

LINGUIST 168 Introduction to Linguistic Typology

LECTURE 15: CASE AND ARGUMENT ALIGNMENT

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1. Reading: Velupillai 2012, Ch.9, pp. 244-257 (up to 9.2)
2. Discussion post

Plan for today

- defining case, case inventories
- case and argument alignment

Basic example of case forms

- Pronouns in English appear in different forms based on their syntactic role.

I saw you.

subject

nominative

You saw **me**.

object

accusative

You saw **my** dog.

possessor

genitive

- *I, me, my* are different **case** forms of the first person pronoun.

Definition of case

- a grammatical category
- expressed by inflectional morphology
- represents syntactic information – the type of relationship a dependent has with its syntactic head

= **government**

Example: syntactic role such as subject or object

- nominal category: may be expressed on nouns, pronouns and their modifiers (determiners, numerals, adjectives)

Discussion question

Marking object/subject versus marking location, motion or instrument.

Why are all these considered the same thing?

- marking subject/object → grammatical case
- marking location/motion/instrument/etc. → semantic case

Grammatical case

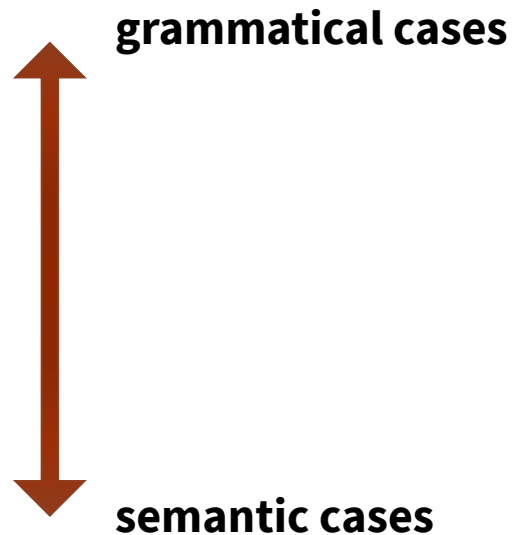
- case that is used to mark a syntactic role is called **grammatical case** (= structural / core case)
- there's no clear **meaning** associated with it

E.g. in English:

- nominative on subjects
- accusative on objects
- genitive on possessors

Semantic case

- correlates with semantic roles (= thematic / theta-roles)
- Examples of semantic roles:
 - › theme / patient
 - › agent
 - › cause
 - › experiencer
 - › instrument
 - › location
 - › companion
 - › beneficiary



Semantic case and their extensions

- case markers are assigned labels based on 'prototypical' function

E.g. locative = location

 instrumental = instrument

- cases are rarely strictly semantic
 - › reason to consider semantic case alongside grammatical case

Extensions of semantic case

Tanti Dargwa (Northeast Caucasian)

SUPER = superlative
'movement towards + on top of'

- locative use of superlative

| | | |
|--|----------------------|------------------------|
| du | dirq'a- ja | q'a ^h nnada |
| I | meadow- SUPER | I am going |
| 'I am going to the meadow.' (= to the top of the meadow) | | |

- non-locative use of superlative

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------|
| rurs:i | nex _a - ja | š:uruqun |
| girl | pigeon- SUPER | transformed |
| 'The girl transformed into a pigeon.' | | |

Extensions of semantic case

Russian

- prototypical (semantic) use of instrumental case

| | | | |
|--|------------|-----------|---------------------|
| Ja | rʲezu | xlʲeb-∅ | noz- om . |
| I | am cutting | bread-ACC | knife- INSTR |
| ‘I am cutting the bread with a knife.’ | | | |

- grammatical use of instrumental: object of preposition

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|----------|-------|---------------------|
| Xlʲeb-∅ | lʲezit | pod | noz- om . |
| bread-NOM | is lying | under | knife- INSTR |
| ‘The bread is lying under the knife.’ | | | |

Case markers or something else?

- it is often difficult to distinguish between case marking and adpositions

Samoan:

| | | |
|-----------------|-----------|---------|
| le maile | a | le tama |
| the dog | of | the boy |
| 'the boy's dog' | | |

| | |
|---------------------|-------|
| l- a -na | maile |
| the- of -3SG | dog |
| 'his/her dog' | |

| | | | | |
|------------------------|-------|---------|------------|-----------|
| Na | va'ai | le tama | i | le maile. |
| PAST | see | the boy | OBL | the dog |
| 'The boy saw the dog.' | | | | |

prepositions?

+ appear as separate word

case proclitics?

+ mark syntactic roles

+ look like a prefix in pronouns

Counting up cases can be difficult

West Circassian: described as having **2, 3, 4** or **5** case markers.

- undisputed case suffixes: absolutive and ergative

| | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| pʃaʃe-m | ħa-r | ətɛʁ ^w əʁ |
| girl- ERG | dog- ABS | she saw it |
| ‘The girl saw the dog.’ | | |

ABS=absolutive;
ERG=ergative;
GEN=genitive;
OBL = oblique.

- may separate two (or more) distinct uses of **-m**: ERG, OBL and GEN

| | | |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| pʃaʃe-r | wəne-m | qek ^w aʁ |
| girl- ABS | house- OBL | went |
| ‘The girl went to the house.’ | | |

| | |
|------------------|---------|
| pʃaʃe-m | jəħa |
| girl- GEN | her dog |
| ‘the girl’s dog’ | |

Counting up cases can be difficult

West Circassian: 2-3 “peripheral” / semantic cases

- look like suffixes
- (generally) used on adjuncts (= non-obligatory elements)
- have some morphological and syntactic properties of postpositions

Example: instrumental

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------|----|--------------------|-----------|
| qame-r | se | ʔe-t̪ɕ'e | sʔəʁəʁ |
| dagger-ABS | I | hand- INSTR | I held it |
| 'I held the dagger with my hand.' | | | |

Rogava, G. V., and Z. I. Keraševa. 1966. Grammatika adygejskogo jazyka. Krasnodarskoe knižnoe izdatelstvo.

