The typological literature reports only one of two logically possible types of Case-agreement mismatch: an ergative Case system with nominative-accusative agreement. Why are there no languages with the opposite type of mismatch, nominative-accusative Case and ergative agreement? The explanation lies in the nature of verbal agreement and its close relation to Case. What we call subject agreement must cross-reference a nominative argument if one is present; it is only in clauses without a nominative that some languages allow agreement with a non-nominative argument, producing mismatch: Warlpiri allows agreement with an ergative subject in the absence of a nominative, while Gujarati allows agreement with a dative marked specific object. The opposite type of mismatch cannot occur because, in a technical sense, there is no such thing as ergative agreement. True verbal agreement appears to be limited to functional nodes that potentially license structural Case, but ergative, like dative, is an inherent Case. There are ergative pronominal clitics, but these must always match in Case with the argument (null or overt) they double so no mismatch is possible.
The Case and agreement systems of a language normally match, with nominative-accusative agreement in languages with a nominative-accusative Case system, and ergative agreement in languages with an ergative Case system. If agreement and Case were alternate expressions of exactly the same thing, or if agreement were entirely parasitic on Case, then we would expect such matching in all languages; yet Case-agreement mismatches do occur: in Warlpiri, the Case system is ergative, yet agreement follows a nominative-accusative pattern (Hale 1973, 1982). Does this mean that Case and agreement are completely independent systems, as in Jelinek’s 1984 account of Warlpiri? The impossibility of the opposite type of Case-agreement mismatch, a nominative-accusative Case system paired with an ergative agreement system (Anderson 1977, 1985; Comrie 1978; Moravcsik 1978; Wierzbicka 1981), indicates that the answer is no. What, then, is the relationship between Case and agreement that allows one type of mismatch, but not the other? This paper will argue that the relationship is quite close, but that mismatch is possible in one predictable context.

The goal of this paper is to show that the possibility of the type of mismatch that occurs, as well as the impossibility of the opposite type, is expected under a restrictive version of standard Case and agreement theory which allows no independent agreement projections (Chomsky 1995: 335) and which, furthermore, limits verbal agreement licensing to functional heads that potentially license structural Case.¹ With respect to

¹This paper is confined to a consideration of verbal agreement with arguments, as opposed to other sorts of agreement, such as adjectival or predicate agreement. See Wechsler and Zlatić 2003 for a discussion of the distinction between verbal agreement and these other types of agreement.
what we traditionally refer to as ‘subject’ agreement, this restriction is a return to the view in Chomsky 1981 that agreement and nominative Case are checked by the same head, which will be labeled here as Infl/Tense for convenience. In addition, the features of a head must be treated as an indivisible packet; that is, it is not possible to check some of the features of a head against one DP while checking others against a different DP. This restriction insures that agreement will always target a nominative argument, if one is present in the clause. When there is no nominative in the clause, languages with agreement take one of two strategies: some require default agreement (e.g. Icelandic, Hindi), but others such as Warlpiri allow the agreement features of Infl/Tense to cross-reference a non-nominative argument when no nominative is present (and the nominative feature of Infl/Tense is deleted). In addition to true agreement, pronominal clitics may also function as an agreement-like device when they double null or overt arguments; however, pronominal clitics do not appear to allow any mismatch, always matching in abstract Case with the argument they double.

Under this restrictive theory of agreement, the above typological gap is predicted. There is no language in which nominative subjects are doubled by an ergative pronominal clitic because pronominal clitics must always match in Case with the argument they double. There is no language in which nominative subjects trigger ergative agreement because there is no such thing as true ergative agreement. Ergative is an inherent Case, and agreement can only be licensed by functional heads that potentially license structural
This is the result we want, both to capture the above typological gap, and because the ergative agreement patterns that occur are formed with either ergative pronominal clitics and/or true agreement with nominatives that forms a surface ergative pattern in the presence of an ergative Case system.\(^3\)

This paper is organized as follows. The required restrictive theory of Case and agreement is laid out in section one, along with the typological predictions as to the kinds of Case-agreement pairings and mismatches that are and are not possible in this theory. Section two is a detailed look at the Case and agreement system of Warlpiri, the language most often listed in the typological literature as an example of a mismatch between Case and agreement. The degree of mismatch in Warlpiri is not as severe as it initially appears to be, once we realize that there are two distinct morphologically unmarked Cases that have been conflated in standard labeling (Legate 2006). Warlpiri differs from many ergative languages in lacking nominative objects; instead, Warlpiri has a three-way or tripartite Case system, where nominative is restricted to intransitive subjects while transitive clauses have an ergative-accusative pattern (Legate 2006).\(^4\) With no nominative in transitive clauses, Warlpiri allows the agreement features of Infl/Tense to

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\(^2\)For extensive discussion of the evidence for the conclusion that ergative is not a structural Case, but rather an inherent Case, see Woolford 1997, 2006.

