The Morpho-Phonology of Accusative and Genitive Case in Barguzin Buryat

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1 Introduction

In this paper, I explore an aspect of case morpho-phonology in the Barguzin dialect of Buryat (Mongolic, Russia), based on my fieldwork with this language. As is typical of “Altaic” languages, Buryat is agglutinative, suffix-heavy, and has a NOM-ACC case system. Most of its nominal suffixes, including its case suffixes, are uncomplicated. Nominative case is systematically null, as we see in (1) below:

(1) Nominative case
   a. tumen-∅ buuza-niij diij ∅ ∅
      Tumen-NOM buuzy-PL-ACC ate
      ‘Tumen ate buuzy (a type of dumpling)’
   b. stakan-∅ mdrə ∅
      glass-NOM broke
      ‘The/a glass broke’
   c. mre-∅ amtatai
      Berry-NOM delicious
      ‘Berries are delicious’

This language also has a full array of oblique cases. These are all instantiated by straightforward suffixes that have no morpho-phonological idiosyncrasies. Many suffixes in this language, including several oblique cases, are subject to vowel harmony—a process which is pervasive, but not important for this paper.

(2) Some oblique cases
   a. bi miisgə-niud-tə mətə axa ugoob
      1SG cat-PL-DAT meat gave
      ‘I gave meat to the cats’
   b. bi noxoi-gəo ainab
      1SG dog-ABL be.afraid.of
      ‘I’m afraid of the dog’

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The topic of this paper is the realization of accusative and genitive case in this language, which is considerably more complex than that of its other cases. The following table previews (most of) the possible forms of these cases. While this is a large set of possible forms, which are essentially in free variation, notice that there is a systematic relatedness between the forms of accusative and genitive:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ACC</th>
<th>GEN</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-j</td>
<td>-n</td>
<td>-Aij</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Aij</td>
<td>-Iin</td>
<td>-ii</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As I describe in the next section, there is a phonological generalization about the distribution of these forms. To preview, the analysis I will provide is as follows: Fundamentally, accusative marking is /j/, while genitive marking is /n/. These cases are members of a morpho-syntactic natural class in Barguzin Buryat (following Davis 2021), and as such are both subject to particular phonological requirement:

The phonological requirement for accusative and genitive in Barguzin Buryat

The accusative /j/ and genitive /n/ must always be adjacent to a Vµµ.

I propose that when this requirement is not trivially satisfied by the phonology of the noun stem, an additional “epenthetic” element, realized as /Ai/ or /ii/, is inserted in order to meet it. This proposal is similar in essence to the analysis of certain Basque and Italian facts in Arregi & Nevins (2012), who argue that these languages sometimes recruit dedicated epenthetic morphemes to satisfy phonological alignment requirements. More generally, these findings add to the body of evidence that the morphological and phonological components of the grammar closely interact (McCarthy & Prince 1998; Wolf 2008, 2009; Pertsova 2015; Davis 2019, a.o.). However, the analysis previewed above does not account for all accusative and genitive forms, as I will show.

2 The phonological generalization

Some of the time, accusative marking is /j/, and genitive marking is /n/. I mention these two forms together in this way for a reason: they both occur under the same conditions. Specifically, these two forms of accusative and genitive marking are permitted when following a noun stem ending in either a long vowel or diphthong—put more abstractly, a bi-moraic segment (Vµµ).

**Accusative /j/ following Vµµ**

- **a.** bi ʒii-j xaranaab
  1SG mother-ACC saw
  ‘I saw mother’
- **b.** sajana xara miisgɔi-j xaraa
  Sayana black cat-ACC saw
  ‘Sayana saw a black cat’
- **c.** dugar noxoij-x xarana
  Dugar dog-ACC see
  ‘Dugar sees a dog’
- **d.** bi tɔx'aa-j xaraab
  1SG chicken-ACC see
  ‘I see a chicken’
- **e.** bi ʒodoj-j xaraab
  1SG fir.tree-ACC see
  ‘I see a fir tree’
(6) Genitive /n/ following $V_{\mu \mu}$

a. ə̟zii-n  miisgśi  buduun
   mother-GEN  cat  fat
   ‘Mother’s cat is fat’

b.  miisgśi-n  xei-d
   cat-GEN  food
   ‘cat food’

c.  noxoii-n  xoool  untśi
   dog-GEN  food  expensive
   ‘Dog food is expensive’

d.  oi-n  fubu-nd  gaiixan
   forest-GEN  bird-PL  beautiful
   ‘The forest’s birds are beautiful’

