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 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 explore some consequences of the idea, advocated by Chomsky (1981 and subsequent work) and many others, 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, 88 ff.) 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 of only pronouns). 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, cf. 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? Partly the same question is raised by languages of the English type. Consider (2):

1 The figures of Nichols are hard to interpret in terms of case-frequencies across languages (since she includes verb agreement as an indicator of A(gent)-S(ubject)-P(atient) contrasts, and since her counts are category based rather than language based), but this is as close as I get. Around 95% of the 155 ‘relevant’ languages in her sample had some marking (i.e. on arguments, at least pronominal, and/or on the verb).
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 pronouns 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, 1998, 1999), 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 expository 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).\(^2\) As we shall see, this means that one and the same ‘deep’ case can have many surface 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, constant meaning or structure.

In more general, the universal view of language developed by Chomsky (1998, 1999, 2001) is bound to profoundly change our conception of the relation between the PHYSICAL FORM of language (PF in spoken language, ‘Sign Form’ in sign languages) and its underlying mental system (LF or narrow syntax). Given that language is basically uniform (the Uniformity Principle of Chomsky 1999, 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 evidently quite common that features and categories are present in a particular 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.

\(^2\) 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 2001, and thus I shall stick to the traditional label, LF.
like Chinese. On the other and, 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 signalling 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, terminological and conceptual 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’ (althoug it typically relates to sense/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 the Tense complex). Finally, section 7 concludes the paper.
2. Inherent case

In an interview with Belletti and Rizzi, Chomsky (2000) 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 candidates):

\begin{itemize}
  \item a The experiencer case (dative in many languages)
  \item b The recipient case (dative in many languages)
  \item c The possessor case (genitive in many languages)
  \item d The partitive case (genitive or partitive in many languages)
  \item e The instrument case (instrumental or dative in many languages)
\end{itemize}

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 in nature, i.e. they might involve more than one layer of deep case. Consider the recipient case, as in the following examples:

English:

(7) a Johns 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(D)
   b Jón sendir bókina til mín á jólunum.
    John(N) sends book-the(A) to me(G) at Christmas(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.\(^3\) 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’.\(^4\)

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. 1998, 1999) 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

\(^3\) This entails that ‘complex roles’ are legitimate (cf. the discussion in Hornstein 1999).

\(^4\) 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.
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 2000 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’):

(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:5

(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 briefly and sparsely so.

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

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5 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.
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. – 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 (cf. 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 1998), both as for instance benefactives and themes, as illustrated in (13):

(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

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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 hlíð 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 are arbitrarily marked for 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 complement (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 hárrí röddu.
    he spoke loud voice(D)
‘He spoke with a loud voice.’

b Ég skildi þetta **mín 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 iterative 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 ten centimeters(D) taller than you [are]

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

All these facts illustrate, quite clearly, that the morphological dative in Icelandic represents or reflects many types of 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 1998):

(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. 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. 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.
    me(D) like(3pl) they(N)
    ‘I like them.’

b Mér líka þeir.
    me(D) like(3pl) they(N)
    ‘I like them.’

c I like them.
    English (NOM-ACC)

(24) Mær líkar henda filmin.
    me(D) likes this film-the(A)
    ‘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.), whereas both English and Icelandic must resort to a preposition:

7 Svenonius (2001) 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.
8 Or, if they have such core meanings at some level of abstraction, these can easily be masked and even wiped out by other factors.
9 Alternatively, one could say that at least German applies case agreement in the pseudopartitive construction (cf. (25b)), but the difference between these two formulations is immaterial here.
(25) a Tre flaskor vin (var på bordet).  
three bottles wine were on table-the  
‘Three bottles of wine (were on the table).’  

b Drei Flaschen Wein (waren auf dem Tisch).  
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.  

(27) a Prjár flöskur *(af) vín voru á borðinu.  
three bottles (of) wine(D) were on table-the  

b *Prjár flöskur vín voru á borðinu.  
three bottles(N) wine(N) were on table-the  
c ?Prjár flöskur vín voru á borðinu.  
three bottles 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 of only pronouns), whereas German and Icelandic have very similar systems of four cases.10

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 directionality vs. location can be expressed with case in e.g. German and Icelandic, it may be expressed by intonation in Swedish, as illustrated in (28):11

(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 vegnum.  
Peter drove (up)on wall-the(D)

b Pétur keyrði á vegginn.  
Peter drove into 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.12 Consider the Finnish cases in (30), of the noun talo ‘hus’, and compare them to the Icelandic adverbial variation in (31):

10 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.
11 Cecilia Falk and Lars-Olof Delsing, p.c. This is a general phenomenon in Swedish.
12 Thanks to Peter Svenonius for drawing my attention to this.
(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**.
   ‘The smoke was in the house.’
   b Reykurinn fór **inn í húsið**.
   ‘The smoke went into the house.’
   c Reykurinn kom **innan úr húsinu**.
   ‘The smoke came from within the hose.’