\(^3\)There is one additional way to form a surface ergative agreement pattern using true agreement with nominatives, discussed in Woolford 2002. In such systems, true agreement is limited to nominative subjects in transitive clauses, while intransitive nominative subjects are cross-referenced with a nominative pronominal clitic. The system looks ergative if nominative and accusative clitics are not morphologically distinguished.

\(^4\)Goddard 1982 suggests a similar analysis may be applicable for many Australian languages that appear on the surface to have a different Case system for pronouns than nouns.
be checked against the ergative subject, producing the kind of Case-agreement mismatch reported in the typological literature. In section 3, we see that it is not necessarily the ergative subject that triggers agreement when no nominative is present; in Gujarati, it is a marked object that controls agreement in the absence of a nominative, and never an ergative subject. Section 4 includes a discussion of what kind of parameters or constraints might be responsible for the cross-linguistic differences in the agreement pattern in clauses without a nominative, and section 5 is the conclusion.

1. Case and Agreement: Theory and Typological Predictions

This section lays out the details of the restrictive theory of Case and agreement that is needed to account for the observed typological generalizations about the kinds of Case-agreement mismatches that do and do not occur. This version of Case and agreement theory is fairly close to that of Chomsky 2000, with a few modifications and extensions.

1.1 Case Theory

There are two basic types of Case: structural and non-structural. Structural Case (e.g. nominative, accusative) is licensed in syntax by a head that stands in either a Spec-head or a local c-command relationship to the DP in question (Chomsky 2000). Chomsky 2000 rejects the previous view in Chomsky 1986 where Case checking was limited to Spec-head relationships; what motivates that change is languages such as Icelandic where
sentences with dative subjects have nominative objects.  

(1) Barninu batnaði veikin. [Icelandic]
    child-DAT recovered-from disease-NOM

    ‘The child recovered from the disease.’ (Yip et al. 1987: 223)

Allowing structural Case licensing in either Spec-head or c-command configurations also allows the theory to accommodate ergative languages such as Hindi, where sentences with either a dative or an ergative subject may have a nominative object:

(2) Raam-ne roTii khaayii thii. [Hindi]
    Ram-ERG bread-NOM,FEM eat(perf, fem) be(past,fem)

    ‘Ram had eaten bread.’ (Mahajan 1990, 73)

(3) Siitaa-ko laRke pasand the. [Hindi]
    Sita-DAT boys-NOM,MASC like be(past,masc.pl)

    ‘Sita likes the boys.’ (Mahajan 1991 (7))

Structural Cases are licensed on a purely structural basis, while the other basic type of Case, non-structural Case, is licensed in connection with θ-licensing. Although it is not crucial for us here, the non-structural Cases subdivide into two types: lexical and inherent (Woolford 2006). Lexical Case is idiosyncratic Case, lexically selected by particular verbs and prepositions. Inherent Case is more regular, including the dative associated with DP goals and the ergative associated with agents (or more accurately, with external

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5 An associated theoretical consequence of this change is that NP movement is no longer thought to be Case driven, but is instead an EPP effect.
arguments). What is crucial for us here is only that the ergative Case is not a structural Case, but rather a non-structural Case.

1.2 Case Locality

Although many languages are like Icelandic and Hindi in allowing nominative objects with dative and ergative subjects, not all languages do. Faroese is closely related to Icelandic, but Faroese lacks the dative-nominative pattern that we saw in the Icelandic example in (1) above; instead, modern Faroese uses an accusative object with dative subjects:

(4) Mær líkar henda filmin.

me-DAT likes this film-ACC (*nom)

‘I like this film.’ (Barnes 1986 (12))

