

On the Symmetry of Case in Conjunction

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Goals of this talk:

- ① To show that the following generalization holds crosslinguistically:

Symmetry of Case in Conjunction (SOCIC):

Case is always evenly distributed amongst all of the conjuncts in nominal conjunction.

- ② To show that apparent counterexamples are only due to superficial morphological operations that create the impression of asymmetric case assignment
- ③ To show that the SOCIC generalization can be used to discriminate between different theories of case assignment
 - ↪ The standard theory according to which case is a reflex of (downward) ϕ -agreement faces serious problems when trying to derive it
 - ↪ Other theories of case assignment such as the Upward Agree approach (Wurmbrand (2014); Zeijlstra (2012); Bjorkman & Zeijlstra (submitted)) or a Dependent Case approach (Marantz (1991),McFadden (2004),Baker (2015),Preminger (2014)), face significantly less problems as the generalization more or less falls out as expected.
- ④ To argue that the generalization can be used as a diagnostic to distinguish morphological vs syntactic alternations of case marking.

¹This work was supported by the NSF (Research Grant Number BCS-1451098, PI: Bobaljik) as well as the Feodor-Lynen Program of the Alexander-von-Humboldt Foundation (Projects: 'Case and Coordination' and 'Consequences of the SOCIC Generalization')

1 Introduction

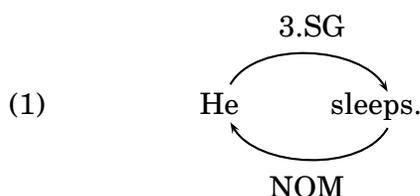
► Research Question:

Does conjunction of NP/DPs have an effect on the case marking of these NP/DPs?

- **The Relation between Case and ϕ -Agreement:**

Many theories agree that Case marking and ϕ -agreement are functionally, but also empirically to a certain extent, mirror images of each other (see e.g. Nichols 1986).

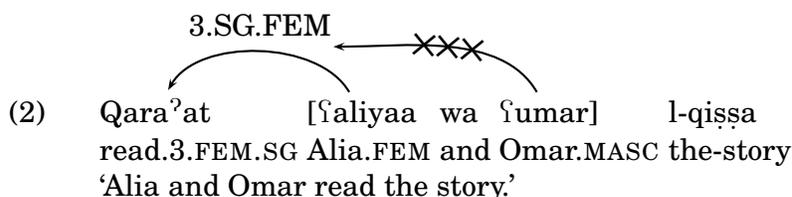
In Chomsky (1995 et seq.), this intuition is captured by the fact that one operation (i.e. Agree) assigns features to the verbal head resulting in ϕ -Agreement *and* triggers a case-reflex at the same time.



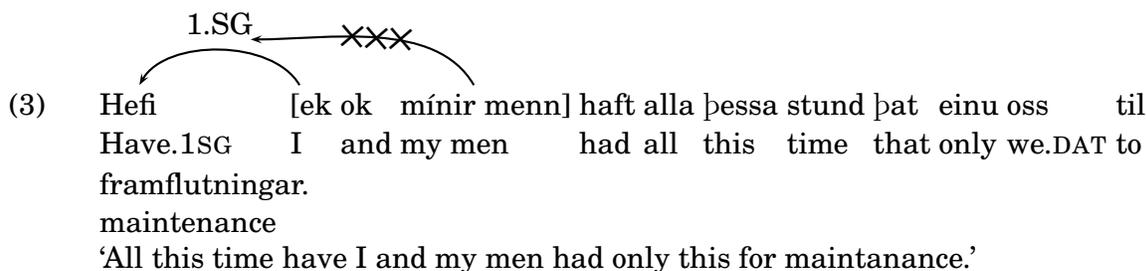
Other theories do not agree on the specifics but still adhere to the assumption that both operations are tightly linked in one way or the other.

- **Closest Conjunct Agreement:**

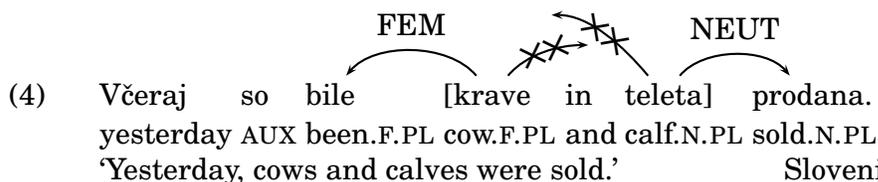
Many languages exhibit cases of so-called *Closest Conjunct Agreement* - a situation where only the linearly closest conjunct ϕ -agrees with a verbal head.



