from there to Spec,vP is not shown.

(85)
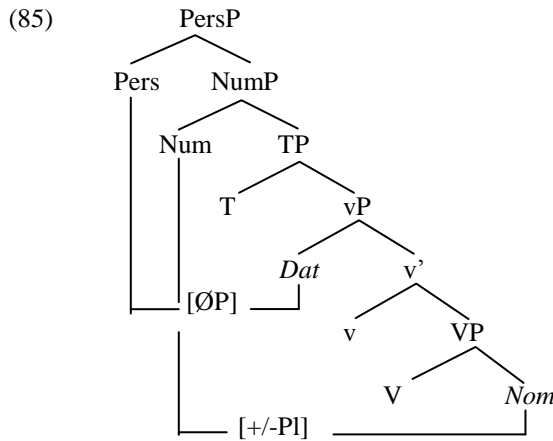
Pers, thus, 'null-agrees' with the dative, whereas Num agrees with the nominative object.

The order of the raising and matching processes involved here may play a role, depending on one's theoretical assumptions. For sake of explicitness, let us assume that the dative raises to Spec,PersP, by PA, prior to number matching, thereby escaping an intervention between Num and the nominative.

This approach entails that we must distinguish sharply between syntactic agreement and morphological agreement; I shall refer to the former as S-AGREEMENT and to the latter as M-AGREEMENT. By PA, Pers s-agrees with non-nominative subjects, whereas it (as well as Num) is blocked from visibly m-agreeing with non-nominatives, as illustrated in (86):

(86)   Okkur**leið**/*liðum   vel.
         us(D)   felt(3sg/*1pl)   well
         'We felt well.'

Reasonably, Pers cannot m-agree with quirky subjects because inherently case-marked arguments already show m-agreement with another element, namely their 'case-assigner'. That is, inherent m-case is an agreement morphology in itself, such that e.g. the dative of the complement of a dative-taking item m-agrees with the selectional requirements of the item, as sketched below:[43]

---

[43] This approach is conceptually close to the analysis of Bayer et al. (2001) that inherently m-case marked DPs are Kase Phrases or KPs (with an extra K-layer, not present in structurally case-marked DPs).

(87)   INHERENT M-CASE signals a **DP-visible** m-agreement relation between a DP and another element: $X(P)_i - DP/\mathbf{agr}_i$

What has come to be known as morphological agreement, on the other hand, is the X^0-visible side of the same coin, namely:

(88)   AGREEMENT signals an $\mathbf{X^0}$**-visible** m-agreement relation between a DP and another element: $X^0/\mathbf{agr}_i - DP_i$

The reason why the Icelandic Pers cannot agree morphologically with non-nominative DPs, even when it agrees with such DPs syntactically, is, then, that this would lead to such DPs being simultaneously involved in two visible m-agreement relations: with their 'case-assigners' and with Pers.

Double m-agreement or 'polygamy' of this sort is commonly avoided in languages, for reasons of economy, but any typological study of agreement quickly reveals that it is by no means universally excluded (cf. e.g. Blake 1994, p. 140 f., Palmer 1994, p. 53 f.). – Even without concomitant m-agreement, PA itself is costly, i.e. most languages satisfy PPP by either verb raising or DP-raising, not by both (see Gilligan 1987).

Morphological finite verb agreement, then, is confined to nominative DPs in languages like Icelandic and German, because, first, the structural cases, as opposed to the inherent cases, are not already 'engaged', and, second, because the nominative is 'closer' to the Pers and Num heads of the clause than is the accusative (Relativized Minimality). – For a conceptually similar (albeit a technically different) approach to the interrelation of m-case and m-agreement, see Brandner 1995.

The unusual property of the Icelandic finite verb complex is that it is simultaneously both 'greedy' and 'modest', i.e. it is syntactically greedy, requiring some element to s-agree with,[44] but it is morphologically modest, being 'content' with showing up in the default 3sg whenever it does not 'find' an accessible nominative to m-agree with.

To repeat our most central conclusions: First, case is vP-internal and does not do any 'work' outside of vP. Second, the syntactic vP-external labor that has standardly been attributed to nominative case is brought about by other features, most prominently Person.