Faroese differs from Icelandic in terms of its requirements on Case locality. However, what blocks nominative licensing to the object in such Faroese examples has nothing to do with a return to the idea of limiting Case checking to Spec-head configurations in Chomsky 1986. We know this because Faroese freely allows nominative Case checking under c-command in unaccusative constructions:

\[\text{Ergative Case is licensed by the little/light v head that theta-licenses the external argument (Massam 2002, Legate 2006, Woolford 2006). The external argument is usually an agent, but in the absence of an agent, it may be an instrument or experiencer in some languages.}\]
The correct generalization appears to be that nominative checking is always allowed under c-command when there is no closer DP present in the clause, but the presence of a closer DP (dative subject) blocks nominative checking to the object in some languages, such as in the Faroese examples such as (4) (Woolford 2003a,b). This is an example of a defective intervention effect (Chomsky 2000, Boeckx 2000), where a closer DP blocks a head from checking a further DP even though the closer DP (the dative DP) does not have the feature (nominative Case) that the head (Infl/Tense) is trying to check. With nominative checking of the object blocked by the presence of the closer dative subject, the best remaining option in Faroese is for the verb to license accusative Case on the object.7

This difference between Faroese and Icelandic illustrates that there are cross-linguistic differences in what counts as a blocking defective intervener for Case checking (Woolford 2003a,b). A closer DP with non-structural Case blocks nominative licensing in some languages but not others. We see this above with respect to dative subjects in Faroese versus Icelandic, and the same cross-linguistic difference occurs in languages with ergative subjects. In Hindi, an ergative subject does not count as a defective

7Nominative takes precedence over accusative if possible (see Woolford 2003a and the references cited therein). It is not yet clear why Faroese allows nominative objects with dative subjects in the passive of a ditransitive (see Woolford 2003b).
intervener and thus ergative subjects can occur with nominative objects, as in (2). However, other ergative languages such as the Australian language Thangu do not allow nominative objects with ergative subjects (Schebeck 1976, Woolford 1997). In Thangu, nominative Case occurs on intransitive subjects, but in transitive clauses with an ergative subject, the closer ergative subject blocks nominative licensing on the object, and thus the object takes accusative Case instead:

(6) Taykka+/0 rakkun‘TIin.
   woman+NOM died
   ‘Woman died.’ (Schebeck 1976 (11))

(7) Yûlju+/tu taykka+Na pûyan.
   man+ERG woman+ACC hit
   ‘Man hit woman.’ (Schebeck 1976 (15))

This produces what is commonly called a three-way or tripartite Case system, with nominative intransitive subjects, ergative transitive subjects, and accusative objects. Legate 2006 argues convincingly that Warlpiri has such a tripartite Case system, although this is less obvious in Warlpiri than in Thangu because neither nominative nor accusative is morphologically marked in Warlpiri. We will see the details of the Warlpiri system in section two.

Let us now turn to Agreement Theory, and how agreement interacts with Case.
1.3 Agreement Theory

What we generally describe as agreement is known to encompass two distinct cross-referencing devices: pronominal clitics that double null and/or overt arguments, and true agreement (sometimes called inflection) (e.g. Blake 1994:52, Woolford 2002). Pronominal clitics, which are essentially a kind of pronominal element, must always have Case, and that Case must always match the Case of the DP that is doubled.\(^8\) (The relevant notion of Case here is abstract Case, which may or may not be realized morphologically.) True agreement is associated with functional heads that potentially also license structural Case. What we traditionally call subject agreement cross-references all and only nominatives in many languages. The close association between structural Case and agreement provides strong support for the modification to the theory proposed in Chomsky 1995 to eliminate the independent agreement heads, AgrS and AgrO from Chomsky 1991, and to locate the agreement features on independently motivated functional heads such as Tense. Like structural Case checking, true agreement can be checked in either a Spec-head configuration or under local c-command, subject to locality conditions (Chomsky 2000).

The Case and agreement features of a head appear to have to be treated uniformly, in the sense that it does not appear to be possible to check the agreement features of Infl/Tense against one DP and its nominative Case feature against a different DP.

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\(^8\)Pronominal clitic doubling is often constrained in various ways cross-linguistically, but these constraints do not concern us here. For example, Kayne 1995 notes that many languages do not allow a pronominal clitic to c-command an overt doubled argument.
Nevertheless, it does appear to be possible to treat the features of a head non-uniformly in another sense, which is to delete some of the features of a head, while retaining others. The instance of this that is important for us here is that, when a clause lacks a nominative argument, and the nominative feature of Infl/Tense is left unchecked and presumably deleted, it is possible in some languages to retain the agreement features of Infl/Tense and check them against a DP with non-nominative Case. This, I argue, is the basis of the mismatch we see in Warlpiri, where ergative subjects agree in the absence of a nominative object. However, other languages appear to require the deletion of the agreement features as well when the nominative feature cannot be checked, producing a default form of the agreement morphology which checks no features, as in Icelandic and Hindi.

If there were such a thing as true ergative agreement, we might expect a similar mismatch to occur, where a nominative subject triggers ergative agreement in the absence of a DP with ergative Case in the clause. The reason this never happens, in this version of agreement theory, is that there is no such thing as ergative agreement, in a technical sense.

