Severing *Differential Subject Marking* from Ergativity

Jessica Coon (jessica.coon@mcgill.ca) & Omer Preminger (opreming@syr.edu)
McGill University / Syracuse University

1. Overview

- Differential Argument Marking is a *configurational* phenomenon (§2)
  - it is a product of particular syntactic configurations
  - it correlates with the interpretive properties of a DP only insofar as the syntactic position in which that DP occurs correlates with those interpretive properties
  - crucially, we will see an instance of DSM that depends on interpretive properties of the *object*
    - since those correlate with different *positions* of the object, which in turn affects the relative configuration of the subject and object

DISCLAIMER:
For the purposes of this talk, the term Differential Subject Marking (DSM) should be understood to refer to alternations involving *structural* case marking, or its absence, on the subject. We will have nothing to say about inherent, theta-determined subject cases (e.g. dative on subject experiencers, which we assume is assigned upon first merge, prior to movement to subject position).

- A challenge from this view comes from "binary split" systems (§3)
  - where both the subject *and* the object seem to vary in their marking, independent of one other, based on their own interpretive properties
  - and crucially, in a language like Dyirbal (Dixon 1994), both markings seem sensitive to the same interpretive property
    - namely, 1st/2nd person vs. 3rd person
- But given the independently established agreement requirement on 1st/2nd person arguments (§4) —
  - there is a way to recast the sensitivity to 1st/2nd person vs. 3rd person in configurational terms, as well (§5)
- Moreover, cross-linguistically—despite the appearance that Dyirbal gives—only subject marking truly correlates with the 1st/2nd person vs. 3rd person distinction (§6)
  - whereas object marking correlates with features like *definiteness*, *specificity*, and/or *animacy*
  - ➢ We present an account that derives this distinction.
- Finally, we ruminate on why it is that DSM seems to be more prevalent in ergative languages (§7)
  - SPOILER ALERT: it's mostly a terminological bias
- Section §8 concludes.

2. Differential Argument Marking as a configurational phenomenon

- Baker & Vinokurova (2010):
  Differential Object Marking (DOM) in Sakha is determined **configurationally** —
  - changes to the **interpretation** of the object (in Sakha: *specificity*) results from changes in the **position** of the object
  - following Diesing (1992), et seq.:
    - *object in VP-internal position → non-specific interpretation*
      - within the scope of existential closure
    - *object moves to VP-external position → specific interpretation*
      - escaping the scope of existential closure
  - DOM manifests itself as case morphology because case is assigned **configurationally**
    - and therefore, **case** depends on the **position** of the noun phrases in question[1]

(1) a. Masha salamaat$_1$-*(y) [$_{VP}$ türgennik t_1 sie-te]. (Sakha)
Masha porridge-*(ACC) quickly eat-PAST.3SG.SUBJ
'Masha ate the porridge quickly.'

b. Masha [$_{VP}$ türgennik salamaat-(#y) sie-te].
Masha quickly porridge-(#ACC) eat-PAST.3SG.SUBJ
'Masha ate porridge quickly.' [*B&V:602; annotations added*]

- when the object moves out of VP, it receives a specific interpretation, and is in a local enough configuration with the subject to receive DEPENDENT CASE(=ACC) (2a)
- when the object remains inside VP, it receives a non-specific interpretation, and is not in a local enough configuration with the subject to receive DEPENDENT CASE (2b)

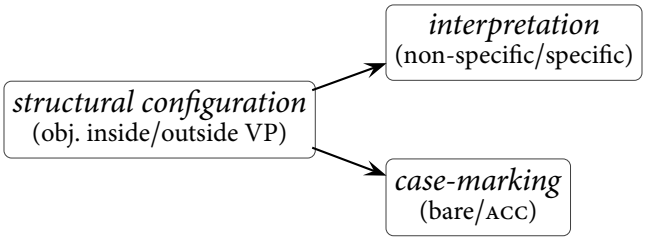
(2) a. Masha porridge$_1$-ACC [$_{VP}$ … t_1 …]
dependent ACC

b. Masha … [$_{VP}$ … porridge …]
dependent ACC

[1] Baker & Vinokurova's (2010) actual claim is that the facts of case in Sakha require a 'hybrid' theory of case, consisting of a configurational component and a probe-goal component. However, Levin & Preminger (to appear) have shown that this is incorrect, and that the facts regarding case in Sakha can be derived in a completely configurational manner, given certain independently-motivated changes to Baker & Vinokurova's theory of agreement.

⇒ The picture that emerges is the following:[2]

(3) CAUSAL RELATIONS IN DOM



- We will return to (3) shortly, but let us pause briefly to pose a terminological question:

> Would the difference between (1a) and (1b) have led anyone to categorize Sakha as a "split accusative" language—i.e., to state that in the presence of a non-specific object, the language "shifts" out of its normal accusative alignment, into a 'neutral' alignment?

