Case and agreement

1 Notes on argumentation

Consider the two passages below:

Passage 1

Consider the ϕ-features on reflexive pronouns and their antecedents:

(1) John talks to himself in the mirror.

(2) They bought themselves new cars.

(3) We wrote a book about ourselves.

(4) You tripped over yourself.

These examples show that reflexives and their antecedents must agree in person, number, and gender ϕ-features.

Passage 2

Consider the contrast below:

(5) I saw myself on TV.

(6) *I saw themselves on TV.

The contrast between (5) and (6) shows that reflexive pronouns must agree with their antecedents in person features.

This passage is lacking _____.

This passage is lacking _____.

2 Quiz next week

Time: 45 minutes, at the beginning of class

Format: A number of short answer questions and one problem similar to that in PS2 or PS3

Content: The quiz will cover all material before this week. There will be no problems on case or agreement. (Note: the final exam will cover the entire semester, not just the second half.)

Make sure you know:

- Chomsky's questions (3)
- constituency tests (10)
- NP asymmetries (9)
- Properties of subjects (5)
- Arguments for the VP-Internal Subject Hypothesis (5)
- Arguments for the Unaccusative Hypothesis (7)
- Key ideas: categories, features, UTAH, Hierarchy of Projections, EPP
- How to use Merge, Adjoin, Move$_{phrase}$ (if necessary, the rules will be provided)

3 Case theory

We know that nouns exhibit case (in some languages more than others) and we want to explain the distribution of case patterns. (The following examples from Pesetsky and Torrego 2011)

(7) **Some cases in Latin:**

    a. Complement to V (accusative):

        [$_{VP}$ scripsit libr-um]
            wrote book-ACC

    b. Complement to P (accusative):

        [$_{PP}$ ad Hispani-am]
            to Spain-ACC

    c. Complement to N (genitive or PP):

        i. [$_{NP}$ amor libertat-is]
            love liberty-GEN
          'love of liberty'

        ii. [$_{NP}$ amor [$_{PP}$ in   patriam]]
             love   into country
           'love for one's country'

    d. Complement to A (ablative or PP):

        i. urbs [$_{AP}$ nuda praesidi-o]
           city   naked defense-ABL
           'a city deprived of defense'

        ii. [$_{AP}$ liberi [$_{PP}$ a   deliciis]]
            free   from luxuries
           'free from luxuries'

(8) **The distribution of NPs in English:**

    a. Complement to V (NP ok):

        [$_{VP}$ wrote the book]

    b. Complement to P (NP ok):

        [$_{PP}$ to Spain]

    c. Complement to N (PP):

        i. [$_{NP}$ our love *(of) liberty]]

        ii. [$_{NP}$ love *(for) their country]]

    d. Complement to A (PP):

        i. [$_{AP}$ free *(from) luxuries]

        ii. [$_{AP}$ fond *(of) luxuries]

Even though Latin clearly has case and English only shows case on personal pronouns, the distribution of where nouns can occur (specifically, nominative and accusative nouns) looks the same between Latin and English.

Idea: *Nouns need case*[1] and we can explain the distribution of nouns by explaining where and how case is assigned, even for languages where we don't see case very often. (This idea is sometimes called *abstract case*.)

N all start with inflectional feature [uCase:__]:

- It's <u>u</u>Case because it needs to be checked: if it stays in the derivation, the result will be ungrammatical. (Traditionally, this was called *the Case Filter*.)
- The gap __ means that it needs to receive a *value*.
- (Detail) It's an *inflectional* feature, so it stays on the head and does not project higher.

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[1] Why do nouns need case? As Pesetsky and Torrego (2011) discuss, this is an open question.

(9) **Agree**(α, β; F)   (read: 'α and β agree in F'; see Adger p. 168)

For any syntactic objects α and β with matching feature F, where α c-commands β:

  a. let the value of F on α and the value of F on β be equal;

  b. if F is uninterpretable on α or β, check the feature (let uF = ~~uF~~).

3.1 Nominative

Nominative case was one property of subjecthood. We will thus associate it with T: T starts with [Case:NOM].

Exercise: Complete this derivation:

- ...
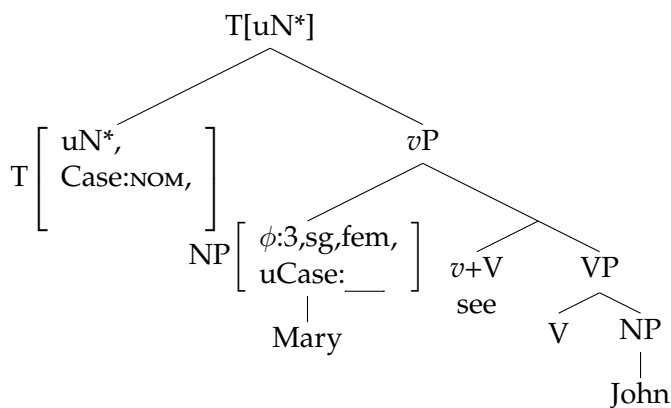
- Merge(T, vP)

  for Hierarchy of Projections

- Agree(___ , ___ ; ___)

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- Move$_{\text{phrase}}$(___ , ___)

Here it's just Mary, but if it were a pronoun, we could specify that [ϕ:3,sg,fem; ~~uCase~~:NOM] is "she" and [ϕ:3,sg,fem; ~~uCase~~:ACC] is "her."

