
Case and Coordination

Research Proposal

Philipp Weisser
philipp.weisser@uni-leipzig.de

1 Summary

This research project aims at investigating the interaction of two grammatical phenomena: Case and Coordination. Both theoretical and typological research on these two topics have made great progress in recent years. Surprisingly, however, there is hardly any work on the interaction of case and coordination in the relevant literature. Applying the results of recent research to areas where both phenomena interact thus promises interesting new findings about both topics.

Standardly, it is assumed that NP-coordination has no influence on case assignment at all. The same case that is assigned to a single NP in a certain position is assigned to all NPs in a coordinate structure. However, in quite a number of languages, we find patterns of case assignment in coordination structures that deviate from standard patterns. The patterns we find include (i) cases in which only a subset of the NPs in a coordination structure receive the regular case and (ii) cases in which the coordination structure seems to assign its own case to some or to all NPs in that position.

In this research project, I am to conduct a number of in-depth case studies about languages in which we find the patterns (i) and/or (ii). In these studies, the specific patterns will be reviewed against the current theoretical assumptions about both phenomena. In doing so, the present project will make progress with respect to current theories of case assignment, agreement and coordination structures. The data for these studies come from languages that are strongly underrepresented in current theoretical discourse and will provide a new perspective on the topic. The project thus ties with the line of research called “Generative Typology” (see Baker and McCloskey (2007); Baker (2010)) whose utmost goal is to document little known (or unknown) phenomena of the world’s languages and see whether they can be described by means of the current theoretical frameworks.

2 Introduction

In many languages, we find no interaction between case and coordination. Two conjoined noun phrases (NPs) always bear the exact same case as a single NP in the same position. In the German example (1), the two conjoined pronouns bear nominative, which is the same case that a single pronoun in the same position would bear (cf. (2)).

- (1) Er und ich gehen ins Kino.
he.NOM and I.NOM go.3PL to.the cinema.

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- (2) a. Er geht ins Kino.
 he.NOM go.3SG to.the cinema.
 b. Ich gehe ins Kino.
 I.NOM go.1SG to.the cinema.

Thus, in this case, the presence of a coordination structure has no impact on case assignment in German. As will be shown in the next section, there are many languages, in which it does.

3 Deviations from the standard pattern

Deviations from the standard pattern of case assignment in coordination are found in languages all over the world. In this research project, I want to confine myself to two types which seem especially promising in terms of theoretical relevance. The first type can be called *Unbalanced Case Assignment* while the second type, which has not been described in theoretical literature at all so far, can be called *Coordination Internal Case Assignment*. In the following sections, I will briefly describe the observed patterns and sketch why they are relevant from a theoretical point of view.

3.1 Unbalanced case assignment

The term *Unbalanced Case Assignment* refers to the more general term *Unbalanced Coordination* established in Johannessen (1998) and describes cases in which only a subset of the conjuncts receives the case which a single noun phrase would receive in the same syntactic environment. A simple example comes from Norwegian:¹

- (3) Han og meg var sammen om det.
 he.NOM and I.ACC were together about it
 ‘He and I were in it together.’ Johannessen (1998)

- (4) a. Han var om det.
 he.NOM was about it
 b. *Meg var om det.
 I.ACC was about it

In the example in (3), the first NP bears nominative while the second NP bears accusative. A single NP in the same position bears nominative (cf. (4)). That is, only the first NP bears the regular case for that position, the second NP does not.

3.1.1 Current state of research

There are a few works which review data like these against a theoretical background but they are almost exclusively concerned with data from familiar languages like English, Dutch or Danish (cf. Angermeyer and Singler (2003); Quinn (2005); Parrott (2007, 2009)). The only exception in this respect is Johannessen (1998) who discusses cases of unbalanced case assignment in quite a number of languages. However, she refrains from