In many other contexts, we see these same suffixes, along with some additional material. For instance, when the nominal stem ends in a consonant, we see what appears to be an extra element intervening between the noun and the case suffix, as (7) below shows. This extra element is realized as either /Ai/ or /ii/. Most of the time, either form is allowed. I gloss this element as EM for “epenthetic morpheme”:

(7) Accusative / genitive with obligatory epenthetic morpheme

a.  bōg-*(oi)-n  mngę  boro
    trash-EM-GEN  color  grey
    ‘The trash’s color is grey’

b.  bi  bōg-*(ii)-jə  xaranaab
    1SG  trash-EM-ACC  saw
    ‘I see a piece of garbage’

c.  dugar-*(ai/ii)-n  miisgśi  buduun
    Dugar-EM-GEN  cat  fat
    ‘Dugar’s cat is fat’

d.  bi  dugar-*(ai/ii)-jə  xaranaab
    1SG  Dugar-EM-ACC  saw
    ‘I saw Dugar’

e.  ail-*(ai/ii)-n  miisgśi  buduun
    family-EM-GEN  cat  fat
    ‘The family’s cat is fat’

f.  bi  ail-*(ai/ii)-jə  xaranaab
    1SG  family-EM-ACC  saw
    ‘I saw the family’

Something similar happens when an accusative / genitive morpheme attempts to suffix to a noun that normally ends in a short vowel. Before I show the fact, note the following phonological process: In Barguzin Buryat, when a short vowel is adjacent to a bi-moraic segment, the short vowel is deleted:

(8) $V_{\mu \mu} \rightarrow \emptyset / \_ \_ V_{\mu \mu}$

(Staroverov & Zelensky To appear, ex. 20)

a.  wolf + ablative
    /förən  +  aan/  \rightarrow  Ʇṇa good → [gunta]

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3 With some nouns, only one of /Ai/ or /ii/ seems to be permitted, but as far as I can tell there is no clear generalization about what determines this. Since there is quite a bit of optionality in Barguzin Buryat nominal morphology, it is possible that some of the observed restrictions were superficial inconsistencies in speakers’ judgments. Further fieldwork would be necessary to know more.
b. leaf + instrumental
/nabʃa + aar/ → nabʃaar → [nabʃaar]

When accusative or genitive marking suffixes to noun that normally ends in a short vowel, we see the emergence of /Ai/ or /ii/ once again. Since either one of these intervening elements is a V_{\mu\mu}, the short vowel deletion process mentioned above applies, removing the final vowel of the nominal stem:

(9) Short vowel deletion caused by epenthetic morpheme

a. \textit{badma} → \textit{badm-ai/ii-jə}
  Badma    Badma-EM-ACC
b. \textit{badma} → \textit{badm-ai/ii-n}
  Badma    Badma-EM-GEN
c. \textit{fong} → \textit{fon-oi/ii-jə}
  wolf       wolf-EM-ACC
d. \textit{fong} → \textit{fon-oi/ii-n}
  wolf       wolf-EM-GEN
e. \textit{tarxi} → \textit{tarx-ai/ii-jə}
  head       head-EM-ACC
f. \textit{tarxi} → \textit{tarx-ai/ii-n}
  head       head-EM-ACC
g. \textit{gəgəfə} → \textit{gəgəf-oi/ii-n}
  sister     sister-EM-GEN

To summarize, the facts I analyze here are as follows: The accusative /jə/ and genitive /n/ straightforwardly affix to nouns ending in a segment V_{\mu\mu}. When the noun ends in anything else (a consonant or short vowel), an intervening element /Ai/ or /ii/ appears (triggering predictable short vowel deletion if applicable). Importantly, because /Ai/ and /ii/ are both V_{\mu\mu} segments, we can make the following generalization about accusative / genitive marking:

(10) Phonological generalization about accusative and genitive in Barguzin Buryat
The accusative /jə/ and genitive /n/ are always adjacent to a V_{\mu\mu}.

