



The South Caucasian Chalk
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Case theory

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Case theory

Outline

- Introduction
- Morphological vs Abstract Case
- Case Assignment
 - The Nominative Case Assigner
 - The Accusative Case Assigners
 - The Genitive Case Assigners
- Summary



Case theory

Case – definition:

Inflectional category of nominals, which typically marks their relation to other constituents of a clause.

Nouns, adjectives, determiners

Nominative

o kalós ánthropos

‘the good man’

Genitive

tu kalú anθrópu

Accusative

ton kaló ánthropo

Vocative

kalé ánthrope



Case theory

Case is associated with grammatical function in the sentence

Subject, object, indirect object, possession

“The number of argument cases is predictably small: the case(s) of subject, object, possessor, and indirect object (Blake 2001). The majority of other forms are represented by locative (adjunct) cases, which encode location and direction (Comrie and Polinsky 1998.).

subject case/object case > possessor (genitive) case > indirect object (dative) case” (Polinsky and Preminger 2014)

Case theory

O	patéras	tu	Giórgu	édose
DEF:M.SG.NOM	father:M.SG.NOM	DEF:M.SG.GEN	George:M.GEN	give:PFV.PST.3SG
The	father	the	George	gave
tis	Elénis	éna	vivlío	
DEF:F.SG.GEN	Helen:F.GEN	INDEF:N.SG.NGEN	book:N.SG.NGEN	
the	Helen	a	book	

'George's father gave a book to Helen'

O patéras.NOM

tu Giórgu.GEN

tis Elénis.GEN or stin Eléni.ACC

éna vivlío.ACC

subject

possession

indirect object

object



Case theory

Indirect object

- a. John sent *Mary* a letter. O Giánis édose *tis Elénis* éna vivlío
b. John sent a letter *to Mary*. O Giánis édose éna vivlío *stin Eléni*

a. *Mary* – RECIPIENT

tis Elénis – RECIPIENT

b. *to Mary* – GOAL

stin Eléni – GOAL

It is in line with the θ -theory hierarchy:

AGENT > RECIPIENT > PATIENT/THEME > GOAL



Case theory

Abstract cases must be distinguished from the morphological cases

Morphological case is a parameter as it does not apply to all languages, while abstract Case is a universal principle. Because in such case grammatical functions are indicated with morphosyntactic features.

Abstract case can be indicated by morphological case markers or by adpositions (prepositions/postpositions).

(Testelefs 2001)



Case theory

Many languages mark case on all DPs, and Modern Greek is one of such languages

There are also cases that have not morphological makeup, these are the instances of morphological case syncretism.

In Modern Greek cases are indicated by means of the determiners, by morphological affixes and by prepositions.

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Examples:

[H Eléni]DP vlépi [ton Níko]DP
NOM ACC

H	Eléni	vlépi	ton	Níko
DEF:F.SG.NOM	Helen:F.NOM	see:3.SG	DEF:F.SG.ACC	Niko:M.ACC
The	Helen	sees	the	Niko
'Helen sees Niko'				



Case theory

Examples:

[Oi ánthropoi]DP ídan[tin ómorfi karékla]DP s-[ti gonía]DP
NOM ACC ACC

Oi	ánthropoi	ídan	tin	ómorfi
DEF:M.PL.NOM	people:M.PL.NOM	see:3.PL	DEF:F.SG.ACC	beautiful:F.SG.ACC
The	people	saw	the	beautiful
karékla	s-	ti	gonía	
chair:F.SG.ACC	LOC	DEF:F.SG.ACC	corner:F.SG.ACC	
chair	in	the	corner	

'The people saw beautiful chair in the corner'



Case theory

Examples:

a. [To vivlío]DP íne edó
NOM

To	vivlío	íne	edó
DEF:N.SG.NOM	book:N.SG.NOM	be:3.SG	here
The	book	be	here
'The book is here'			

b. Diavázo [to vivlío]DP
ACC

Diavázo	to	vivlío
read:1.SG	DEF:N.SG.ACC	book:N.SG.ACC
Read	the	book
'I read the book'		

or a. Edó íne [to vivlío]DP

b. [To vivlío]DP diavázo

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Case theory

Modern Greek obeys the general principles of Case Theory, namely:

- Case Uniqueness Principle: DP may receive only one case.
- The Case Filter: Every nominal argument must be assigned case
- Principle of Case licensing: Every instance of Case must be properly licensed.