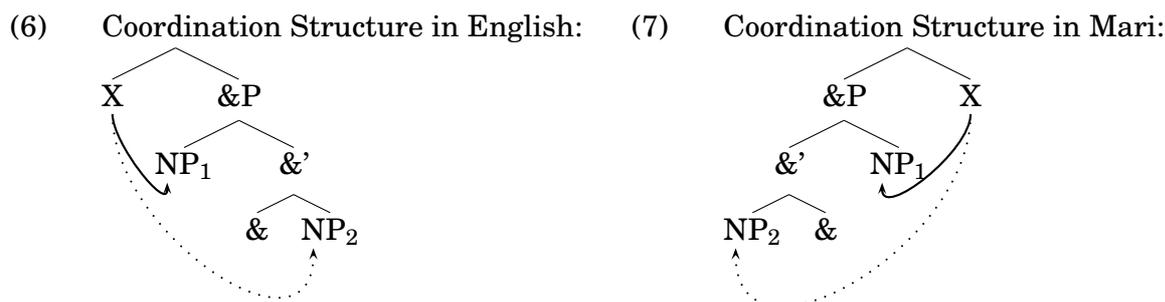
¹An asterisk preceding the example indicates ungrammaticality.

a detailed analysis of the patterns in specific languages because she aims at conducting a comparative cross-linguistic study. Johannessen argues for an asymmetric structure of coordination and takes the unbalancedness of case assignment as an indicator for this asymmetry. If the regular case is found only on one conjunct, then this conjunct is higher in the structure. Case assignment to the lower conjunct is then blocked by locality domains like barriers or phases. In the case of Norwegian, for example, the left conjunct would be the higher one. In other languages like the Uralic language Mari (see (5) below), the right conjunct is the higher one. In Mari, only the right conjunct bears the regular case, the other one is unmarked.²

- (5) a. Me Annan yderžö den ergežm palem.
 I Anna.GEN daughter.3SG.POSS and son.3SG.POSS.ACC know.1SG
 ‘I know Anna’s daughter and son.’
 b. *Me Annan yderžöm den ergežm palem.
 I Anna.GEN daughter.3SG.POSS.ACC and son.3SG.POSS.ACC know.1SG
 ‘I know Anna’s daughter and son.’

Mari: Johannessen 1998, p.11

In this analysis, only the higher conjunct is accessible for a relation with the external head X. A relation between the lower conjunct and X is not possible (as indicated by the dotted arrow).



Apart from Johannessen’s analysis is one of very few concrete analyses of asymmetric case assignment in the literature.³ However, in principle, one could try and transfer an analysis for unbalanced agreement patterns to asymmetric case. The term *unbalanced agreement* describes cases in which only one of the NPs in a coordinate structure agrees with the verb.⁴ In the example below from the Bantu language Ndebele, only the second NP triggers agreement on the verb as can be seen from the presence of a class marker on the verb (i.e. IV).

- (8) A-ba-lungu la-ma-bhunu a-yahleka.
 II.PL-white.man CONJ-VI.PL-Afrikaaner VI.PL-laughing.
 ‘The Englishmen and the Afrikaaners are laughing.’

Ndebele: Moosally 1998

²An alternative explanation according to which the suffix in (5a) is not a case suffix but a clitic that is attached to the whole coordination phrase can be shown to be untenable for phonological reasons such as vowel reduction and stress. Also, she shows that the order of case and agreement morphemes with some cases indicates that case morphemes are in fact suffixes.

³Also see morphological analyses like Schütze (2001); McFadden (2004)

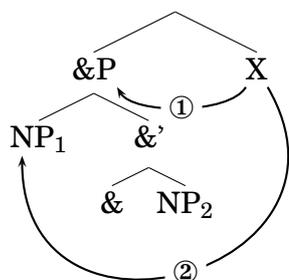
⁴This phenomenon is also known under various other terms such as *First, Last or Closest Conjunct Agreement*.

For some reason, there is a lot more literature on asymmetric agreement than there is on asymmetric case. The literature on asymmetric agreement can be divided into two groups. The first group analyzes agreement asymmetries as a result of an asymmetric syntactic structure along the lines of Johannessen (for this view see Johannessen 1998; Munn 1999; Harbert and Bahloul 2002; Citko 2004; van Koppen 2006; Bošković 2009). The other group argues that agreement asymmetries are at least partly a surface phenomenon. According to the analysis they propose, agreement can also apply on the basis of linear order (see Benmamoun et al. 2009; Benmamoun and Bhatia 2010; Marušič et al. to appear).

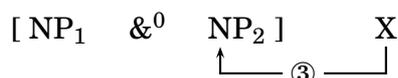
Bošković (2009) is one example of a syntactic analysis that makes reference only to hierarchical structure. He discusses cases of agreement with coordinate NPs in Serbo-Croatian and finds that all logically possible options seem to be attested: (i) Balanced agreement with the whole &P. (ii) Unbalanced agreement with the first NP and (iii) Unbalanced agreement with the second NP. In his analysis, balanced agreement follows from agreement with the full &P. Agreement with the first NP emerges when the features of the whole &P do not suffice for the agreement relation. Then, the search space is expanded to include the structurally highest NP. Finally, agreement with the last NP is found when the features of the &P and those of the higher NP are rendered inactive due to certain syntactic movement processes.

