

An Analysis of Case Licensing and Morphological Realizations of Case in Turkish

Arife Betül Yenice

Boğaziçi University, The Institute for Graduate Studies of Social Sciences, Linguistics Department
arifebetul@gmail.com

Many accounts of case start with a distinction between lexical and structural case, claiming lexical case is lexically there while structural case is being derived by some syntactic operation. This binary approach can be useful for describing the structures in general terms, but it does not suffice to explain all possible case derivations. To deal with intermediate levels that sometimes behave like a structural case and sometimes like a lexical case, a more elaborate system is needed. This paper focuses on the case licensing and morphological case realizations with examples from Turkish and aims to describe them as broadly as possible. This paper presents a theory of case that is sensitive to both syntactic and semantic properties of the nominals. I argue that many problems related to case can be explained without any reference to the dichotomy. In an attempt to do so, I propose a mechanism that integrates semantic features as syntactic embeddings both vP internally and in case features. The aim is to derive not only what is known as structural case in traditional terms but also derive so-called inherent case as well demonstrating that it is not very different from structural case and the differences are explainable by the case features that are claimed to be semantic. In doing so, I show that the traditional distinctions like structural – lexical are superfluous and case features are assigned by syntactic heads that are internal to vP and the case with the most amount of feature match is realized on the nominal.

Theoretical Background

Dependent case is the case that is realized on the argument rather than abstract case which usually refers to the licensing of overt NPs, it deals with the overt case marking on the NPs if the language has them Baker (2015). In this paper, I propose a framework that combines Dependent Case Rules with the Nanosyntax Framework in licensing the case and figuring out the overt realizations of the case on NPs. Structural vs. lexical case dichotomy limits the theories to a certain extent because of the “intermediate” cases, some cases such as dative and ablative in Turkish are sometimes structural and sometimes inherent cases. Baker (2015) decides we can solve this issue by extending the use of the structural case to be able to cover both types of dative and it is possible with “some fine grained syntactic properties which can distinguish the two kinds of dative”. It is possible to find these properties with the help of Nanosyntax and some semantic attributes that I claim to be a part of the grammar in this paper. I suggest that dependent case is far more powerful than Baker first thought, and it can account for so-called inherent case and stretch his idea of dependence of arguments to dependence of case features which are thought to be semantic by Caha (2009).

According to Caha (2009), cases are composed of a number of features and these features are arranged in the functional sequence. He claims NPs are base generated with features, which are not specified, but each case is “uniquely identified by its topmost feature”. Adapting the Checking theory, this approach requires the topmost feature of the case to be checked locally (Spec, Head) against an appropriate assigner. According to the k-selection adopted in this paper it is claimed that T head selects for nominative for the argument standing in Spec, vP because it is headed by T, so it triggers movement. Thus, a case emerges as a consequence of attraction by a head. The size of the construction, therefore the number of heads will imply the case that’s k-selected as stated by Caha “the case k-selected by the head is directly read off from the size of the constituent attracted.”. This implies that internal structure of vP is determinant in the assignment of case, which consists of features stacked on top of each other hierarchically. Two questions arise that are central to the proposal of this paper. What are those features? What makes up the internal structure of vP that is responsible for assigning these bundles of features to NPs?

