THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CASE AND AGREEMENT AND THE THEORETICAL ISSUES RELATED TO THIS RELATIONSHIP
OUR ROADMAP

- Theoretical assumptions and an overview of X-Bar theory
- Case assignment and case realization
  - *Case vs case*
- The basics of agreement
- Where the relationship between case and agreement gets complicated
  - *A look at Choctaw*

SOURCES


**Morphology (in general) in a Theoretical Context**

**Big Picture Issue:**
- For the most part, we’ll adopt the perspective that syntactic structures and operations are responsible for word formation.
- This is not uncontroversial. There’s a school of thought which pretty much removes syntactic operations from the business of word formation and heavily enriches the morphological component of the grammar. (We delve more deeply into this issue in Topics in Morphology.)
(Re)familiarizing ourselves with the x-bar skeleton

- The positions of heads, phrases, and specifiers can be switched. For instance, in a verb-final language, we want the verb to come after the object in the VP.
- Some heads are lexical. For our purposes, words “start off” in these positions. The words might move to other positions.
- Some heads are functional. They do “work” in the syntactic structure and may or may not host a lexical item. The work that we are concerned with has morphological consequences.
- The complement to a head is what’s required by the head - i.e., a transitive verb needs an object.
- Adjuncts provide additional information - e.g., prepositional phrases, adjectives, adverbials.
- The specifier position has different functions. Sometimes, a phrase is born there. Sometimes phrases move to specifier spots.

**Diagram:**

- XP \(\rightarrow\) (ZP), X'
- X' \(\rightarrow\) X', (YP)
- X' \(\rightarrow\) X\(^o\), (WP)

**Example:**

\[\text{VP: ate a savory waffle for dinner} \]

- Head
- Complement
- Specifier
- Adjunct
Why X-Bar???

“...a goal of syntactic theory should be to contribute towards structuring the universe of Gs.” [Johnson 2011:3]

- In essence, the X-Bar model facilitates (a weaker stance) or makes possible (a stronger stance) the acquisition process by severely constraining the range of possible grammars.

- “If every language learner is equipped with this X’ Theory, then they will converge on more or less the same $G_L$ when presented with the information that being in the environment of speakers of L provides. If there are differences in the $G_L$s that learners converge on, these will trace back to different decisions these learners have made about the identity of $W$, $X$, $Y$, and $Z$ or how their linear order is determined. If the rest of a model that incorporates these constraints is correct, then, it should allow any language learner to pick out a $G_L$ very close to the $G_L$ giving shape to the speech in that learner’s environment.” [Johnson, p.4]

- The syntacticians’ task, then, is to figure out the minutiae that the X-Bar skeleton represents and to the best of our ability, use this model to account for a variety of phenomena.
What are the XP categories in X-bar theory?

Noun Phrase
Determiner Phrase
Verb Phrase
Adjective Phrase
Adverb Phrase
Prepositional Phrase
Complementizer Phrase
Tense Phrase
Light Verb Phrase, aka Little v Phrase

Heads of these phrases assign case (probably not an exhaustive list)
How does this work?

**T has two functions:**
- (Finite) T assigns nominative case to the subject.
- T also transmits tense information to the verb.
  - In English, V moves to v
  - In some languages, V moves all the way up to T
- Since T has a relationship with both the subject and the verb, the verb agrees with the subject.

**V also has two functions:**
- It assigns accusative case to the object
  - The syntactic job
- It provides a home – via its specifier – for the verb’s external argument (the subject)
  - The semantic job

**Case:**
- abstract
- morphological

**Important:** This is the model for simple nominative-accusative systems, independent of whether the case that is assigned syntactically is morphologically realized.

Cherlon prefers bourbon barrel-aged beer.
- **Marantz (1984):** The entire predicate (not just the verb) assigns a θ-role to the subject. The meaning/properties of the object influence the meaning of the verb, which, in turn, determines the semantic properties of the subject.

- **The object is assigned its theta role by the verb. The subject is assigned its theta role by the entire predicate.**

(1)

a. throw support behind a candidate  
   d. throw a party  

b. throw a baseball  
   e. throw a fit  

c. throw a boxing match (take a dive)

(2)

a. take a book from the shelf  
   d. take an aspirin  

b. take a bus to New York  
   e. take a letter in shorthand  

c. take a nap

(3)

a. kill a cockroach  
   d. kill a bottle (empty it)  

b. kill a conversation  
   e. kill an audience (wow them)  

c. kill an evening watching TV  
   (Kratzer 1996, EX 6-8)

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**IMPORTANT:** Objects are “internal” arguments of the verb and semantic subjects are “external” arguments.