In caseless languages, the abstract structural 'cases' or Argument Relation (AR) features amount to Argument Licensing, i.e. the basic predicate-argument relations that arise when predicates and their arguments are merged. The distinction between the AR-features, 'nominative' vs. 'accusative', in turn, amounts to a distinction between event participants – and in

---

[44] This view is in part inspired by Holmberg's approach (2000) to Icelandic Stylistic Fronting and EPP.

this sense, the cases *are* interpretable (although they are like other formal features in not having any absolute meaning, of course). In case-languages, the Argument Relation features are in addition made 'extra-visible' by morphological marking of the argument DPs involved. Notice that these basic relations are of course visible or interpretable in non-case languages, albeit not 'extra-visible'. Hence, after having been vP-internally licensed, DPs in such languages are visible to displacement and may thus move out of vP, whereas DPs in case languages must in addition be case matched.

7   Conclusion

In this paper I have evaluated and discussed the consequences of the universalist view of case advocated by Chomsky (e.g. 1981, 2001a). Given the universalist view, languages that do not apply m-case at all have the same inventory of deep cases as do m-case languages, much like all languages must have the same inventory of for instance tense and aspect features. This leads to a view of morphological case, and of morphological distinctions in general, as 'making a difference' rather than 'making sense'. What 'makes sense' in language is LF (or the semantic component, Σ, of Chomsky 2001b), whereas morphological and other PF variation makes distinctions. The distinctions so made typically relate to or reflect sense, but there is also a general tendency that such distinctions become opaque and arbitrary over time (thereby becoming more similar to phonemic distinctions). Plausibly, such a development typically results in a breakdown of the morphological variation in question, often accompanied by phonological weakening of the relevant markers (cf. e.g. Blake 1994, p. 177 ff. and Falk 1997, p.153 ff. on the loss of case).[45]

While the inherent abstract cases are 'extra' semantically related, the structural abstract cases or Argument Relation features merely encode the basic predicate-argument relations that arise when predicates and their arguments are merged (thereby distinguishing between event participants). Both types of cases may but need not be made 'extra-visible' by m-case, both types are vP-internal and neither type does any 'work' outside of vP. Rather, when a DP has been vP-internally licensed it becomes visible to movement and can thus be dislocated for the purposes of matching other features than case, most importantly Person.

---

[45] It is sometimes assumed that phonological reduction of inflectional endings as such can lead to the loss of morphological categories, for instance case. However, if a category is highly functional, language typically 'compensates' for such reduction by introducing a new variation in the stem, for instance a circumflex or some kind of a mutation.

References

Alexiadou, Artemis and Elena Anagnostopoulou. 1998. Parametrizing Agr: v-movement, word order and EPP-checking. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 16: 491-539.

Alexiadou, Artemis and Elena Anagnostopoulou. 2001. The subject-in-situ generalization and the role of case in driving computations. *Linguistic Inquiry* 32: 193-231.

Allen, Cynthia L. 1996. A change in structural case marking in Early Middle English. *Studies in Comparative Germanic Syntax* II, ed. Höskuldur Thráinsson, Samuel David Epstein, and Steve Peter, 3-20. Dordrecht: Kluwer.

Arad, Maya. 1999. On "little v". *MIT Working Papers in Linguistics* 33.

Barðdal, Jóhanna. 1993. Accusative and dative case of objects of some transitive verbs in Icelandic and the semantic distinction between them. *Flyktförsök*, 1-13. A Festschrift for Christer Platzack, Department of Scandinavian Languages, Lund University.

Barðdal, Jóhanna. 2001. *Case in Icelandic: A Synchronc, Diachronic and Comparative Approach*. Doctoral dissertation, Lund University.

Barnes, Michael P. 1986. Subject, nominative and oblique case in Faroese. *Scripta Islandica* 37: 13-46.

Bayer, Josef, Markus Bader and Michael Meng. 2001. Morphological underspecification meets oblique case: syntactic and processing effects in German. *Lingua* 111: 465-514.

Belletti, Adriana. 1988. The Case of unaccusatives. *Linguistic Inquiry* 19: 1-34.

Blake, Barry J. 1994. *Case*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Boeckx, Cedric. 2000. Quirky agreement. *Studia Linguistica* 54: 354-380.

Brandner, Ellen. 1995. *Specifiers and Functional Projections*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Stuttgart.

Burzio, Luigi. 1986. *Italian Syntax*. Dordrecht: Reidel.

