

# Case

Now that we've been introduced to morphology, let's look at one popular kind of morphology on nouns.

**She** saw **her**.

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- *she*: ‘nominative’
- *her*: ‘accusative’

**She saw her.**

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- *her*: ‘accusative’

maybe the first thing to say is that not all languages have this...

**Tā kàn-le tā.** ‘She saw her’ (*Mandarin*)

**She** saw **her**.

- *she*: ‘nominative’
- *her*: ‘accusative’

**Yukarrbarda** kurri **bidngen-i**.

**Mužčina** videl **ženščin-u**.

**Adam** **kadın-ı** gördü.

‘**The man** saw **the woman**’

[*Lardil*]

[*Russian*]

[*Turkish*]

Some cases have meanings that are fairly easy to explain...

nunâm **ŝtân** ‘I see the town’ (*Wampanoag*)

nutay **ŝtân-ât** ‘I live in the town’

Some cases have meanings that are fairly easy to explain...

<b>talo-ssa</b>	‘in the house’	[ <i>Finnish</i> ]
<b>talo-lta</b>	‘from the house’	
<b>talo-lle</b>	‘to the house’	
<b>talo-sta</b>	‘out of the house’	
<b>talo-on</b>	‘into the house’	
<b>talo-lla</b>	‘at the house’	

Some cases have meanings that are fairly easy to explain...

<b>talo-ssa</b>	‘in the house’	[ <i>Finnish</i> ]	<b>coa-ssë</b>	‘in the house’	[ <i>Quenya</i> ]
<b>talo-lta</b>	‘from the house’		<b>coa-llo</b>	‘from the house’	
<b>talo-lle</b>	‘to the house’		<b>coa-nna</b>	‘to the house’	
<b>talo-sta</b>	‘out of the house’				
<b>talo-on</b>	‘into the house’				
<b>talo-lla</b>	‘at the house’				

...but others are not as simple.

**She** likes llamas.

The llama likes **her**.

I want **her** to like llamas.

In order for **her** to like llamas,  
she will have to overcome her fear of being spat on.

*structural case*: seems to say something about where the noun is in the sentence?

## Patterns of structural case

**She** left.

**She** saw **her**.

**Bidngen** yuurr-waa.

‘The woman left’ (*Lardil*)

**Bidngen** kurri yalaan **bidngen-i**. ‘The woman saw the other woman’

## Patterns of structural case

### *nominative-accusative*

**She** left.

**She** saw **her**.

### *ergative-absolutive*

Na'e kata '**a** Sione.

Na'e langa '**e** Sione '**a** e fale.

'**John** laughed' (Tongan)

'**John** built **a house**'

Ngarrka wangkaja.

Ngarrka-**ngku** wawirri luwarnu.

'**The man** spoke' (Warlpiri)

'**The man** shot **the kangaroo**'

Miali aniqqaujuq.

Taiviti-**up** suraktanga igaalaq.

'**Miali** left.' (Inuktitut)

'**Taiviti** broke **the window**'

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### *three-way*

Agherre nterreke.

Artwe-**le** agherre-**nhe** weke.

'**The kangaroo** ran'

'**The man** shot **the kangaroo**'

(Antekerrepenhe)

# Patterns of structural case

S V<sub>intransitive</sub>

S V<sub>transitive</sub> O

*nominative-accusative*

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*ergative-absolutive*

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*three-way*

# Patterns of structural case

**S** V<sub>intransitive</sub> *nominative-accusative*

**S** V<sub>transitive</sub> **O**

**S** V<sub>intransitive</sub> *ergative-absolutive*

**S** V<sub>transitive</sub> **O**

**S** V<sub>intransitive</sub> *three-way*

**S** V<sub>transitive</sub> **O**

**S** V<sub>intransitive</sub> ~~**S**~~ V<sub>transitive</sub> ~~**O**~~ *not found!*

One way to think about this:

**Case systems are always set up so that  
transitive S and transitive O  
are different from each other.**

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are different from each other.**

Intransitive S can then pattern with:

- transitive S (nominative-accusative)
- transitive O (ergative-absolutive)
- neither (three-way)

One reason to think about things this way: *quirky case*

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'They have eaten **the fish (ACCUSATIVE)**'

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Þeir hafa étið **fiskinn**. *(Icelandic)*

‘They have eaten **the fish (ACCUSATIVE)**’

Þeir hafa hent **fiskinum**.

‘They have discarded **the fish (DATIVE)**’

→ ‘discard’ assigns quirky **dative** case to the object.

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**Hún** kyssti **Maríu**.

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**Henni** líkuðu **hestarnir**.

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...and it turns out that whenever the subject is **dative**,  
the object in Icelandic is **nominative**.

Why isn't the object **accusative**, as usual?

Well, it doesn't need to be: if the subject is going to be **dative**, then the subject and the object will be in different forms, even if we don't make the object **accusative**. So the object can be **nominative**.

## Case splits

It's very common for languages to alternate between *nominative-accusative* and *ergative-absolutive* systems. One common kind of split is conditioned by *tense/aspect*:

**Raam** **rotii** khaataa thaa. [Hindi]

‘**Raam** ate **bread** (habitually)’

**Raam-ne** **rotii** khaayii thii

‘**Raam** has eaten **bread**’

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'**Raam** has eaten **bread**' → *perfect* tenses are **ergative**

## Case splits

Another common split is *pronouns* vs. *non-pronouns*:

**Ngaja** gagama                      ‘**I** will go’ (*Warrgamay*)

**Ngaja** **nginba** nyuunjalma      ‘**I** will kiss **you**’

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**Ngaja** gagama

**Ngaja** **nginba** nyuunjalma

‘**I** will go’ (*Warrgamay*)

‘**I** will kiss **you**’

**Gajiya** gagama

**Gajiya-nggu** **muyma** nyuunjalma

‘**The girl** will go’

‘**The girl** will kiss **the boy**’

## Differential object marking

Bir **kız-ı** gördüm *(Turkish)*

‘I saw a (specific) **girl**’

Bir **kız** gördüm

‘I saw some **girl** or other’

→ accusative case, but only on a subset of objects  
(‘specific’ ones)

# Syncretism

‘girl’

(*Latin*)

NOMINATIVE

**puella**

ACCUSATIVE

**puellam**

GENITIVE

**puellae**

DATIVE

**puellae**

ABLATIVE

**puellā**

## Syncretism

	‘girl’	‘boy’	( <i>Latin</i> )
NOMINATIVE	<b>puella</b>	<b>puer</b>	
ACCUSATIVE	<b>puellam</b>	<b>puerum</b>	
GENITIVE	<b>puellae</b>	<b>puerī</b>	
DATIVE	<b>puellae</b>	<b>puerō</b>	
ABLATIVE	<b>puellā</b>	<b>puerō</b>	

## Syncretism

	‘girl’	‘boy’	‘war’ ( <i>Latin</i> )
NOMINATIVE	<b>puella</b>	<b>puer</b>	<b>bellum</b>
ACCUSATIVE	<b>puellam</b>	<b>puerum</b>	<b>bellum</b>
GENITIVE	<b>puellae</b>	<b>puerī</b>	<b>bellī</b>
DATIVE	<b>puellae</b>	<b>puerō</b>	<b>bellō</b>
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	‘girl’	‘boy’	‘war’ ( <i>Latin</i> )
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### *Case Contiguity* (Caha 2009):

to be syncretic, two cases must be adjacent to each other on the following list:

*nominative - accusative - genitive - dative - ablative*

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