1.4 No True Ergative Agreement

We have seen that true agreement correlates with structural Case, in terms of the kinds of nodes that license these and the configurations in which these may be licensed. It is natural to ask whether there is any agreement associated with the non-structural
Cases. That is, is there something we would call inherent agreement, paralleling inherent Case? Although this is certainly a logical possibility, the evidence seems to indicate that the answer is no: there is no true agreement associated with the heads that license ergative or dative Case (although there are ergative and dative pronominal clitics that can double arguments and thus function as agreement-like elements, and there may also be adjectival or predicate agreement involving a matching of inherent Case features). If there were such a thing as true ergative agreement, we would expect it to have the same semi-independence from Case that we see with nominative agreement, allowing ergative agreement to be checked against something besides an ergative DP in clauses lacking an ergative DP. Since this never occurs, we need a theory that is sufficiently restrictive to disallow it. It appears, therefore, that a properly restrictive theory of agreement must rule out true ergative agreement, in principle.

In addition to patterns involving ergative clitics (which can only double arguments with ergative Case), what we call ergative agreement actually involves ordinary nominative agreement that is pulled into a surface ergative pattern when a language has ergative (and/or dative) subjects and nominative objects, as we will see in the next section.
1.5 Basic Types of Case-Agreement Patterns

To explore the types of matches and mismatches that are predicted by this theory, and those that are predicted not to occur, we will begin with nominative-accusative Case systems, exploring the types of compatible and incompatible agreement systems, and then move on to ergative Case systems to do the same.

1.5.1 Nominative-accusative Case Systems

Nominative-accusative Case systems are compatible with nominative-accusative agreement patterns, and these agreement patterns can involve true agreement and/or doubling pronominal clitics. It is not possible for a nominative-accusative Case system to occur with an ergative agreement system, for the reasons outlined above: there is no such thing as true ergative agreement, and an ergative agreeing clitic would have to match Case with the argument it doubles.

1.5.2 Ergative Case Systems

Ergative Case systems are compatible with ergative pronominal clitics, but they do not appear to involve true ergative agreement. What we call ergative agreement in languages with an ergative Case system such as Hindi is literally nominative agreement (agreement with all and only nominative DPs) which forms a superficial ergative pattern
in clauses with an ergative subject and a nominative object. We see this in examples such as (8) where the feminine nominative object triggers feminine agreement (and the masculine ergative subject does not agree):

(8) Raam-ne roTii khaayii thii. [Hindi]

Ram-ERG bread-NOM.FEM eat(perf, fem) be(past,fem)

‘Ram had eaten bread.’ (Mahajan 1990, 73)

The same agreement pattern occurs in clauses with dative subjects and nominative objects in Hindi. Here the masculine plural nominative object agrees, but the feminine singular dative subject does not:

(9) Siitaa-ko laRke pasand the. [Hindi]

Sita-DAT boys-NOM,MASC like be(past,masc.pl)

‘Sita likes the boys.’ (Mahajan 1991 (7))

It is also possible for an ergative language to have both the Hindi type of ergative agreement pattern, plus agreeing clitics that cross-reference the non-nominative arguments (e.g. Kashmiri (Wali and Koul 1994, 1997)).

Ergative languages may also manifest the type of Case-agreement mismatch reported in the typological literature, where the agreement pattern is nominative-accusative despite the ergative Case system, but I maintain that this is possible only if the

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9There is also a way to produce a surface ergative agreement pattern in a language with a so-called neutral Case system. If the language does not distinguish nominative and accusative Case morphologically, so that nominative and accusative clitics look alike, and if true agreement (with nominatives) is used only as a last resort in transitive clauses, the pattern can look ergative, as in certain Sulawesi languages (see Woolford 2002).
language actually has a tripartite (three-way) Case system, where nominatives are limited to intransitives while transitive clauses have an ergative-accusative pattern. As described above, such languages may allow the agreement normally associated with nominatives to be checked against the ergative subject in the absence of a nominative. This produces a superficial nominative-accusative agreement pattern (with the accusative objects doubled by accusative clitics). In the next section, we will see that Warlpiri is an example of this type of ergative language.