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Case theory

“One standard way of implementing the Case filter is by using a mechanism known as feature checking.

The Case filter becomes a requirement that a noun be close enough to a Case assigner to check that the noun has the right features. The noun must be close to its Case assigner.”

(Carnie 2013)

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Case theory

Case theory puts restrictions on where nominal arguments can occur

As all DPs assign case this means that case is a property of nominal constituent that is assigned to it by a particular syntactic head

In English different heads are responsible for different cases

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Case theory

Finite clause subjects need to be assigned nominative Case by T[Fin] – [NOM]

Objects need to be assigned accusative Case by a verb or preposition. So, V, P are responsible for assigning accusative Case [ACC]

Possessors need to be assigned genitive Case by D 's [GEN]

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Case theory

These requirements restrict the positions in which nominal arguments can occur, because they are dependent on these heads for case assignment

English example:

*Him visits Mary and Martin

The example is ungrammatical because *him* should be *he*. *Him* is in the subject position in T[Fin]P, where it can only receive nominative case, not accusative case.



Case theory

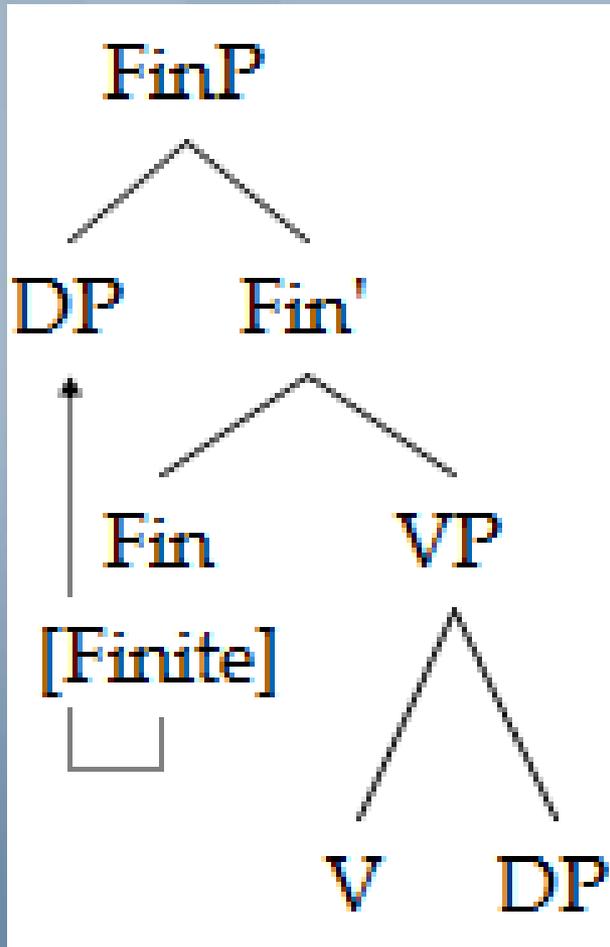
In Modern Greek different heads are responsible for different cases

Subjects always need to be assigned nominative Case by $T[\text{Fin}] - [\text{NOM}]$, T could be in a realis or subjunctive.

