Stacked and phrasal case in Russian and Lardil:
Richard's conjecture and the unity of the world's languages
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In this talk, I will argue that case morphology may a play a role for the syntactician a bit like tree rings for the dendrochronologist: it gives us a direct glimpse at the syntactic derivation in which the morphology-bearer has participated, providing evidence for specific details of that derivation (including the periodic action of Spell Out when phases are built). In so doing, I will be building on a conjecture advanced by Richards (2007, 2013), and focusing on two of the languages that he himself investigated in this connection Lardil and Russian -- plus Korean (recently discussed by Levin 2013).

Lardil is a language that shows extensive "case stacking", in which case-bearing elements may bear more than visible one case affix at a time. Richards suggested that Lardil demonstrates a general fact about language, that "Case morphology may be assigned to a DP arbitrarily many times" -- and that even languages like Russian, which do not appear to show Lardil-style case stacking, actually do stack case morphology, but suppress the appearance of multiple cases due to Russian-specific constraints.

I argue that Richards' core conjecture is even more strongly supported than he claimed. Extending my own work on Russian case (Pesetsky 2011; in press), I will argue that as a general rule, case morphology represents the copying of part-of-speech features from a head to its dependents, and the realization of these features as morphology whenever phase boundaries do not intervene. When a phase boundary does intervene, morphology that bumps against the edge of the phase may end up affixed to the phase-boundary itself, as phrase-level morphology. Viewed from this perspective, Russian and Lardil turn out to have almost identical case-realization rules, a striking point of unity among utterly unrelated languages, different in many other ways. Most surprisingly, Russian has case-stacking after all, as do other languages that one would assume are quite un-Lardil-like.

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Pesetsky, David. 2011. *Russian case morphology and the syntactic categories*. Unpublished manuscript. MIT.
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