

Object splits and complex licensers

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Background. Recent work has emphasized the importance of ‘discourse peripheries’ in the nominal domain (Ritter and Wiltschko 2019, a.o.). The current work explores some consequences of enriched DP categories on the licensing of arguments, focusing on differential object marking (DOM) phenomena. It proposes that some complex types of DOM from Uzbek (Turkic), involve the presence of more than one case assigner (licenser) acting on the same nominal.

Some theoretical assumptions. Specifications at the higher end of animacy, specificity and definiteness scales trigger the presence of dedicated markers in many genetically-unrelated languages (Givón 1984, Comrie 1989, Bossong 1991, Lazard 2001, Aissen 2003, López 2012, a.o.). Minimalist implementations generally approach these types of splits in a specific theoretical line: i) (inanimate, non-specific, etc.) unmarked objects such as in (4)a undergo a process of (pseudo-)incorporation (1) as they are caseless when it comes to structural Case (they might receive only inherent or lexical marking). Marked objects in (4)b, on the other hand, have a structural Case feature (2) which requires licensing/valuation/checking (depending on specific analyses) in the syntax (López 2012, Rodríguez-Mondoñedo 2007, Ormazabal and Romero 2013), Kalin 2018, Levin 2019, a.o.). In some languages, Case licensing can only be implemented in a certain position, after raising (above VP or even above *vP*).

(1) [*vP* ...*v* [*VP* V NP] *Unmarked Objects*

(2) [*vP* ...*v*_{Acc} [*VP* VP DP_[_Case]] *Marked Objects*

Under dependent Case configurational implementations (Marantz 1991, Baker 2015, Levin and Preminger 2015, a.o.) the accusative Case feature on the marked objects forces their raising into a domain where they enter into Case competition with a higher argument.

(3) Let DP₁ and DP₂ be two nominals in the same domain. If DP₁ c-commands DP₂:

a. mark DP₁ [= in the clause, ERGATIVE] and/or

b. mark DP₂ [= in the clause, ACCUSATIVE] Baker (2015)

Some problems and how to solve them. Object splits are common in Turkic (Kornfilt 1984, 1997, Johanson and Csató 1998, Baker and Vinokurova 2010, MacMillan 2020, a.o.). The object that receives DOM *-ni* (accusative) in Uzbek is (normally) associated with a definite interpretation. One could assume that the special marking reduces to the dependent marking algorithm (MacMillan 2020, a.o.). Such objects have a Case feature which forces their raising to the same domain as the subject. As the subject (DP₁) c-commands the *-ni* object (DP₂), DP₂ will be marked accusative (*-ni*).

(4) UZBEK (TURKIC) (Levy-Forsythe and Kagan 2018, ex.2a, b)

<p>a. Anvar rasm chizdli. Anvar picture draw.PST.3SG ‘Anvar drew (a) picture(s).’</p>	<p>b. Anvar rasm-ni chizdi. Anvar picture-DOM draw.PST.3SG ‘Anvar drew the picture.’</p>
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However, this assumption runs into some problems. First, as Levy-Forsythe and Kagan (2018) have convincingly shown, bare nominals as in (4)(a) have *syntactic independence* in Uzbek and can be separated from the verb by a variety of types of adverbs. Secondly, they give evidence of the presence of a structural accusative Case feature, as seen in contexts involving causatives (data from Levy-Forsythe and Kagan 2018, and from Levy-Forsythe, p.c.).