2. Warlpiri

Warlpiri is generally described as having an ergative-absolutive Case pattern and a nominative-accusative agreement pattern (e.g. Hale 1982, Nash 1980, Simpson 1991). This makes Warlpiri appear to have a very serious Case-agreement mismatch, so much so that some have analyzed Warlpiri as having two completely independent Case systems, one for DPs and another for the agreement clitics (e.g. Jelinek 1984). However, a detailed investigation of the Warlpiri system reveals that the degree of true mismatch is actually quite limited. Legate 2006 shows that what has been labeled ‘absolutive’ in Warlpiri is actually two different Cases, both of which happen to be morphologically unmarked: nominative on subjects and accusative on objects. Thus there is no mismatch when it comes to objects: accusative objects are cross-referenced with accusative clitics. The only real mismatch in Warlpiri occurs with ergative subjects, which trigger the same agreement form as nominative subjects. If this ‘subject’ agreement form is true
agreement, as I will argue, in contrast to the accusative and dative morphemes which are identified as clitics in Simpson 1991, Warlpiri exemplifies the one kind of Case-agreement mismatch that the theory set out in section one allows: a system where ergative subjects trigger true agreement in the absence of a nominative in the clause.

(10) Warlpiri Case and Agreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nominative</td>
<td>→ True agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ergative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accusative</td>
<td>→ Accusative clitic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dative</td>
<td>→ Dative clitic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the remainder of this section, we will see the details of the Warlpiri Case and agreement system, and how these correspond.

2.1 The Warlpiri Case System

The Case patterns that we find in Warlpiri matrix clauses are summarized below, based on work by Hale 1982, Simpson 1991, and Legate 2006:
(11) Warlpiri Case Patterns

Intransitive clauses:

- nominative
- ergative

Transitive clauses:

- nominative - dative
- ergative - accusative
- ergative - dative

Ditransitive clauses

- ergative - dative - accusative

Warlpiri has two Cases for subjects, nominative and ergative, and two Cases for objects, accusative and dative. Warlpiri belongs to the class of tripartite ergative languages, which do not allow nominative objects.

Verbs in Warlpiri form two classes. One class takes nominative subjects, which are morphologically unmarked (and normally labeled ‘absolutive’ in the literature).

(12) Ngaju ka-rna parnka-mi.

I(nom) pres-1sg run-nonpast

‘I am running.’ (Hale 1982 (1b))

(13) Ngaju ka-rna-rla wangka karnta-ku.

I(nom) pres-1sg-3dat speak woman-dative

‘I am speaking to the woman.’ (Simpson 1991: 317)
(14) Ngaju -rna ngapa-ku ngampurrpa.

I(nom) -1sg  water-dat  desirous

‘I want water.’  

(Hale 1982 (2d))

(15) Jakamarra ka-nyanu yulka-mi nyanungu-ku

Jakamarra(nom)  pres-refl  love-nonpast  he-dative

‘Jakamarra loves himself.’  

(Simpson 1991: 319)

The other verb class of Warlpiri verbs takes an ergative subject.

(16) Ngarrka-ngku ka yunpa-rni.

man-erg  pres  sing-nonpast

‘The man is singing.’  

(Hale 1982 (30a))

(17) Ngarrka-ngku ka-rla karli-ki warri-rni.

man-erg  pres-3dat  boomerang-dat  seek-nonpast

‘A man is looking for a boomerang.’  

(Hale 1982 (44a))

Verbs of both classes may take dative objects, as we see in the examples above. The examples below show that verbs with an ergative subject may take an object with a morphologically unmarked Case, traditionally labeled ‘absolutive’, which is correctly identified as accusative according to Legate 2006.

(18) Ngajulu-rlu ka-rna marlu nya-nyi.

I-erg  pres-1sg  kangaroo(acc)  see-nonpast

‘I see the kangaroo.’  

(Hale 1982 (9c))
There are two kinds of evidence that this unmarked object Case is accusative, and not nominative. One is that it is cross-referenced by an accusative clitic, as we will see below in the section on agreement. In addition, Legate 2006 shows that the two morphologically unmarked Cases are treated differently in nonfinite clauses. Nominatives become dative Case in this context, as in (20), (presumably because there is no nominative licensing head available). In contrast, accusatives do not turn into datives (but remain accusative), as in (21):

(20) ... [ngaju-ku jarda-nguna-nja-rlarni]
    ... I-dative  sleep-lie-infin-obviative comp
    ... while I was asleep  (Legate 2006 (19))

(21) ... [karnta-patu-rlu miyi purra-nja-puru]
    ... woman-paucal-erg food(acc) cook-infin-contemporary action comp
    .... while the women are cooking the food  (Legate 2006 (20))

Now that we have established that Warlpiri thus belongs to the class of ergative languages that does not allow nominative objects, let us now turn to the associated agreement patterns of Warlpiri.
2.2 *The Warlpiri Agreement System*

The agreement morphemes of Warlpiri suffix to a tense/aspect morpheme in an auxiliary cluster which normally appears in second position (Hale 1973, Nash 1980).\(^{10}\) I will argue that these consist of a true agreement morpheme, followed by one or more agreeing clitics.