Marušič et al. (to appear) discuss the same pattern in a related language, in Slovenian. Here, also all three options are attested. However, their analysis is quite different. They assume that agreement can either be established on the basis of hierarchical structure or on the basis of linear order. If it is based on hierarchy, either the full &P or the highest NP in the structure are taken into account (cf. possibility ① or ②). If the agreement relation is established postsyntactically on the basis of linear order (cf. possibility ③), the features of the closest conjunct are relevant which is the second one.

(9) a. Agreement based on Hierarchy



b. Agreement based on Linear Order



3.1.2 Research Questions:

Up to this point, there is no theoretical investigation of asymmetric case found in the literature. There are only a few case studies which are almost exclusively based on Germanic languages. Other languages have not been studied at all. Thus, a broader perspective on cases of asymmetric case in coordination is necessary. Furthermore, asymmetric case assignment in coordination allows to test a number of theoretical hypothesis about the case assignment and the relation between case assignment and agreement:

Given the standard view, case assignment and agreement are two reflexes of the same underlying process. Hence, we may formulate the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1:

Instances of asymmetric case assignment in coordination should have the same properties as instances asymmetric agreement in coordination.

If this hypothesis turns out to be correct, then this poses a strong argument for the standard view. However, since cases of asymmetric agreement have received different analyses in different languages, an investigation of asymmetric case assignment in coordination allows to distinguish between the different analyses that were proposed. So, if one adopts the analysis by Bošković (2009) which makes reference to syntactic structure only, then one expects Hypothesis 2 to be correct. If one adopts an approach in the spirit of Benmamoun et al. (2009); Benmamoun and Bhatia (2010); Marušič et al. (to appear); Bhatt and Walkow (to appear) on the other hand, then one expects Hypothesis 3 to be correct.

Hypothesis 2:

Asymmetries in case assignment in coordination are due to asymmetries in syntactic structure rather than to linear order.

Hypothesis 3:

Asymmetries in case assignment in coordination are at least partly due to the linear order of constituents.

A detailed investigation of instances of asymmetric case in coordination is particularly promising to distinguish between these two hypotheses. The reason is that, in many languages⁵, only subjects trigger agreement. Hence, potential asymmetries only refer to the same syntactic position. With case assignment however, asymmetries could, in principle, be observed in a wide variety of syntactic positions such as subjects, direct objects, indirect objects. Depending on the word order in a given language, the two hypotheses above make different predictions. If we adopt Hypothesis 3, we might expect an SVO-language for example, to show different asymmetries between subjects and objects because they are located on two different sides of the verb.

If Hypothesis 1 turns out not to be correct and we find systematic and substantial differences between the syntactic properties of asymmetric case assignment and asymmetric agreement, then one is forced to rethink the assumed relation between case and agreement in general. There are a number of proposals in the literature which claim that case assignment and agreement are two different processes which should be dissociated.

One of the most common alternative theories is that case is configurationally assigned to all noun phrases in a certain domain on the basis of a certain hierarchy. Given this view, structural cases are not assigned by functional heads but rather by a post-syntactic process that distinguishes noun phrases on the basis of their relative position. Accusative case, for example, is assigned only if there is a higher noun phrase in the structure which can be assigned nominative.⁶

Crucially, under this approach to case, only the relative position of noun phrases is relevant for case assignment, other factors such as the absolute position or linear order are

⁵especially in the languages in which asymmetric agreement patterns have been described in detail such as Slavic or Semitic languages

⁶for several proposals which more or less correspond to this view see Zaenen et al. (1985); Yip et al. (1987); Marantz (1991); McFadden (2004); Bobaljik (2008)

not taken into account. Hence, case in coordinate structures may also provide arguments for or against the configurational case theory if all intervening factors are controlled for.⁷

Hypothesis 4:

Under a configurational approach to case, asymmetries in case assignment cannot be due to the linear order of noun phrases. Rather, they must be due to structural or relational properties of the noun phrase.