Standard Arabic: Aoun et al (1994:207)

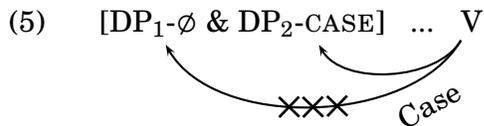


Old Norse: Nygaard (1966) as cited in Johannessen (1998:30)



Slovenian: Marušič et al (2015)

- Do we find the phenomenon of Closest Conjunct Case in the world's languages?



Several claims can be found in the literature that the phenomenon like Closest Conjunct Case actually exists (McCloskey 1986; Johannessen 1998; Walkow 2013) but a thorough case study about an alleged case of CCC has not been done so far.

In this research project, I conducted 14 case studies about potential counterexamples in the world's languages. Contrary to the claims in the literature, I found that none of the potential instances of Closest Conjunct Case withstands closer scrutiny. More specifically, I argue that the following generalization holds cross-linguistically:

- (6) **Symmetry of Case in Conjunction (SOCIC):**

Case is always evenly distributed amongst all of the conjuncts in nominal conjunction.

2 Case Studies of Potential Counterexamples

In order to find counterexamples to the generalization in (6), we take a closer look at languages in which the case markers of conjoined DPs seem to differ morphologically.

As we will see, examples of this sort fall into three distinct classes, all of which can (and should) receive an answer that does not involve asymmetric case assignment.

2.1 &P-clitics:

First, in some languages, it is possible to case-mark the whole &P (as in (7)). On the surface, this may create the impression of asymmetric marking (abstractly in (8)).

(7) [Conj₁ & Conj₂]-CASE

(8) *[Conj₁ & Conj₂-CASE]

To distinguish these two underlying structures, we can make use of the following diagnostics:

- DP-internal concord (as in (9) below)
- Postnominal modifiers
- The scope of other affixes/clitics (as in (11))

► **Estonian:**

(9) a. Ta jook-sis jõe ja puu-ni.
3SG run-3SG river.GEN and tree-TERM
'He went to the river and the tree.' Hasselblatt (2008)

b. Ta jook-sis jõe ja suu-re puu-ni.
3SG run-3SG river.GEN and big-GEN tree.GEN-TERM
'He went to the river and the big tree.' Triinu Viilukas (p.c.)

(10) [Conj₁-GEN & Conj₂-GEN]-TERM

► **Hindi-Urdu:**

- (11) a. Nadya lahor or karac^hi-se hε
Nadya Lahore and Karachi-INS be.PRES.3SG
'Nadya is from Lahore and Karachi.' Hindi-Urdu: Butt & King (2005)
- b. mē vahā gaadee or saikal-hi-se pahūc^h sak-ti hū.
1SG.NOM there train and bicycle-FOC-INS reach able-IPFV.SG be.1SG.PRES
'I can get there with just the train and a bike.' Sharma (1999)
- (12) [Conj₁ & Conj₂]-FOC-INS

Other languages with similar constructions are Udmurt (Weisser 2016), Hungarian (Trommer 2008) (and probably more Finno-Ugric languages), Bodic languages (Noonan 2008) and many more.

- Since case-marking in these examples is perfectly symmetric, we can state that the SO-CIC Generalization is not violated.

2.2 Suspended Affixation:

In some languages, it is possible to elide inflectional material on non-final conjuncts. In some cases, the results of this ellipsis operation can create the impression of asymmetric case marking:

- (13) [Conj₁-~~AFF~~ & Conj₂-AFF]
- (14) alan ɛma dɛw-ɛj tarstɛn
Alan.NOM and you-ABL be.afraid-PAST.1SG
'I am afraid of Alan and you.' Digor Ossetic (Erschler, 2012, 157)
- (15) Yamada to Harada-tati-ga mat-ta.
Yamada and Harada-COLL-NOM wait-PAST
'Yamada with his associates and Harada with his associates waited.'
Japanese, H. Saito (p.c.)
- (16) köy, kasaba ve kent-ler-imiz-den
village town and city-PL-1PL.POSS-ABL
'from our villages, towns, cities.' Turkish: Göksel & Kerslake 2005, p.458

⇒ How is Suspended Affixation different from phrasal cliticization?