The semantic function of \(v\) is to “introduce” the external argument to the event encoded in the VP. The syntactic function of \(v\) is to assign accusative case to the verb’s object. **Why should these two things be related?**
Burzio’s Generalization

- If a verb assigns accusative case, then it assigns an external $\theta$-role.
- No semantic subject $\theta$-role $\rightarrow$ no accusative Case
- *In technical terms*: When a verb phrase combines with a head that introduces an external argument, that head assigns accusative case to the internal argument of the verb.

- In b/d there’s only an internal argument, and the internal argument surfaces in subject position.
  a. She fired me.  
  b. I was fired.  
  c. They broke the window. (EX26)  
  d. The window broke. (EX 2)

(from Burzio 2000)

- We know there’s not a one-to-one mapping between case, grammatical relations, and thematic roles.
- Another instance of this mismatch is found with unaccusatives, which pattern like passives in some ways.
- No accusative assigned to the semantic object.
Unergatives have an underlying semantic subject. E.g. *Mary slept.*

Unaccusatives have an underlying semantic object.

Some verbs alternate between being transitive and intransitive.  
- *Mary froze the popsicles.*
- *The popsicles froze.* Popsicles is the semantic object. Why do we think this?

In transitive sentences, resultatives modify objects, not subjects.
- *John hammered the metal flat.* The metal is flat as a consequence of being hammered.
- *John hammered the metal sweaty.* John is sweaty as a result of hammering metal.
- Passives allow for a resultative to modify the semantic object/syntactic subject.
  - *The metal was hammered flat.*
- Resultatives are also allowed with the syntactic subject of some intransitives...
  - *The popsicles froze solid.*
- ...But not with others.
  - *Mary slept rejuvenated.* (On the interpretation that Mary is rejuvenated as a consequence of sleeping.)
- *The popsicles* is a semantic object – just like *the metal* in the passive.
In some languages, auxiliary selection distinguishes unaccusatives and unergatives

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unaccusative - <em>be</em></th>
<th>Unergative - <em>have</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Italian</strong></td>
<td><strong>Italian</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Maria è arrivata</td>
<td>c. Maria ha telefonato</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria is arrived-fem.sg. ‘Maria has arrived.’</td>
<td>Maria has telephoned 'Maria has telephoned.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>German</strong></td>
<td><strong>German</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Die Maria ist angekommen</td>
<td>b. Die Maria hat telefoniert</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Maria is arrived</td>
<td>the Maria has telephoned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Maria has arrived.’</td>
<td>'Maria has telephoned.'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Maria starts off as the object, but is not assigned accusative case. Maria is assigned nominative by T.

There is no underlying object. Maria starts off as the subject, and is assigned nominative by T.

And remember Georgian

Student-i mivida.
@student-ABS went
'The student went.'

Student-ma Ceri-i daCera
@student-ERG letter-ABS wrote
'The student wrote the letter.'

http://www.nthuleen.com/papers/L12paper.html

Georgian distinguishes between unaccusatives and unergatives.

a. nino-m Ceri-i daCera.
   Nino-ERG letter-NOM wrote-3SGS;3O
   ‘Nino wrote a letter.’

b. Kar-i gaiγo.
   door-NOM opened-3SGS
   ‘The door opened.’

c. *Kar-ma gaiγo.
   door-ERG opened-3SGS
   ‘The door opened.

d. nino-m imγera.
   Nino-ERG sang-3SGS
   ‘Nino sang.’

Butt 2006: 157
Case and Infinitives: Raising vs Subject control

1. Barnett seemed to understand the formula. Raising
2. Barnett tried [Barnett] to understand the formula. Subject Control

- In the second sentence, Barnett is the agent of the trying and of the understanding.
- We need some item in the lower clause to satisfy the semantic requirements of the embedded verb.
- The technical term for this silent DP is PRO. PRO is argued to not get case. Hence, its silence. Non-finite T is argued to not assign case. [We already know that it’s more complicated than this.]
- Barnett$_i$ tried [PRO$_i$ to understand the formula].
- Barnett seemed [Barnett to understand the formula].
- There is no PRO in the seem sentence. There is only one semantic subject.

The Case Filter: All DPs must be marked with a Case in order to be pronounced.