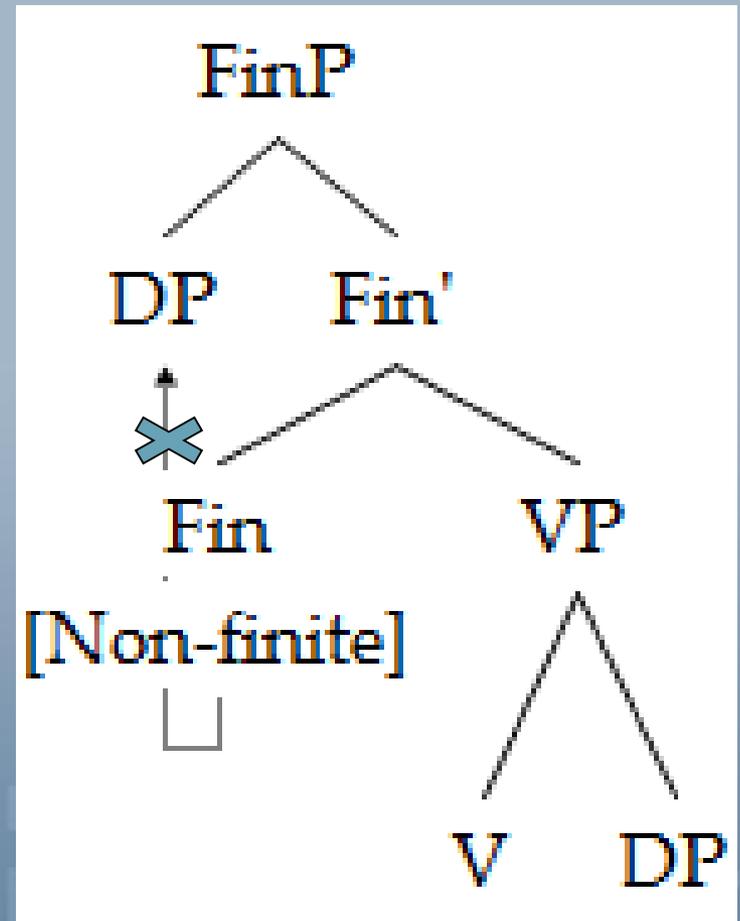
In English only finite clause subjects are assigned nominative Case, while subjects of non-finite clauses are assigned accusative Case.