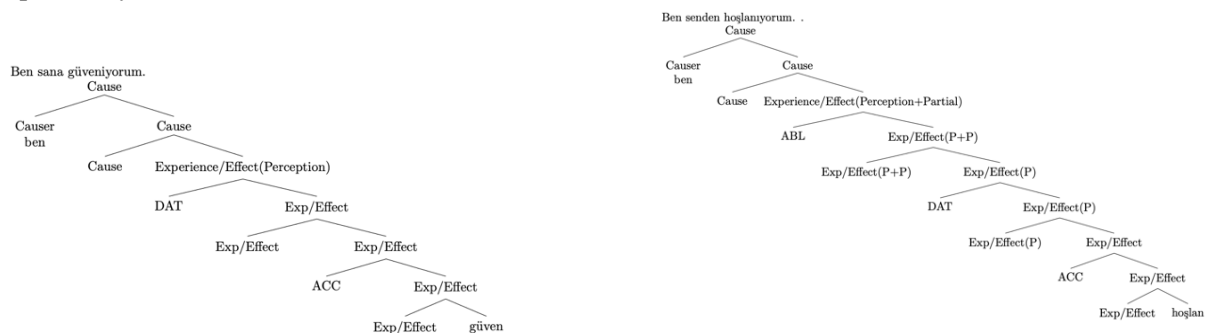
Proposal

Following insights from Caha (2009; 2013), I take these features to be semantic entailments that are assigned by some head in the vP domain. I will adopt Grimm's (2010) semantics of case framework, as it is one of the most comprehensive theories about semantics of case and its hierarchical framework that can be mapped onto hierarchical structure of case in Nanosyntax. It is important to note that this paper claims instead of case features, semantic entailments of the relevant k-selector are assigned to the NPs and the case feature that best matches these semantic entailments are assigned. The matches are again based on Grimm's agentivity lattice. Turning to the second question of what assigns these semantic features, we need to take a deeper look into the internal structure of vP. Instead of thematic roles, we will adopt precise structural configurations that are internal to the verb and the heads in these structures will be the k-selectors of the semantic entailments of the case realized on the NPs, following from Niyogi and Berwick (2005) implementation. The whole architecture needs a thorough algorithm, but I will provide case examples to show that we can derive the appropriate case features by precisely providing vP internal structures that have semantic attributes, applying semantic entailments of the verb, putting the case features in a competition within the NP domain (Nanosyntactic derivation) and the phrasal spell out domain (Dependent Case). The semantic features that are licensed through entailment relationship by the k-selector can be volition, instigation, sentence, motion, and persistence (Dowty, 1991; Grimm, 2010). Adapted from Dowty's agentivity properties, Grimm provides a set of semantic entailments that the arguments have and puts them in an agentivity lattice, which shows hierarchical combinations of these semantic features according to their agentivity and patience. (See Grimm, 2010 for the full analysis of these entailments)

A Brief Analysis

Even though there is no way to say a specific semantic entailment points to a specific case feature, we can use the hierarchy within the theory and the number of semantic entailments licensed to the arguments to derive the case features hierarchically. The whole computation is beyond the scope of this paper, but the method would be as follows: (1) Determining the types of predicates and categorizing them (such as making, movement, cognition, change etc.). Such a categorization was made by Barddal (2011), (2) Compute the internal structures of the categories of predicates. (See Hale and Keyser, 1993; Hale and Keyser, 1998; Niyogi and Berwick, 2005) (3) Determine what semantic entailments these predicates would have for their first and second arguments according to their internal structures and categories, (4) Calculate and compare the hierarchical agentivity/patience value (Grimm, 2010) and the number of semantic entailments to derive the case realization.

Non-canonical dative and ablative case in Turkish, structure changing operations that effect case realizations, and differential object marking examples has been analyzed for this paper but for the reasons of space only non-canonical ablative case will be demonstrated.



This paper shows that dependent relationship of not only arguments of the structure, but also internal features of the arguments are determinant in case realizations. The hierarchical relationship of arguments, vP internal structural heads, case features and semantic entailments of agentivity and patience hold together. These hierarchies can be computed in relation to each other to derive the morphological case on NPs. An elaborate computation for the claims made in this paper; however, the manual effort to demonstrate what this method can achieve seems promising. K-selectors, which are vP internal semantic

embeddings that are structurally productive (Hale and Keyser, 1993), are another issue we face since there has been little effort to develop internal structures of vP, but this issue is left for future research. In conclusion, we have attempted to show an overview of the interplay of semantic internal structure of case features which is hierarchical on many accounts, and syntactic internal structure of vP which is layered with semantic embeddings and also hierarchical and provided examples from Turkish.