Case Theory

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Morphological case

- In many Languages, Noun Phrases appear with morphological case in sentences as witnessed with the Subject and object or indirect object of the Hindi sentences given below
- 1. **raam ne mohan ko Daraaya**
- 2. **raam ne mohan se baat kii**

Case in English

- In English, however, NPs realized by proper names or Full NPs are not marked overtly for morphological case. They appear with the same form irrespective of the position they are in
- **John saw Bill**
- **Bill gave John   some money**

Morphological case in English

- But pronouns in English are morphologically distinguished, depending on the position they hold within the sentence
- **He/*Him likes her/*she**
- **She/*her spoke about him/*he to everyone**
- The asterisked items above signify unacceptability or ungrammaticality.

Cont…

- So pronouns in English have different forms
- Their form in the Subject position of sentences is said to be Nominative in case
- And in the Object position of verbs and prepositions, Accusative.

Case assigner

- Further if they are possessive in NPs as in *John's Book* they have the forms *His,Her, Their* etc. said to be Genetive in case.
- Eventhough proper nouns in English are not marked for case overtly they do show case effects as pronouns.
- If verbs and prepositions assign accusative case to their complement NPs , Adjectives and nouns in English do not appear to assign case to their complement NPs

Complements of Adj/Noun

- ***John is [fond/proud Bill/him]**
- **John is [fond/proud of Bill/him]**
- ***John's [drawings natural landscapes] drew crowds**
- **John's [drawings of natural landscapes] drew crowds**

Of-insertion

- The above examples show that adjectives and nouns disallow an NP as complement, irrespective of whether they are realized as a full NP or pronoun. But if the preposition *of* is inserted between them, they become acceptable.
- According to Chomsky (1981), *of-insertion* is resorted to here, to permit case assignment for the complement NP of Adjectives and Nouns.

Abstract case and its assignment

- So the assumption in Chomsky's 'Principles and parameters approach' to Grammar , that NPs need to be assigned **abstract** case, disregarding whether or not the language has morphologically realized case, for they have consequences in grammar
- How is case assigned?
- Traditional Grammars had it that verbs and prepositions assign accusative case to the complements they govern.

Government

- The notion of '**government**' adopted in P &P theory of Grammar is formally defined thus.

Government

A governs B iff

 i. A C-commands B; and

ii. A c-commands B and B c-commands A.

Where governors are heads like V, A,P and N.

C-command and its…

- And **C-command**, following Reinhart(1981), is defined as follows:
- A C-commands B iff
- i. A does not dominate B and B does not dominate A; and
- ii. the first branching node dominating A also dominates B.
-

… Structural configuration

Accusative Case assignment

- Given the Definitions for **Government** and **C-command**
- Here A=V , B = NP and W=V' in the previous slide for VP
- V C-Commands its complement NP, as the first branching node dominating V, the V' also dominates the NP (and the NP C-commands the V too conversely), and therefore is in structural configuration to assign accusative case to it.

Case of the Subject-Nominative

- The definition of **government** given here also takes care of the object of a preposition thereby assigning it accusative case too.
- Now, Let us see if this notion of **government** extends for Nominative case assignment for the Subject NP.
- What is the head responsible for Nominative case assignment?
- Obviously it should be I(NFL) standing for Inflection, i.e. the position for auxiliaries and tense Inflection

Finite INFL as case assigner

- The following contrasts shows that it is the INFL in a finite clause that assigns Nominative case to its Subject, not the INFL in non-finite clause.   Perhaps because finite clauses have Tense in it, while non-finites lack it.
- **John saw him**
- **John promised [to leave]**
- ***John promised [John to leave]**

Invisible Subject in infinitives

- By the theta criterion and projection principle, the embedded infinitive clause must have a subject as the lone argument of its intransitive verb. This subject is coreferential with the main clause subject but cannot be realized overtly.
- The non-realizability of the overt subject in the embedded infinitival is plausibly due to its inability to receive case from the non-finite I(nfl) of its clause. For, had there been a preposition preceding the overt subject in the embedded infinitival, the sentence becomes acceptable in certain cases.
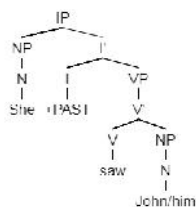- **I hoped [for him to come]**

….Case-Filter

- Hence the assumption follows that only the finite INFL governs its Subject position and thereby assigns case to it; but the non-finite INFL does not govern it and therefore is unable to assign case to it.
- This derives the requirement that overtly realized NPs need to have case, which is encoded in the principle

- **Case Filter**
- A phonetically realized NP must have abstract case

- So the implausibility of a subject for the infinitival subject follows from observance of the requirement of Case Filter.