Case theory



Assigns Nom Case to DP



Does not assign Nom to DP

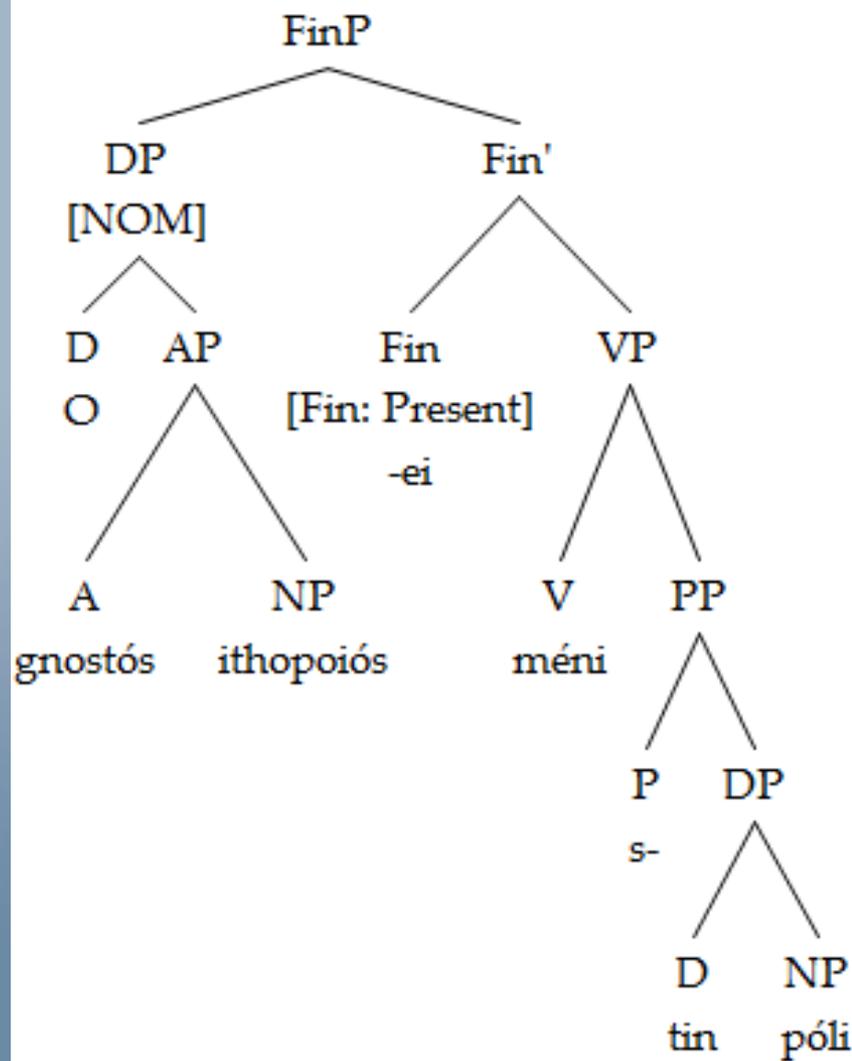


Case theory

[O gnostós ithopoiós] méni stin póli
