

Varying the domain of Dependent Case

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Last week we started to look at Baker's reformulation of Dependent Case, where he replaced Marantz's original proposal with one along the following lines:

- (1) Assign DP no case.
- (2) If XP bears a c-command relationship Y to some ZP in local domain WP, then assign case V to XP.

What was crucial last week, is that by varying the c-command relation Y, then we can capture Tripartite languages in a way that Marantz could not.

The key was to allow Y to be both upwards and downwards, whereas Marantz could only really capture one.

We also saw evidence that the case V could be varied, to get dependent cases other than accusative and ergative, such as dative in Sakha.

1 Domains of Case Assignment

1.1 CP/TP

The first case domain that Baker shows is the most common us the CP/TP domain. All theories of case assignment have case assignment taking place within this domain.

In Sakha, if one NP is c-commanded by another NP in the same clause, then it is accusative.

- (3) Erel kinige-ni atyylas-ta
Erel book-ACC buy-PAST.3sS

[Sakha]

'Erel bought the book.'

However, this effect does not hold across clauses:

- (4) Min [sarsyn ehigi-(*ni) kel-iex-xit dien] ihit-ti-m
 I.NOM [tomorrow you-(*ACC) come-FUT-2PS that] hear-PAST-1sS
 ‘I heard that tomorrow you will come.’

The same pattern holds in Lezgian, which has an ergative–absolutive alignment, rather than an nominative–accusative alignment.

- (5) a. Alfija-di maqala kxê-na
 Alfija-ERG article.ABS write
 [Lezgian]
 ‘Alfija wrote an article.’
 b. Čun [a k’walax iji-z] hazur ja
 we.ABS that job.ABS do-INF ready COP
 ‘We are ready to do that job.’

1.2 Restructuring contexts

Though this effect is not seen across clause boundaries, it is known that there are certain instances of ‘clausal’ complementation that do not involve a full CP embedded. Rather, certain matrix verb selects for a VP complement.

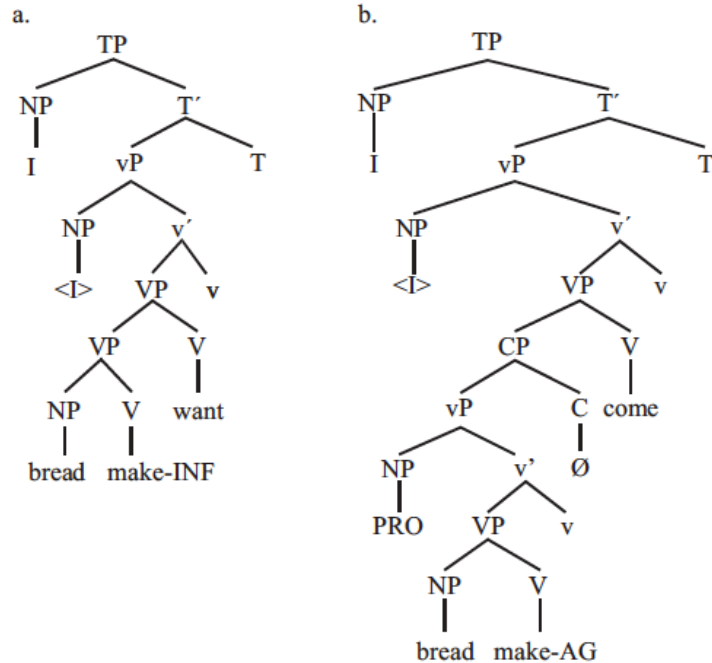
Cuzco Quechua usually does not mark the object of a non-finite clause with accusative:

- (6) T’anta-(*ta) ruwa-q hamu-ni
 bread-(*ACC) make-AG somce-1sS
 [Cuzco Quechua]
 ‘I come to make bread.’

However, if the matrix verb is ‘want’, or ‘used to’, then accusative shows up on the embedded object:

- (7) a. T’anta-ta ruwa-y-ta muna-ni
 bread-ACC make-INF-ACC want-1sS
 [Cuzco Quechua]
 ‘I want to make bread.’
 b. T’anta-ta ruwa-q ka-rqa-ni
 bread-ACC make-AG be-PAST-1sS
 ‘I used to make bread.’

(8) Different structures for Cuzco Quechua



Baker shows that the same pattern arises in Shipibo, an ergative-absolutive language. The prediction for these languages is that the transitivity of the embedded clause should determine whether the matrix subject shows up with ergative or not.

- (9) a. Jose-kan-ra Rosa kena-ti atipan-ke
Jose-ERG-PRT Rosa call-INF can-PERF

[Shipibo]

‘Jose can call Rosa.’