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

(32) | Place X | Toward X | From X |
--- | --- | --- | ---
uppi ‘up’ | upp | ofan |
níðri ‘down’ | niður | neðan |
úti ‘out’ | út | utan |
níni ‘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 (OR ‘CASE AGREEMENT’)
some(N) men-the(N) left
‘Some of the men left.’
b Sumir mannahmanna fóru. GENITIVE
some(N) men-the(G) left
‘Some of the men left.’
c Sumir af mónnumnum 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).13

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.’

13 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 by an observant reviewer.
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 bídja ‘ask for’, bída ‘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 unsuccessful/unsucceeded process). 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).15

14 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.

15 Svenonius (2001) advocates a similar approach to the Icelandic accusative.
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. Maling 1998, Barðdal 2001) 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)). 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):

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

17 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 arbitrary 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
(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. 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) \( \forall x: (\text{DP}(x) \& \text{subject}(x) \& \text{agent}(x)) \rightarrow \text{nominative}(x) \)

Similarly, each of the other statements in (43) involves two or more preconditions. However, what I am claiming is this:

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’.

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’.

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.
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 (and often, of course, 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  Maríþókkir Rósu.  
Mary(N) knows Rose(A) 
b  Rósa þókkir Mariu.  
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
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 \( \text{AR}_1 \) and \( \text{AR}_2 \), respectively (‘Argument Relation 1’, ‘Argument Relation 2’). The structural matching of these features, in turn, is \text{ARGUMENT LICENSING} (\text{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 1999) licenses both the ‘nominative’ feature \( \text{AR}_1 \) and the ‘accusative’ one, \( \text{AR}_2 \), the former being licenced directly by \( v^* \), the latter indirectly via \( V \) (\( V \) activated by \( v^* \)). This is sketched in (47):

\[
\begin{array}{c}
v^*P \\
\text{3} \\
v^* \\
\text{VP} \\
g \quad \text{g} \\
\text{[AR}_1\text{]} \\
V' \\
g \\
\text{3} \\
z \rightarrow \quad V \rightarrow \quad [\text{AR}_2]
\end{array}
\]

This deviates from the approach of Chomsky (1999) in three aspects: First, the subject is merged as Spec,\( \text{VP} \) and not as Spec,\( v^*P \). Second, the ‘cases’ or the Argument Relation features are ‘half-siblings’, having \( v^* \) as their common source or ‘parent’. Third, both features are locally and immediately matched by \( v^* \) (and by \( v^* \) plus \( V \)),\(^{19}\) whereas \( \text{AR}_1 \) or nominative is matched by 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 \( \text{AR}_1 \) and \( \text{AR}_2 \), respectively, in accusative languages like e.g. English and Icelandic, and, correspondingly, whether there is such a correlation between Argument Licensing (\text{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 \text{AL}, whereas \text{AL} does not necessarily trigger structural m-case marking; that is, such marking may be blocked or ‘bled’ by other factors.

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 \( \text{AR}_2 \), 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):

\[
\begin{array}{c}
a \quad \text{Við fengum} \text{ mikið fé}.
\end{array}
\]

\(^{19}\) In passive, unaccusative and other ‘defective’ constructions in the sense of Chomsky (1999), \( \text{AR}_1 \) or the ‘nominative’ feature is matched by plain \( v \) (cf. Sigurðsson 2000).
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.\textsuperscript{20} 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\textsubscript{2}, as in e.g. (49b):

\begin{align}
\text{(49)} & \quad \begin{align}
\text{a} & \quad \text{Við fundum hann.} \\
& \quad \text{we found him(A)}
\end{align} \\
\text{b} & \quad \text{Við leituðum hans.} \\
& \quad \text{we looked him(G)}
\end{align}

‘We looked for him.’