NOM

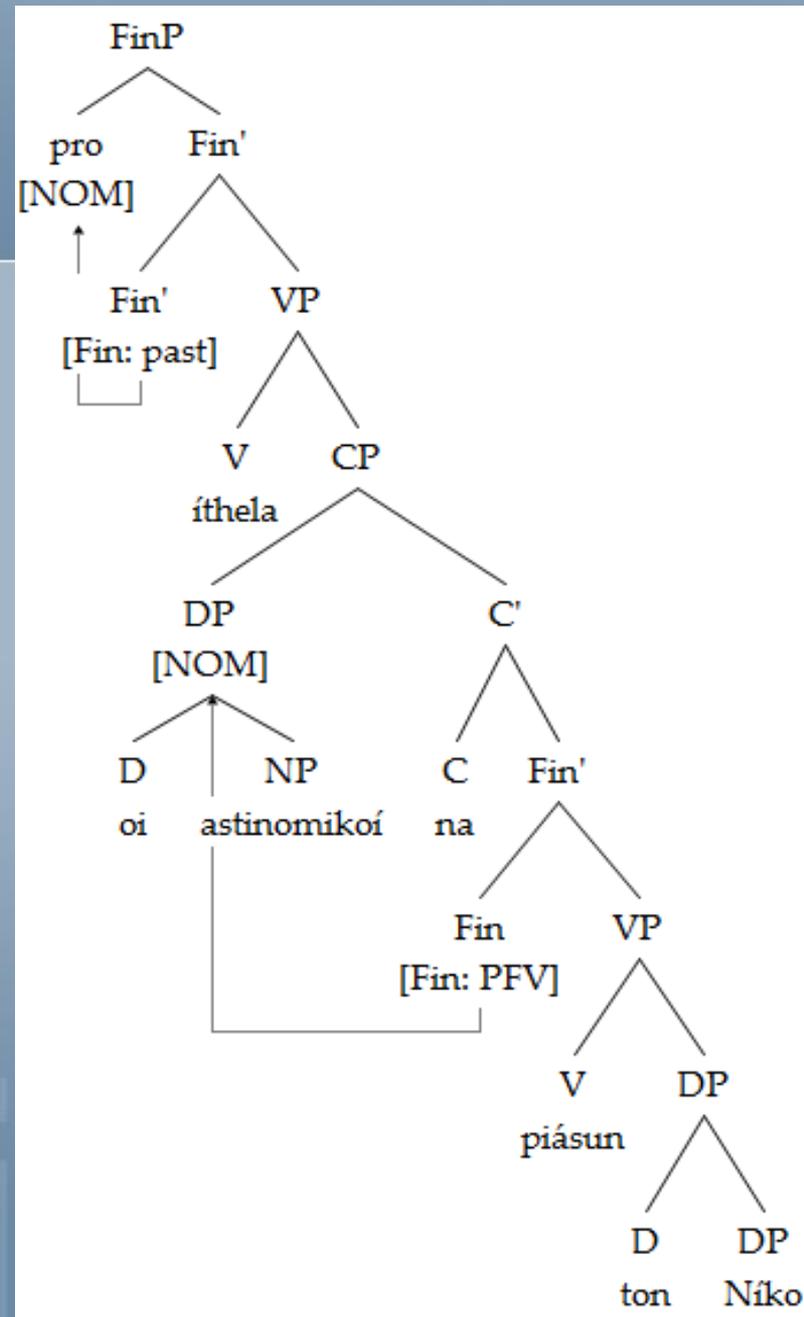
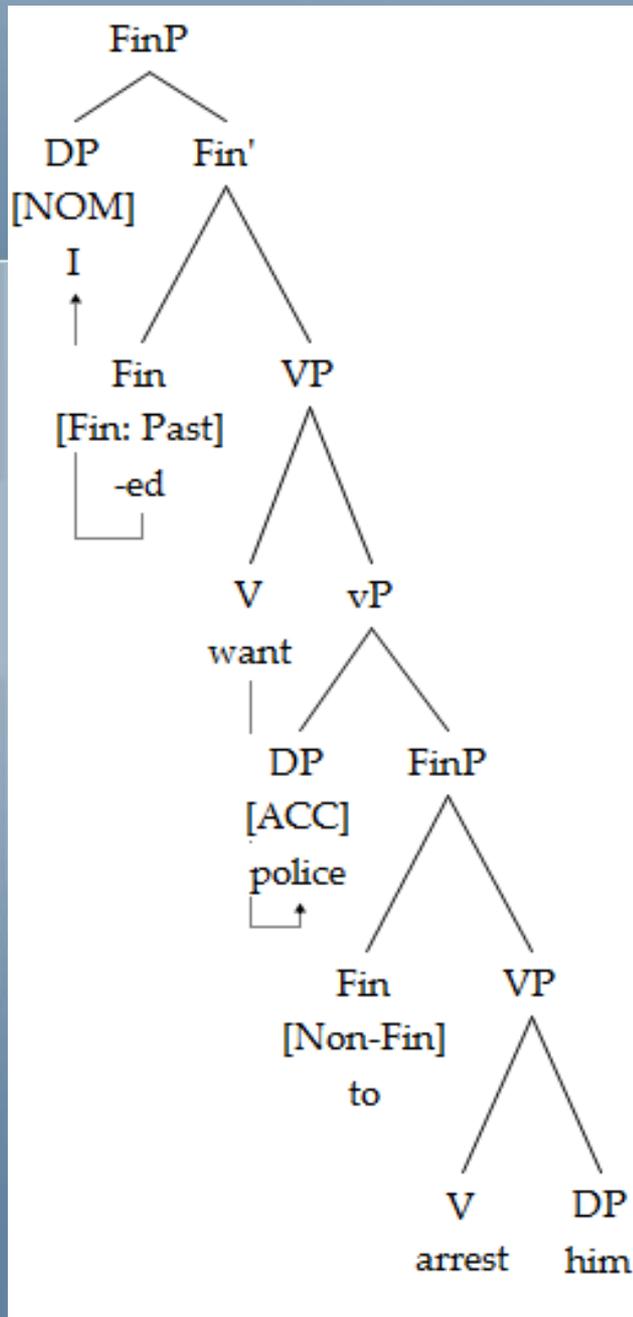
‘The well-known actor lives in the city’

