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Bantu Syntax & Information Structure

Puzzle 3: Case diagnostics

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BaSIS brainstorm
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LUCL Leiden University Centre for Linguistics

NWO Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research

Puzzle 3: Outline

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1. Introducing the Case debate
2. The BaSIS hypothesis
3. BaSIS findings (so far)
4. Open discussion

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1. The Case debate

1. Case in syntactic theory

Generative syntax: Case is necessary for NPs to be interpretable (Chomsky 1981, 1986, 2000)

e.g. GB-era *Case Filter* (1981):

*NP, if NP is overt and has no Case

à **Case conditions nominal licensing**

- Minimalism: NPs have [*u*Case], which must be valued before Spellout via Agree

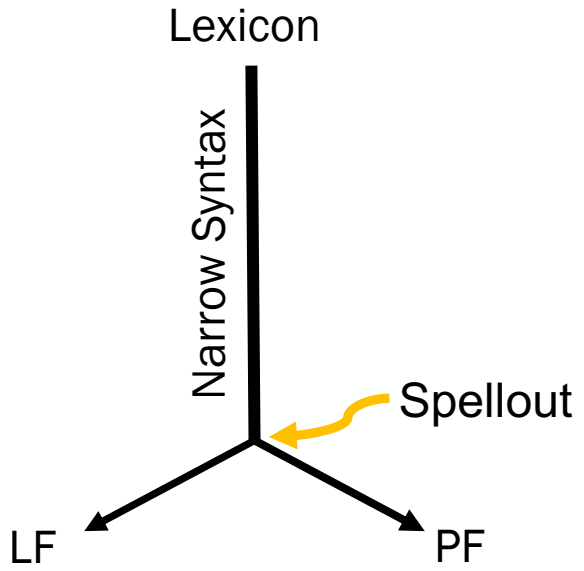

Fig 1. Generative model

1. Defining Case

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Distinction between **morphological case** and **syntactic Case**

Morphological case = Case-dependent morphological marking
(often taken as a PF phenomenon)

Syntactic Case = abstract/structural Case (governs nominal licensing in the syntax)

We are interested in syntactic Case; morphological case is relevant only as a diagnostic of Case

1. Case universality

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The big Qs:
What is universal across languages? What is parameterized?

How can we tell whether Case is universal, when morphological case is not a perfect diagnostic, and not all languages mark morphological case?

→ **Case diagnostics:**
morphological case-marking, identification of syntactic reflexes

1. The Case debate

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- **Case diagnostics (Diercks 2012; van der Wal 2015):**

1. Presence of morphological case marking → morphological
2. Subject agreement on verb with nominative DP (in SVO and in inversion contexts) → syntactic
3. Default agreement without nominative DP → syntactic
4. Overt subject DPs in non-finite clauses → syntactic
5. Overt agent DP in passive → syntactic

1. The Case debate

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For Bantuists:

Q: Do NPs in Bantu have [*u*Case]?

A: depends who you ask…

Ways to answer this Q:

Do Bantu languages pass Case diagnostics?

How can we parameterize the variation?

1. The Case debate

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View 1: Bantu languages do not have [*u*Case]

- "given the large amount of data in Bantu languages that are unexplained under Case theory, I propose that **a theory of (abstract) Case in fact does not apply to Bantu languages.** Specifically, I claim that **Bantu languages do not have uninterpretable Case features in their feature inventories.**"

  • Diercks (2012:253-4)

1. The Case debate

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View 1: Bantu languages do not have [*u*Case]

- "**the system of abstract Case is unnecessary and unmotivated for Bantu languages**, and analyses of many key constructions are in fact more elegant without such Case features."