↪ The case marker is really part of the final conjunct:

- It shows all the morphophonological properties of a regular case affix (wrt. stress, phonological processes e.g. vowel harmony, etc.)
- In some cases, overt material belonging to the second conjunct can follow the case marker showing that it must be part of the second conjunct

- (17) Hon issatsu to pen-o nihon kau.
book one and pen-OBJ two buy
'I will buy one book and two pens.' Japanese: Johannessen (1998)

- (18) Üder mej-en uše-m den tej-en süm-ešte-t.
 girl 1SG-GEN mind-1SG and 2SG-GEN heart-INESS-2SG
 ‘The girl is in my mind and in your heart.’

Meadow Mari: Guseva & Weisser (submitted)

However, there are various good reasons to assume that Suspended Affixation not asymmetric case assignment:

- Other categories can be suspended along with case (cf. (15),(16)).

Asymmetric marking of case would imply asymmetric marking of number and possession, which seems implausible

- The suspended affix can trigger stem allomorphy.

- (19) Pörjeng memna den nunem už-eš
 Man.NOM us.??? and them.ACC sees-3SG
 ‘The man sees us and them.’
 Meadow Mari (Guseva & Weisser 2015)

1PL.NOM	me
1PL.GEN	memna-n
1PL.ACC	memna-m
1PL.DAT	memna-lan

- (20) dɛw/*du ɛma alan-ɛj tɛrsun.
 you-OBL/NOM and Alan-ABL be.afraid.1SG
 ‘I am afraid of you and Alan.’
 Digor Ossetic (Erschler 2012)

2SG.NOM	du
2SG.OBL	dɛw
2SG.DAT	dɛw-ɛn
2SG.ABL	dɛw-ɛn

- Phonological processes (such as vowel harmony) that affect the phonological shape of the affixes can bleed Suspended Affixation in some languages.

- (21) sis-ten (22) %sis ve yağmur-dan
 rain-ABL rain and fog-ABL
 ‘Because of the rain’ ‘because of the rain and the fog’ Turkish

An ellipsis account straightforwardly accounts for the allomorphy patterns as well as the patterns including phonological operations (e.g. vowel harmony) whereas an account making use of asymmetric assignment or phrasal cliticization does not.

- ➡ Since ellipsis is usually thought to be a late postsyntactic operation, we can conclude that, in the languages above, case marking is symmetric underlyingly. Thus the SOCIC Generalization is maintained.

2.3 Allomorphy

In some languages, an arbitrary set of pronouns surfaces as allomorphs when adjacent to the conjunction. This kind of allomorphy may create the impression of asymmetric case marking:

► English:

- (23) a. *Him and I* are fighting. Parrott (2009)
 b. He says he saw *John and I* last night.
 c. *She and him* will drive to the movies.
 d. He thought that I was coming between *he and his wife* Johannessen (1998)

► Italian:

- (24) Io e te/*tu andremo insieme a Roma.
 I.SUBJ and you.OBJ/SUBJ go.FUT.1PL together to Rome.
 'You and I go to Rome together.' Johannessen (1998)

According to analyses by Emonds (1986); Sobin (1997); Parrott (2009) conjoined pronouns in English bear object case underlyingly and only in some arbitrary cases, the output forms are overwritten by superficial allomorphy rules. Sobin (1997) gives a number of criteria to identify these cases of allomorphy:

- Arbitrariness: Only certain pronouns show this kind of allomorphy.

(25) *Peter and we go to the movies.

- Directionality: Conjunction-adjacent allomorphy often requires a certain order.

(26) *I and Peter go to the movies.

- Adjacency: When the immediate adjacency between the conjunction and the pronoun is interrupted, choosing the allomorph is often ungrammatical.

(27) ?*Peter and probably I go to the movies.

- Overextension: Allomorphs are sometimes extended to contexts where there is no nominative case anywhere to be seen (cf. (23-d))

- Insensitivity to Hierarchical Structure: Since these kinds of allomorphs are used based on linearity, we find cases of overextension that ignores complex hierarchical structure.