➢ Similar alternations in subject marking *routinely* result in a language being classified as 'split ergative'…

- Like ACC on objects, ERG on subjects depends on a second DP occupying a position *in the same case-domain* (Marantz 1991; see also Baker 2013, in prep.)

⇒ If something were to disrupt this sufficiently-local configuration of two DPs, it would bleed the assignment of ERG
  - just like the assignment of ACC is bled in the Sakha (1b/2b)

Consider the following, rather remarkable finding (Woolford 2008, Massam 2013, Baker in prep.) —

- An object that remains inside VP can bleed the assignment of ERG (just as in the Sakha (2a–b), it bleeds the assignment of ACC):

(4) a. mə-ŋən ləɣə$_1$ [$_{VP}$ əllə juɣ kanŋa t$_1$ aməɣaloɣ]. (Eastern Ostyak[5])
we-ERG them large tree beside put.PAST.3pl.OBJ/1pl.SUBJ
'We put them (pots of berries) beside a big tree.'

b. mä [$_{VP}$ t'əkäjəɣlämnä ula mənɣäləm].
we.dual(NOM) younger.sister.COM berry pick.PAST.1pl.SUBJ
'I went to pick berries with my younger sister.'
[*Gulya 1966, via Baker in prep.; annotations added*]

[2] See Merchant 2009 for a different (and pre-dating) proposal—building on Aissen 1999, 2003 and implemented in a 'cartographic' fashion—that nevertheless preserves the fundamental insight that *position* is the independent variable in DOM as well as DSM, whereas changes in interpretation and case-marking are derivative.

[5] Finno-Ugric; Siberia. The reason these two data points are not a more perfect minimal pair is because they are collected from narratives, rather than through elicitation (Gulya 1966).

(5) a. we-ERG them$_1$ [$_{VP}$ … t_1 …]

dependent ERG

b. we … [$_{VP}$ … berry …]

✗ *dependent* ERG

- Massam (2013): in Niuean, specificity/non-specificity of the object has the same effect on case-marking of the subject (i.e., ERG vs. bare), *even when the object in question is null*
  - all but ruling out an account of this subject case alternation in terms of (pseudo-)noun-incorporation of the object

To us, this is the "smoking gun" that Differential Argument Marking is a fundamentally *configurational* phenomenon (as in (3), above).

- In (4a–b), we have the case-marking of one argument (the subject) alternating according to the semantic properties of another (the object)
- It's true that Differential Argument Marking usually involves the semantic properties of an argument alternating with the case-marking *on that same argument* —
  - ➢ but that is because the position of an argument often affects its own case-marking

- A theory of Differential Argument Marking that derives the morphological marking of an argument directly from its semantic properties does not generalize to cases like (4a–b)

➢ **A configurational theory, where the independent variable is not interpretation but (relative) position—as in (3)—does**

3. A challenge to the configurational theory of Differential Argument Marking: "Binary split" systems

(6) INTRANSITIVE: LEXICAL SUBJECT

[$_S$ **ŋuma**] miyanda-n^{y}u (Dyirbal)
father laugh-NONFUT
'Father laughed.'

(7) INTRANSITIVE: 1ST/2ND PERSON SUBJECT

[$_S$ **ŋana**] miyanda-n^{y}u
we laugh-NONFUT
'We laughed.'

(8) TRANSITIVE: LEXICAL SUBJECT, LEXICAL OBJECT

a. [$_{P}$ **ŋuma**] [$_{A}$ **yabu-ŋgu**] bura-n
father **mother-ERG** see-NONFUT
'Mother saw father.'

b. [$_{P}$ **yabu**] [$_{A}$ **ŋuma-ŋgu**] bura-n
mother **father-ERG** see-NONFUT
'Father saw mother.'

(9) TRANSITIVE: 1ST/2ND PERSON SUBJECT, 1ST/2ND PERSON OBJECT

a. [$_{A}$ **ŋana**] [$_{P}$ **nʸurra-na**] bura-n
we **y'all-ACC** see-NONFUT
'We saw y'all.'

b. [$_{A}$ **nʸurra**] [$_{P}$ **ŋana-na**] bura-n
y'all **we-ACC** see-NONFUT
'Y'all saw us.' [*Dixon 1994:161*]

(10) TRANSITIVE: MIXED CLAUSES

a. 1ST/2ND PERSON SUBJECT, LEXICAL OBJECT

[$_{A}$ **ŋana**] [$_{P}$ **ŋuma**] bura-n
we **father** see-NONFUT
'We saw father.'