I will use this generalization as the basis for my analysis in the next section. To conclude this section, note that the /Ai/ or /ii/ that we have seen occurring in some accusative / genitive forms cannot appear with any other cases (nominative or oblique):

(11) No /Ai/ or /ii/ with nominative

a. \textit{tumən-ə-əgə/ii  buuzə-annəl-ii-jə  xələ əə}
  Tumen-NOM-EM buuzy-PL-EM-ACC ate
  ‘Tumen ate buuzy’
b. \textit{stakan-ə-əgə/ai  əmdərəəəə}
  Glass-NOM-EM broke
  ‘The/a glass broke’
c. \textit{gəməs-ə-əgə/ii-əsi  amtaəi}
  Berry-NOM-EM delicious
  ‘Berries are delicious’

(12) No /Ai/ or /ii/ with oblique cases

a. \textit{bi  gər-əgə/ii-tə  żərəbə}
  1SG house-EM-DAT came
  ‘I came to the house’
b. \textit{bi dugar-*ai/*i-(g)aan ainaab} \\
\hspace{1cm}1SG Dugar-EM-ABL be.afraid.of \\
\hspace{1cm}‘I am afraid of Dugar’

c. \textit{bi dugar-*ai/*i-tai magazin ofoob} \\
\hspace{1cm}1SG Dugar-EM-COM store went \\
\hspace{1cm}‘I went to the store with Dugar’

d. \textit{bi miisg-i-*gəi-(g)ər omogorxon} \\
\hspace{1cm}1SG cat-EM-INST be.proud.of \\
\hspace{1cm}‘I am proud of the cat’

Therefore it is clear that whatever is responsible for the arising of this element is only relevant for accusative and genitive cases.\(^4\)

3 Proposal: Epenthesis to satisfy alignment

We have seen that accusative and genitive case in this language obey a particular phonological generalization. I will interpret this as evidence that these case morphemes are subject to an Optimality Theoretic alignment constraint (McCarthy & Prince 1993, 1998), which I state as follows:

\begin{equation}
(13) \text{ALIGN(V\textsubscript{\(\mu\mu\)}-ACC/GEN)}
\end{equation}

Assign a \(*\) when an ACC/GEN suffix is not aligned to the right edge of a V\textsubscript{\(\mu\mu\)} segment.

It fits the facts to define this alignment constraint as applying only to accusative and genitive cases, since this language’s other cases have no special alignment requirement. It is worth wondering why only these two cases, and no others, pattern in this way. In Davis (2021), I argue that these two cases in Barguzin Buryat are members of a natural class that excludes the other cases, drawing from the intuition of work on case containment (Caha 2009; Smith et al. 2019, a.o.). In that article, I focus on the fact that accusative and genitive case in Barguzin Buryat can uniquely undergo a particular suppletion process in plural contexts, which assigns them both the syncretic form \(-nuu\):

\begin{equation}
(14) \text{Syncretic plural suppletion for accusative and genitive}
\end{equation}

(Davis 2021, ex. 6)

a. \textit{bi miisg-i-nuuf\textsuperscript{x}xaranab} \\
\hspace{1cm}1SG cat-PL.ACC see \\
\hspace{1cm}‘I see cats’

b. \textit{miisg-i-nuuf\textsuperscript{x}gul-nuud \textit{uta}} \\
\hspace{1cm}cat-PL.GEN tail-PL long \\
\hspace{1cm}‘The cats’ tails are long’

If the morpho-phonological component of this language’s grammar groups these cases together in a salient way, it is easy to describe the fact that they are both uniquely subject to a particular alignment constraint (13) and a particular (optional) suppletion process (14). Since the method of bundling these cases in Davis (2021) depends on theory-internal concepts that are not relevant to this paper, here I will proceed by simply referring to the two in tandem as “ACC/GEN”.\(^5\)

Next let’s proceed to the analysis. The constraint defined above is automatically satisfied when the noun inherently ends in a V\textsubscript{\(\mu\mu\)} segment as we saw in section 1, as (15) below shows again:

\(^4\) The /g/ in parentheses in (12b) and (12d) would be expected if the epenthetic morpheme were used in these contexts, due to the phonological constraint demonstrated in (21) below.

