

Overview

Moro (Kordofanian: Sudan) provides new evidence for accusative as a dependent case.

- Accusative case occurs wherever one DP c-commands another DP in a phase.
- All human objects shift to [Spec, vP] where they are accessible for dependent case assignment.
- Only proper nouns, kinship terms, and pronouns mark accusative case.

Agree-based vs. dependent theories of case

Agree-based case: Standard analyses of structural accusative case assume it is assigned by transitive *v* under Agree.

Dependent case: Baker (2015) argues that case reflects c-command relationships between DPs in the same phase, following (Marantz, 1991).

- Ergative vs. accusative alignment can be derived by assigning dependent case 'up' or 'down'.

Dependent case in Moro

Proposal: Dependent case rule

If DP_1 c-commands DP_2 in the Spell-Out of ϕ :

- Value DP_2 as ACC.
- Where $\phi = \{CP, DP\}$

Argument 1: Ditransitives

Both objects of ditransitive verbs surface with ACC:

- (1) éga-nac-ó njalo-ŋ kója-ŋ
1SG.RT-give-PFV Ngalo-ACC Koja-ACC
'I gave Ngalo to Koja.' / 'I gave Koja to Ngalo.'

- This configuration is predicted by the dependent case account as both objects are c-commanded by the subject DP.

Argument 2: Passives

Accusative case is assigned to internal arguments in passives:

- (2) njallo gə-nac-ən-ú kója-ŋ
Ngallo CLG.RT-give-PASS-PFV Koja-ACC
'Ngallo was given to Koja.' / 'Ngallo was given Koja.'
- If ACC were assigned structurally by v_{active} , it should disappear in passive contexts.

Dependent case in Moro (continued)

Argument 3: Focused objects

A-bar movement of the object bleeds ACC assignment:

- (3) njw-Kúku-(*)ŋ-ki₁ n=éégá-bwáŋ-á t₁
FOC-Kuku-(*ACC)-REL.OP COMP=1SG.DPC-like-IPFV
'It's Kuku that I like.'

Argument 4: Bare nominal complements

'Accusative' case markers surface on inalienable possessors in the absence of possessor agreement:

- (4) a. ləŋge Kúku-ŋ b. ləŋg-en gá-Kúku
mom Kuku-ACC mom-3.POSS clg.POSS-Kuku
'Mom of Kuku' 'Kuku's mom'

- *Kuku-ŋ* must be the complement of NP in (4a), meaning c-command by D^0 can license ACC.
- In (4b), the possessor raises to [Spec, *n*] to receive inherent genitive case (cf. Dvorak, 2011).

Multiple [PERSON] object shift

Human objects always precede non-human ones:

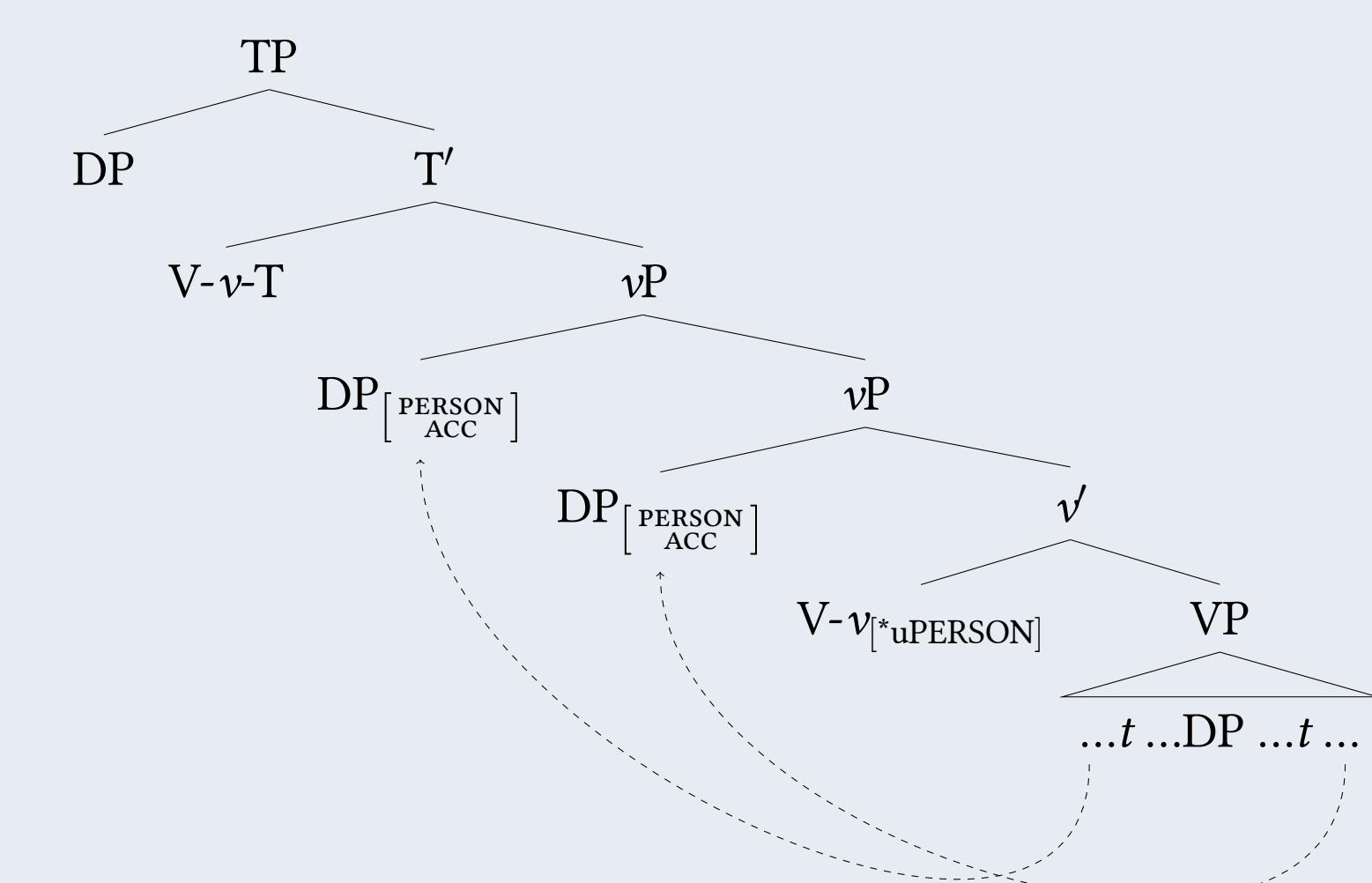
- (6) a. éga-nac-ó kója-ŋ diə
1SG.RT-give-PFV Koja-ACC cow
'I gave the cow to Koja/ Koja to the cow.'
- b. *éga-nac-ó diə kója-ŋ

- Binding data suggest this asymmetry is structural:

- (7) íga-saj-ʌc-ú lámmiə lənəlnəj é-nega dəŋgen
1SG-see-L.APPL-PFV boys each LOC-houses 3PL.POSS
'I saw each boy at his house.'

Analysis: Object shift of human nouns

- Human nouns are specified [PERSON]
- *v* has a strong, insatiable [UPERSON] probe



- [PERSON]-valued objects in [Spec, vP] are accessible for dependent case assignment in the CP phase.