b. LEXICAL SUBJECT, 1ST/2ND PERSON OBJECT

[$_{P}$ **ŋana-na**] [$_{A}$ **ŋuma-ŋgu**] bura-n
we-ACC **father-ERG** see-NONFUT
'Father saw us.' [*Dixon 1994:130*]

(11) DYIRBAL ARGUMENT MARKING — SUMMARY

	1st/2nd person pronouns	other nominals
A	Ø	***-ŋgu*** **('ERG')**
S	Ø	Ø
P	***-na*** **('ACC')**	Ø

➢ Observations (Dixon 1994):

- ACC and ERG can co-occur (10b)
- but neither depends on the presence of the other (8–9)

⇒ Tempting to view this as two systems, both sensitive to interpretation (1st/2nd person vs. 3rd person), operating independently from one another

- objects:
  - 3rd person → unmarked
  - 1st/2nd person → marked (ACC)
- subjects:
  - 1st/2nd person → unmarked
  - 3rd person → marked (ERG)

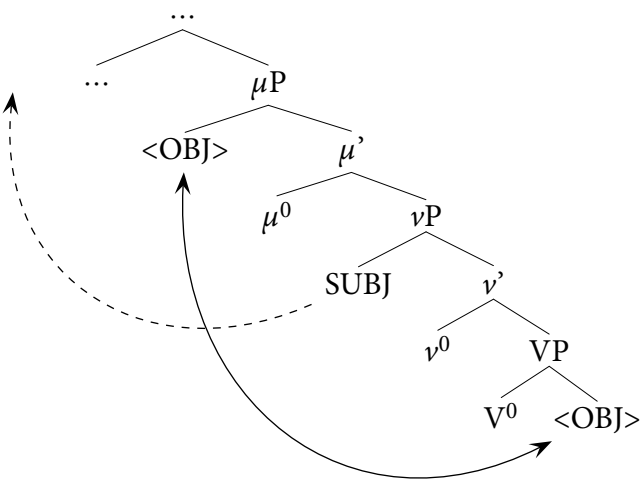
cf.: explanations in terms of *prototypicality*, *iconicity*, and *animacy hierarchies* (for discussion, see Silverstein 1976, 1981, Wierzbicka 1981, a.o.)

➢ **But recall that this treatment would not generalize to the Eastern Ostyak and Niuean patterns discussed earlier**

- ideally, we would want a *configurational* account of Differential Argument Marking in Dyirbal, as well

⟶ *Solution…?*

(12)



(cf. Johnson 1991, on μP and short movement of objects; and note the similarity to *Object Shift* more generally)

(13) a. ACC in Dyirbal:
DEPENDENT CASE assigned to the *higher* of two DPs **outside of VP**.

b. ERG in Dyirbal:
DEPENDENT CASE assigned to the *higher* of two DPs **inside *v*P**.

- This comes close to predicting a "binary split" system
  - the case-marking on the object (ACC vs. bare) will depend on features of the object
  - but as it stands, the case-marking on the subject will invariably be ERG *(stay tuned…)*

- But is such **domain-relativization** motivated, when it comes to DEPENDENT CASE?
  - ➢ *Yes!* Going back to Baker & Vinokurova 2010, their actual DEPENDENT CASE rules are:

(14) a. If there are two distinct argumental NPs **in the same VP-phase** such that NP1 c-commands NP2, then value the case feature of NP1 as dative unless NP2 has already been marked for case.

b. If there are two distinct argumental NPs **in the same phase** such that NP1 c-commands NP2, then value the case feature of NP2 as accusative unless NP1 has already been marked for case.

[*Baker & Vinokurova 2010:595; emphasis added*]

- Without the emphasized domain-relativizations in (14a–b), Baker & Vinokurova's would make the wrong predictions for, e.g., case in Sakha ditransitives

Now, about the variable assignment of ERG *in a "binary split" system…*

4. The formal agreement requirement on 1st/2nd person pronouns

- The *Person Case Constraint* (PCC) —
  - APPROXIMATION:
    a prohibition against 1st/2nd person direct objects in the presence of an indirect object
    - i.e., "direct objects of ditransitives must be 3rd person"
    - see Anagnostopoulou 2005, Bonet 1991, Nevins 2007, a.o., for more fine-grained characterizations

➢ But if you look at formal accounts of the PCC, what you find is the following:
  - they do not rule out 1st/2nd person direct objects per se;
  - what they rule out is 1st/2nd person *object agreement*, or 1st/2nd person *object clitics*

- This is for good reason —
  - the PCC arises precisely where object-agreement/object-clitics are found
    - e.g. the Basque (15b)
  - and its effects disappear when no such object marking is found
    - e.g. the embedded clause in (16), which is the infinitival counterpart of (15b)

(15) a. Zuk niri liburu-a saldu d-i-Ø-da-zu.
you.ERG me.DAT book-ART$_{sg}$(ABS) sold 3.ABS-√-sg.ABS-1sg.DAT-2sg.ERG
'You have sold the book to me.'

b. * Zuk harakin-ari ni saldu *n-(a)i-Ø-o-zu*.
you.ERG butcher-ART$_{sg}$.DAT me(ABS) sold 1.ABS-√-sg.ABS-3sg.DAT-2sg.ERG
Intended: 'You have sold me to the butcher.'