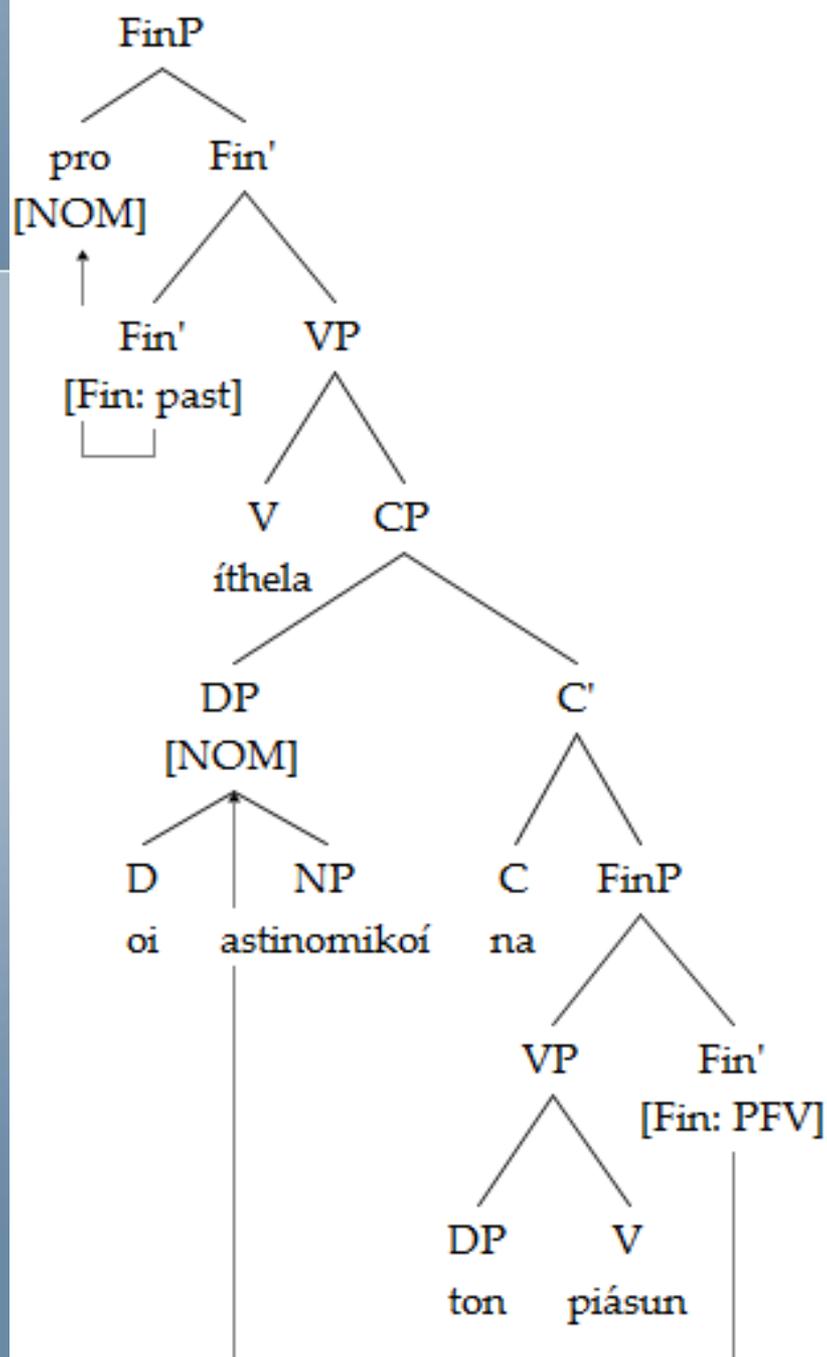
Fin checks
nominative Case
against a DP in spec,
FinP