(22) tense/aspect+Agr+clitic(s)

All of these Warlpiri cross-referencing morphemes are usually described as clitics, but Simpson (1991: 307) points out that they fall into two main types, which she labels Clitic 1 (cross-referencing subjects) and Clitic 2 (cross-referencing non-subjects). I will argue that from a syntactic point of view, the Clitic 1 person forms are really true agreement, while the other cross-referencing morphemes (the Clitic 2 forms as well as the number morphemes *pala* and *lu* which may help cross-reference subjects) are pronominal clitics, although both forms phonologically cliticize to tense/aspect.\(^{11}\)

The true agreement forms are morphologically distinct from the pronominal clitics that cross-reference accusative and dative DPs. The accusative and dative pronominal clitics look alike (because they are not morphologically marked for Case), except perhaps

\(^{10}\)This auxiliary cluster appears in first position if the tense morpheme is heavy enough (Nash 1980).

\(^{11}\)These number clitics, *pala* dual and *lu* plural, supplement the agreement morphemes in cross-referencing subjects in some instances, but as clitics, they are ordered among the other clitics by clitic ordering constraints, which order first and second person singular clitics before these number clitics (see Nash 1980:60). See Grimshaw 2001 for a discussion of constraints ordering clitics in Romance.
in the 3rd singular where there is a special form for the dative, *rla*.\(^\text{12}\)

(23) Warlpiri Singular Agreement Morphemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>True Agreement</th>
<th>Accusative Clitics</th>
<th>Dative Clitics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>rna</td>
<td>ju</td>
<td>ju</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>n(pa)</td>
<td>ngku</td>
<td>ngku</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td><em>rla</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(24) Ngaju ka-rna wangka-mi.

I(nom) pres-1sgAgr speak-nonpast

‘I am speaking.’ \((\text{Hale } 1982 \ (9a))\)


you(nom) pres-2sgAgr speak-nonpast

‘You are speaking.’ \((\text{Hale } 1982 \ (9b))\)

(26) Ngajulu-rlu ka-rna-ngku nyuntu nya-nyi.

I-ergative pres-1sgAgr-2sgCL you(acc) see-nonpast

‘I see you.’ \((\text{Hale } 1982 \ (9f))\)

(27) Kurdu-ngku ka-ju nya-nyi ngaju.

child-erg pres-1sgCL see-nonpast me(acc)

‘The child sees me.’ \((\text{Simpson } 1991: 99)\)

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\(^{12}\text{Hale } 1982:252 \text{ does not consider } \textit{rla} \text{ to technically be an agreement form, but rather a dative “registration element”, however it is labeled as a dative clitic in Simpson } 1991.\)
(28) Ngaju-ku ka-ju karli jarnti-rni.

I-dative pres-1sgCL boomerang(acc) trim-nonpast

‘He’s making me a boomerang.’ (Simpson 1991: 150)

The pronominal clitics in Warlpiri behave like pronominal clitics in Romance in that they are subject to the same sort of clitic cluster constraints, as Simpson (1991:149) points out. In both French and Warlpiri, a first or second person accusative clitic cannot co-occur with a first or second person dative clitic:

(29) a. *Il me te donne. [French]

He 1sgCL 2sgCL give.

‘He is giving you/me to me/you.’


man-erg pres-1sgCL-2sgCL take-away-nonpast

‘The man is taking you/me away from you/me.’ (Simpson 1991:149)

The true agreement morphemes in Warlpiri are immune to the effects of these clitic cluster constraints, providing another indication that they are not pronominal clitics. There are no person restrictions when an agreement morpheme co-occurs with an adjacent clitic:

(30) Kuyu ka-nga-ngku ka-nyi.

meat pres-1sgAgr-2sgCL carry-nonpast

‘I am carrying meat for you.’ (Simpson 1991:149)

These two facts support the proposed division of the Warlpiri cross-referencing
morphemes into true agreement morphemes and clitics.\textsuperscript{13}

Now that the Case and agreement systems of Warlpiri have been laid out, we can return to the question of the degree of mismatch between these systems that Warlpiri allows.

2.3 Match and Mismatch in Warlpiri

Given these independently motivated assumptions about the Case and agreement systems of Warlpiri, there is now an almost complete match between them. Nominative subjects trigger agreement in Warlpiri, just as they do in English.