(28) For Mary to be the winner and [_{SC} I the loser] is unfair. Sobin (1997)

⇒ Only if case marking in conjunction is underlyingly symmetrical and the asymmetry is the result of postsyntactic allomorphy rules, then the pattern is explained.

► Irish:

Based on (29), McCloskey (1986) claimed that Irish is an instance of closest conjunct case.

- (29) Chuaigh se-isean agus e-isean 'na bhaile.
 go.PAST 3SG.SUBJ-CONTR and 3SG.OBJ-CONTR home
 'He and he went home.' McCloskey (1986)

A closer look reveals that Irish is also an instance of allomorphy triggered by the adjacency of the verb (see also Carnie (1995) and Harley (2000) for the same conclusion).

- When the immediate adjacency is interrupted, the subject form is not licensed.

- (30) a. *Chuartaigh, ar ndóigh, siad an bád.
 search.PAST of course 3PL.SUBJ the boat
 'They of course searched the boat.'
 b. Chuartaigh, ar ndóigh, na saighdiúirí an bád.
 search.PAST of course the soldiers the boat
 'The soldiers of course searched the boat.' Chung & McCloskey (1987)

- When the copula is dropped in certain contexts, the subject form is no longer possible.

- (31) a. Cén aois atá sé?
 what age is 3SG.SUBJ
 b. Cén aois é?
 what age 3SG.OBJ
 'What age is he?' (Ó Siadhail, 1989, p.215)

- When the subject undergoes Heavy-NP-Shift, it is no longer adjacent to the verb and as a result, the subject form is no longer licensed.

- (32) Tháinig t_1 isteach ina dhiaidh sin [iad sin a bhí le daoradh chun báis]₁
 Came t into after DEM 3PL.OBJ DEM C were condemned to death
 'Those who were to be condemned to death came in after that' Harley (2000)

↪ I conclude that Irish is also an instance of allomorphy based on adjacency rather than a case of asymmetric case assignment.

- Assuming that allomorphy is also a superficial morphological process, languages such as English, Italian or Irish also do not violate the SOCIC generalization.

► A possible solution that comes to mind in order to prohibit situations as in (35), might be to invoke the Case Filter.

⇒ However, the problem is not that we want to exclude derivations like (35). Contexts of this sort are unquestionably attested.

↪ Rather, we want to know how nominative case ends up on the second conjunct without prior AGREE.

⇒ Also, a solution along those lines runs into problems with the numerous cases where DPs inside of a coordination phrase are shielded from any kind of case-marking whatsoever:

(36) Us and them are gonna rumble tonight. English: Schütze (2001)

(37) Toi et moi ferons le nécessaire.
You and I do.FUT.1PL the necessary
'You and I will do what is necessary.' French

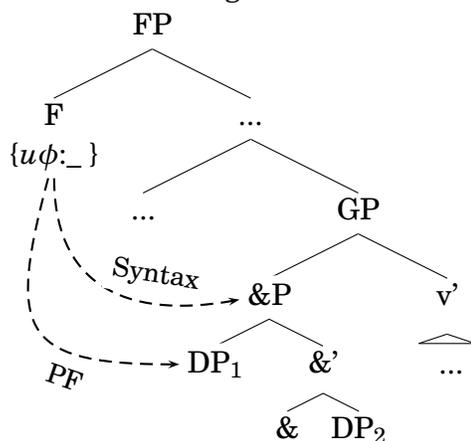
(38) a. para tú y yo
for you.NOM and I.NOM
b. para ti / para mi
for you.ACC / for I.ACC Spanish: Johannessen (1998)

⇒ How can the mismatch between case marking and ϕ -agreement in (34) be derived?

⇒ A look at recent analyses of Closest Conjunct agreement:

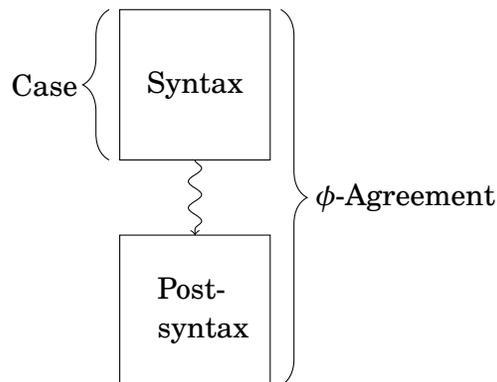
In order to have the syntax operate on the basis of hierarchical structure only, recent papers put forward the idea that linearity effects in CCA are due to the fact that ϕ -agreement can, at least in part, apply in the postsyntactic module (i.e. after linearization) (see e.g. Bhatt & Walkow (2012); Marušič, Nevins & Badecker (2015); Marušič, Willer-Gold, Arsenijević & Nevins (2015); Willer-Gold et al. (2016)).