So called **exceptional Case marking** because ACC case is assigned not within the same clause







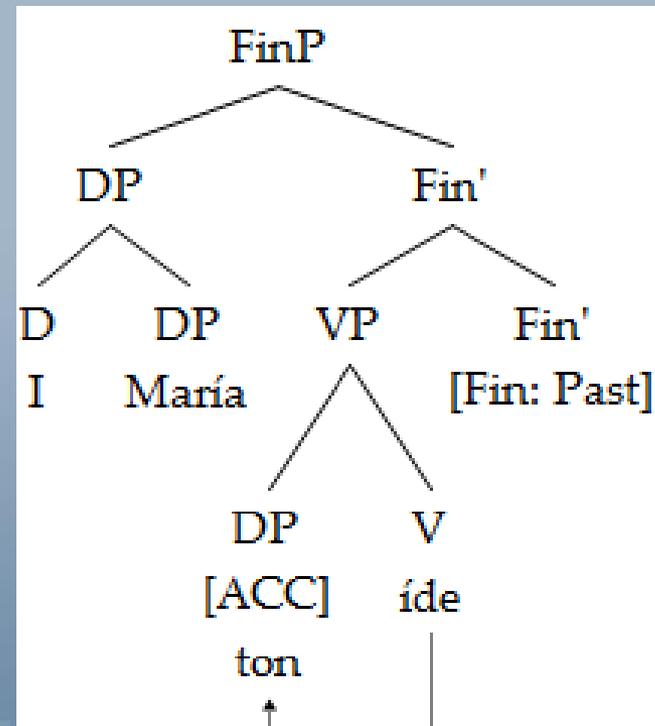
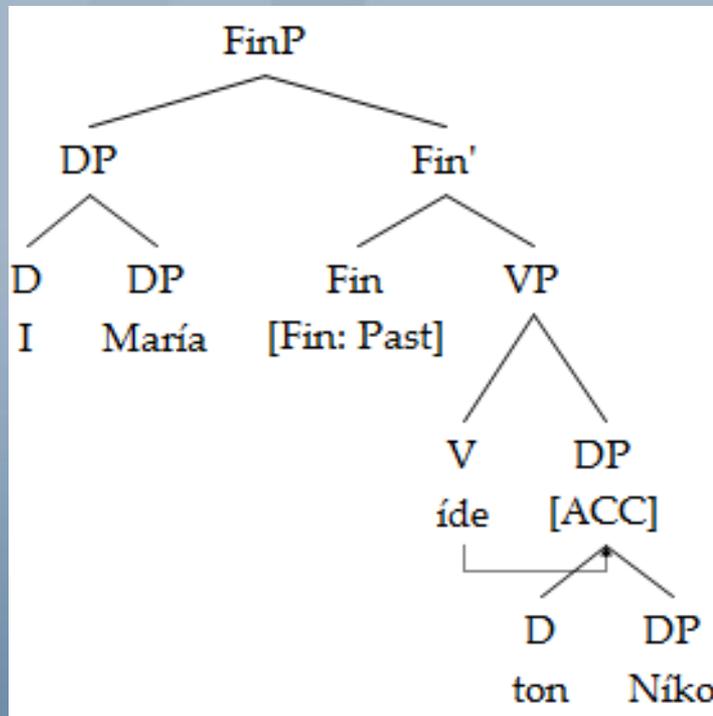
Case theory

V checks accusative Case
against a DP sister

H	María	íde	ton	Níko
DEF:F.SG.NOM	Maria:F.NOM	see:PFV.PST:3.SG	DEF:M.SG.ACC	Niko:M.ACC
The	Mary	saw	the	Niko
'Mary saw Niko'				

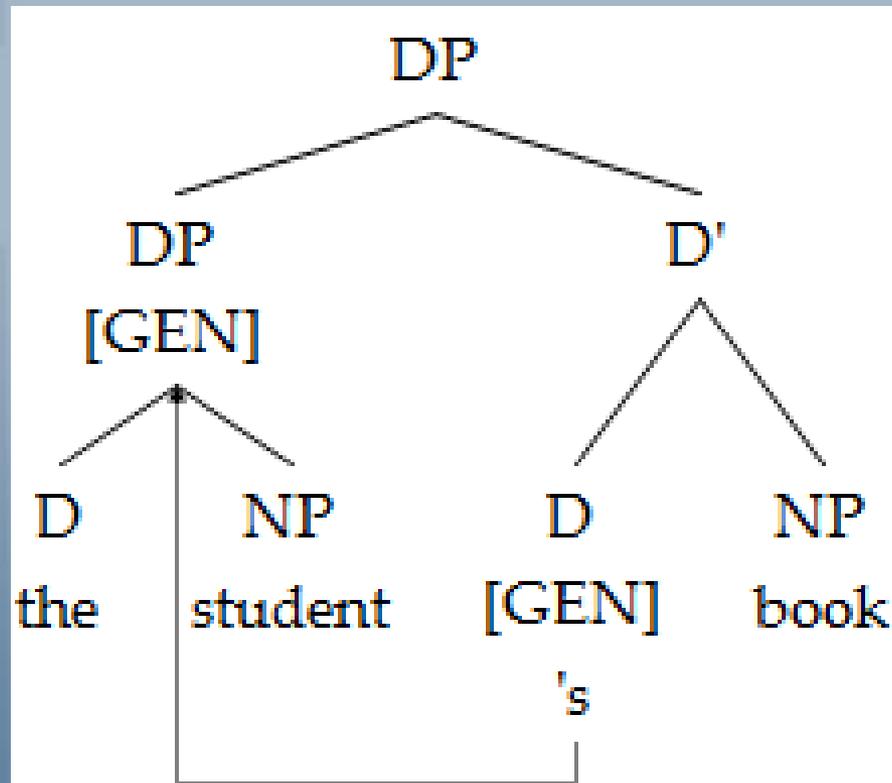
H	María	ton	íde
DEF:F.SG.NOM	Maria:F.NOM	3:SG.ACC	see:PFV.PST:3.SG
The	Mary	him	saw
'Mary saw him'			