An important concept of these approaches is the notion of *default case*. The unmarked case (i.e. nominative or absolutive) is usually taken to be the default case which is assigned last to all noun phrases which have not yet received some other case. Under this assumption, configurational approaches to case would expect Hypothesis 5 to hold:⁸

Hypothesis 5:

The noun phrase which is not assigned the regular case in a coordination structure bears default case.

3.2 Coordination Internal Case Assignment

A second type of deviation from the standard pattern of case assignment in coordinate contexts are cases in which the coordination seems to assign a certain case. In the two Uralic languages Udmurt and Komi, for example, both conjoined NPs in subject position bear instrumental even though single NPs in subject position standardly bear nominative (see Csúcs (1988); Winkler (2001))

- (10) otin kišno-jen kart-en kutsašk-o
there man-INS woman-INS thresh-PRES.3PL
'A man and a woman are threshing there.' Udmurt: Winkler 2001, p.24

Similar cases are found in Tauya, Burmese, Tibetan and Newari. Diachronically, these patterns have developed from comitative strategies (see discussion in Stassen (2000)). However, since both NPs have the same case and the verb agrees with both of them, these are cases of prototypical coordination, synchronically.

This kind of coordination internal case assignment has not been investigated from a theoretical perspective at all. Also, in the typological literature, this pattern has not received much attention. A detailed investigation of this strategy to conjoin NPs, which is not found in the literature at all, raises important questions which will be relevant for the analysis of coordination structures as well as for the analysis of case assignment.

The first and foremost question is where this case comes from. Since it occurs only in coordination contexts, a first, intuitive hypothesis would be the following:

⁷The accounts in question are not explicit about how the case assignment rules they assume must be modified to account for case assignment in coordination. At least for some of the accounts, this is not trivial since the absolute number of other noun phrases in the same domain is relevant for the case assignment rules. It is thus an open question whether all of the accounts can be treated in the same way with respect to Hypothesis 4.

⁸This hypothesis is also shared by others who adhere more closely to the standard view of case assignment (see e.g. Schütze (2001); Preminger (in press)). However, it follows more naturally from the configurational approaches.

Hypothesis 6:

(Instrumental/Comitative) Case can be assigned by the coordination.

If this was correct, this would be in conflict with the claim in te Velde (2005) that coordination cannot assign case. According to standard assumptions of case assignment this would also imply that the coordination is a syntactic head which itself is a much debated question (see e.g. Munn (1987); Zoerner (1995); Johannessen (1998)) for the assumption that it is and Munn (1993, 1999); Kayne (1994) for the assumption that it is not.)

Also, it will be interesting to investigate which strategies are attested in the world's languages to resolve the problem that certain NPs are assigned more than one case. In the case of Udmurt above, both NPs are assigned instrumental and, as a default assumption, one would probably say that they receive nominative as well. In Assmann, Edygarova, Georgi, Klein and Weisser (2014), a typology has been proposed (in an empirically different context) how languages deal with multiple case assignment. If noun phrases are assigned more than one case, Assmann, Edygarova, Georgi, Klein and Weisser (2014) predict in principle five ways to resolve this situation:

(11) *Realization of assignment of multiple cases*

- a. Realization of all cases: overt *case stacking*;
- b. Realization of only one case:
 - (i) *Case attraction*: the case value that is assigned last is realized;
 - (ii) *Case maintenance*: the case that is assigned first to an element is realized; languages without case stacking that do neither apply the attraction, matching or allomorphy strategy.
 - (iii) *Matching*: Both case values are realized by a single marker, but this is only possible if the marker is syncretic for the two abstract cases.
 - (iv) *Allomorphy*: a portmanteau morpheme realizes all abstract cases at once.

Given this typology, a possible hypothesis can therefore be stated as:

Hypothesis 7:

If coordination structures can assign their own case, noun phrases may receive more than one case. Languages may deal with such a situation in various ways as predicted by the typology in (11).

3.3 Cooccurrence of both deviation types

Finally, there are cases in which both deviation patterns seem to cooccur, i.e. where the coordination internal case itself is asymmetric. Such an example is found in Huallaga Quechua.

- (12) Kampu-pa alwasir-nin-pa-wan ka-n mas huk-pis kustumri-n
marshal-GEN alguacil-3SG-GEN-COM be-3 more other-even custom-3
rura-na-n-paq.
do-SUB-3PL-PURP

'The marshal and his alguacil have another custom to do.'