  • Diercks (2012:257)

+ see Perez (1985)

1. The Case debate

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View 2: (some) Bantu languages do have [*u*Case]

- "This paper shows, first, that the Bantu languages Makhuwa and Matengo are interesting counterexamples [to Diercks' claim that Bantu languages lack abstract Case], concluding that -- **although Case may be parameterized – microvariation within the Bantu language family shows that it is not correct to characterize the whole language family as Caseless.** […]"

• van der Wal (2015:109)

+ see Sheehan & van der Wal (2018)

1. Summary

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- Generative syntax has abstract Case as a universal condition on nominal licensing ([*u*Case])

- We can diagnose Case using **Case diagnostics**

- Two views:
- Diercks (2012): Bantu languages show no sign of abstract Case
- Van der Wal (2015): Some Bantu languages show Case

- Consequences for theory: parametrization of Case, Agree
- To be done: test more languages, revise theory

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2. The BaSIS hypothesis

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Preverbal restriction

Changana

() *mani a-heetshemul-ile — no wh
who 1SM-sneeze-PFV.DJ
int. ‘Who sneezed?’

() #Xjosé a-heétshémul-î:le — no answer
1.Jose 1SM-sneeze-PFV.DJ
‘José sneezed.’

() *ntsena kokwana a-luz-ile — no ‘only’
only 1.grandparent 1SM-lose-PFV.DJ
int. ‘Only grandpa died.’

_____

no focus

Preverbal restriction

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Changana

() (And so he told me the following:)

na wena [a ntirho] u-wu-kum-ile,
and 2sg.pro A 3.work 2sg.sm-3om-find-pfv.dj
'You too have found work.'

(Tomorrow you will come and continue work with the others)

Hyperactivity

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() a. Ernest seems [~~Ernest~~ to clean] the windows.

b. It seems that Ernest cleans the windows.

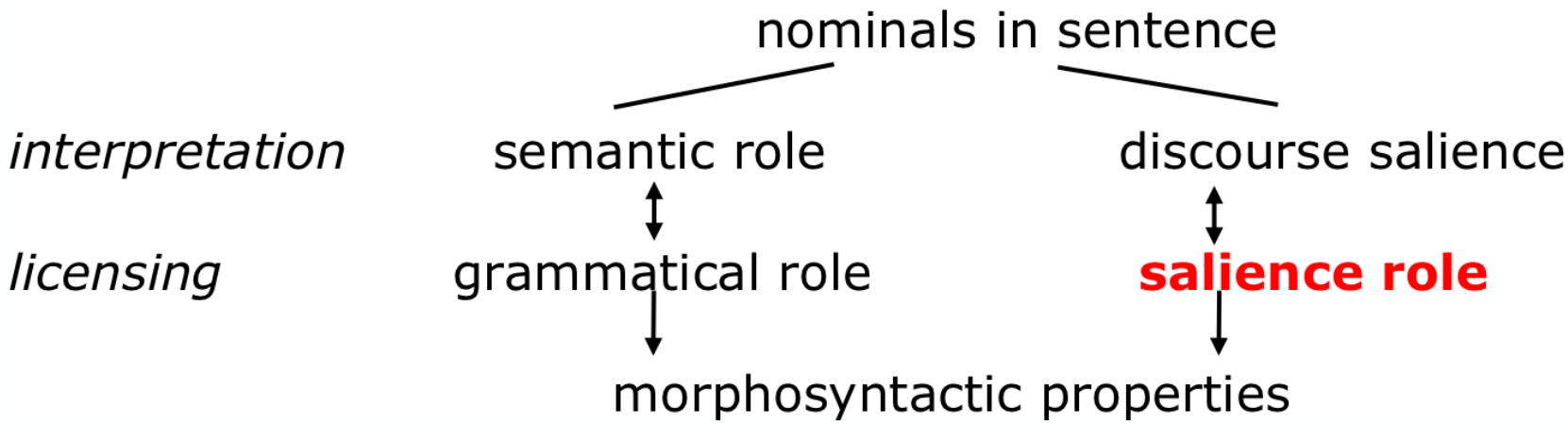
c. *Ernest seems that [t cleans] the windows.

