Dependent case in syntactically ergative languages: Evidence from Inuit and West Circassian   *Word count: 498*
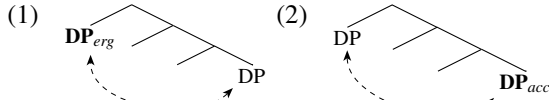
In dependent case theory (Marantz 1991, a.o.), morphological case is assigned via configurational/c-command relations between DPs: ERG is assigned to the higher of two arguments within some domain (1), while ACC is assigned to the lower, (2). We extend this typology to *syntactically ergative* languages, in which the ABS transitive object moves to a position c-commanding the ERG subject. Focusing on Inuit and West Circassian (WC), we argue that *dependent ERG case is assigned only after object movement*. Thus, ERG case in syntactically ergative languages is assigned *downwards*, like the "ACC" configuration in (2). As this contradicts existing dependent case tenets, we caution against the conflation of morphological case labels and directionality of dependent case assignment.

Inuit: Inuit is syntactically ergative; ABS objects take wide scope above other elements, on par with ABS subjects (e.g. Bittner 1994), (3). (Additionally, Inuit displays Ā-extraction asymmetries recalling other syntactically ergative languages.) The dependent analysis of ERG correctly predicts its ability to surface on unaccusative subjects if a lower DP (e.g. applicative) is present (Yuan 2018), (4-5). Thus, ERG case is configurational, not tied to agentivity or transitivity (contra Woolford 2006).

(1) DP_{erg} ... DP

(2)   DP ... DP_{acc}

(3) suli Juuna-p   **atuagaq ataasiq** tigu-sima-nngi-laa
    still Juuna-ERG book.**ABS** one.**ABS** get-PERF-<u>NEG</u>-3S.S/3S.O
    'There is one (particular) book Juuna hasn't received yet.'   **ABS>NEG**

(4) niuvirvik matui-sarait-tuq
    store.ABS open-early-3S.S
    'The store opened early.'   **(ABS subj.)**

(5) **niuvirvi-up** matui-sarai-gutigi-janga   <u>Miali</u>
    store-ERG open-early-APPL-3S.S/3S.O <u>Miali.ABS</u>
    'The store opened early for Miali.'   **(ERG subj.)**

Dependent ERG case assignment interacts with syntactic ergativity in Inuit. In high nominalizations (marked by n^0 *-lik*), the object cannot move because its left-peripheral landing site is no longer available. Crucially, *the lack of high object bleeds ERG case on the subject*, resulting in ABS, (6). (The object then receives Last Resort oblique case, akin to 'of'-insertion in English nominalizations.) Thus, in Inuit, dependent ERG case requires two *v*P-external DPs (Baker & Vinokurova 2010). We propose the rule in (7).

(6) Taiviti   / *T.-**up** nagli-<u>gi</u>-ja-<u>lik</u>   Kiuru-mik
    David.ABS *T.-**ERG** love-TR-PART-<u>NMLZ</u> Carol-MOD
    'David loves Carol.'

(7) **DOWNWARD ERGATIVE RULE:** Within a case domain α, if DP_1 is c-commanded by another DP_2, assign ERGATIVE case to DP_1. Otherwise, DP_1 is ABSOLUTIVE.

WC: If ERG case may be assigned downward and *v*P is a variable case domain (Baker 2015), we expect languages with *multiple* downward-assigned ERG, akin to multiple ACC ditransitives cross-linguistically. WC presents such a case. In WC the high position of the ABS object is evinced by reciprocal binding, expressed via specialized agreement on the predicate (Ershova 2019): this agreement is triggered by the ERG subject in (8) and the applied object in (9). In both cases, the ABS DP raises to Spec,TP to bind the reciprocal.

(8) [TP ***pro*_i(ABS)**   [vP *rec*_i(ERG)   [VP ~~*pro*_i(ABS)~~   te-   **zere-**   λeʁ^wə -ʁ]]]
                                          1PL.ABS- **REC.ERG**- see   -PST
    'We saw each other'   **ABS>ERG**

(9) [TP ***pro*_i(ABS)**   [vP ~~*pro*_i(ABS)~~   [ApplP *rec*_i(IO)   tə-   **z-**   e-   pλəž'ə]]]
                                          1PL.ABS- **REC.IO**- DAT- look
    'We are looking at each other.'   **ABS>IO**

WC has two core cases: *-r* on ABS DPs and *-m* (OBLIQUE) on agents and applied objects (10a). Since the ABS DP c-commands all oblique-marked DPs, this system is readily derived via the rule in (7), shown in (10b). Crucially, the treatment of OBL/ERG as downward dependent case accounts for *all* case morphology on verbal arguments, regardless of whether the ABS argument raises from a *v*P-internal position (10a) or the external argument position of an unergative verb (11).

(10) a. **[TP** [aš'   jəsabjəjxe-**r**]_i(**ABS**) [vP č'elejeʁaǯe-**m**(**ERG**) [ApplP [mə bzəλfəʁe-**m**](**IO**) [VP t_i fješ'ež'ə
                that.OBL POSS.child.PL-**ABS**   teacher-**OBL**   this woman-**OBL**   takes
         'This woman(ERG) takes his/her children(ABS) to the teacher(IO).'

      b.   [TP DP₁(theme) [vP DP₂(agent) [ApplP DP₃(IO) [VP <DP₁>]]]]
               ABS   **OBL**   **OBL**

(11) **[TP** [mə č'ale-**r**]_i(**ABS**)   bere [vP t_i(ABS) [ApplP jəʔahəlxe-**m**(**IO**)   telefonč'e   afetjewe
            this boy-**ABS**   much   POSS.relative.PL-**OBL** by telephone rings for
      'This boy calls (lit. rings for) his relatives on the telephone a lot.'

Discussion: Our findings suggest that the labels 'ergative' and 'accusative' do not meaningfully correlate with the directionality of case assignment: "ERG" case in syntactically ergative languages, (7), resembles downwards ACC case assignment, (2). This lays the foundation for discussion of how case alignment should be understood within a dependent case framework, and whether a characterization of morphological alignment in terms of directionality of case assignment disposes of the widely assumed correlation between morphological and syntactic alignment (e.g. Polinsky 2017).