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A configurational account of Finnish case

This paper presents a configurational account of Finnish morphological case wherein CP and *v*P phases serve as the local domains for case competition (CC). I argue that a DP with unmarked case located at the edge of a phase partakes in CC in both that phase and the next highest phase. This model accounts for two otherwise disjoint phenomena in Finnish: nominative-genitive CC and the object-case alternation between partitive and nominative/genitive.

Data: At the clausal level, the external argument (EA), the internal argument (IA), and measure and multiplicative adjuncts compete for nominative case wherein the highest DP is nominative and all other lower DPs are genitive. In constructions where there is no EA, e.g. passives and imperatives, or the EA is lexically case-marked, e.g. necessive and existential constructions, the highest DP—i.e. the IA, unless it is lexically case-marked—is nominative. For example, in (1a), the EA is nominative because it is higher than the two adjuncts; note that the IA *Kekkoseen* has been assigned lexical case by *luottaa* 'trust' and therefore does not partake in CC. When (1a) is passivised in (1b-c) where the EA has been removed, the highest adjunct is nominative.

(1) a. **Tarja** luotti   Kekkose-en [**yhde-n vuode-n**] [**kolmanne-n kerra-n**]
         T.NOM trusted.3SG K-ILL   one-GEN year-GEN third-GEN   time-GEN
         'Tarja trusted Kekkonen for a year for a third time'

     b. Kekkose-en luote-ttiin   [**yksi   vuosi**] [**kolmanne-n kerra-n**]
         K-ILL   trust-PASS.PAST one.NOM year.NOM third-GEN   time-GEN
         'Kekkonen was trusted for a year for a third time'

     c. Kekkose-en luote-ttiin   [**kolmas   kerta**]
         K-ILL   trust-PASS.PAST third.NOM time.NOM

         'Kekkonen was trusted for a third time'   (Maling 1993)

The case of the IA is also contingent on the telicity of the eventuality. In an atelic eventuality, the IA is partitive (2a). In a telic eventuality, the IA is nominative or genitive (2b), depending on the outcome of nominative-genitive CC as discussed above.

(2) a. Ammui-n **karhu-a**   b. Ammui-n **karhu-n**
         shot-1SG bear-PTV   shot-1SG bear-GEN

         'I shot at the/a bear'   'I shot the/a bear'   (Kiparsky 1998)

The algorithm that assigns structural case in Finnish is in (3). The challenge remains to implement this algorithm in the syntax, for which I adopt the configurational case model.

(3) *Finnish structural-case algorithm:*
     1. Assign partitive to the IA if the eventuality is atelic.
     2. Assign nominative to the structurally highest DP with unvalued case.
     3. Assign genitive to all remaining DPs with unvalued case.

Configurational case model: The calculus of morphological case proceeds along Marantz's disjunctive case hierarchy (4).

(4) lexical case → dependent case → unmarked case   (Marantz 1991)

First, each lexical head assigns the respective idiosyncratic lexical case to its sister; this accounts for quirky case. Second, for each pair of remaining DPs with unvalued case within some local domain, one DP in the pair is assigned dependent case (NOM-ACC languages: the lower, ERG-ABS languages: the higher); this is known as *case competition*. Third, any DP whose case is still unvalued is assigned unmarked case.

Proposal: I assume that the relevant local domain for case assignment is the phase wherein each phase type has its own dependent and unmarked cases. Additionally, I propose that unmarked case is the result of a DP not having been assigned lexical or dependent case, that is *unmarked case is not assigned, but a default*. From the general assumption in Phase Theory that elements at the edge can partake in operations in the next phase (Chomsky 2001), it follows that a DP not yet assigned case located at the edge of a phase partakes in CC in both that phase and the next highest phase. This proposal allows the configurational case model to handle case assignment that spans two domains, e.g. Finnish object case.