Similarly, evidence that the structural ‘nominative’ feature, AR\textsubscript{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):

\begin{align}
\text{(50)} & \quad \text{Under the table and behind the door are good places to hide.}
\end{align}

\begin{align}
\text{(51)} & \quad \text{Måste här städas till jul?} \quad \text{from Falk 1993, pp. 273, 294} \\
& \quad \text{must here be-cleaned for Christmas} \\
& \quad \text{‘Is it necessary to clean here before Christmas?’}
\end{align}

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

\begin{align}
\text{(52)} & \quad \text{She had not liked them.} \quad \text{NOM-ACC} \\
\text{(53)} & \quad \text{Henni höfðu ekki líkað þeir.} \quad \text{DAT-NOM} \\
& \quad \text{her(D) had(3pl) not liked they(N)} \\
& \quad \text{‘She had not liked them.’}
\end{align}

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\textsubscript{1},

\begin{footnote}
\textsuperscript{20} Although they probably have a social function; by mastering the right cases the child signifies his/her ‘rightful’ belonging to a linguistic community/ethnic group.
\end{footnote}
whereas the morphological nominative matches the structural ‘accusative’, AR. 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. 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 show their case on only their N head and nominal modifiers of N. Consider (54):

(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 highly implausible.

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

21 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.
The boldface accusatives indicate that the clausal subjects in examples of this sort are assigned nominative. The reason why this is so is that structural accusative is contingent on structural nominative, that is:

(57) Structural 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, 2001).

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) \((\text{Acc} \rightarrow \text{Nom}) \& ¬(\text{Nom} \rightarrow \text{Acc})\)

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:

(59) a Kjartani líkuðu þessir bílar/*þessa bíla.
Kjartan(D) liked(3pl) these cars(N/*A)
b Honum þóttu [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. The following examples are from Barnes (1986, 18-19, 34):

(60) a Með líkar henda filmin.
me(D) likes this film-the(A)
b Kjartani dámar væl nýggja bil sín.
Kjartan(D) likes well new car his(A)
c Honum nýtist fleiri bókahillar.
him(D) needs more bookshelves(A)

(61) a Henni tókti bítin ringan.
her(D) thought boat-the(A) bad

---

22 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).


24 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).
b Honum tökti 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 case-Oblique case) > Nom-Acc (Allen 1996, 10 ff.).\(^{25}\)

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 implicational, but instead reads: ‘translates as’). The variable \( \alpha \) ranges over the ‘nominative’ vs. the ‘accusative’ values (i.e. the Argument Relation (AR) values 1 and 2 in the diagram in (47) above):\(^{26}\)

\[
(62) \quad AR_\alpha \rightarrow DP_\alpha
\]

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):

\[
(63) \quad AR_\alpha \rightarrow DP_\alpha \rightarrow DP/C_\alpha
\]

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’):

\[
(64) \quad AR_\alpha \rightarrow DP_\alpha \rightarrow \neg \rightarrow DP/C_\alpha = DP/C_{inh}
\]

\( \rightarrow \)

\( \neg \)

\[
(64) \quad AR_\alpha \rightarrow DP_\alpha \rightarrow DP/C_{inh} \rightarrow ¬ \rightarrow DP/C_\alpha = DP/C_{inh}
\]

\( \rightarrow \)

\( \neg \)

\[
(64) \quad AR_\alpha \rightarrow DP_\alpha \rightarrow \neg \rightarrow DP/C_\alpha = DP/C_{\alpha}
\]

\( \rightarrow \)

\( \neg \)

\[
(64) \quad AR_\alpha \rightarrow DP_\alpha \rightarrow \neg \rightarrow DP/C_\alpha = DP/C_{\alpha}
\]

\( \rightarrow \)

\( \neg \)

25 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).

26 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 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:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(65)} & : & C_{\text{Inh}} & C_{\text{Str}} \\
\alpha & \rightarrow & \text{AR} & \alpha & \rightarrow & \text{DP} & \alpha & \rightarrow & \text{DP/C}_{\text{Inh}} & \rightarrow & \text{DP/C}_{\text{Inh}} & \text{C}_{\alpha=\emptyset} & = & \text{DP/C}_{\text{Inh}} & \emptyset \\
\beta & \rightarrow & \text{AR} & \alpha & \rightarrow & \text{DP} & \alpha & \rightarrow & \neg & \rightarrow & \text{DP/C} & \alpha & = & \text{DP/C} & \alpha \\
\end{align*}
\]

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 \(\text{DP/C}_{\text{Inh}} & \text{C}_{\alpha=\emptyset} = \text{DP/C}_{\text{Inh}} & \emptyset\) and the same claim has been made for certain Australian languages (see Blake 1994, 103 ff.).