(31) Ngaju ka-rna parnka-mi.

I(nom) pres-1sgAgr run-nonpast

‘I am running.’ \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{(Simpson 1991: 65)}

Accusative and Dative DPs are cross-referenced by accusative and dative pronominal clitics (which look alike morphologically in first and second person), subject to limitations imposed by clitic cluster constraints that prevent the co-occurrence of certain clitics.

(32) Kurdu-ngku ka-ju nya-nyi ngaju.

child-erg pres-1sgCL(acc) see-nonpast me(accusative)

‘The child sees me.’ \hspace{1cm} \textsuperscript{(Simpson 1991: 99)}

\textsuperscript{13}Warlpiri allows free clitic doubling (Simpson 1991), in contrast to Romance languages which place various constraints on clitic doubling. I take the position that the possibilities for clitic doubling in a language are independent of the properties of the clitics themselves.
Prior to Legate 2006, it was assumed that these morphologically unmarked accusative objects had nominative (absolutive) Case, and thus it appeared that there was a mismatch between the Case of the object and the case of the cross-referencing clitic (accusative). The only mismatch that remains now is that ergative subjects trigger the same agreement form that nominative subjects do:

(34) \text{Ngajulu}-rlu \quad \text{ka-rna} \quad \text{nya-nyi} \quad \text{kurdu.}
\begin{align*}
\text{I-ergative} & \quad \text{pres-1sgAgr} & \text{see-nonpast} & \text{child(acc)} \\
\end{align*}

‘I see the child.’ \hfill (\text{Simpson 1991: 100})

(35) \text{Ngaju} \quad \text{ka-rna} \quad \text{parnka-mi.}
\begin{align*}
\text{(nom)} & \quad \text{pres-1sgAgr} & \text{run-nonpast} \\
\end{align*}

‘I am running.’ \hfill (\text{Simpson 1991: 65})

Ergative subjects can trigger true agreement in Warlpiri because there are no nominative objects (which would have priority with respect to controlling agreement). In the absence of a nominative, Warlpiri allows Infl/Tense to delete its nominative feature and check only its agreement features against those of the ergative subject.

What we do not yet know is why Warlpiri selects the ergative subject (rather than the accusative object) to agree when there is no nominative. Several hypotheses might account for this choice: for example, the ergative subject might be selected because it is
the closest argument to Infl/Tense, or it might be selected because it has the grammatical relation of subject. Interestingly, neither of these hypotheses holds generally with respect to predicting what can control agreement in the absence of a nominative, as we will now see from an examination of the agreement patterns in Gujarati.

3. Gujarati

Gujarati is interesting in the present context because it shows us that not all languages are like Warlpiri in allowing agreement with an ergative subject as the next best option in clauses with no nominative argument. Gujarati never allows agreement with an ergative subject (Comrie 1984: 862, Mistry 1997:428); in Gujarati, it is only a marked object that can control the agreement in the absence of a nominative (Mistry 1976, 1997). In Gujarati, as in Hindi, objects with certain features such as specificity are marked with what looks like the dative Case, but which is often labeled accusative in work on Indo-Aryan languages because of differences in the behavior of this Case and other instances of the dative Case. We see agreement in Gujarati with a marked object in the following pair of examples with an ergative subject and a marked object (labeled here with dat/acc Case to represent the controversy over the exact identity of this Case), and no nominative argument. In (36) the ergative subject is masculine and the marked object is feminine; it is the feminine marked object that controls the agreement, not the masculine ergative subject.
In the similar example in (37) where the gender of the subject and object are reversed, we see that it is still the marked object, now masculine, which controls the agreement.

(37) Sudha-e Ramesh-ne dhømkawy-o [Gujarati]

Sudha(fem)-erg Ramesh(masc)-dat/acc scold-masc

‘Sudha scolded Ramesh.’ (Mistry 1976 (14b))

Otherwise, Gujarati is like Hindi with respect to agreement. Whenever there is a nominative present in the clause, either as a subject or as an object, that nominative controls the agreement. We see agreement with the nominative subject in (38) and agreement with the nominative object in (39).

(38) a. Baḷok awy-ū.

child(nom) came-neuter

‘A child came.’ (Mistry 1976 (3c))

b. Ramesh awy-o.

Ramesh(nom) came-masc

‘Ramesh came.’ (Mistry 1976 (3a))

c. Sudha awy-i.