Case theory



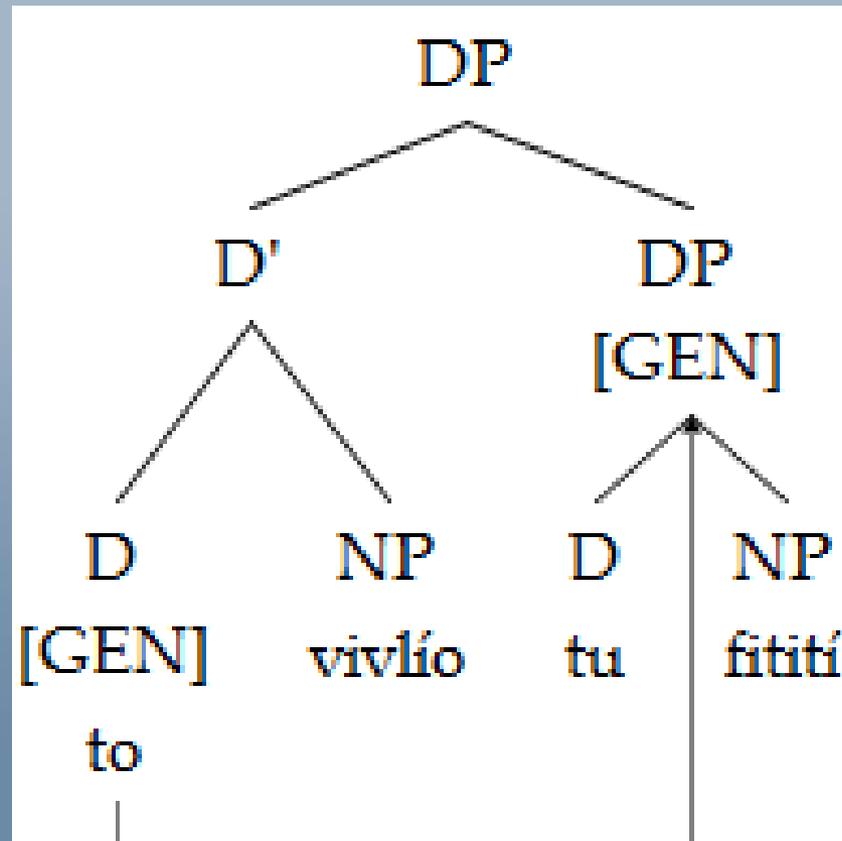
Case theory

D 's checks genitive Case, [GEN] in English



Case theory

D checks genitive Case, [GEN] in Greek





Case theory

Prepositions can assign either accusative or genitive case

Examples:

a. O Giánnis íne [stin trápeza]
ACC

O	Giánnis	íne	s-	tin	Trápeza
DEF:M.SG.NOM	Ianis:M.NOM	be:3.SG	LOC	DEF:F.SG.ACC	bank:F.SG.ACC
The	Ianis	is	in	the	Bank
'Ianis is in the bank'					



Case theory

Examples:

b. Metaksí [mas]
GEN

metaksí	mas
between	1:PL.GEN
'between us'	

No preposition ever takes a nominative complement. Some of the prepositions can govern more than one case. Thus, prepositions place specific case requirements on the following NPs.



Case theory

Summary

Merge with:	Case assigned:	Examples:
[Finite]	nominative	egó, avtí, o Níkos, I vivliothíki
[V], [P]	accusative	me, tin, i María, to panepistímio
[D], [V], [P]	genitive	tou, tou Níkou, tis foitítrias,

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