Changana

(11) mina nisálé nílí:mpa máxjané:la

mina **ni**-sal-e **ni**-limpa ma-xjanela
1sg.pro 1sg.sm-stay-pfv.cj 1sg.sm-clean 6-windows

‘I cleaned (the) windows.’


nominals in sentence
interpretation
semantic role
discourse salience
licensing
grammatical role
salience role
morphosyntactic properties

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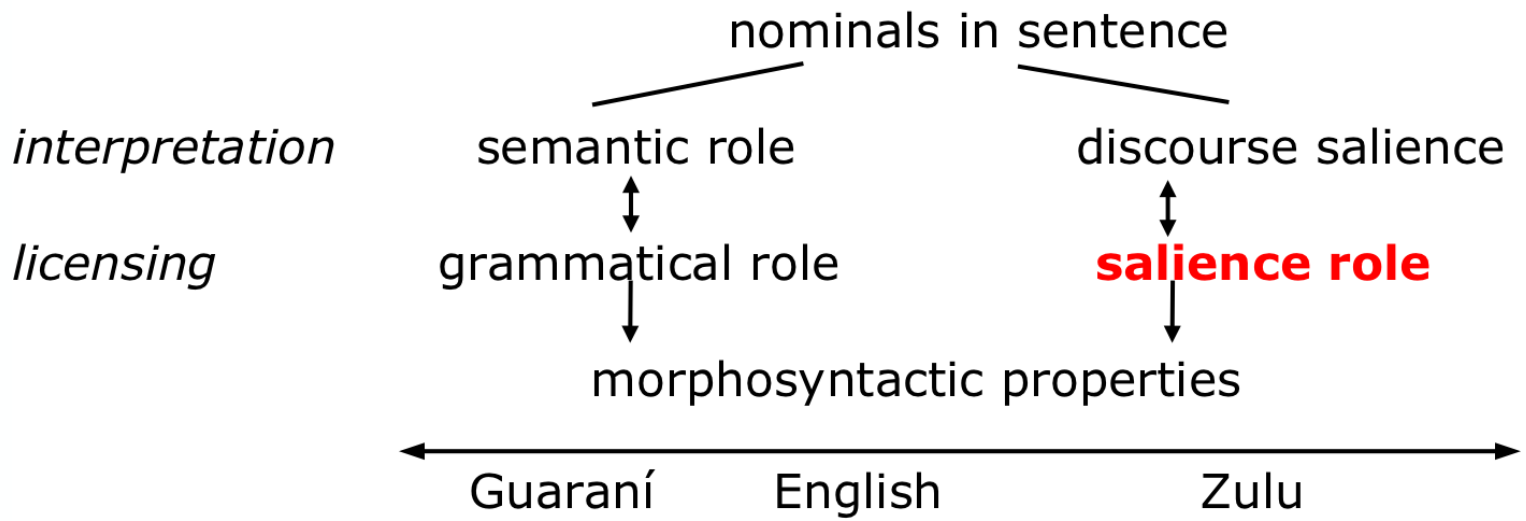

How can we find out?

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For each language L:

- How does L express (the relevant categories of) information structure?
- Does L show grammatical restrictions that are due to Case?

(see also methodology – day 1)

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3. Findings (so far)

Sheehan & Van der Wal (2018)

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	Mandarin	Thai	Yoruba	JC	Makhuwa	Luganda
(i) Non-finite clauses	+	+	+	+	+	–
(ii) Agreement	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	+	–
(iii) Activity	+	+	+	+	+	–
(iv) Passive agent	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	+	+	–
(v) Case-based asymmetry	0	0	+	+	0	0

+ = evidence of Vergnaud licensing, – = evidence for lack of Vergnaud licensing, 0 = compatible with either, n.a. = test cannot be applied, ? = no data or unclear, JC = Jamaican Creole; shading = same value.