(39) Distributed Agree



⇒ If this is the right solution, we can, given the established generalization above, draw the following conclusion:

- (40) Case assignment is a purely syntactic operation whereas ϕ -agreement can, at least in part, be postsyntactic.
- (41) Distribution of Case Assignment and ϕ -Agreement across modules:



⇒ This corollary illustrates the problem of the standard approach to case and agreement from a different perspective:

↪ Case simply cannot be the mere reflex of ϕ -agreement because it precedes agreement in at least a subset of cases.

► Given that we want to account for the correlations between case assignment and ϕ -Agree by saying that one operation feeds the other, the SOCIC Generalization strongly suggests that Case assignment feeds into ϕ -Agreement and not vice versa.

↪ There are a number of recent approaches to the case/agreement relation which argue for this order of operations.

- The Upward Agree approach put forward by Zeijlstra (2012); Bjorkman & Zeijlstra (submitted); Wurmbrand (2014) which assumes that the direction of probing is in fact upward whereas feature valuation applies downward.
- A Dependent Case approach (Marantz 1991; McFadden 2004; Preminger 2014; Baker 2015) coupled with the assumption that the dependent case algorithm feeds into the computation of ϕ -agreement availability (as in Bobaljik (2008)).

↪ In both theories, the validity of the SOCIC generalization falls out as expected and the mismatch between case and ϕ -agreement can be derived without further ado.

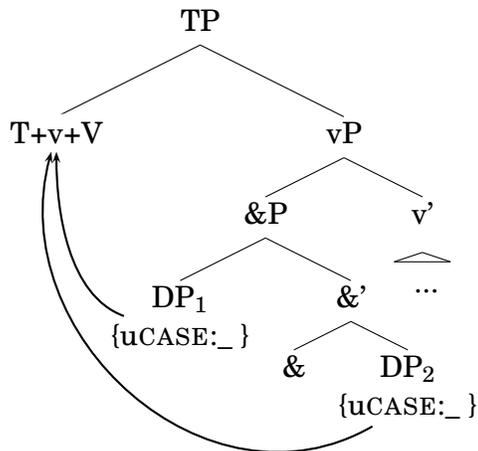
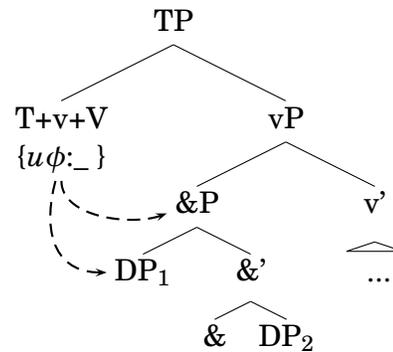
► The Upward Theory of Agree

A theory in which upward Agree (and downward valuation) is a possibility (see e.g. Baker (2008); Wurmbrand (2014); Zeijlstra (2012); Bjorkman & Zeijlstra (submitted)), lends itself to deriving the mismatch between case and ϕ -agreement.

↪ In this case, both DPs can probe independently to receive a case value from a functional head above them.

↪ In a later, possibly post-linearization, step, the ϕ -probe on the verbal head can be valued by either the &P or the features of one of its conjuncts.

(42) Step 1: Upward Probing of Case:

(43) Step 2: Downward Probing of $u\phi$:

- Each conjunct can probe independently and will find the same case assigner.

↪ Hence, all the conjuncts will end up with the same case value.