\(^5\) Specifically, in Davis (2021) I bundle together accusative and genitive case in Barguzin Buryat as manifestations of “dependent case”, following the case ontology of Marantz (1991) and much following work. Marantz’s case categories are convenient for Davis (2021) due to their adoption in several relevant works on case containment and the typology of case morphology (Zompi 2017; Smith et al. 2019, a.o.).
(15) **Automatic satisfaction of the alignment constraint**

a. bi ᠠᠭᠢᠶ᠋-ᠬᠠᠷᠠᠠᠳ
   1SG mother-ACC saw
   ‘I saw mother’

b. ᠠᠭᠢᠶ᠋-ᠬᠤ荻ᠫ᠎ᠡᠭᠥᠨ
   mother-GEN cat  fat
   ‘Mother’s cat is fat’

c. ᠪᠠᠳᠠᠨᠠ ᠠᠭᠢᠶ᠋-ᠬᠠᠷᠠᠠᠳᠬᠠᠷᠠᠠᠳ
   Sayana black cat-ACC saw
   ‘Sayana saw a black cat’

d. ᠠᠭᠢᠶ᠋-ᠬᠠᠲᠤᠬ᠒ᠦᠨ
   cat-GEN food
   ‘cat food’

However, if the noun ends in any other sort of segment, this constraint is violated. As previewed above, I argue that violation of ALIGN(\(V_{\mu\mu-ACC/GEN}\)) is avoided by insertion of an epenthetic element, which is realized as /Ai/ or /ii/. Note that Barguzin Buryat does have a typical process of phonological epenthesis: Consonant clusters at morpheme boundaries are broken up by insertion of /Ai/.

(16) **/A/ epenthesis to break up CC at morpheme boundaries**

(Staroverov & Zelensky, ex. 24)

a. /ᠬᠠᠷᠠᠠᠳᠬᠠᠷᠠᠠᠳ-ᠤᠭᠤᠭᠤᠭᠡᠨ᠎ᠡᠡᠳᠢ/ → [ᠬᠠᠷᠠᠠᠳᠬᠠᠷᠠᠠᠳ-ᠭᠤᠭᠤᠭᠡᠨ᠎ᠡᠡᠳᠢ]
dance-HAB-1PL

b. /ᠬᠠᠷᠠᠠᠳᠬᠠᠷᠠᠠᠳ-ᠤᠭᠤᠭᠤᠭᠡᠨ᠎ᠡᠡᠢ/ → [ᠬᠠᠷᠠᠠᠳᠬᠠᠷᠠᠠᠳ-ᠭᠤᠭᠤᠭᠡᠨ᠎ᠡᠡᠢ]
face-1SG.POSS

c. /ᠬᠠᠷᠠᠠᠳᠬᠤᠡᠭᠥᠨ/ → [ᠬᠠᠷᠠᠠᠳᠬᠤᠡᠭᠥᠨ]
book-2SG.POSS

Epenthesis of /Ai/ or /ii/ never occurs simply to break up clusters at morpheme boundaries, and /A/ epenthesis is never recruited to satisfy the constraint in (13) above. These facts are captured by my Optimality Theoretic analysis, which is demonstrated by the tables in (17) and (18) below.

The input to (17) is a consonant-final noun and an accusative or genitive suffix. Here ALIGN(\(V_{\mu\mu-ACC/GEN}\)) and \(*C+C\) (which bans CC clusters that span morpheme boundaries) are un-dominated. Below these is DEP(Ai/ii), which outranks DEP(A). While DEP(A) is the lowest ranked here, violating DEP(A) cannot satisfy ALIGN(\(V_{\mu\mu-ACC/GEN}\)). Only a violation of DEP(Ai/ii) can achieve this, as the optimal candidate (17c) shows. When ALIGN(\(V_{\mu\mu-ACC/GEN}\)) is not relevant, the lowest ranked constraint DEP(A) will be violated to satisfy \(*C+C\) as in (16) above.