- Case is a necessary, not sufficient condition for pronunciation.
  - Silent subjects in pro-drop languages.
- Non-finite T does not assign case...maybe.
3. Barnett persuaded the doctor to examine Tilman.  

4. Barnett believed [the doctor/her to have examined Tilman].  

- In ECM, the verb in the main clause is transitive and the embedded clause is the object of the verb.
- The embedded subject is accusative and we have a reason for this exceptionality.
- Non-finite T doesn’t assign nominative, so the embedded subject gets accusative from the verb in the main clause.
- There is no PRO in ECM constructions. The verb in both the main clause and the verb in the embedded have semantic subjects and each subject is pronounced.
- **Object Control** constructions are ditransitives. *Persuade* has two objects – the DP ‘the doctor’ and the clause ‘PRO to examine Tilman.’
- *The doctor* is both the object of *persuade* and the subject of examine. *The doctor* cannot get case in the embedded clause and is represented by PRO.
- Barnett persuaded the doctor [PRO to examine Tilman].
- Unlike in subject control, in object control, the object is coreferential with PRO.

The Big Picture is that infinitives play a big role in Case theory.
“Normal” v’s and “Special” v’s

**Icelandic**
1. a. Við lásum bókina.
   
   we.Nom read.1pl book.the.Acc
   ‘We read the book.’ (Sigurðsson 1996, Ex 14)
   --Normal v: assigns accusative to the object

   b. Einum málfræðingi líkuðu þessar hugmyndir.
      one.Dat linguist.Dat liked.3pl these.Nom ideas.Nom.pl
      ‘One linguist liked these ideas.’ (Sigurðsson and Holmberg 2008, EX 1)
      --Special v: assigns dative to the subject

**Gujarati** (spoken in India by about 50million ppl)
2. a. Sudha away-i.
   
   Sudha(fem).Abs came-fem
   ‘Sudha came.’
   --Normal v: there’s no object for v to assign case to

   b. Sudha-e radio kharidy-o.
      Sudha(fem)-Erg radio(masc).Abs bought-masc
      ‘Sudha bought a radio.’ (Woolford 2006, EX 38c/39)
      --Special v: assigns ergative to the subject

NOTE: These non-Nominatives really are subjects, not topicalized objects. We’ll see evidence for that. And, I’m ignoring the optionality of the verbal agreement.
Little $v$-dative and ditransitives

**English**
The students gave their professor a necklace.

**Icelandic**
Ég sendi Hildi fiskinn
‘I sent Hildur the fish.’

English: $V \rightarrow v(dat) \rightarrow v(acc)$

Icelandic: $V \rightarrow v(dat) \rightarrow v(acc) \rightarrow T$

(Icelandic is a verb–second language and negation comes after the verb.)
Case is a relationship between a head and a phrase.

A head checks/assigns (the particular terminology varies, but the general concept is the same) case to a phrase that occupies a particular structural position.

Particular heads are born with a particular case to give away. E.g.:

- Finite T assigns nominative, v assigns accusative
- Special v’s can assign different cases
- Prepositions assign a variety of cases (accusative in English)

There is a distinction between abstract Case and morphological case.

All NPs which are pronounced are argued to have abstract Case, which is assigned in the syntax. Sometimes there is a morphological expression and sometimes not.
A Look at Choctaw

Spoken by appr. 10,400 people in Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Tennessee
Is agreement really independent of Case in Choctaw? [Woolford 2008]

**NO**
- Case and agreement are linked.
- Agreement follows the pattern observed in nominative-accusative systems.
- The verb agrees with the nominative.

**YES**
- Yes: A verb can agree with a nominative in more than one way.
- The choice between using “true” agreement and using a clitic depends on an active-stative distinction...maybe.
  - The agreement morpheme is used with more active/volitional activities.
  - The clitic is used with less active/volitional activities.
  - *This division is very tentative*
Davies 1986: “In Choctaw, ‘the agreement system and the case marking system function independently…”

Broadwell 2006: case system is nominative-accusative

Mithun 1991: Agreement system is active-stative

All subjects are nominative.

The more agentive subjects are “cross-referenced” with Series I forms.

The less agentive subjects are “cross-referenced” with Series II/III forms, which also cross-reference objects and possessors.