- Subsequent ϕ -Agree can under certain circumstances be postponed until after linearization

↪ possibly because downward Agree is not a viable option in the syntax (see e.g. Wurmbrand (2014); Bjorkman & Zeijlstra (submitted); Smith (2015))

or:

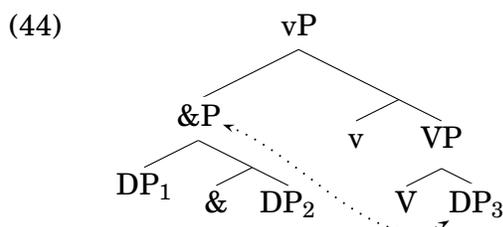
↪ the closest goal (i.e. the &P) does not have an adequate feature inventory (see. e.g. Marušič, Nevins & Badecker (2015))

► Dependent Case Approach

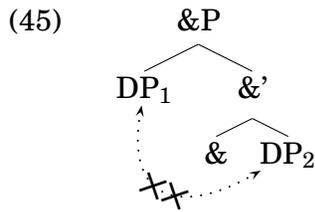
In a dependent case approach, case is assigned solely on the basis of syntactic c-command relations (see e.g. Marantz (1991); McFadden (2004); Bobaljik (2008); Preminger (2014); Baker (2015)).

Thus, a dependent case account can, in principle, account for the data. It must however make additional assumptions in order to deal with conjoined DPs:

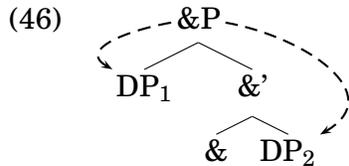
↪ It is the highest &P-head that counts as a coargument for purposes of case assignment elsewhere in the clause.



- ↪ A conjoined DP must not count as a coargument for other conjuncts even though it might c-command them.



- ↪ If an &P is assigned case, it passes it down *symmetrically* to all the DPs it dominates.



- ⇒ Based on these assumptions, case assignment can apply successfully and may serve as input for ϕ -agreement computation as e.g. in Bobaljik (2008) with the small qualification that it is not necessarily the highest accessible DP that controls agreement but sometimes also the closest one (in the case of CCA).

4 Empirical Implications

Based on the findings of the previous sections, we now have the tools to use the coordination configuration as a straightforward test to distinguish syntactic from morphological case alternations:

- ↪ Whenever two case forms can occur on an argument with a certain thematic role, the conjunction test can help decide whether the alternation is due to a difference in syntactic position/category or due to morphological opacization.

► Hungarian

A toy example comes from Hungarian, a language in which possessors can either bear nominative or dative:

- (47) a. (a) Mari kalap-ja
 the Mari.NOM hat-3SG.POSS
 'Mary's hat'
 b. Mari-nak a kalap-ja
 Mari-DAT the hat-3SG.POSS
 'Mary's hat'

Szabolcsi (1994)

Based i.a. on the linear order of the possessor and the determiner *a/az* and the facts about Left-Branch extraction of possessors, Szabolcsi (1994) concludes that the difference in case of the possessor can be attributed to the position of the possessor inside the DP:

(48) [_{DP} Poss₁ D [_{N+I} Poss₂ NP]]

A possessor in position Poss₂ receives nominative case whereas a possessor in Poss₁ receives dative case.

- The SOCIC Generalization states that case marking with conjoined subjects is uniform unless the pattern is manipulated by postsyntactic morphological rules.
- ↪ Thus, if the case alternation of possessors is really due to a difference in syntactic position as Szabolcsi claims, then conjunction of two possessors with different case forms should be impossible
- ↪ This is indeed borne out: All possible combinations are ungrammatical.

(49) a. *Mari-nak és János-Ø (a) kalap-ja(-i)
 Mary-DAT and János-NOM DET hat-3-PL
 b. *János-Ø és Mari-nak (a) kalap-ja(-i)
 János-NOM and Mary-DAT DET hat-3-PL
 ‘Mary and János’s hat’

A. Barany (p.c.)

- ↪ The test thus seems to confirm Szabolcsi’s claim that the case alternation is syntactic in nature

► Finnish

In Finnish, direct objects can bear three different case markers (see Kiparsky (2001)): Pronouns bear the accusative case marker */-t/*, full DPs bear the genitive case marker */-n/* and objects of atelic verbs bear the partitive case marker */-a/*.

(50) a. Me nä-i-mme häne-t.
 1.PL see-PAST-1.PL 3.SG-ACC
 ‘We saw her/him.’
 b. Me nä-i-mme karhu-n.
 1.PL see-PAST-1.PL bear-GEN
 ‘We saw a/the bear.’
 c. Me nä-i-mme karhu-j-a.
 1.PL see-PAST-1.PL bear-PL-PART
 ‘We saw (some of the) bears.’