(17) **Consonant-final noun + accusative or genitive suffix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>dugar-n/jɔ</th>
<th>(*C+C)</th>
<th>(V_{\mu\mu-ACC/GEN})</th>
<th>DEP(Ai/ii)</th>
<th>DEP(A)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. dugar-n/jɔ</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. dugar-a-n/jɔ</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

→ c. dugar-ai/ii-n/jɔ | ✓ | ✓ | * | ✓ |

In contrast, the input to the table in (18) below involves a noun ending in a short vowel. This table is similar to that in (17), but includes \(*V_{\mu\mu}\) (which penalizes a short vowel adjacent to a \(V_{\mu\mu}\)) as well as MAX(\(V_{\mu}\)). \(*V_{\mu\mu}\) is undominated, and due to out-ranking MAX(\(V_{\mu}\)), it motivates deletion of the noun’s final short vowel when DEP(Ai/ii) is violated to satisfy ALIGN(\(V_{\mu\mu-ACC/GEN}\)).

6 In the following tables I abbreviate ALIGN(\(V_{\mu\mu-ACC/GEN}\)) as \(V_{\mu\mu-ACC/GEN}\).
I show no table for examples where the noun inherently ends in a \( \nu_{\mu} \) as in (15) above, since in such examples \( \text{ALIGN}(\nu_{\mu}, \text{ACC/GEN}) \) is trivially satisfied.

A few questions remain. What exactly is the identity of this epenthetic element /Ai/-/ii/? It is possible that this is the realization of some feature / functional head in the DP, though no facts I am aware of facilitate a specific proposal about this. Another question is why the form of this epenthetic element is variable (/Ai/ or /ii/). I must leave this question unanswered here. However, there are additional facts described in section 4 below where /Ai/ and /ii/ do not pattern the same, which may point towards a future solution.

3.1 Against a deletion analysis. We might speculate that this piece realized as /Ai/ or /ii/ is not a separate morpheme, but rather an inherent part of accusative / genitive morphology that sometimes deletes. Here I will argue against such an analysis. Under a deletion analysis, the underlying forms of accusative morphology would be /-Aij/, /-iij/, and the underlying forms of genitive morphology would be /-Ain/, /-iin/.

Under such an analysis, it is necessary to assume that when one of these morphemes affixes to a noun ending in a consonant, affixation proceeds straightforwardly as in (19a), and that when the noun ends in a short vowel, predictable deletion of that vowel occurs (19b).

(19) **Assumption #1 of a deletion analysis**

a. /nom/ + Ain/ \( \rightarrow \) [nom-o-in]

book GEN book-GEN

b. /fono/ + Aijs/ \( \rightarrow \) [fon-oij]

wolf ACC wolf-ACC

This analysis of forms like those in (19) is unproblematic. However, under such an analysis it is necessary to assume that when affixing to a noun that ends in a \( \nu_{\mu} \) segment, the /Ai/ or /ii/ sub-part of the accusative or genitive suffix deletes, as in (20):

(20) **Assumption #2 of a deletion analysis**

a. /tax\(^{\nu}\) aa + Ajij\(^{\nu}\) \( \rightarrow \) [tax\(^{\nu}\) aaAjij\(^{\nu}\)]

chicken ACC chicken-ACC chicken-ACC

b. /miisg\(^{\nu}\) i + Ain/ \( \rightarrow \) [miisg\(^{\nu}\) i-Ain]

cat GEN cat-GEN cat-GEN

\(^7\) Violating \text{Dep}(A)\) to place /Ai/ next to the noun’s final vowel in (18) does not satisfy \( \nu_{\mu} - \text{ACC/GEN} \), as (18b) shows. However, this would satisfy \( \nu_{\mu} - \text{ACC/GEN} \) if adjacent short vowels could be coalesced into a long vowel. A faithfulness constraint like \text{Uniformity} (McCarthy & Prince 1995) will prevent this, but I omit this from (18) for simplicity.