Application: At the vP-phase level, genitive is the unmarked case and partitive is the dependent case. Following Kratzer (2004), v^0 optionally bears a [TELIC] feature which yields a telic interpretation of the eventuality. When v^0 bears [TELIC], it establishes an Agree relationship with the IA that causes it to raise to [Spec, vP]; otherwise, the IA remains in-situ. When the EA is merged in [Spec, vP], the phase is complete. If the IA has remained in-situ, it is assigned dependent partitive case because the EA is higher. However, if the IA has raised to [Spec, vP], it is at the same structural position as the EA such that neither is assigned dependent case. If they remain in [Spec, vP], they will both be marked for genitive (which surfaces in participial constructions, see Vainikka 1989). This is schematised in (5) and (6) for an atelic and telic eventuality respectively, where dashed lines represent dependent case assignment.

(5) $\left[_{v\text{P}} \textbf{EA} \; v^0 \left[_{\text{VP}} \text{V}^0 \; \textbf{IA} \right]\right]$

(6) $\left[_{v\text{P}} \textbf{EA} \; \textbf{IA} \; v^0_{[\text{TELIC}]} \left[_{\text{VP}} \text{V}^0 \; \_\_ \right]\right]$

At the CP-phase level, nominative is the unmarked case and genitive is the dependent case. The EA, the IA if raised by [TELIC], and measure and multiplicative adjuncts compete for nominative case. The EA raises to [Spec, TP] for the EPP such that it is the structurally highest DP in the phase. The case algorithm assigns dependent genitive case to the raised IA and any adjuncts. The EA surfaces with unmarked nominative case. This is schematised in (7) and (8) for an atelic and telic eventuality respectively, where subscripts indicate the resulting case.

(7) $\left[_{\text{CP}} \text{C}^0 \left[_{\text{TP}} \textbf{EA}_{\text{NOM}} \text{T}^0 \left[_{v\text{P}} \_\_ \; v^0 \left[_{\text{VP}} \text{V}^0 \; \textbf{IA}_{\text{PTV}} \right]\right]\right]\right]$ *Atelic eventuality*

(8) $\left[_{\text{CP}} \text{C}^0 \left[_{\text{TP}} \textbf{EA}_{\text{NOM}} \text{T}^0 \left[_{v\text{P}} \_\_ \; \textbf{IA}_{\text{GEN}} \; v^0_{[\text{TELIC}]} \left[_{\text{VP}} \text{V}^0 \; \_\_ \right]\right]\right]\right]$ *Telic eventuality*

If there is no EA, e.g. in a passive, and the eventuality is telic, the IA raises to [Spec, TP] for the EPP and therefore surfaces with unmarked nominative case, as schematised in (9).

(9) $\left[_{\text{CP}} \text{C}^0 \left[_{\text{TP}} \textbf{IA}_{\text{NOM}} \text{T}^0 \left[_{v\text{P}} \_\_ \; v^0_{[\text{TELIC}]} \left[_{\text{VP}} \text{V}^0 \; \_\_ \right]\right]\right]\right]$ *Passive*

Implications & Extensions: This proposal widens the empirical coverage of the configurational case model to cover case assignment that spans two domains. This paper shows CP-vP phase interaction, but it also can account for vP-DP phase interaction, such as Finnish and Estonian numeral constructions where the numeral reflects the DP's structural case and the NP is partitive. Moreover, this analysis of Finnish case accounts for more data and posits fewer stipulations than analyses based on the standard Chomskyan functional-head model, e.g. Vainikka & Brattico (to appear) and Nelson (1998). Therefore, this paper provides further support for the configurational case model, which has independent empirical motivation from quirky subjects and nominative objects in languages like Icelandic (Bobaljik 2008, Preminger 2011, a.o.).

Selected references: Kratzer, Angelika. 2004. Telicity and the meaning of objective case. In *The Syntax of Time*, 389–423. **Preminger, Omer**. 2011. Agreement as a fallible operation. Doctoral Dissertation, MIT.