(16) Gaizki iruditzen Ø-zai-Ø-t [zuk ni harakin-ari
wrong look-IMPF 3.ABS-√-SG.ABS-1SG.DAT you.ERG me(ABS) butcher-ART$_{SG}$.DAT
saltzea].
sold-NMZ-ART$_{SG}$(ABS)
'It seems wrong to me for you to sell me to the butcher.' [*Laka 1996*]

- So what the PCC rules out is not a given combination of (internal) arguments, but rather a given combination of object-agreement markers (or object-clitics)

➢ But without further provisions, the expectation arises that a 1st/2nd person strong pronoun in direct object position of a ditransitive would be just fine —

  - as long as that the finite verbal element carried agreement morphology expressing *3rd person* features (rather than the 1st/2nd person features of the actual object)

- This expectation is false, of course:

(17) * Zuk harakin-ari ni saldu d-i-Ø-o-zu.
you.ERG butcher-ART$_{SG}$.DAT me(ABS) sold 3.ABS-√-SG.ABS-3SG.DAT-2SG.ERG
Intended: 'You have sold me to the butcher.'

⇒ To handle this, accounts of the PCC are commonly supplemented with something along the lines of (18):[6]

(18) Person Licensing Condition (PLC)
Interpretable 1st/2nd-person features must be licensed by entering into an *Agree* relation with an appropriate functional category. [*Béjar & Rezac 2003*]

- Or, in Preminger's (to appear) formulation:

(19) Person Licensing Condition (PLC) – alternative formulation
The feature [participant] on a pronoun must participate in a valuation relation.

NB: '[participant]' is the feature that distinguishes 1st/2nd person nominals from 3rd person ones; see Harley & Ritter (2002) and McGinnis (2005), for further discussion.

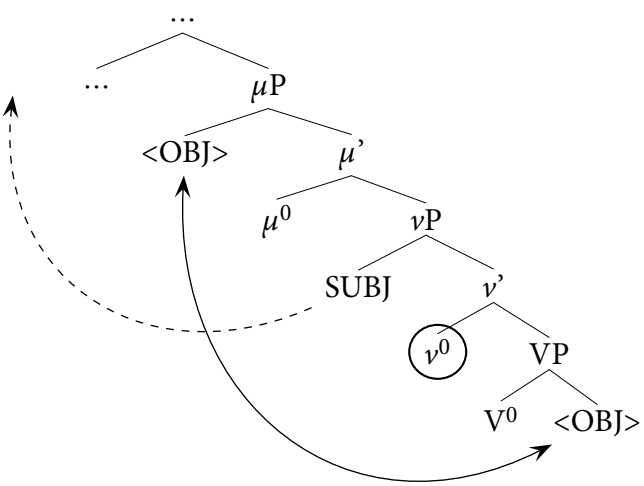
  - this requirement of formal licensing appears to be a *sui generis* requirement on marked PERSON features, which does not extend to other φ-feature classes (NUMBER, GENDER)
    - Preminger 2011; *pace* Baker (2008)

[6] A principle like (18) will correctly rule out cases like (17), but it leaves open the question of how the local indirect object pronoun in the infinitival clause in (16) satisfies its licensing requirements. It is possible that non-finite clauses come equipped with a phonologically covert counterpart of the relevant functional projection; but for an alternative approach, based on locality, see Preminger (2011). We leave the particular approach taken to resolve this issue aside for purposes of the current discussion.

5. The PLC meets DSM

And now, back to DSM in Dyirbal —

(20) *[≈(12)]*



(21) a. ACC in Dyirbal: *[=(13a–b)]*
DEPENDENT CASE assigned to the *higher* of two DPs **outside of VP**.

b. ERG in Dyirbal:
DEPENDENT CASE assigned to the *higher* of two DPs **inside *v*P**.

➢ Proposal:

(22) If the External Argument bears [participant], agreement with v^0 (upon first merge in [Spec,*v*P]) will satisfy its PLC requirement.[7]

(23) [participant]-bearing v^0 is phasal: yes/no. ⟵ *per-language parameterization*

NB: It is not the ubiquitous transitive verb-phrase-level phase that is being parameterized, here; in the Baker & Vinokurova treatment of DOM, which we are building upon, it is crucially VP (and not *v*P) that is the standard verb-phrase-level case-domain.