<p>(5) Madina Anvar-ni/*ga ye-dir-di Madina Anvar-ACC/*DAT run-CAUS-PST.3SG ‘Madina made Anvar run.’</p>	<p>(6) Madina Anvar-ga/*ni nok ye-dir-di Madina Anvar-DAT/*ACC pear eat-CAUS-PST ‘Madina made Anvar eat (a) pear(s).’</p>
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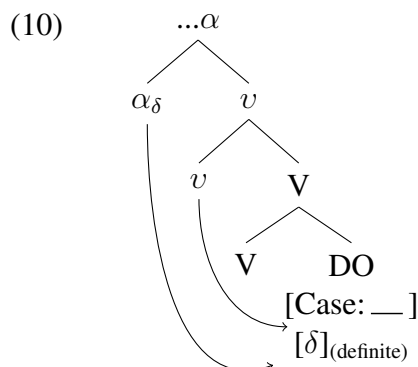
In (5), the causee *Anvar* behaves as expected, receiving accusative **-ni**. In (6), however, the expected **-ni** results in ungrammaticality. The dative case must be used instead. This behaviour is similar to that of a DOM-ed theme in (7), but different from that of the lexical ablative in (8).

- (7) Madina **Anvar-ga**/*ni nok-ni ye-dir-di
 Madina Anvar-DAT/*ACC pear-DOM eat-CAUS-PST
 ‘Madina made Anvar eat the pear.’
- (8) Madina **Anvar-ni**/*ga nok-dan bez-dir-di
 Madina Anvar-ACC/*DAT pear-ABL get tired-CAUS-PST.3SG
 ‘Madina made Anvar get tired of pears.’

In a nutshell, the unmarked object *nok* ‘pear’ in (6) behaves as the DOM object in (7), when it comes to the accusative Case feature. It enters into a case competition with the causee. As a result of the dependent case algorithm, the causee cannot be marked Accusative in (6), as *nok* has that Case (although it is not spelled out). The causee in (6) must instead use the next available internal case, the dative, just like in (7). But if both the unmarked and the marked object in (4) have a structural Case feature and are not distinguished in terms of distinct positions, how is the difference between them to be formalized? The hypothesis we explore here is that DOM is not just a matter of Case, but rather a matter of features requiring licensing beyond Case per se. Such features are, instead, linked to discourse specifications, such as sentience, the speaker’s point of view, specificity, definiteness, etc.; they are merged in a functional layer beyond the one hosting the Case feature. This amounts to saying that (some) unmarked objects have a formal Case feature, while marked objects contain not only a formal Case feature, but also a second, discourse (δ)-related feature, which is syntactically active, independently of Case per se, as schematically represented in (9). As the initial licenser in the domain (for example, v^0) values the Case feature, an additional licenser (which we assume to be similar to López’s 2012 α projection) is recruited for the δ -related feature. As such, DOM involves the presence of two licensers acting on the same nominal, as schematically illustrated in (10). The analysis predicts that the δ -feature, being syntactically active, will trigger competition with other δ -features, which are similarly active in the syntax. This is borne out; we see in (11) that a partitive ablative, which contains a definiteness or specificity feature, blocks DOM on the causee. Therefore, DOM shares structural features with both the unmarked nominal in (4)(a) - the structural (accusative) Case - and the partitive ablative in (11) - structural definiteness/specificity.

- (9) [δP δ [DP $D_{[-Case]}$... [NP N]]]

Differentially marked objects



- (11) Madina **Anvar-ga**/*ni nok-dan
 Madina Anvar-DAT/*ACC pear-ABL
 yer-dir-di
 eat-CAUS-PST.3SG
 ‘Madina made Anvar eat some of the pears.’

Conclusions. The data we have examined indicate that DOM i) is not simply the distinction between Case marked and casless nominals and ii) does not reduce just to raising. It rather signals the licensing of an additional feature beyond structural Case and the presence of more than one licenser acting on the same nominal. The proposed analysis can be extended to other complex object splits, as seen in non-standard Basque (deriving the difference between agreeing absolutes and oblique DOM on human DPs, see especially Odria 2014, 2017, Fernández

and Rezac 2016, a.o.) and Finnish (explaining the differences between the three accusatives, ACC(t), ACC(n) and ACC(0), see especially Brattico 2012, Vainikka and Brattico 2014, a.o.).

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