Chomsky, Noam. 1981. *Lectures on Government and Binding*. Dordrecht: Foris.

Chomsky, Noam. 1995. *The Minimalist Program*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Chomsky, Noam. 2000. Minimalist inquiries: the framework. *Step by Step: Essays on Minimalist Syntax in Honor of Howard Lasnik*, ed. Roger Martin, David Michaels, and Juan Uriagareka, 89-155. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Chomsky, Noam. 2001a. Derivation by phase. *Ken Hale: A Life in Language*, ed. Michael Kenstowicz, 1-52. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Chomsky, Noam. 2001b. Beyond explanatory adequacy. Ms., MIT.

Chomsky, Noam. 2002. *On Nature and Language*. Ed. Adriana Belletti and Luigi Rizzi. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cinque, Guglielmo. 1999. *Adverbs and Functional Heads: A Cross-Linguistic Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Comrie, Bernard. 1989. *Language Universals and Linguistic Typology*. 2nd edition. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Delsing, Lars-Olof. 1993. *The Internal Structure of Noun Phrases in the Scandinavian Languages*. Doctoral dissertation, Lund University.

Einarsson, Stefán. 1949. *Icelandic*. Grammar, Texts, Glossary. Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press.

Eythórsson, Thórhallur. 2000. Dative vs nominative: Changes in quirky subjects in Icelandic. *Leeds Working Papers in Linguistics & Phonetics* 8. [Edited by Diane Nelson and Paul Foulkes.]

Eythórsson, Thórhallur. 2002. Changes in subject case-marking in Icelandic. *Syntactic Effects of Morphological Change*, ed. David Lightfoot, 196-212. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Falk, Cecilia 1993. *Non-referential Subjects in the History of Swedish*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Lund.

Falk, Cecilia. 1997. *Fornsvenska upplevarverb* [Old-Swedish Psych-Verbs]. Lund: Lund University Press.

Fillmore, Charles J. 1968. The case for case. *Universals in Linguistic Theory*, ed. Emond Bach and Robert T. Harms, 1-88. New York: Holt, Reinhart and Winston.

Fillmore, Charles J. 1971. Some problems for case grammar. *Working Papers in Linguistics, Ohio State University* 10: 245-265.

Gilligan, Gary Martin. 1987. *A Cross-Linguistic Approach to the Pro-Drop Parameter*. Doctoral dissertation, USC, Los Angeles.

Hjelmslev, Louis. 1935-1937. *La catégorie des cas: Etude de grammatica générale* I-II. Munksgaard, Copenhagen [Acta Jutlantica: Aarskrift for Aarhus universitet 7.1 & 9.3].

Holmberg, Anders. 1993. Two subject positions in IP in Mainland Scandinavian. *Working Papers in Scandinavian Syntax* 52: 29-41.

Holmberg, Anders. 2000. Scandinavian Stylistic Fronting: how any category can become an expletive. *Linguistic Inquiry* 31: 445-483.

Holmberg, Anders and Christer Platzack. 1995. *The Role of Inflection in Scandinavian Syntax*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Hornstein, Norbert. 1999. Movement and control. *Linguistic Inquiry* 30: 69-96.

Jakobson, Roman. 1936/1971. Beitrag zur Allgemeine Kasuslehre: Gesamtbedeutungen der russischen Kasus. *Selected Writings II: Words and Language*, 23-71. The Hague: Mouton.

Jónsson, Jóhannes Gísli. 1996. *Clausal Architecture and Case in Icelandic*. Doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Jónsson, Jóhannes Gísli. 1997-1998. Sagnir með aukafallsfrumlagi [Verbs with an oblique subject]. *Íslenskt mál og almenn málfræði* 19-20: 11-43.

Jónsson, Jóhannes Gísli. 1998. List of predicates that take a quirky subject in Icelandic. Ms. University of Iceland.

Jónsson, Jóhannes Gísli. 2001. Case on experiencers in Icelandic. Paper read at the Workshop on Case and Argument Structure, Reykjavík, May 27, 2001.

Josefsson, Gunlög. 1998. *Minimal Words in a Minimal Syntax: Word Formation in Swedish.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Julien, Marit. 2002. *Syntactic Heads and Word Formation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kracht, Markus. 2000. On the semantics of locatives. *Linguistics in Potsdam* 10: 7-74.