- In a language where (23) is set to "yes", (21b) will be bled precisely when the subject bears [participant] features
  - i.e., when the subject is 1st/2nd person

⇒ resulting in ERG assignment being suppressed

- And crucially, (21a) will be unaffected by phasehood (or lack thereof) of *v*P

⇒ and so ACC assignment is not sensitive to the features of the subject

[7] At first glance, such agreement may seem to constitute *Reverse Agreement* (Zeijlstra 2012; cf. Preminger 2013), but that is not so. Given *Bare Phrase Structure*, the nodes *v*' (the sister of the subject, in its base position) and v^0 share the same features (Chomsky 1995). Therefore, this can be construed as agreement under sisterhood—which is admissible under the standard agreement model.

6. DSM vs. DOM

A remaining problem:

- If Differential Argument Marking is fundamentally a *configurational* phenomenon, as argued here —
  - then it is comes out as a coincidence that the same factors that regulate movement of the object out of VP would regulate the phasehood of *v*P
    - namely, a given argument bearing, or not bearing, a [participant] feature

Our answer:

➢ **Good. We want that to be a (Dyirbal-specific) coincidence.**

- Cross-linguistically speaking, it is common for differential ergative marking on subjects to correlate with the *1st/2nd person vs. 3rd person* distinction (Coon & Preminger 2012)
- But differential case marking on objects is typically sensitive to features like *animacy*, *specificity*, and *definiteness*

- Historically, both DOM and DSM have often been claimed to adhere to a scale like (24):

(24)

⟵ *subj marked* ERG						*obj marked* ACC ⟶
common nouns	≫	proper nouns	≫	demonstratives, 3rd-person pronouns	≫	1st/2nd-person pronouns

[*Dixon 1994, Silverstein 1976, a.o.*]

- While this was an extremely useful (and influential) first approximation, it belies the finer typological differences between subjects and objects

> "Intuitively we could expect [the DSM] split to be found between humans and non-humans, or between animates and inanimates. Actually, no language places the split in such positions; most of them indeed single out 1/2 pronouns from the rest."
>
> [*Cocchi 1999:112*]

> "If [a unified approach to DOM and DSM is correct], we expect to find an equal diversity of types of subject and object splits in the world's languages; however, that prediction is not borne out. Instead, there are very few kinds of subject splits, in contrast to an enormous diversity of object splits. For example, Comrie (1981:123) notes that while definiteness is frequently the basis of object splits, there is an embarrassing absence of clear attestations of the predicted marked indefinite subject."
>
> [*Woolford 2001:535*]

  - And with respect to Australian languages (like Dyirbal) in particular:

> "My key point is simply that [Hopper & Thompson (1980)] clearly establish that special accusative marking tends to occur with proper nouns, human and animate nouns, and definite, referential usages *in many language families*. **There is no reason to link this phenomenon when it occurs in Australian languages with the incidental fact that Australian languages have ergative case**."
>
> [*Goddard 1982:191, emphasis added*]

- Thus, a more typologically representative example would be, e.g., Balochi (NW Iranian):

(25) intransitive: lexical subject

[$_S$ **jinik**]$_i$ ʃω$_i$ (Balochi)
girl go.pst.3sg
'The girl went.'

(26) transitive: indefinite object

[$_A$ **jinik-a**] [$_P$ **dar**]$_i$ dist-ã$_i$
girl-erg **wood** see.pst-3pl
'The girl saw (some) wood.'

(27) Balochi DOM

a. transitive: lexical subject, definite object

[$_A$ **jinik-a**] [$_P$ **dar-anã**] dist
girl-erg **wood-dat** see.pst
'The girl saw the wood.'

b. transitive: 1st/2nd person subject, definite object

[$_A$ **mən**] [$_P$ **tə-ra**] gitt
I **you-dat** catch.pst
'I caught you.' [*Farrell 1995:224*]

(28) Balochi argument marking — summary

	1st/2nd person pronouns	3rd person pronouns, and other definites	indefinites
A	Ø	**'erg'**	**'erg'**
S	Ø	Ø	Ø
P	**'dat'**	**'dat'**	Ø