- b. Maria-ra bewa-ti atipan-ke
Maria.ABS-PRT sing-INF can-PERF

‘Maria can sing.’

2 VP as a domain for case assignment

Baker also claims that VP is sometimes a domain for case assignment. This is connected to the phase approach of Chomsky, 2000 *et seq.*, but we will not consider this parallel any further here.

The place that this can be seen most easily is with the phenomenon of Differential Object Marking.

- (10) a. Masha salamaat-y sie-te
Masha porridge-ACC eat-PAST.3sS

[Sakha]

‘Masha ate the porridge.’

- b. Masha salamaat sie-te
Masha porridge eat-PAST.3sS

‘Masha ate porridge.’

Differential Object Marking is a common phenomenon found throughout many languages of the world. It refers to the likelihood of a particular DP to show case marking in object position. As shown above in Sakha, a definite object will show case marking, whereas an indefinite object does not show case marking.

It is often proposed (see, e.g. Woolford, 1999), that this phenomenon arises through movement of a definite DP to a higher structural position than indefinite DPs occupy (which ultimately stems from the Mapping Hypothesis of Diesing, 1992).

In Sakha, this difference in position is manifested overtly when we consider the position of adverbs that are hypothesised to attach to VP. Definite (case marked) DPs appear to the left of these adverbs, whereas indefinite DPs appear to the right.

- (11) a. Masha salamaat-y turgennik sie-te
Masha porridge-ACC quickly eat-PAST.3sS

[Sakha]

‘Masha ate the porridge quickly.’

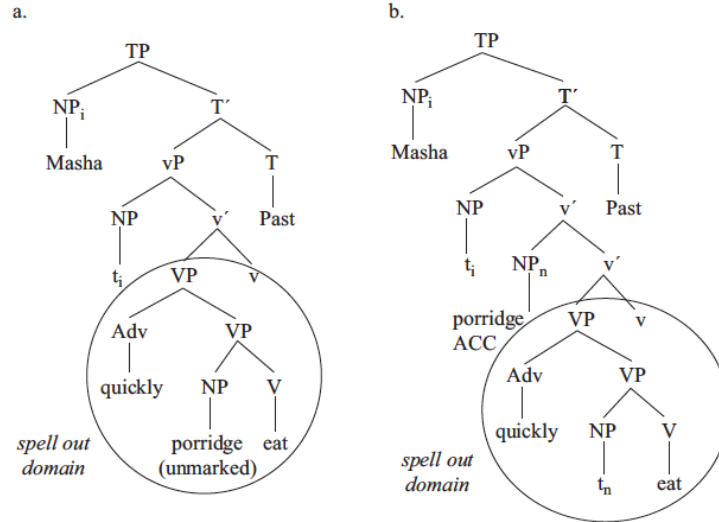
- b. Masha turgennik salamaat sie-te
Masha quickly porridge eat-PAST.3sS

‘Masha ate porridge quickly.’

Using Baker’s view of dependent case, but restricting the domain of application to VP, we can understand why this pattern should arise. Suppose that definite objects move out of VP. This means that VP contains no DPs to participate in case assignment. However, the higher DP has two DPs, which can participate normally in dependent case theory. The result is (since Sakha has a nominative–accusative alignment), that the shifted object appears with accusative.

Indefinite objects on the other hand remain within VP. Supposing that VP is a case domain, then indefinite objects will be on their own in the lower VP. Thus, they will cannot form a dependency relationship with the subject DP, and so are spelt out with unmarked case.

(12) Sakha different spell out domains



Again, looking at ergative-absolutive languages, we see the same patterns arise. The prediction this time is that definite objects should cause case marking on the subject (ergative), but indefinite objects should not.

- (13) a. Gsariwieri tigri aʔwasa-na
Gabriel jaguar chase-DPAST
‘Gabriel went after a jaguar.’
b. Tigri-se? tšinu kʌ-ga-na
Jaguar-ERG pig PERI-eat-DPAST
‘A jaguar ate his pig.’

[Ika]

The effects of this are particularly striking with tripartite languages that exhibit DOM. Nez Perce is such a language. With these languages, we predict that either both subject and object should have case (since they are both outside the VP), or neither should (since they are both in different domains). Nez Perce shows that this is borne out:

- (14) a. Háama hi-‘wí-ye wewúkiye
man.NOM 3S-shoot-ASP elk.NOM
‘The man shot an elk.’
b. Háama-nm hi-néec-‘wi-ye wewúkiye
man.NOM 3S-PLO-shoot-ASP elk.ACC

[Nez Perce]

‘The man shot the elk (plural).’

Overall, Baker’s theory allows us to vary the domain of case assignment, and it elegantly captures the effects of DOM, and how they interact with case assignment.

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