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

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{(66)} & : & C_{\text{Inh}} & C_{\text{Str}} \\
\alpha & \rightarrow & \text{AR} & \alpha & \rightarrow & \text{DP} & \alpha & \rightarrow & \neg & \rightarrow & \text{DP/C} & \alpha & = & \text{DP/C} & \alpha \\
\beta & \rightarrow & \text{AR} & \alpha & \rightarrow & \text{DP} & \alpha & \rightarrow & \neg & \rightarrow & \text{DP/C}_{\text{Inh}} & \alpha & = & \text{DP/C}_{\text{Inh}} & \emptyset \\
\gamma & \rightarrow & \text{AR} & \alpha & \rightarrow & \text{DP} & \alpha & \rightarrow & \text{DP/C}_{\text{Inh}} & \rightarrow & \neg & \rightarrow & \text{DP/C}_{\text{Inh}} & \text{C}_{\alpha=\emptyset} & = & \text{DP/C}_{\text{Inh}} & \emptyset \\
\delta & \rightarrow & \text{AR} & \alpha & \rightarrow & \text{DP} & \alpha & \rightarrow & \text{DP/C}_{\text{Inh}} & \rightarrow & \text{DP/C}_{\text{Inh}} & \text{C}_{\alpha=\emptyset} & = & \text{DP/C}_{\text{Inh}} & \text{C}_{\alpha} \\
\end{align*}
\]

There seems to be a hierarchical correlation between the m-case strategies: \(e \gg d \gg c \gg b\). 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 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). Similarly, 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 life’ 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 a striking evidence in favor of that conclusion.

6. NP-movement and Person Prominence
Reconsider Chomsky’s (2000) 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,

\[27\) For arguments against case-stacking in Korean, however, see Schütze (1997, 164 ff.).]
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 assumed in Chomsky (1999) and as argued in e.g. Sigurðsson (1989 and subsequent work), NP-movement or DP-displacement is evidently not case-driven.

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).28

(67) a Pað mundi einverjum bánum þá sennilega verða stolið á uppboðinu. 
there would some boats(D) then probably be stolen at auction-the
‘Some boats would then probably be stolen at the auction.’

b Pað mundi þá einverjum bànum sennilega verða stolið á uppboðinu

c Pað mundi þá sennilega einverjum bánum verða stolið á uppboðinu.

d Pað mundi þá sennilega verða stolið einverjum bánum á uppboðinu.

(68) *Pað mundi þá sennilega verða einverjum bánum 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 Pað mundu einverjir bánar þá sennilega verða seldir á uppboðinu. 
there would some boats(N) then probably be sold at auction-the
‘Some boats would then probably be sold at the auction.’

b Pað mundu þá einverjir bánar sennilega verða seldir á uppboðinu.

c Pað mundu þá sennilega einverjir bánar verða seldir á uppboðinu.

d Pað mundu þá sennilega verða einverjir bánar á uppboðinu.

(70) *Pað mundu þá sennilega verða einverjir bánar seldir á uppboðinu.

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 subjects):

(71) a Ég taldi [einverjja bán] 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 einverjja bán á uppboðinu].
I believed have been sold some boats(A) at auction-the

28 See also Sigurðsson 2000, 78 ff.; the judgements there are more varied because of the presence of the negation.
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): 29

(71) a Mundu margir stúdentar þá kannski ekki hafa leisið bókina?
   would many students(N) then perhaps not have read book-the(A)

b Mundu þá kannski ekki margir stúdentar hafa leisið bókina?
   would then perhaps not many students(N) have read book-the(A)

c *Mundu þá kannski ekki hafa margir stúdentar leisið bókina?
   would then perhaps not have many students(N) read book-the(A)

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 & Anagnostopoulou 1998, 2001). Consider for instance the following Modern Greek examples (from/modelled on Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 1998, 495, 497):

(73) a … o Petros episkeftike tin Ilektra
   … that the-Peter visited the Ilektra
   ‘… that Peter visited Ilektra.’

b … oti episkeftike o Petros tin Ilektra
   ‘… that Peter visited Ilektra.’