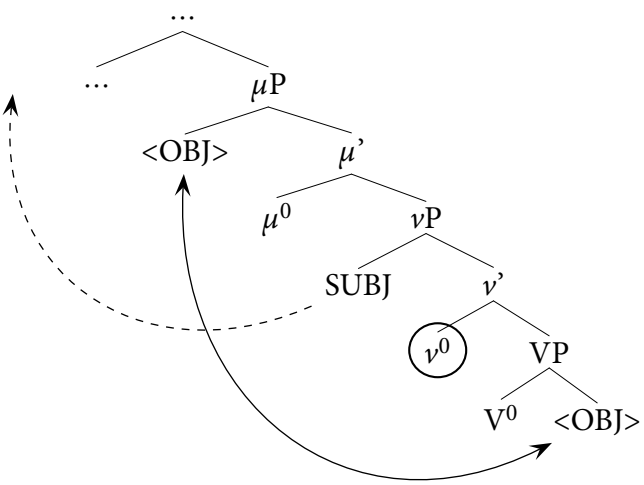
➢ We therefore propose the following generalization:

(29) Differential Argument Marking generalization

a. DSM (i.e., of **A**) is based on the presence or absence [participant]
b. DOM (i.e., of **P**) is governed by *definiteness*, *specificity*, and/or *animacy*

Let's look again at (30) (repeated from earlier) —

(30) *[=(20)]*



- The generalizations in (29a–b) can be captured as follows:
  - DOM (29b) is regulated by movement to [Spec,μP]
    - and can therefore depend on one of a set of possible features
      - *definiteness*, *specificity*, and/or *animacy*
    - depending on what it is that μ^0 probes for
  - DOM (29a) is regulated by the phasehood of νP
    - which on our proposal, is regulated by a single, fixed feature
      - [participant]

⟶ *So what about Dyirbal…?*

➢ OBSERVATION: **Dyirbal doesn't actually have 3rd person pronouns.**

⇒ we can recast (31) (repeated from earlier) as (32), without loss of generality:

(31) DYIRBAL ARGUMENT MARKING — SUMMARY *[=(11)]*

	1st/2nd person pronouns	other nominals
A	Ø	***-ŋgu* ('ERG')**
S	Ø	Ø
P	***-na* ('ACC')**	Ø

(32) DYIRBAL ARGUMENT MARKING — EXPANDED VERSION

	1st/2nd person pronouns	3rd person pronouns	other nominals
A	Ø	*-ŋgu* ('ERG')	***-ŋgu* ('ERG')**
S	Ø	Ø	Ø
P	***-na* ('ACC')**	*-na* ('ACC')	Ø

- to be clear:
  - we are not saying that there is a Dyirbal-internal argument *in favor* of (32);
  - only that given the lack of 3rd person pronouns in Dyirbal, there is no Dyirbal-internal argument *against* (32)

- In fact, such a view of Dyirbal is not without precedent (see also Legate 2008):

> "Proper and some common nouns (usually just those referring to humans) can take the suffix *-na*, but only when they are in transitive object function."
>
> [*Dixon 1972:43*]

⇒ We can maintain the view that:
- while DSM in Dyirbal is about [participant] vs. lack thereof, DOM in Dyirbal is about *pronominality*—or perhaps, given Dixon's (1972) quote, *animacy*

In summary —

➢ Given its lack of 3rd person pronouns, Dyirbal does not counter-exemplify the DAM generalization, repeated in (33):

(33) Differential Argument Marking generalization *[=(29)]*
  a. DSM (i.e., of **A**) is based on the presence or absence [participant]
  b. DOM (i.e., of **P**) is governed by *definiteness*, *specificity*, and/or *animacy*

7. Why does it seem that DSM is more common in ergative languages?

- The short answer:
  - ➢ **a terminological bias towards properties of the *subject* as the defining property of a morphological marking system**

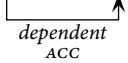
- Recall that, on the current analysis, DSM is about the disruption (or non-disruption) of the dependent case configuration involving the subject
- But in a nom-acc language, the dependent case relation involving the subject *does not affect the subject's marking*
  - instead, it determines acc on the object

⇒ So, fixating on the subject, we would not notice that anything "noteworthy" has changed
- recall the discussion in §2 of Sakha as a 'split accusative' language

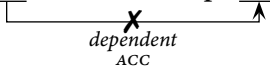
(34) a. Masha salamaat$_1$-*(y) [$_{VP}$ türgennik t_1 sie-te]. *[=(1a–b)]*
Masha porridge-*(acc) quickly eat-past.3sg.subj
'Masha ate the porridge quickly.'

b. Masha [$_{VP}$ türgennik salamaat-(#y) sie-te].
Masha quickly porridge-(#acc) eat-past.3sg.subj
'Masha ate porridge quickly.' [*B&V:602; annotations added*]

(35) a. Masha porridge$_1$-ACC [$_{\mathbf{VP}}$ … t_1 …] *[=(2a–b)]*



b. Masha … [$_{\mathbf{VP}}$ … porridge …]