Nominative Case assignment

- Now will the case assignment for the subject NP in finite clauses follow from our formal definition of **Government**?
- Look at the structure of the sentence :

Clause Structure

```
          IP
        /    \
      NP       I'
      |      /   \
      N     I     VP
      |     |      |
     She  PAST     V'
                  /  \
                 V    NP
                 |    |
                saw   N
                      |
                   John/him
```

Subject NP not C-commanded by INFL

- The finite INFL does not C-command the subject NP in the Spec of IP, as the first branching node required for satisfying C-command for INFL in this case is the I' dominating it, which however does not dominate it.
- But we wish to be able to derive the result that the finite INFL governs the Subject NP in its specifier position

The alternative to C-command

- Since our formal definition of **government** does not permit it, it needs to be modified to accommodate case assignment for the Subject NP too.
- Altering the node to be considered for dominating both the INFL and the Subject NP to be the first Maximal Projection rather than the first branching node would achieve just that end.

Redefining Government …

- Hence **Government** is redefined as follows in Chomsky (1986):
- **Government**
- A governs B if and only if
- i. A is a governor; and
- Ii. A m-command B; and
- Iii. No Barriers intervene between A and B
Where
  a. Governors are lexical heads and tensed INFL;
  b. Maximal Projections are barrier

.. and M-Command

- Where M-Command is defined thus:
- **M-Command**
- A m-commands B iff
- i. A does not dominate B; and
- ii. B does not dominate A; and
- iii. The first maximal projection that
-     dominates A also dominates B

Contd…

- Given the revised definition of **Government**, we find that Tensed INFL and the Subject NP in its Spec position in our tree structure are both immediately dominated by the same maximal projection : IP and no other maximal projections intervene between both.
- Thus INFL could be said to govern the subject NP as it M-Commands it and therefore assigns nominative case to it.

Structural case

- The revised assumption of **government** also accounts for accusative assignment to the object of Verb and Preposition. That is, the first maximal project dominating the governor and governee in those cases also are the VP and PP respectively
- Since these cases, i.e. the Nominative and Accusative are assigned under a phrase structural configuration involving **government**, these are said to be instances of Structural Cases.

Inherent Case

- Apart from Structural cases i.e. the regular instances of the nominative and accusative cases, Languages also exhibit another kind of case.
- Some verbs could require their Complement NPs to realize a non-typical case.
- For instance the verb *help* in German is realized with a dative case instead of accusative, as would be normal otherwise.
- In Hindi, the (in)direct objects with verbs like *kahnaa*, *puuchnaa*, appearing with sociative case *se* instead of the usual dative *ko* could be construed an instance of inherent case

Inherent Case a Lexical property

- This is a lexical idiosyncracy of particular verbs in the language and must be listed in the lexicon as part of lexical entries along with other information This is said to be dependent on the particular theta role binding the argument to its verb and it is termed as inherent case. This is said to obtain under theta **government** i.e. the constituent in question must be governed and assigned with the specific theta role in addition.

Overt Subject in infinitives

- Look at the embedded infinitives in the following
- **John believes[him to be honest]**
- **John wants [him to succeed in the crucial test]**
- Their subjects are accusative in case. We know them to be subjects of the infinitive clauses by examining their finite correspondents and given the theta criterion and projection principle requirement for their verbs. For instance, see the following:
- **John believes [that he is honest]**

Case assigner for the Infinitival Subject

- We already arrived at the assumption that the infinitival subjects are ungoverned and therefore incapable of receiving case unless preceded by a preposition.
- Here we have another legitimate instance of infinitive subject surfacing with accusative case eventhough it is not preceded by the preposition *for* as complementizer.
- Hence the suspect for assigning case to the infinitival subject must rest on the matrix verb *believe* or *want*.
- Further the verbs in the matrix(main) clause are known to have the propensity to assign accusative case to its complement NPs. Cf.:
- **John believes him**
- **John wants him**

A hurdle …

- Hence the matrix verb alone may be held responsible for embedded clause's subject.
- But we face a hitch, here.
- Normally the verb assigns accusative case to its complement NP, i.e. its argument.
- Here however the complement of the matrix verb is an IP and the NP surfacing with accusative case is its Subject, which therefore is not, strictly speaking, an argument of either *believe* or *want.*

Exceptional Case Marking(ECM)

- Hence, the assumption follows that the verb here exceptionally 'governs' into the subject position of its complement IP and assigns accusative case to it.
- In order to make possible **exceptional government** into the embedded Subject position in these cases, another auxiliary assumption also needs to be made.

Clausal Structure

- In the unmarked case, Clausal complements to verbs whether finite or not are CP in category.
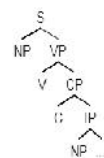
Resolving ECM

- Given our revised definition of **Government** the intervention of CP between the Verb and the embedded Subject in Spec of IP would have been a Barrier for the V to govern into the Subject NP position inside the IP.
- To get around this problem, the Exceptional case marking verbs (ECM verbs) are assumed to permit IP too as their complement when they happen to be infinitivals. Then the matrix verb can exceptionally govern into its embedded subject position and assign accusative case to it.

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