How do we decide what a case is?

Iggesen 2013:

- “**Case** is a system of marking dependent nouns for the type of relationship they bear to their heads.”
- “Categories with pragmatic (non-syntactic) functions, such as **vocatives** or **topic markers**, are not counted as case even if they are morphologically integrated into case paradigms.”
- Other strategies of marking syntactic role (e.g. word order) are not case, but not less valid or salient.

Why is it so hard to distinguish case from adposition?

- Case markers and adpositions tend to be historically related.
- Case affixes develop out of adpositions.
- If the transition is currently in progress, a case/adposition marker may have some properties of an affix and some properties of an adposition.

E.g. in West Circassian: core cases generally do not combine with pronouns, but instrumental does (= adpositional property)

| | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|
| se | ħa-r | səteɸ ^w əɸ |
| I(ERG) | dog- ABS | I saw it |
| 'The girl saw the dog.' | | |

✗ **pronoun + ERG**

| |
|-----------------|
| serə-tɕ'e |
| I- INSTR |
| 'by/with me' |

✓ **pronoun + INSTR**

QUESTION

In the typological perspective, what are the consequences of classifying an element as a **case marker** versus an **adposition**?

Typology of case inventories

| | Value | Representation |
|---|---|----------------|
| ○ | No morphological case-marking | 100 |
| ◐ | 2 case categories | 23 |
| ◑ | 3 case categories | 9 |
| ◒ | 4 case categories | 9 |
| ◓ | 5 case categories | 12 |
| ◔ | 6-7 case categories | 37 |
| ◕ | 8-9 case categories | 23 |
| ◖ | 10 or more case categories | 24 |
| ◗ | Exclusively borderline morphological case-marking | 24 |
| | Total: | 261 |

Very small case systems

Mapudungan (Araucanian): 2 cases

- no marker / zero marker for arguments that are indexed on the verb

| | | |
|-------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| iñché | ñi ñuke | ngüma- y |
| I | my mother | cry- 3 |
| ‘my mother cried’ | | |

***indexing** = theory-neutral
for head-marking agreement

- instrumental for everything else

| | | |
|---------------------------------|------|----------------------|
| aneltufiñ | kiñe | kuchillo- mew |
| I threatened him | one | knife- INSTR |
| ‘I threatened him with a knife’ | | |

Very small case inventories

Common distinctions:

- core participants (arguments) versus optional/peripheral participants (adjuncts)
- basic syntactic role distinctions: subject versus object versus possessor
- more intricate distinctions between types of adjuncts (location, manner, instrument, etc.) are more likely in large inventories

Very large case systems

Icari Dargwa (Northeast Caucasian): 6 non-locative case forms

| | | | |
|---------|------------|--------------|---------------------------|
| ‘goat’ | | | |
| q’atsa | | absolutive | |
| q’atsa | -l | ergative | |
| q’atsa | -la | genitive | |
| q’atsa | -ts:illi | comitative | ‘with smth’ |
| q’atsa | -j -tʃilla | contentive | ‘about smth’ |
| q’atsa | -j -ibli | instrumental | |
| (q’atsa | -j) | superlative | ‘movt towards the top of’ |

Discussion question:

How do you memorize all these cases?

Sumbatova, Nina R. and Rasul O. Mutalov (2003) A grammar of Icari Dargwa. LINCOM Europa.

ACTIVITY

Below is the paradigm of locative case forms in Icarí Dargwa. Identify the morphemes responsible for each meaning component and the order they appear in.

| q'atsa 'goat' | 'movt to' | 'static' | 'movt towards' | 'movt from' |
|---------------|------------|-------------|----------------|-------------|
| 'on' | q'atsaj | q'atsajib | q'atsajibal | q'atsajir |
| 'under' | q'atsayu | q'atsayub | q'atsayubal | q'atsayur |
| 'in front of' | q'atsasa | q'atsasab | q'atsasabal | q'atsasar |
| 'behind' | q'atsaha | q'atsahab | q'atsahabal | q'atsahar |
| 'inside' | q'atsats:i | q'atsats:ib | q'atsats:ibal | q'atsats:ir |

(slide left intentionally blank)

Icari Dargwa: 20 locative case forms

- predictable morpheme/meaning combinations
- composed agglutinatively by stacking suffixes: **location** + **movement**

| q'at̃sa 'goat' | 'movt to' | 'static' | 'movt towards' | 'movt from' |
|----------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| 'on' | q'at̃sa- j | q'at̃sa- ji-b | q'at̃sa- ji-bal | q'at̃sa- ji-r |
| 'under' | q'at̃sa- yu | q'at̃sa- yu-b | q'at̃sa- yu-bal | q'at̃sa- yu-r |
| 'in front of' | q'at̃sa- sa | q'at̃sa- sa-b | q'at̃sa- sa-bal | q'at̃sa- sa-r |
| 'behind' | q'at̃sa- ha | q'at̃sa- ha-b | q'at̃sa- ha-bal | q'at̃sa- ha-r |
| 'inside' | q'at̃sa- ts̃:i | q'at̃sa- ts̃:i-b | q'at̃sa- ts̃:i-bal | q'at̃sa- ts̃:i-r |

Should each locative combination count as a distinct case?

- largest case inventories are claimed to have up to 53 case values (Tabasaran; Northeast Caucasian)
- but large part of inventory are predictable complex locative forms
- not everyone agrees that each combination should count as a distinct case
- some argue that locative case forms are noun+adposition combinations