(EXCEPTION: When the DEPENDENT CASE relation that the subject is involved with is with a *higher* argument
- cf.: ACC vs. bare subjects in Turkic ECM environments)

- But if we look carefully, we should be able to find something that looks like the mirror image of the Eastern Ostyak and Niuean pattern, discussed in §2:
  - a scenario where the [participant] features on a 1st/2nd person subject—and the concomitant phasehood of v^0—affect a morphosyntactic property *other* than the subject's own morphological marking

- This might be exactly what's going on in the (obviously NOM-ACC) Abruzzese dialect of Italian:

(36) a. Ji **so'** magnate.
I am(**BE**) eaten.SG
'I have eaten.'

b. Esse **a** magnate.
she has(**HAVE**) eaten.SG
'She has eaten.'
(Abruzzese)

[*D'Alessandro & Roberts 2010:54–55*]

- On the Freeze-Kayne assumption that **HAVE** = **BE** + $\mathbf{X^0}$ (where X^0 is some clausal particle of category D or P; Freeze 1992, Kayne 1993) —
  - a phasal v^0 would block the head-movement/incorporation of X^0 into BE
  - ➢ collapsing the HAVE/BE alternation to BE in the presence of a 1st/2nd person subject
    - exactly the state of affairs in Abruzzese (see D'Alessandro & Roberts 2010)

What we have not yet found:

- a language where [participant] features on the subject affect the case marking of the object per se—bleeding ACC on the object

An idea:
In languages where *v*P is (conditionally) phasal—depending on subject [participant] features—VP is not

- i.e., the (conditional) phasehood of one comes at the expense of the other

As a matter of fact, we had ignored the phasehood of VP in our rules of Dyirbal case assignment (see (21a–b), above)

- and if we hadn't ignored it, the phasehood of VP would have caused a problem

8. Conclusion

- Differential Argument Marking—including DSM—is a *configurational* phenomenon
  - the independent variable is *syntactic configuration*, which gives rise to both interpretive distinctions and morphological distinctions
  - ➢ allowing, in certain instances, for the interpretive properties of one argument to co-vary with the morphological marking of another
    - via the DEPENDENT CASE mechanism (Eastern Ostyak, Niuean)
- Even subject marking alternating with whether the subject is 1st/2nd person or 3rd person can be recast configurationally
  - given the independently motivated formal agreement requirement on 1st/2nd person arguments (Anagnostopoulou 2005, Béjar & Rezac 2003)
- Object marking, on the other hand, co-varies with features like *definiteness*, *specificity*, and/or *animacy* (perhaps even in Dyirbal; Dixon 1994)
  - because the relevant changes in the syntactic position of the object are essentially an instance of *Object Shift*
- Given this view of Differential Argument Marking, the seeming tendency of DSM to occur in ergative languages is largely a terminological matter

References

Aissen, Judith. 1999. Agent focus and inverse in Tzotzil. *Language* 75:451–485.

Aissen, Judith. 2003. Differential object marking: iconicity vs. economy. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* 21:435–483, DOI: 10.1023/A:1024109008573.

Anagnostopoulou, Elena. 2005. Strong and weak person restrictions: a feature checking analysis. In *Clitic and affix combinations: theoretical perspectives*, eds. Lorie Heggie & Francisco Ordonez, *Linguistics Today* 74, 199–235. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Baker, Mark C. 2008. *The syntax of agreement and concord*. *Cambridge Studies in Linguistics* 115, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Baker, Mark C. 2013. *On dependent ergative case (in Shipibo) and its derivation by phase*. Ms. URL: <http://www.rci.rutgers.edu/~mabaker/shipibo-ergativity-paper-submitted.pdf>.

Baker, Mark C. in prep. *Case: its principles and its parameters*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Baker, Mark C. & Nadya Vinokurova. 2010. Two modalities of Case assignment: Case in Sakha. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* 28:593–642, DOI: 10.1007/s11049-010-9105-1.

Béjar, Susana & Milan Rezac. 2003. Person licensing and the derivation of PCC effects. In *Romance linguistics: theory and acquisition*, eds. Ana Teresa Perez-Leroux & Yves Roberge, 49–62. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Bonet, Eulalia. 1991. *Morphology after syntax: pronominal clitics in Romance*. Doctoral dissertation, Cambridge, MA: MIT.

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

Cocchi, Gloria. 1999. Nominative and ergative languages: towards a unified account of case checking. *Syntaxis* 2:103–129.

Comrie, Bernard. 1981. *Language universals and linguistic typology*. 1st Edition, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.

Coon, Jessica & Omer Preminger. 2012. Towards a unified account of person splits. In *Proceedings of 29th West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics (WCCFL 29)*, eds. Jaehoon Choi et al., Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Press, 310–318, URL: <http://www.lingref.com/cpp/wccfl/29/index.html>.