Kiparsky (2001)

Based on the generalization we established, we may thus wonder whether the different case markers can be conjoined:

- A pronoun bearing accusative and a full DP bearing genitive can be combined without a problem in both orders.

(51) a. Me nä-i-mme häne-t ja karhu-n.
 1.PL see-PAST-1.PL 3.SG-ACC and bear-GEN
 ‘We saw her/him and a/the bear.’

- b. Me nä-i-mme karhu-n ja häne-t.
 1.PL see-PAST-1.PL bear-GEN and 3.SG-ACC
 ‘We saw a/the bear and her/him.’

A.Vainikka (p.c.)

↪ This ties in nicely with the analyses in Kiparsky (2001); Vainikka & Brattico (2014) who argue that the alternation between accusative and genitive is ultimately a morphological phenomenon.

- It is, however, not possible to conjoin a partitive object with a pronoun (or a full DP):

- (52) a. ??Me nä-i-mme häne-t ja karhu-j-a.
 1.PL see-PAST-1.PL 3.SG-ACC and bear-PL-PART
 Intended: ‘We saw her/him and some bears.’
 b. ??Me nä-i-mme karhu-j-a ja häne-t.
 1.PL see-PAST-1.PL bear-PL-PART and 3.SG-ACC
 Intended: ‘We saw some bears and her/him.’

A.Vainikka (p.c.)

↪ This ties in nicely with the syntactic analyses in Vainikka & Brattico (2014, 2016) who argue that partitive is assigned by a different (atelic) little v.

► Differential Object Marking:

A well-studied case marking alternation found in many languages of different families is Differential Object Marking (DOM). DOM is characterized by the fact that languages assign a special case to direct objects that are high in specificity, definiteness or animacy.

DOM is usually derived by syntactic means, i.e. movement of the object in question to a higher position (outside the VP). Thus, it would be unexpected to find languages in which it is possible to conjoin a DOM-marked object and an unmarked one.

- ↪ However, the survey of eleven DOM-languages from five different language families in Kalin & Weisser (2017) reveals that the vast majority of DOM-languages allow for conjunction of different objects:

Tamil:

- (53) Kumaar [_{&P} kar-**aiy**-um paṇam-um] keeṭ-ṭ-aan.
 kumaar car-DOM-COORD money.NOM-COORD ask.PAST-3M.SG
 ‘Kumaar asked for the car and money.’

Hebrew:

- (54) Dan axal [_{&P} uga ve **et**-ha-ugiyot].
 Dan ate cake and DOM-the-cookies
 ‘Dan ate some cake and the cookies.’

Spanish:

- (55) Vi [_{&P} una mujer y **a** María juntas] en el parque.
 see.PST.1SG a woman and DOM Maria together in the park
 ‘I saw a woman and Maria together in the park.’

(56) Asymmetric Differential Object Marking in conjunction possible?

Yes	No
Spanish	Hindi
Neapolitan Italian	Turkish
Romanian	
Nepali	
Finnish	
Caucasian Urum	
Hebrew	
Amharic	
Tamil	

Kalin & Weisser 2017

- ↪ This finding casts doubt on the vast majority of syntactic accounts of DOM in most languages of the survey:
- ↪ Since coordination structures are known to be robust islands due to the Coordinate Structure Constraints, it can be excluded that only one of the conjuncts moves up in the tree.
- ↪ Further, if we accept the validity of the SOCIC generalization, this suggests that DOM is, in the majority of cases, a morphological case alternation and not as generally assumed, a syntactic phenomenon.

5 Conclusion

In this talk I have argued that...

... the following generalization holds crosslinguistically:

Symmetry of Case in Conjunction (SOCIC):

Case is always evenly distributed amongst all of the conjuncts in nominal conjunction.

... a corollary of the SOCIC Generalization is that case is not subject to linearity effects in conjunction whereas ϕ -agreement is.

... this mismatch poses a serious problem for the standard theory of case according to which case is merely a reflex of ϕ -agreement.

... More recent theories of case such as the Upward Agree theory or a Dependent Case approach can derive the generalization straightforwardly.

... The SOCIC generalization can be used as a diagnostic as to whether case alternations are syntactic or morphological in nature.

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