A reviewer mentions that two other potential candidates are relevant here: One that lengthens the final vowel of the noun stem, and one that adds an [i] in order to create /Ai/, which we know is an appropriate “epenthetic” diphthong. A highly ranked constraint such as \text{Identity(Length)} will properly eliminate the first possibility. The second possibility could be ruled out by a constraint like \text{Uniformity}, though this issue raises the question of how /Ai+/i/ sequences are generally handled in the language—something which is unfortunately not clear to me based on the available data.

\(^8\) I am aware of two reasonable possibilities. One is that /Ai/-/ii/ is a special realization of a functional head like n (Marvin 2003; Embick & Marantz 2008; Embick 2010). Another is that this is the realization of a case feature—a possibility made especially salient by the case containment approach adopted in my analysis of Barguzin Buryat suppletion in Davis (2021). In Caha (2009), for instance, genitive case structurally contains accusative case, which in turn contains nominative case, meaning that both genitive and accusative contain a nominative feature. Such a feature could be what is spelled-out as /Ai/-/ii/ (though evidently only when the needs of alignment require it).
Importantly, this second necessary assumption does not fit the facts about how Barguzin Buryat actually handles potential sequences of two adjacent $V_{\mu\mu}$ segments. In reality, it is not the case that one of the $V_{\mu\mu}$ segments is deleted. Rather, the epenthetic consonant /g/ is inserted between them:  

\[ \emptyset \rightarrow /g/ / V_{\mu\mu} \_ V_{\mu\mu} \]  
(Staroverov & Zelensky, ex. 21)

a. *gun* + instrumental  
/buu + aar/ → [buugaar]

b. *chicken* + ablative  
/tax/a + aan/ → [tax’aagaan]

c. *happiness* + comitative + instrumental  
/bajar + tai + aar/ → [bajartaigaar]

Since a deletion analysis for Barguzin Buryat accusative and genitive case morpho-phonology requires positing an exceptional deletion process that is not actually attested in the language, we have reason to be suspicious of such an analysis. However, the epenthesis analysis that I have proposed above does not have this problem.

3.2 *Is epenthesis the only possible analysis?* While I argue that an epenthesis analysis is superior to a deletion one, the facts could also be accounted for by positing that there is no separate epenthetic element, but rather some form of contextual allomorphy for accusative / genitive morphology. However, an allomorphy account renders the phonological generalization that we saw in section 2 mere coincidence. It is possible that this is indeed a synchronic coincidence, perhaps with a diachronic explanation. I cannot distinguish between these hypotheses with the data available to me.

4 Further puzzles

4.1 *Another form of genitive.* I’ve argued that the extra /Ai/ or /ii/ in some accusative / genitive contexts is the result of epenthesis motivated by the following constraint:

\[ \text{ALIGN}(V_{\mu\mu} - \text{ACC/GEN}) \]

Assign an * when an ACC/GEN suffix is not aligned to the right edge of a $V_{\mu\mu}$ segment.

We’ve seen that when the noun being affixed to inherently ends in a $V_{\mu\mu}$ segment, the assumed epenthesis does not occur. A complication for this analysis is that even when a noun ends in a $V_{\mu\mu}$ segment, what appears to be redundant epenthesis of /Ai/ can occur in genitive contexts. Since this creates a situation where two $V_{\mu\mu}$ segments would be adjacent, predictable epenthesis of /g/ between them applies:

\[ \text{Optional redundant epenthesis of } /Ai/ \text{ in genitive forms} \]

a. *miizgii-(gii)-n*  
cat-EM-GEN

b. *naadaxii-(gii)-n*  
toy-EM-GEN

c. *gii-(gii)-n*  
mother-EM-GEN

d. *zoooxii-(gii)-n*  
sour.cream-EM-GEN

Interestingly in contrast, such redundant insertion of /ii/ is not acceptable in genitive forms:

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9 This is a typologically unusual epenthesis strategy, which Staroverov (2016) analyzes.

