

TWO TYPES OF NOMINAL SPLITS

Background: In a wide range of languages, the case marking borne by a nominal is dependent on the nature of the nominal itself--1/2 pronoun, 3 pronoun, human, animate, or inanimate. Previous accounts have focused on the hierarchy of nominal types (motivating it or attempting to derive it), while assuming that the implementation in the grammar is morphological (DeLancey 1981, Aissen 2003), or is in terms of syntactic abstract Case (Jelinek 1993, Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 2002).

Proposal: We demonstrate that an adequate analysis of nominal splits requires a detailed understanding of the relationship between abstract and morphological case. We reveal a distinction between two types of nominal splits. In *differential morphology* splits, abstract Case assignment is uniform, while morphological realization of the abstract Case differs between nominal types. In *differential syntax* splits, abstract Case assignment differs between nominal types.

We adopt a model of the grammar in which abstract Case features are assigned in the syntax and morphologically expressed in a post-syntactic morphology (for this type of “Late Insertion” approach to morphology see e.g. Halle & Marantz 1993). The morphological expression of abstract Case features is accomplished through the insertion of morpho-phonological material according to the Elsewhere Condition (Anderson 1969, Kiparsky 1973, Halle & Marantz 1993, Halle 1997): morpho-phonological material realizing the most specific features is inserted in preference to material realizing more general features.

Differential Morphology Splits: In one type of nominal split, abstract Case is uniformly assigned to all DPs in the syntax, regardless of nominal type. Nominal splits in these languages result when a morpho-phonological realization of a specific abstract Case feature, like [+Accusative], is available for only a subset of the nominal types. For the remaining nominal types, since no realization of the specific abstract Case feature exists in the language, a default must be inserted instead, realizing only [+Case]. We illustrate this type of nominal split with the split ergative Pama-Nyungan languages Djapu (Yuulngu, data from Morphy 1983), Kugu Nganhcara (Middle Paman, data from Smith & Johnson 2000), and Margany (Maric, data from Breen 1981). In Djapu, humans and higher animates show ergative-nominative-accusative, pronouns show nominative-accusative, and all other nominals show ergative-absolutive. We claim that in these languages, all DPs receive ergative-nominative-accusative abstract Case marking, absolutive being not an abstract Case, but rather the default morphological realization of [+Case] (e.g. Legate 2002). All elements of a DP in Djapu must bear case suffixes, and must match in case, (1). However, the combination of different nominal types results in case mismatches DP-internally, (2a,b). This is strong support for our claim that the locus of the nominal split is morphological in Djapu, since the component parts of a single DP cannot receive conflicting abstract Cases. In (2a), the DP *ngunhinydhi yolngun* “that.ABS person-ACC” receives abstract accusative Case. The [+Accusative] feature can be realized morphologically on the human noun “person” through the suffix *-n*. However, there is no realization of [+Accusative] for the demonstrative “that”, (3); therefore, the default realization of [+Case] is inserted, the “absolutive”. Identical reasoning applies to *ngunhiyi yutjuwalan* “that-ABS small-ACC” in (2b). Similar data obtains in Kugu Nganhcara, (4), and Margany (5), where DP-internal case mismatches result from the combination of a pronoun/determiner (nominative-accusative), with a noun/adjective/demonstrative (ergative-absolutive). In sum, the *differential morphology* split is characterized by a lack of resources to morpho-phonologically express the abstract Case features of certain types of nominals.

Differential Syntax Splits: In the second type of nominal split, abstract Case is non-uniformly assigned, based on the features of the DP as a whole. Unlike in the *differential morphology* split, DP-internal case mismatches are not possible, nor it is possible to have case splits dependent on properties of a lexical item that don’t project to the DP as a whole (e.g. lexical category like demonstrative vs noun in Djapu). Furthermore, *differential syntax* split languages typically do have the morpho-phonological resources to express the abstract Case features assigned to the different DP-types. We illustrate this type of nominal split with differential object case in Hindi (e.g. Mohanan 1994), (6), Spanish (e.g. Jaeggli 1982), (7), and Romanian (e.g. Steriade 1980, Borer 1984), (8). In Spanish, for example, animate objects receive abstract dative Case, morpho-phonologically realized as *a*. The absence of *a* on inanimate objects does not have a morphological source, since *a* can appear on inanimates when they bear abstract dative Case, (9). Instead, the assignment of abstract dative Case to the object is dependent on the properties of the DP.

Extensions: Finally we consider the implications for the nominal hierarchy’s relationship to the grammar.

- (1) nganapurru-nggalangu-w djamarrkurli-w' yumurrku-w dhiya-ku Djapu-w
 1pl.Excl-OblS-DAT children-DAT small.pl-DAT this-DAT Djapu-DAT
 'for these our small Djapu children' (Morphy 1983:123)
- (2a) wungay' marrtji-nya ngunhi-ny-dhi yolngu-n wapirti-warrtju-na-puyngu-nha-ny weka-nh
 honey.ABS go-Pst that.ABS-Pro-Anaph person-ACC stingray-spear-pl-Nm-Inhab-ACC-Pro give-Pst
 'We would go and give honey to those stingray-spearing people' (Morphy 1983:110)
- (2b) ngayi ngunhi nganya nguli buthuwa-ny ngunhi-yi yutjuwala-n
 he.NOM that him.ACC Irreal give.birth.to.Unm-Pro that.ABS-Anaph small-ACC
 '...when it gives birth to the small one' (Morphy 1983:129)
- (3) nguri-ngi [+Ergative]; nguri-ki [+Dative]; nguri-king [+Originator]; nguri-kal [+Oblique];
 nguri-kalangungur [+Ablative]; nguri-kalanguwuy [+Associative]; ngunhi [+Case]
- (4) [nhi-la pukpe-ng] [nhu-nha kuyu] yuku muka-ng-nha peka
 [3sg-NOM child-ERG] [3sg-ACC woman.ABS] thing stone-Erg-3sgAcc throw.at
 'The child threw a stone at the woman' (Smith & Johnson 2000:390)
- (5) [gurruny-dyu ngaya] dhumba:-nhi
 [alone-ERG 1sg.NOM] build-RecPast
 'I built it on my own' (Breen 1981:342)
- (6a) ilaa anil-ko uthaaegii (6b) ilaa haar uthaaegii
 Ila.F.Nom Anil-DAT lift.Fut.Fsg Ila.F.Nom necklace.M.Acc lift.Fut.Fsg
 "Ila will lift up Anil" "Ila will lift up a necklace"
- (7a) vimos a Juan (7b) vimos la casa de Juan
 saw.1pl DAT Juan saw.1pl the house of Juan
 "We saw Juan" "We saw Juan's house"
- (8a) Maria l-a desenat pe Matei (8b) Maria a desenat tenul verde
 Maria CL-has drawn on Matei Maria has drawn train green
 "Maria drew Matei" "Maria drew the green train"
- (9) Juan entro' a mi casa.
 Juan entered DAT my house
 "Juan entered my house"

Selected References

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