We can also take care of another subject property at the same time: *subject-verb agreement*.
Exercise: Let T also start with [uϕ:___].
Again, the pronunciation of T could be sensitive to ϕ-features on it at the end of the derivation.

Does nominative case always cooccur with satisfaction of the EPP (uN*)? Consider passives:

(10) a.   The book was put ___ under the table.

      b.   * It was put the book under the table.

(11) a.   [CP That the world is round] was believed ___ by the ancient Greeks.[2]

      b.   It was believed by the ancient Greeks [[CP that the world is round].

- In English, *assignment of nominative must be followed by movement to Spec,TP.*

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[2]Movement of the sentential subject (CP) somehow satisfies the EPP.

Later we will discuss constructions with embedded clauses. Consider the following contrast:

(12) a. It seems [$_{\text{CP}}$ that John is writing a letter.]

    b. * It seems [$_{\text{nonfinite}}$ John to be writing a letter.]

    c. John seems [$_{\text{nonfinite}}$ to be writing a letter.]

- Only *finite* T assigns nominative case.

3.2 Accusative

As we saw above, complements of verbs and prepositions receive a special case, which is accusative. It is tempting, then, to give all V [Case:ACC].

Proposal: Instead, put [Case:ACC] on transitive v.

(13) **Two little vs:**

    a. <u>For active transitives and unergatives:</u>   [v, uN, Case:ACC]

    b. <u>For passives and unaccusatives:</u>   [v]

There are two advantages to this approach:

1. The ability to give accusative case and introducing a NP in Spec,vP (an agent by UTAH) go together. This naturally captures Burzio's generalization:

    (14) **Burzio's generalization (Burzio, 1986):**

        If a verb licenses accusative case, it has an external argument.

2. The ability to give accusative disappears in passives. But it is not necessarily passive of the local verb that matters. See the German "long passive" in Pesetsky and Torrego (2011).

Exercise: Derive the following sentences. Which little v will you use?

(15) Sarah has eaten salad.

(16) Nick has arrived.

(17) The water has frozen.

(18) We were arrested.

Don't worry about deriving the right tense and verb forms; we'll do that next week.

4 Patterns of case and agreement

Many other languages have different patterns of case and agreement[3] morphology. Which NPs are grouped together according to this morphology?

(19)

	Nominative/accusative:	Ergative/absolutive:
transitives:	subj obj	subj obj
intransitives:	subj	subj

Exercise:[4] For each set of data, identify the type of case or agreement pattern observed:

(20) **Tongan (Austronesian: Oceanic):** (Churchward 1953 in Dixon 1994, p. 41–42)

    a. na'e lea   ['a Tolu].
       PAST speak   Tolu
       'Tolu spoke'

    b. na'e lea   ['a e   talavou].
       PAST speak   the youth
       'The youth spoke.'

    c. na'e tamate'i ['a e   talavou] ['e Tolu].
       PAST kill   the youth   Tolu
       'Tolu killed the youth.'

    d. na'e tamate'i ['a Tolu] ['e he talavou].
       PAST kill   Tolu   the youth
       'The youth killed Tolu.'

(21) **Abaza (Northwest Caucasian):** (Allen 1956 in Dixon 1994, p. 43)

    a. d-ád
       'He/she's gone.'

    b. h-ád
       'We've gone.'

    c. h-l-bád
       'She saw us.'

    d. h-y-bád
       'He saw us.'

    e. d-h-bád
       'We saw him/her.'

(22) **Albanian:**

    a. Vajza   vjen.
       the.girl(f) come.3s
       'The girl comes.'

    b. Shoku   vjen.
       the.friend(m) come.3s
       'The friend(m) comes.'

    c. Vajza   çon   shokun.
       the.girl(f) take.3s the.friend(m)
       'The girl takes the friend(m).'

    d. Shoku   çon   vajzën.
       the.friend(m) take.3s the.girl(f)
       'The friend(m) takes the girl.'

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[3]Agreement generally refers to morphemes that encode features (often ϕ-features) of some NP.
[4]Based on an exercise by Jason Merchant

(23) **Hindi:** (Mahajan 1990, 1991 in Woolford 2000)

    a. Raam baazaar gayaa.
       Ram   market go(past,masc,sg)
       'Ram went to the market.'

    b. Raam-ne roTii   khaayii   thii.
       Ram-ERG bread(fem) eat(perf,fem) be(past,fem)
       'Ram had eaten bread.'

    c. Siitaa   kelaa   khaatii   thii.
       Sita(fem) banana(masc) eat(imp,fem) be(past,fem)
       'Sita (habitually) ate bananas.'

    d. Siitaa-ne   laRkii-ko dekhaa.
       Sita(fem)-ERG girl-DAT   see(perf,masc,sg)
       'Sita saw the girl.'

    e. kuttoN-ne bhoNkaa.
       dogs-ERG   barked(masc,sg)
       'The dogs barked.'

See Pesetsky and Torrego (2011) for one approach to ergativity. See Legate (2008) for discussion of another approach.

References

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