Sudha(nom) came-fem

‘Sudha came.’ (Mistry 1976 (3b))
(39) Sudha-e radio khɔridy-o.
      Sudha-erg radio(masc)(nom) bought-masc.

Sudha bought a radio.       (Mistry 1976 (10a))

Nominative controls the agreement even if a marked object is also present in the clause, showing that nominative takes priority over a ‘last resort’ agreement controller. In the following example, we see that the singular nominative subject, rather than the plural marked object, controls the agreement:

(40) Šeelaa pāc maaṇas-o-ne mokal-š-e
    sheela(nom) five man-pl-dat/acc send-fut-singular

‘Sheela will send the five men.’         (Mistry 1997 (8b))

This data supports the view put forth here that agreement must be controlled by a nominative argument if one is present, and that another Case may control agreement only as a ‘last resort’ in the absence of a nominative. However, not just any other Case will do; in clauses with neither a nominative nor a specificity marked object, Gujarati manifests default agreement (Mistry 1976, 1997). Mistry shows that an object with the regular dative Case (which is superficially identical to the Case on marked objects) cannot control agreement in Gujarati. We see this in example (40) where the verb ‘touch’ is one that lexically selects for a dative object, and agreement takes the default neuter form, despite the presence of a masculine dative object (and a masculine ergative subject).
(41) Kiṣor-(n)e kaaga₁-ne aḍ-v-ū hat-ū.

Kishor-erg letter-dat touch-desiderative-neuter be-past-neuter

‘Kishor wished to touch the letter.’ (Mistry 1997 (6c))

This example also shows us that ergative can never serve as a ‘last resort’ agreement controller in Gujarati, in contrast to what we saw in Warlpiri.

4. Discussion

We now know that languages differ as to what Case renders an argument eligible to control agreement in the absence of a nominative, but we do not yet know what range of Cases can serve as such ‘last resort’ agreement controllers in the languages of the world. Are ergative and the Case of specificity marked object the only such Cases? At this point, we cannot even be sure that languages can only allow one Case as a last resort agreement controller. It is still a logical possibility that some languages have a second or even a third choice for the Case that controls agreement. Answering this question requires further study of additional languages with Case-agreement mismatches.

We also do not yet know how the grammars of languages that do and do not allow mismatch differ. Why does one language require default agreement in the absence of a nominative (e.g. Hindi) when another allows an argument with a different Case to control agreement? At this point, we can only speculate, but one possibility has to do with the principles or constraints that regulate how the feature packet of a single head is treated. Ideally, all the features of a head should be checked, and checked against the same target.
One can imagine that there are two distinct principles or constraints that enforce these goals: one requires uniform treatment of the features of one head, while the other requires features to be checked, if possible. When a clause lacks a nominative, a language has to choose which one of these principles or constraints to violate; a language that uses default agreement chooses to treat the agreement and nominative features in a uniform manner, checking none of these features, whereas a language that allows a non-nominative to check agreement in the absence of a nominative chooses to achieve the goal of getting as many features checked as possible. There is a tension between these two goals, and one way of resolving this tension is to allow what is viewed in the typological literature as Case-agreement mismatch.

5. Conclusions

The goal of this paper has been to show that a restrictive version of standard agreement theory can account for the asymmetry in the types of Case-agreement mismatches that have been observed. There are languages such as Warlpiri with an ergative Case system and nominative-accusative agreement pattern, but no languages have been reported with a nominative-accusative Case system and an ergative agreement system. The claim put forth here is that the relationship between true agreement and nominative Case is extremely close because these features occupy the same head and must be checked against the same DP. The exception is when the clause lacks a nominative argument to check and the nominative Case feature is deleted. In this
situation, some languages allow the agreement features of Infl/Tense to be checked against an argument with some other Case. We have seen that the other Case that can serve as a ‘last resort’ agreement controller differs cross-linguistically: it is ergative in Warlpiri, but in Gujarati it is the dative (or accusative) Case that marks specific objects.

The observed typological gap is expected if the theory limits true agreement checking to functional heads that potentially also check structural Case. This limitation eliminates the possibility of true agreement that primarily targets non-structural Cases such as ergative or dative (although it still allows doubling pronominal clitics with these non-structural Cases). With no true ergative agreement, there can be no language in which true ergative agreement could target a nominative subject in the absence of an ergative argument. The theory does not require (and thus should not allow) true ergative agreement if it is true (which it appears to be) that the patterns of ergative agreement that we observe cross-linguistically involve either ergative pronominal clitics and/or agreement with nominatives which forms a surface ergative pattern, as it does in the presence of an ergative Case pattern.
References


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