D'Alessandro, Roberta & Ian Roberts. 2010. Past participle agreement in Abruzzese: split auxiliary selection and the null-subject parameter. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* 28:41–72.

Diesing, Molly. 1992. *Indefinites*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Dixon, R. M. W. 1972. *The Dyirbal language of North Queensland*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Dixon, R. M. W. 1994. *Ergativity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
Farrell, Tim. 1995. Fading ergativity? a study of ergativity in Balochi. In *Subject, voice and ergativity: selected essays*, ed. David C. Bennett, 218–243. School of Oriental and African Studies.
Freeze, Ray. 1992. Existentials and other locatives. *Language* 68:553–595.
Goddard, Cliff. 1982. Case systems and case marking in Australian languages: a new interpretation. *Australian Journal of Linguistics* 2:167–196.
Gulya, János. 1966. *Eastern Ostyak chrestomathy*. Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press.
Harley, Heidi & Elizabeth Ritter. 2002. Person and number in pronouns: a feature-geometric analysis. *Language* 78:482–526, DOI: 10.1353/lan.2002.0158.
Hopper, Paul J. & Sandra A. Thompson. 1980. Transitivity in grammar and discourse. *Language* 56:251–299.
Johnson, Kyle. 1991. Object positions. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* 9:577–636, DOI: 10.1007/BF00134751.
Kayne, Richard S. 1993. Toward a modular theory of auxiliary selection. *Studia linguistica* 47:3–31.
Laka, Itziar. 1996. *A brief grammar of Euskara, the Basque language*. Open-access grammar, ISBN: 84-8373-850-3, Vitoria-Gasteiz: Euskal Herriko Unibertsitatea (University of the Basque Country). URL: <http://www.ei.ehu.es/p289-content/eu/contenidos/informacion/grammar_euskara/en_doc/index.html>.
Legate, Julie Anne. 2008. *Dyirbal ergativity*. Paper presented at the *82nd Winter Meeting of the Linguistic Society of America (LSA 82)*, Chicago, IL.
Levin, Theodore & Omer Preminger. to appear. Case in Sakha: are two modalities really necessary?, *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory*.
Marantz, Alec. 1991. Case and licensing. In *Proceedings of the 8th Eastern States Conference on Linguistics (ESCOL 8)*, eds. German Westphal et al., Ithaca, NY: CLC Publications, 234–253.
Massam, Diane. 2013. *On definite and generic null arguments in Niuean*. Paper presented at the 20th Meeting of the Austronesian Formal Linguistics Association (AFLA 20), University of Texas: Arlington, TX.
McGinnis, Martha. 2005. On markedness asymmetries in person and number. *Language* 81:699–718.
Merchant, Jason. 2009. Polyvalent case, geometric hierarchies, and split ergativity. In *Proceedings of the 42nd annual meeting of the Chicago Linguistic Society (CLS 42)*, eds. Jackie Bunting et al., vol. 2, Chicago, IL: Chicago Linguistics Society, 57–76.
Nevins, Andrew Ira. 2007. The representation of third person and its consequences for Person-Case effects. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* 25:273–313, DOI: 10.1007/s11049-006-9017-2.
Preminger, Omer. 2011. Asymmetries between person and number in syntax: a commentary on Baker's SCOPA. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* 29:917–937, DOI: 10.1007/s11049-011-9155-z.
Preminger, Omer. 2013. That's not how you agree: a reply to Zeijlstra. *The Linguistic Review* 30:491–500, DOI: 10.1515/tlr-2013-0015.
Preminger, Omer. to appear. *Agreement and its failures*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
Silverstein, Michael. 1976. Hierarchies of features and ergativity. In *Grammatical categories in Australian languages*, ed. R. M. W. Dixon, 112–171. New Jersey, NJ: Humanities Press.
Silverstein, Michael. 1981. Case marking and the nature of language. *Australian Journal of Linguistics* 1:227–244.
Wierzbicka, Anna. 1981. Case marking and human nature. *Australian Journal of Linguistics* 1:43–80.
Woolford, Ellen. 2001. Case patterns. In *Optimality-theoretic syntax*, eds. Géraldine Legendre et al., 509–543. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
Woolford, Ellen. 2008. Differential subject marking at argument structure, syntax, and PF. In *Differential subject marking*, eds. Helen De Hoop & Peter De Swart, 17–40. Dordrecht: Springer.
Zeijlstra, Hedde. 2012. There is only one way to agree. *The Linguistic Review* 29:491–539, DOI: 10.1515/tlr-2012-0017.

SVN revision code: 4402