10 Another version of a deletion analysis that would posit that /Ai/ or /ii/ is actually inherent to the noun stem, but sometimes deleted, faces the same issue.
(24) **No redundant epenthesis of /ii/ in genitive forms**

a. miisgaj-(*gi)-n
   cat-EM-GEN

b. əgii-(?/*gi)-n
   mother-EM-GEN

c. zoaxəi-(*gi)-n
   sour.cream-EM-GEN

Further, no redundant epenthesis of any variety is available in accusative forms:

(25) **No redundant epenthesis of either kind in accusative forms**

a. miisgaj-(*gi/*gi)-jə
   cat-EM-ACC

b. əgii-(*gi/*gi)-jə
   mother-EM-ACC

c. zoaxəi-(*gi/*gi)-jə
   sour.cream-EM-ACC

d. buuru-(*gi/*gi)-jə
   calf-EM-ACC

It is consistent with these facts to add to my account the proposal that there are in fact two varieties of genitive morpheme in this language: /n/ and /Ai/. When the latter affixes to a nominal stem that inherently ends in a V segment, epenthesis appears to have applied redundantly. These facts deserve further consideration, since they may help clarify the nature of /Ai/ and /ii/. I leave this for future work.

4.2 **Truncated forms.** In contexts where /Ai/ or /ii/ has been inserted, it is often possible for the expected accusative /jə/ or genitive /n/ to not occur.\(^{11}\)

(26) **Truncated accusative / genitive forms**

a. galuu-nuud-əi-(jə/n)
   goose-PL-EM-ACC/GEN

b. dugar-ai-(jə/n)
   Dugar-EM-ACC/GEN

c. bulgəm-əi-(jə/n)
   group-EM-ACC/GEN

d. dugar-ii-(jə)
   Dugar-EM-ACC

Such truncated forms, which are quite frequent, are almost always ambiguous between accusative and genitive: context is necessary to determine which case is intended. The most straightforward way of accounting for such forms in the context of my epenthesis analysis would be to propose that they involve deletion of the original case suffix after epenthesis. Other analyses are likely feasible, but further investigation will be necessary to determine what the most accurate approach is.

5 **Conclusion**

I have argued that certain case morphemes in Barguzin Buryat are subject to a particular alignment constraint, which motivates an instance of epenthesis in some phonological contexts. Case morphology in this language is quite rich, and there are several other accusative / genitive forms that do not straightforwardly fit this analysis (though they do not falsify it, either). Further insight may be gained by comparing Barguzin

\(^{11}\) Truncated forms where the only case marking is /ii/ are much less common that those using just /Ai/. I do not have an explanation for this fact.
Buryat with standard Buryat. Future work should also seek to reduce the alignment constraint that this analysis depends on to something independent, but it remains possible that it is irreducible. I leave this for future research to consider.

5.1 Another loose end. As far as I know, the generalization that I proposed above is exception-less:

(27) Phonological generalization about accusative and genitive in Barguzin Buryat
The accusative /jʊ/ and genitive /n/ are always adjacent to a Vµµ.

However, it is not always the case that a nominal stem that ends in a Vµµ segment allows direct affixation of both the accusative /jʊ/ or genitive /n/: Sometimes, what I have described as epenthesis must apply even with such nouns. For instance, consider Xalaa (‘branch’). /jʊ/ can suffix to this noun directly, but /n/ cannot. Rather, the epenthetic element must occur to allow suffixation of /n/, though such “redundant epenthesis” is not permitted when /jʊ/ is used.

(28) Case forms for ‘branch’
  a. Xalaa-∅
     branch-NOM
  b. Xalaa-jʊ
     branch-ACC
  c. * Xalaa-ɡ思索-jʊ
     branch-EM-ACC
  d. * Xalaa-n
     branch-GEN
  e. Xalaa-ɡ思索-n
     branch-EM-GEN

This asymmetry in the distribution of accusative and genitive marking is also evident with a few other nouns in my data set, such as Zodoo (‘fir tree’) and Buruu (‘calf’). This puzzle is likely related to the complication about genitive marking mentioned in section 4.1 above. Further data gathering, with special attention paid to the phonology of each nominal stem, is likely necessary to resolve these and related puzzles.

12 Poppe (1960)’s survey of standard Buryat reports the existence of the genitive/possessive forms /-ai/ and /-iin/, and a direct object marker /-(ii)ji/. These morphemes bear an obvious resemblance to the case markers in Barguzin Buryat, but their exact status in the grammar of standard Buryat cannot be inferred from Poppe’s overview.
References