(74) An ehi idhi diavasi kala o Petros [t̂] 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 peim þá kannski hafa verið stolið á uppboðinu?
   would them(D) then perhaps have been stolen at auction-the
   ‘Would they then perhaps have been stolen at the auction?’

b *Mundi þá peim kannski hafa verið stolið á uppboðinu?

c *Mundi þá kannski peim hafa verið stolið á uppboðinu?

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

Nominative subject:

(76) a Mundu þær þá kannski hafa verið seldir á uppboðinu?

29 Presumably, the ‘low’ position in question is Spec,v*P.
would they(N) then perhaps have been sold 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
(‘SpecIP’), 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 (1999) 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 matches nominative case by agreement (and vice versa). For closely related
approaches, see e.g. Pesetsky and Torrego (2000), 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 and it is rather odd to think of this visibility function as being pre-conditioned 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.30 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 descriptive gain, it seems. Fourth, and most problematically, many case languages
have vP-internal or ‘low’ nominatives, not only in tensed environments, as we have

30 For the sake of fairness, it should however be pointed out that this does not obvioulsy follow from
our vP-internal approach to nominative case either.
already seen examples of, but also in untensed environments, as in the Icelandic (77)\textsuperscript{31} and the German (78):\textsuperscript{32}

\begin{enumerate}
\item a Hana langaði ekki til [að leiðast \textit{þeir}/*þá].
\begin{tabular}{l}
her(A) longed not for to \textit{PRO} bore they(N)/\textit{them}(A) \\
\end{tabular}
\begin{tabular}{l}
\textquote{She did not want to find them boring.} \\
\end{tabular}
\item b Mér virtist/*virtust [henni hafa leiðst \textit{þeir}/*þá].
\begin{tabular}{l}
me(D) seemed(3sg/*3pl) her(D) have bored they(N)/\textit{them}(A) \\
\end{tabular}
\begin{tabular}{l}
\textquote{It seemed to me that she had found them boring.} \\
\end{tabular}
\end{enumerate}

\begin{enumerate}
\item a Sie haben beschlossen [\textit{einer} nach dem anderem wegzugehen].
\begin{tabular}{l}
they have decided PRO one(N) after the other away-to-go \\
\end{tabular}
\begin{tabular}{l}
\textquote{They decided to leave one after the other.} \\
\end{tabular}
\item b \ldots dass mir [dem Fritz \textit{ein Buch} abhanden gekommen zu sein] scheint.
\begin{tabular}{l}
that me the Fritz a book(N) lost become to be seems \\
\end{tabular}
\begin{tabular}{l}
\textquote{\ldots that it seems to me that Fritz has lost a book.} \\
\end{tabular}
\end{enumerate}

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):

\begin{align*}
& \text{v}^*P \\
& \begin{array}{c}
\text{v}^* \\
\text{g} \quad \text{g} \\
\text{g} \quad \rightarrow [\text{CASE}_1] \\
\text{g} \\
\text{z} \quad \rightarrow [\text{CASE}_2] \\
\end{array}
\end{align*}

If \textit{V} selects no inherent case, the higher argument will show up in the nominative, whereas the lower one will show up in the accusative.\textsuperscript{33} If \textit{V} selects inherent case for one of the arguments, the other one will show up in the nominative (in Icelandic, as opposed to Faroese).\textsuperscript{34} – I shall refer to this approach as the \textit{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):

\begin{align*}
& (\text{Acc} \rightarrow \text{Nom}) \land \lnot (\text{Nom} \rightarrow \text{Acc}) \\
\end{align*}

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,

\textsuperscript{31} The inifinitive marker \textit{að} ‘to’ is arguably a complementizer (see e.g Sigurðsson 1989), hence the order \textit{to-PRO} in the glosses in (77a).

\textsuperscript{32} Thanks to an anonymous reviewer for pointing (78a) out to me and to Gisbert Fanselow, p.c., for providing (78b).

\textsuperscript{33} A reviewer points out that [+human] accusatives normally precede [–human] nominatives in German (as in \textit{dass meinen Onkel(Acc) die Fliegen(Nom) geärgert haben:} that my uncle the flies annoyed have). I have no account of this interesting pattern.

\textsuperscript{34} In ‘defective’ constructions (in the sense of Chomsky 1999), like passives and unaccusatives, the sole argument is matched against plain \textit{v} via \textit{V} (getting nominative case unless \textit{V} selects inherent case).
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 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, 2001).

