Case systems (Grammatical Relations)
Case vs. Verb Agreement

Relationships among participants in a sentence can be coded using...

- case marking (marking on the noun or noun phrase)
- verb agreement (marking on the verb)
- or by a combination of the two
English case & verb agreement

(1) I am running.
(2) He is kicking me.

I and he both have nominative case. 
Am and is show verb agreement; the form of the verb indicate that the subjects are 1sg and 3sg respectively.

(3) I often smile.
(4) He often smiles.

I and he both have nominative case. 
Smile-s shows verb agreement; -s indicates that the subject is 3sg.
Active vs. non-active

Some participants are active (A) and some are non-active (O).

(5) I am running.

(6) I am dead.

(7) I am kicking you.
Accusative languages

Some languages mark all subjects one way and all objects one way.

(8) I am running.
    A

(9) I am dead.
    O

(10) I am kicking him.
    A

(11) He is kicking me.
    O
Accusative languages

Serrano (Uto-Aztecan: Los Angeles)

(12) Čičint vö’ pahpan.
    boy past thirsty
    ‘The boy was thirsty.’

(13) Čičint vö’ ya’i.
    boy past run
    ‘The boy ran.’

(14) Čičint vö’ hukahti mui.
    boy past deer shoot
    ‘The boy shot the deer.’

(15) Naašt vö’ čičinti mui.
    girl past boy shoot
    ‘The girl shot the boy.’

Subjects have NOMINATIVE case; objects have ACCUSATIVE case.
Active languages

Some languages mark all active participants one way and all non-active another way.

Tuteloa (Siouan: Virginia)

(16) Wa-hiantkape:-wa.
   1sg-sleep-pres
   ‘I sleep.’

(17) Wi-te:-wa.
   1sg-dead-pres
   ‘I am dead.’

(18) Wa-yi-teo:ma.
   1sg-2sg-kill-prog
   ‘I am killing you.’

(19) Kohinan-wi-ya-he-wa.
   ?-1sg-2sg-strike-pres
   ‘You strike me.’

A participants are called ACTIVE;
O participants are called NON-ACTIVE.
**Ergative languages**

Some mark the subject of a transitive sentence one way, and all other participants another way.

Central Alaskan Yupik

(20) Nayiq cikkuuq.
    seal    frozen
    ‘The seal is frozen.’

(21) Nayiq kittuq.
    seal    sink
    ‘The seal sinks.’

(22) aju:təm nayiq nəɣɣaa.
    man    seal    eat
    ‘The man eats the seal.’

(23) nayim nəqaq nəɣɣaa.
    seal    fish    eat
    ‘The seal eats the fish.’

The transitive subject is called **ERGATIVE**; other participants are called **ABSOLUTIVE**.
Let’s practice!

Wichita (Caddoan: Oklahoma)

(24) Ta-t-ʔt:y-s.  ‘I saw him.’
(25) Ta-ki-ʔt:y-s.  ‘He saw me.’
(26) Ta-t-hisa.  ‘I went.’
(27) Ta-ki-hiya:s.  ‘I am hungry.’

*ta-* is tense marker for non-future.
*-s is an aspect marker

Is this case marking or verb agreement?