Huallaga Quechua: Weber 1989, p.350

Here, the coordination assigns comitative case but only to the second conjunct. In addition, both NPs are assigned genitive case. The second conjunct thus has two cases. The solution Huallaga Quechua makes use of is a strategy known as *Case stacking*.⁹

These cases are hard to distinguish from prototypical comitative strategies. In the case of comitatives, the two NPs in question are not conjoined with equal rank as in coordination but rather one of them is adjoined to the other. In English, comitatives are expressed by means of prepositions, but in a number of other languages, a distinct comitative case is assigned (cf. (14)).

- (13) a. I see Peter and Maria. COORDINATION
 b. I see Peter with Maria. COMITATIVE

- (14) ja Barber rüüpa-b koos Balthasari-ga sügava sõõmu
 and Barber drink-3SG together Balthasar-COM deep.GEN mouthful.GEN
 ‘And Barber takes a sip together with Balthasar.’

Estonian: Stroh et al. 2006

Haspelmath (2007) gives a number of criteria to distinguish comitatives from coordination strategies but also notes that this distinction is not always entirely clear-cut. One such criterion is verbal agreement. In (14), we see that the verb agrees with only one NP (it bears a 3rd person singular marker) whereas in (12), the verb is marked for plural.

Comitatives are relatively well understood empirically (see e.g. Stassen (2000); Stolz (2001); Stroh et al. (2006)) and there are also a few theoretical analyses for these constructions (see Kayne (1994); Zhang (2007)). However, these investigations are primarily concerned with prototypical cases of comitatives and borderline cases between coordination and comitatives are not looked at.

In my dissertation (Weisser (2014a)), I have argued that cases in between subordination and coordination in the clausal domain are to be derived by means of movement to Spec&P. A syntactic constituent can be subordinate and coordinate but only at different stages of the derivation. A small sample derivation is given in (15).

- (15) [_{&P} XP₁ [_{&'} & [_{XP₂} t_{XP₁} XP₂]]]
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Derivations of this kind are, however, not restricted to the clausal domain. In principle, they should also occur in the nominal domain. Thus, if derivations like (15) are indeed a possible option in the grammar, we expect cases in which a noun phrase can have properties of an adjunct and properties of a conjunct at the same time. The distinction between comitatives and coordinate constructions seems like a perfect testing ground for these predictions. Since comitatives are well-known to evolve into regular coordinate structures diachronically, there are many cases which seem to be in between coordinate and comitative structures. Given the derivation in (15), we may thus formulate the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 8:

Cases in between coordinate and comitative structures are generated by means of movement to Spec&P. As a result, these structures behave like coordinate structures on the surface but nevertheless exhibit some properties of adjuncts.

⁹for *Case Stacking* in general see Nordlinger (1998); Merchant (2006); Pesetsky (2014); Richards (2013)

4 Plan of research

In the course of this project, I want to conduct a number of comprehensive case studies to shed new light on the research questions stated above. As mentioned above, there are a few survey articles on the topics in the literature but detailed case studies which investigate case patterns in coordination contexts do not exist so far. In order to close this gap, new data from the languages in question will be collected, systematically evaluated and analysed.

The language sample for these case studies is not constrained to a certain linguistic area or a certain language family. However, a detailed investigation of the different patterns in Uralic languages seems to be a promising starting point for a number of reasons: First, as the examples from Mari, Udmurt and Estonian above show, Uralic languages seems to exhibit a wide range of possible patterns. These languages have established coordination structures but they also use a number of comitative strategies with different degrees of grammaticalization. Also, Uralic languages exhibit highly complex case systems with up to 15 or 20 cases. This leads to a great number of possible patterns, especially since not all cases behave identically in coordination contexts. Furthermore, Uralic languages have explicit agreement systems which are relatively transparent because of the agglutinating morphology of these languages. The cooccurrence of a complex case and agreement system provides for the possibility to study similarities and differences of case and agreement in detail.

Another reason to work on Uralic languages is that this language family is not very well researched and generally underrepresented in current theoretical discourse.

5 Acquisition of Data

The data for the case studies in question will be collected in various ways. If relevant data in the literature are accessible, then these data will be used after their validity is checked with native speakers. Uralic languages are not very well understood and there is hardly any literature in German or English but there is a certain amount of Russian and Hungarian (or Finnish) literature which can be consulted (with the help of translators). Furthermore there are a few projects which investigate Uralic languages, especially at Hungarian and Finnish Universities. Also, the University of Helsinki has collected a data base of texts from Finno-Ugric languages which will prove helpful for this research project.