As we have seen, NP-movement seems to be unrelated to case.35 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, language seems to adhere to the PERSON PROMINENCE PRINCIPLE (PPP):36

(81)  PPP: Visualize Person as high in the clause as possible

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’.37

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,Pers

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: Top, Pers, Num, Force, Mood, Tense, …

Languages like Italian apply PR to the inflected verb, whereas English applies it to the subject (= ‘high’ NP-movement).39 Languages like Icelandic, on the other

35 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 heigher 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 & Anagnostopoulo suggest, it is not clear that this ban against lexicalizing Spec,VP (in Icelandic) relates to case.

36 Chomsky 1999 tentatively suggests that the EPP feature on Tense is person. The present approach raises many intriguing questions that I cannot adress 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.

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

38 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.

39 Needless to say, this approach owes important insights to Alexiadou and Anagnostopoulo 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.
hand, are PERSON AGREEMENT (PA) languages. That is, they basically apply the ‘Italian’ verb-raising strategy, but, in addition, they apply PA:

\[(83) \quad \text{PA: Pers agrees with another element, X, in Spec,Pers}\]

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,Pers 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. 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 agreement relation with Pers, albeit only a morphologically ‘defective’ one.\(^{40}\) See further below.

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

\[(84) \quad \begin{align*}
\text{a} & \quad *\text{Mér höfðum leiðst við.} \\
& \quad \text{me(D) had(1pl) bored we(N)} \\
& \quad [\text{i.e. ‘I had found ourselves boring.’}]
\text{b} & \quad *\text{Mér höfðuð leiðst þið.} \\
& \quad \text{me(D) had(2pl) bored you(N)} \\
& \quad [\text{i.e. ‘I had found you boring.’}]
\text{c} & \quad \text{Mér höfðu leiðst þeir.} \\
& \quad \text{me(D) had(3pl) bored they(N)} \\
& \quad ‘\text{I had found them boring.’}
\end{align*}\]

As seen in (84c), the finite verb shows number agreement with 3\(^{rd}\) person nominative objects, whereas it is blocked from agreeing with 1\(^{st}\) and 2\(^{nd}\) person objects, as in (84a, b). This asymmetry is accounted for if, first, 3\(^{rd}\) 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 (3\(^{rd}\) 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):\(^{41}\)

\[(85) \quad \begin{array}{c}
\text{PersP} \\
3 \\
\text{Pers} \quad \text{NumP} \\
g \quad 3 \\
g \quad \text{Num} \\
g \quad T \\
g \quad vP
\end{array}\]

\(^{40}\) Both merger of expletive \(\text{það} \) ‘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 afield.

\(^{41}\) 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.
Pers, thus, ‘null-agrees’ with the dative, whereas Num agrees with the nominative object (arguably, however, the dative must then be ‘deported’ or raised across Num, or else it would intervene between Num and the nominative).

This approach entails that we must distinguish sharply between syntactic (Spec-head) 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.42

(87) INHERENT M-CASE signals a DP-setVisible m-agreement relation between a DP and another element: X(P)i – DP/agr:i

What has come to be known as morphological agreement, on the other hand, is the X0-visible side of the same coin, namely:

(88) AGREEMENT signals an X0-visible m-agreement relation between a DP and another element: X0/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. Gilligan 1987, Blake 1994, p. 140 f., Palmer 1994, p. 53 f.). – Even without concomitant m-agreement, PA itself

42 This approach is conceptually close or equivalent 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).
is costly, i.e. most languages satisfy PPP by either verb raising or DP-raising, not by both (=PA).

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 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 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, 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.

As Chomsky (2000) observes in his interview with Belletti and Rizzi, then, the abstract structural ‘cases’ or Argument Relation features do not really have any content. In caseless languages, they simply amount to Argument Licensing, i.e. the basic predicate-argument relations that arise when predicates and their arguments are merged. In case-languages, these relations are in addition made ‘extra-visible’ by morphological marking of the argument DPs involved. Notice that these basic relations are of course visible 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, 1999) and many others. 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 2001), 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 historical 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).

43 This view is in part inspired by Holmberg’s approach (2000) to Icelandic Stylistic Fronting and EPP.
44 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,
While the inherent abstract cases are 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. 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-externally licensed (and matched for its m-case, in case languages), the DP becomes visible to movement and can thus be dislocated for the purposes of matching other features, most importantly Person.

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language typically ‘compensates’ for such reduction by introducing a new variation in the stem, for instance a circumflex or some kind of a mutation.


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