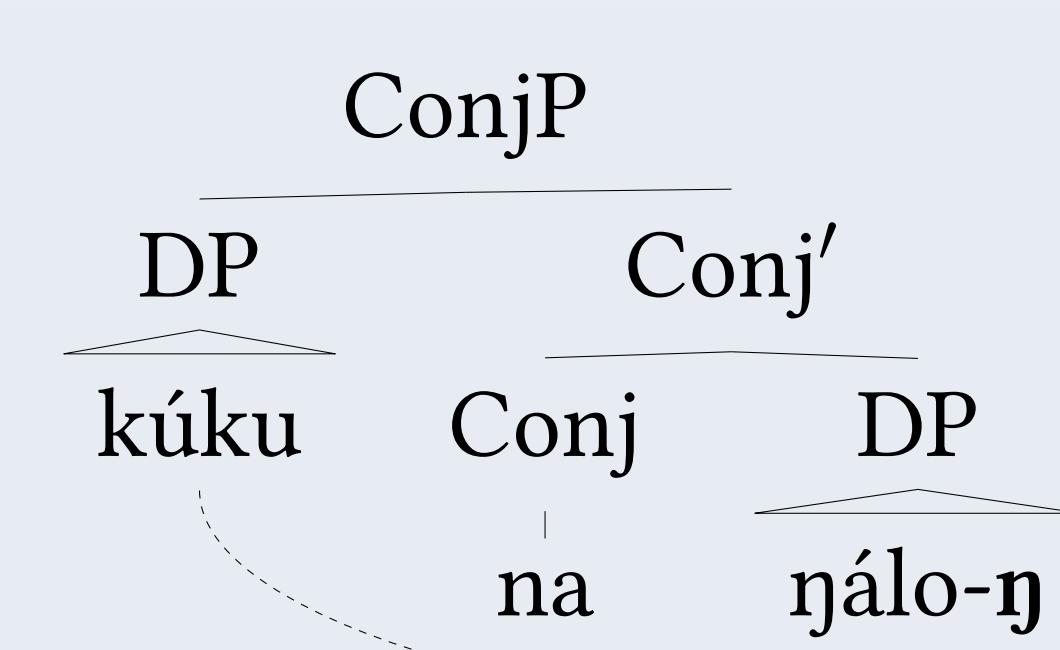
Argument 5: DP Coordination

DP coordination triggers ACC on the right conjunct, even in subject position:

- (5) Kúku na njalo-ŋ l-ajer-á
Kuku and Ngalo-ACC cl.LRT-good-ADJ
'Kuku and Ngalo are nice.'

- ACC on the first argument is ungrammatical, which we might expect if this was default case.

Analysis: Dependent case in coordination



[PROPER] morphological case

Only names and kinship terms receive ACC in Moro:

- (8) a. éga-nac-ó kója-ŋ njera-ŋ-ŋ
1SG.RT-give-PFV Koja-ACC girl-*ACC
b. éga-nac-ó njera-ŋ kója-ŋ
'I gave a girl to Koja/Koja to a girl.' (both exx.)

- Associative plural suffixes are restricted to the same class of nouns:

- (9) lorlada-ŋ-anda b. Koja-ŋənda
brothers-1SG.POSS-ASSOC.PL Koja-ASSOC.PL
'My brothers' 'Koja's family/friends'

- 3P object clitics are only overt when these nouns serve as their antecedents:

- (10) a. g-war-ó njalo na nəŋ-ŋú-bug-i
clg.RT-insult-PFV Nalo and 3SG.I-3SG.OM-punch-CPFV
'He yelled at Ngallo; then punched him.'
- b. kuku g-war-ó njera na nəŋ-ŋú-bug-i
kuku clg.RT-insult-PFV child and 3SG.I-punch-CPFV
'Kuku yelled at the child; then punched him.'

- We propose that these nouns have a common [PROPER] feature (Matushansky, 2006).

Analysis: Accusative case allomorphy

- ① [ACC] ↔ -ŋ / [PROPER]
- ② [ACC] ↔ -∅ / elsewhere

Implications for case typology

Object asymmetries in Moro

Syntactic [PERSON] > [ANIMATE]
Morphological [PROPER] > [PERSON]

- Moro resembles Diyari (Pama Nyungan), in which high-animate objects, including names, receive accusative case while low animacy objects are unmarked (Baker, 2015, 22-23).

- Baker (2015) and Legate (2008) argue that animacy-based splits must occur in the morphology (pace Merchant, 2006).

- Yet Moro shows that animacy can trigger syntactic asymmetries, which should be able to feed dependent case assignment.

Typological prediction

Both syntactic and morphological animacy-based case splits are possible, predicting a three-way case split for some language.

Conclusion

- The distribution of accusative case in Moro support an analysis based on dependent case (Marantz, 1991; Baker, 2015).

- The Case facts exist alongside syntactic and morphological asymmetries that feed case assignment.

- The distribution of overt accusative case is crucially dependent on the morphological component.

- While DPs may still need to be licensed by verbal heads in Moro (voice morphology suggests this is the case), there is no evidence that nonhuman objects receive case in the syntax.

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