The majority of the data for the case studies will, however, be collected with native speakers and/or researchers in the field. The contact with these people has been established in projects in the past based on a broad network of young engaged researchers basically from Finnish or Hungarian Universities.

In previous (or ongoing) projects, I have worked with a number of people working on Uralic languages. Svetlana Edygarova (University of Helsinki), a coauthor of a recent paper of mine, is a native speaker of Udmurt and also does a lot of descriptive work on the language. Christian Pischlöger (University of Vienna), Ekaterina Georgieva (University of Szeged) and Laura Horváth (University of Budapest) all work on morphosyntactic phenomena of Udmurt and related languages and regularly conduct fieldwork in the area. Anne Vainikka (John Hopkins University) and András Barany (University of Cambridge) are working on Finno-Ugric languages in general and their comments on the morphosyn-

tax of Uralic languages as well as their willingness to translate Hungarian or Finnish sources is generally very helpful.

6 Previous work

The topic of this research project combines two foci of my previous work. In my dissertation (Weisser 2014a), I discuss coordination structures in the clausal domain. The main research question is whether the standard typology of clausal relations as either subordinate on one hand and coordinate on the other is fine-grained enough to describe the variety of structures we find in the world's languages. I discuss the so-called clause chaining construction which has often been claimed to be neither subordinate nor coordinate. Traditionally, categories like “subordinate” and “coordinate” are assumed to be discrete and exhaustive. However, recent research on the theoretical implementation of coordination structures, in principle, provides for structures that combine properties subordinate and properties of coordinate constructions. In this work, I develop a theory which can derive data that seem to be in between coordinate and subordinate structures but still adheres to Minimalist principles. As sketched in Section 3.3, this theory is not limited to the clausal domain but makes predictions for nominal domain as well. It is thus an interesting question whether asymmetric case assignment in coordination structures can be derived in this way as well.

The other focus of my work has always been case as a grammatical concept. Most of the projects apart from my dissertation have been concerned with case systems from morphological or syntactical perspective. In Assmann, Edygarova, Georgi, Klein and Weisser (2014), an instance of double case assignment in the Uralic language Udmurt is discussed. In Udmurt, the case of possessors of noun phrases alternates between genitive and ablative. The choice is conditioned by the position of the head noun which the possessor modifies. This pattern is analysed as an instance of covert case stacking. NPs can be assigned more than one case in the syntax but postsyntactic processes fuse these two case features into one. In the course of this work, I have learned a lot about the complex case systems and, more generally, about the syntax of Uralic languages and came in contact with a number of speakers and field workers in this area.

In Assmann, Georgi, Heck, Müller and Weisser (2014), cases of overlapping case domains are discussed. However, in this paper, which is concerned with Mayan languages, the reflexes of these case assignment processes are not morphological but rather syntactic. It is argued that overlapping case domains can be responsible for the ungrammaticality of certain movement processes in these languages.

Other syntactic analyses of theoretically interesting case systems are found in Weisser (2014b); Assmann et al. (2012). Analyses of case systems from a morphological perspective are proposed in Weisser (2006, 2007, 2008).

7 The research project at the University of Connecticut

The research project outlined in this proposal would benefit immensely if it were conducted at the Linguistics Department at the University of Connecticut. The department has a high reputation in the field of theoretical linguistics and is known to be a place where many important theoretical developments were initiated.

Furthermore, a number of people at the department have conducted work that is immediately relevant for the research project I envisage. For one, the faculty generally works on a broad empirical basis and field work on a wide variety of different languages has always played an important role there. This general knowledge of the potential problems one may encounter when trying to acquire usable data will be very helpful.

Also, some members of the staff have worked on phenomena that were touched on in the discussion above. Most importantly, there is the topic of encoding of grammatical relations or, more specifically, case and agreement. This is one of the recurring topics of Jonathan Bobaljik's work (Bobaljik and Branigan (2006); Bobaljik (2007); Bobaljik and Landau (2009); Bobaljik (2008)). For the present project, Bobaljik (2008) particularly important because it constitutes a novel theory of agreement that seems to make interesting predictions for instances of unbalanced case assignment. I also hope to benefit from Željko Bošković whose work on closest conjunct agreement (Bošković (2009)), about agreement in general (Bošković (2006); Bošković (2007)) and about the internal structure of noun phrases (Bošković (2008)) is of immediate relevance to this project.

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