Findings (so far)

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	Changana	Rukiga	Copi	Tunen	Teke	Makhuwa	Luganda
1. Non-finite clauses	+	+	+	0	+	+	-
2. Agreement	+/-	-	+/-	0	+/-	+	-
3. Activity	-	-	-	-	-	+	-
4. Passive agent	+	-	+	0	+/-	+	-
5. Case-based asymmetry	0	0	+?	0	0	0	0

- evidence against Case
+ evidence in favour of Case
0 no (clear) data

	Rukiga
1. Non-finite clauses	+

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- Rukiga example

Rukiga does not allow DP subjects of non-finite clauses.
Non-finite complements of control verbs cannot contain an overt subject:

*twiin' ámasiko Jóhn kudyá búrahanda
tu-ine a-ma-siko John ku-dya burahanda
1pl.sm-have aug-6-hope 1.John 15-eat 9.pancakes
‘We hope (for) John to eat pancakes.’

	Luganda
2. Agreement	-

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- Luganda example

In Luganda, the “subject marker” can agree with a preverbal subject, or with a preverbal locative when the logical subject occurs postverbally.

a. Omuwala a-beera mu-nyuumba eno.
1.girl 1sm-live 18-9.house 9.dem
‘A/the girl lives in this house.’

b. Mu-nyúúmb’ eeyó mú-bééra-múomuwála.
18-9.house 9.dem 18sm-live-18loc 1.girl
‘In that house lives a/the girl.’1

	Teke
3. Activity	-

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- Teke example

Teke shows hyperactivity: an auxiliary and main verb can both agree with the same DP.

Me ka kam-bvúl-i n-dzáa mu ntsá nzó ni, ya li-kíti kukí mu ki-dzá.
1SG.PRN NEG 1SG-do.always-PST 1SG-eat PREP inside 9.house NEG AUX.have 5-occasion PREP PREP INF-eat
I did not always eat at home, only sometimes I did.

	Makhuwa
4. Passive agent	+

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- Makhuwa example

Makhuwa allows for the overt expression of the agent with a preposition ni required:

Íi, koo-vár-íya *(ni)khwátte! [Makhuwa]
ii 1sg.sm.perf.dj-grab-pass by 1.fox
‘Ii, I am caught by the fox!’

	Copi
5. Case-based asymmetry	-?

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• Copi example

In Copi, when both the agent and the patient are questioned, it is possible to extract the agent but not accepted to extract the patient.

a. í m!á:ní (wú) angawo:mbá câ:ni? (adjusted tones and length over phone)
   i mani wu a-nga-womb-a cani
   cop who comp/rm 1sm-rel-say-fv what
   'Who said what?'

b. *í nc!ání cí anga(ci)wó:mbá má:ní?
   i cani a-nga-womb-a mani
   cop what 1sm-rel-say-fv who
   'What did who say?'

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4. Discussion

How far can we push a model without Case?

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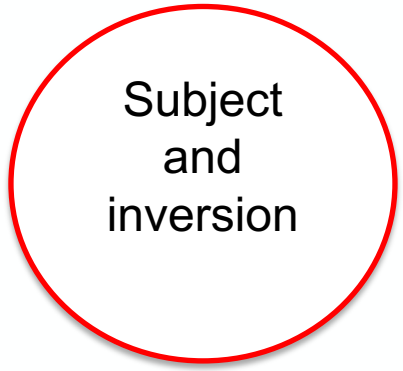
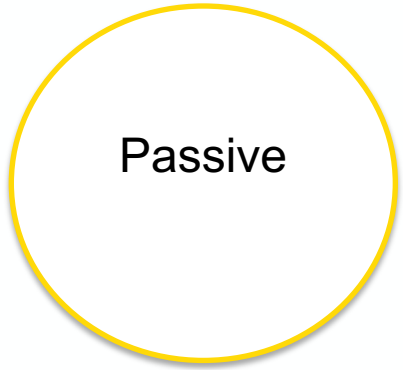
Predictions?

Other data?

Necessary assumptions?





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