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

- *she*: ‘nominative’
- *her*: ‘accusative’
She saw her.

- *she*: ‘nominative’
- *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.**  [Lardil]
Mužčina videl żenščin-u.  [Russian]
Adam kadın-ı gördü.  [Turkish]

‘The man saw the woman’
Some cases have meanings that are fairly easy to explain…

nunâm 8tân  ‘I see the town’  (Wampanoag)
nutay 8tân-ât  ‘I live in the town’
Some cases have meanings that are fairly easy to explain…

*ta*lo-*ssa*  ‘in the house’  [Finnish]
*ta*lo-*lt*a  ‘from the house’
*ta*lo-*lle*  ‘to the house’
*ta*lo-*sta*  ‘out of the house’
*ta*lo-*on*  ‘into the house’
*ta*lo-*lla*  ‘at the house’
Some cases have meanings that are fairly easy to explain…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finnish</th>
<th>Quenya</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>talo-ssa</strong></td>
<td><strong>coa-ssë</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>talo-lta</strong></td>
<td><strong>coa-llo</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>talo-lle</strong></td>
<td><strong>coa-nna</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>talo-sta</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>talo-on</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>talo-lle</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
…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. ‘John laughed’ (Tongan)
Na’e langa ‘e Sione ‘a e fale. ‘John built a house’

Ngarrka wangkaja. ‘The man spoke’ (Warlpiri)
Ngarrka-ngku wawirri luwarnu. ‘The man shot the kangaroo’

Miali aniqqaujuq. ‘Miali left.’ (Inuktitut)
Taiviti-up suraktanga igaalaq. ‘Taiviti broke the window’
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.

**three-way**
Agherre nterreke.  
Artwe-le agherre-nhe weke.

‘John laughed’  
‘John built a house’

‘The kangaroo ran’  
‘The man shot the kangaroo’
Patterns of structural case

\[ \begin{array}{c}
S & V_{\text{intransitive}} \\
S & V_{\text{transitive}} & O
\end{array} \]

nominative-accusative
Patterns of structural case

- \( S \) \( V_{\text{intransitive}} \)  \( \text{nominative-accusative} \)
- \( S \) \( V_{\text{transitive}} \)  \( O \)  \( \text{ergative-absolutive} \)
Patterns of structural case

nominative-accusative

ergative-absolutive

three-way
Patterns of structural case

- **nominative-accusative**
  
  - $S \rightarrow V_{\text{intransitive}}$
  
  - $S \rightarrow V_{\text{transitive}} \rightarrow O$

- **ergative-absolutive**
  
  - $S \rightarrow V_{\text{intransitive}}$
  
  - $S \rightarrow V_{\text{transitive}} \rightarrow O$
  
  - $S \rightarrow V_{\text{transitive}} \rightarrow O$

- **three-way**
  
  - $S \rightarrow V_{\text{intransitive}}$
  
  - $S \rightarrow V_{\text{transitive}} \rightarrow O$

- **not found!**
  
  - $S \rightarrow V_{\text{intransitive}}$
  
  - $S \rightarrow V_{\text{transitive}} \rightarrow O$
One way to think about this:

Case systems are always set up so that transitive S and transitive O are different from each other.
One way to think about this:

Case systems are always set up so that transitive S and transitive O 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*
Quirky case

In a lot of languages, there are particular verbs that are associated with unusual cases…
Quirky case

In a lot of languages, there are particular verbs that are associated with unusual cases…

Þeir hafa étið **fiskinn**.                     \(\text{(Icelandic)}\)

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

In a lot of languages, there are particular verbs that are associated with unusual cases…

Þeir hafa étið fískinn. (Icelandic)
‘They have eaten the fish (ACCUSATIVE)’

Þeir hafa hent fískinum.
‘They have discarded the fish (DATIVE)’

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

In a lot of languages, there are particular verbs that are associated with unusual cases…

Hún kyssti Maríu.
‘She (NOMINATIVE) kissed Mary (ACCUSATIVE)’
Quirky case

In a lot of languages, there are particular verbs that are associated with unusual cases…

Hún kyssti Maríu.
‘She (NOMINATIVE) kissed Mary (ACCUSATIVE)’

Henni líkuðu hestarnir.
‘She (DATIVE) liked the horses (NOMINATIVE)’

➔ ‘like’ assigns quirky dative case to the subject…
Quirky case

In a lot of languages, there are particular verbs that are associated with unusual cases…

**Hún** kyssti **María**.
‘She (NOMINATIVE) kissed **Mary** (ACCUSATIVE)’

**Henni** líkuðu **hestarnir**.
‘She (DATIVE) liked the **horses** (NOMINATIVE)’

→ ‘like’ assigns quirky **dative** case to the **subject**…

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

➔ ‘like’ assigns quirky *dative* case to the *subject*…

…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.  
‘Raam ate bread (habitually)’

Raam-ne rotii khaayii thii  
‘Raam has eaten bread’
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’ → 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’
Case splits

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

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

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

**Gajiya** gagama  
‘The girl will go’

**Gajiya-nggu muyma nyuunjalma**  
‘The girl will kiss the boy’
Differential object marking

Bir kız-ı gördüm  
‘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 puella
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>‘girl’</th>
<th>‘boy’</th>
<th>(Latin)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOMINATIVE</td>
<td><em>puella</em></td>
<td><em>puer</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCUSATIVE</td>
<td><em>puellam</em></td>
<td><em>puerum</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENITIVE</td>
<td><em>puellae</em></td>
<td><em>puerī</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATIVE</td>
<td><em>puellae</em></td>
<td><em>puerō</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABLATIVE</td>
<td><em>puella</em></td>
<td><em>puerō</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case</td>
<td>'girl'</td>
<td>'boy'</td>
<td>'war'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOMINATIVE</td>
<td>puella</td>
<td>puer</td>
<td>bellum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACCUSATIVE</td>
<td>puellam</td>
<td>puerum</td>
<td>bellum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GENITIVE</td>
<td>puellae</td>
<td>puerī</td>
<td>bellī</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DATIVE</td>
<td>puellae</td>
<td>puerō</td>
<td>bellō</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABLATIVE</td>
<td>puellā</td>
<td>puerō</td>
<td>bellō</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Syncretism

‘girl’  ‘boy’  ‘war’  (Latin)

| NOMINATIVE | puella  | puer  | bellum |
| ACCUSATIVE  | puellam | puerum| bellum |
| GENITIVE   | puellae | puerī | bellī  |
| DATIVE     | puellae | puerō | bellō  |
| ABLATIVE   | puellā  | puerō | bellō  |

Case Contiguity (Caha 2009):

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

nominate - accusative - genitive - dative - ablative