**Wooford’s Proposal:** There is a distinction between “true” agreement and clitics.

- “True agreement” is Woolford’s term and refers to verbal agreement with nominatives.
- A nominative can be cross-referenced with either a true agreement morpheme or a pronominal clitic.
  - Woolford doesn’t commit to the exact distinction [active vs stative/external argument vs internal argument, or something else]
- An accusative can only be cross-referenced with a clitic.
  - Verbs don’t agree with accusatives
- The nominative and accusative clitics look the same. The morphological expression does not necessarily match the abstract Case.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case</th>
<th>Series I [true agreement]</th>
<th>Series II [pronominal clitics]</th>
<th>Series III [Series II+applicative]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st sg</td>
<td>li</td>
<td>sa/si</td>
<td>(s)am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pl</td>
<td>pi</td>
<td>pem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd sg</td>
<td>is(h)</td>
<td>chi</td>
<td>chim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pl</td>
<td>hachi</td>
<td>hachum</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd sg</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>im</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pl</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>im</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Overview of C/case in Choctaw

Choctaw is SOV  Subjects are nominative  Objects are accusative

• Accusative is optionally marked if the object is adjacent to the verb.
• Accusative is obligatorily marked if the object moves.
  • Condition on morphological realization of case

(2) John-at tákkon(-a) chopá-h.  
    John-NOM peach(-ACC) bought  
‘John bought a peach.’  (Broadwell 2006:39)

(3) Tákkon-a John-at chopá-h.  
    peach-ACC John-NOM bought  
‘John bought a peach.’  (Broadwell 2006:39)

(4) Hattak-at alla-yā towá(-yā) į-píla-tok.  
    man-NOM child-ACC ball(-ACC) APPL-throw-past  
‘The man threw the child the ball.’  (Davies 1986:7, reglossed)

(5) An-akoosh nípi' chopá-li-tok.  
    I-CONTR:NOM meat buy-1SG-PAST  
‘I (not someone else) bought the meat.’  (Broadwell 2006:93)

• No (morphological) dative. In ditransitives, the accusative marker is optional for the argument adjacent to the verb.
• Free (unbound) pronouns are marked for nominative and accusative, but they only appear when focused and contrastive.
# Agreement vs clitics in Choctaw

(8) Agreement+NEG+CL+CL+applicative+CL+V+Agreement(1stsg only)+Tense

## Cross-referencing Forms in Choctaw

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Series</th>
<th>True Agreement</th>
<th>Pronominal Clitics</th>
<th>Series III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st sg</td>
<td>li</td>
<td>sa/si</td>
<td>(s)am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st pl</td>
<td>il</td>
<td>pi</td>
<td>pim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd sg</td>
<td>is(h)</td>
<td>chi</td>
<td>chim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd pl</td>
<td>has(h)</td>
<td>hachi</td>
<td>hachim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd sg</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>im</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd pl</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>im</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Series 1: cross-references only, but not all, nominatives
- Occur at left edge, except for 1sg form, which precedes the tense suffix
- (When we look at Dakota, we’ll see that the distribution of pronouns varies within the verbal complex.)

### Agreement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(13)</th>
<th>I:-balili-tok.</th>
<th>1pl.Agr run PAST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘We ran.’</td>
<td>(Davies 1986:14, reglossed)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(14)</th>
<th>Ish-îpa -h ő.</th>
<th>2ndsg.Agr eat -PRED Q</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘Have you eaten?’</td>
<td>(Davies 1986:14, reglossed)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(15)</th>
<th>Hilha -li -tok.</th>
<th>dance -1sg.Agr -past</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>‘I danced.’</td>
<td>(Davies 1986:14, reglossed)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Clitics always have an abstract Case that matches the abstract Case of the noun they cross-reference.

Series II has both nominative and accusative clitics that are syncretic.

But...the nominative clitic is closer to the verb than the accusative clitic.

A clitic that cross-references a subject is closer to the verb than any other clitic.

There is no 3rd person clitic, so the 2nd person object clitic is closest to the verb in (23).
Yucatec Maya is spoken by 1 million-ish ppl in Mexico and Belize

Aspect, agreement, and clitics in Yucatec Maya

The nominative subject of an intransitive is cross-referenced by agreement when the aspect is imperfective, but by a clitic when the aspect is perfective.

And, the clitics aren’t distinguished for case. The accusative form in the transitive sentence in (27) is the same as the nominative form in the intransitive sentence in (26).
– The Case vs case distinction is very important in syntactic and morphological theory.
– Sometimes there’s an alignment between Case and case, but often times not.
– Agreement is argued to be sensitive to Case in Choctaw