Li, Charles N. and Sandra A. Thompson. 1990. Chinese. *The Major Languages of the World*, ed. Bernard Comrie, 811-833. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Maling, Joan. 1980. Inversion in embedded clauses in Icelandic. *Íslenskt mál og almenn málfræði* 2: 175-193.

Maling, Joan. 2002. Icelandic verbs with dative objects. *Working Papers in Scandinavian Syntax* 70: 1-60.

Maling, Joan and Rex A. Sprouse. 1995. Structural case, specifier-head relations, and the case of predicate NPs. *Studies in Comparative Germanic Syntax*, ed. Hubert Haider, Susan Olsen, and Sten Vikner, 167-186. Dordrecht: Kluwer.

Neidle, Carol Jan. 1988. *The Role of Case in Russian Syntax*. Dordrecht: Kluwer.

Nichols, Johanna. 1992. *Linguistic Diversity in Space and Time*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Palmer, Frank R. 1994. *Grammatical Roles and Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Pesetsky, David and Esther Torrego. 2001. T-to-C movement: causes and consequences. *Ken Hale: A Life in Language*, ed. Michael Kenstowicz, 355-426. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Platzack, Christer. 2001. The computational system as a minimal feature driven device and the tripartite TP/VP-hypothesis of the universal clause. Ms., Lund University.

Rizzi, Luigi. 1997. The fine structure of the left periphery. *Elements of Grammar. Handbook in Generative Syntax*, ed. Liliane Haegeman, 281-337. Dordrecht: Kluwer.

Schütze, Carson T. 1997. *Infl in Child and Adult Language: Agreement, Case and Licensing*. Doctoral dissertation, MIT.

Sigurðsson, Halldór Ármann. 1989. *Verbal Syntax and Case in Icelandic*. Doctoral dissertation, Lund University. [Published 1992 by Institute of Linguistics, University of Iceland, Reykjavík].

Sigurðsson, Halldór Ármann. 1990. Long distance reflxives and moods in Icelandic. *Modern Icelandic Syntax*, eds. Joan Maling and Annie Zaenen, 309-346. San Diego: Academic Press.

Sigurðsson, Halldór Ármann. 1990-1991. Beygingarsamræmi [Agreement]. *Íslenskt mál og almenn málfræði* 12-13: 31-77.

Sigurðsson, Halldór Ármann. 1991. Icelandic Case-marked PRO and the Licensing of Lexical Arguments. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 9: 327-363.

Sigurðsson, Halldór Ármann. 1992. The case of quirky subjects. *Working Papers in Scandinavian Syntax* 49: 1-26.

Sigurðsson, Halldór Ármann. 1996. Icelandic finite verb agreement. *Working Papers in Scandinavian Syntax* 57: 1-46.

Sigurðsson, Halldór Ármann. 2000. The locus of case and agreement. *Working Papers in Scandinavian Syntax* 65: 65-108.

Svavarsdóttir, Ásta. 1993. *Beygingarkerfi nafnorða í nútímaíslensku* [The Inflectional System of Nouns in Modern Icelandic]. Reykjavík: Insitute of Linguistics, University of Iceland.

Svenonius, Peter. 2002. Icelandic case and the structure of events. *Journal of Comparative Germanic Linguistics* 6: 197-225.

Taraldsen, Knut Tarald. 1995. On agreement and nominative objects in Icelandic. *Studies in Comparative Germanic Syntax*, eds. Hubert Haider, Susan Olsen and Sten Vikner, 307-327. Dordrecht: Kluwer.

Thráinsson, Höskuldur. 1979. *On Complementation in Icelandic*. New York: Garland Publishing.

Woolford, Ellen. 1997. Four-way case systems: ergative, nominative, objective and accusative. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 15: 181-227.

Woolford, Ellen. 2003 Burzio's generalization, markedness and locality constraints on nominative objects. This volume.

Yip, Moira, Joan Maling and Ray Jackendoff. 1987. Case in Tiers. *Language* 63: 217-250.

Yoon, James. 1996. Ambiguity of Government and the Chain Condition. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 14: 105-162.

Yoon, James and Jeongme Yoon. 1991. Chain Condition, Ambiguity of Government and Derivational Grammars. *NELS* 21.

Zaenen, Annie, Joan Maling and Höskuldur Thráinsson. 1985. Case and grammatical functions: the Icelandic passive. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 3: 441-483.