

A configurational account of Finnish case

Summary: This paper presents a configurational account of Finnish morphological case wherein CP and ν P phases serve as the local domains for case competition. I argue that, in the phase-based configurational case model, a DP with unmarked case located at the edge of phase α partakes in case competition at the next highest phase β such that it can receive marked case in β . This model accounts for two otherwise disjoint phenomena in Finnish: nominative-genitive case competition and the partitive-nominative/genitive object case alternation.

Background: In the configurational model, the calculus of morphological case proceeds along Marantz's (1991) disjunctive case hierarchy (1). First, each lexical head assigns the respective idiosyncratic lexical case to its sister, e.g. quirky case. Second, for each pair of remaining DPs with unvalued case within the phase, one DP in the pair is assigned marked case (NOM-ACC languages: the lower, ERG-ABS languages: the higher), i.e. *case competition*. Third, any DP whose case is still unvalued is assigned unmarked case.

Data: At the clausal level, the external argument (EA), the internal argument (IA), and measure and multiplicative adjuncts compete for nominative case wherein the highest DP is nominative and all other lower DPs are genitive. For example, in (2a), the EA is nominative because it is higher than the two adjuncts; note that the IA *Kekkoseen* has been assigned lexical case by the verb *luottaa* 'trust' and therefore does not partake in the case competition. When (2a) is passivised in (2b)-(2c) and the EA is removed, the highest adjunct is nominative.

The case of the IA is also contingent on the telicity of the eventuality. In an atelic eventuality, the IA is partitive (3a). In a telic eventuality, the IA is nominative or genitive (3b), depending on the outcome of the case competition discussed above.

Proposal: At the ν P-phase level, genitive is the unmarked case and partitive is the marked case. Following Kratzer (2004), ν^0 optionally bears a [TELIC] feature which yields a telic interpretation of the eventuality. When ν^0 bears [TELIC], it establishes an Agree relationship with the IA which causes it to raise to [Spec, ν P]; otherwise, the IA remains in-situ. When the EA is merged in [Spec, ν P], the phase is complete. The case calculus assigns marked partitive case to the IA if it has remained in-situ. However, if the IA has raised to [Spec, ν P], it is at the same structural position as the EA such that neither is higher than the other and both receive unmarked genitive case (which surfaces in various infinitival constructions). This is schematised in (4b).

At the CP-phase level, nominative is the unmarked case and genitive is the marked case. Crucial to this analysis is the proposal that a DP at the edge of a phase partakes in case competition at the next highest phase. This follows from general assumptions about Phase Theory that elements at the edge can take part in operations in the next phase. In Finnish, it allows the IA of telic eventualities to participate in case competition at the CP-phase level. EAs, IAs raised by [TELIC], and measure and multiplicative adjuncts compete for nominative case. The EA raises to [Spec, TP] for the EPP such that it is the structurally highest DP in the phase. The case calculus assigns marked genitive case to the raised IA and any adjuncts and unmarked nominative case to the EA. This is schematised in (4a). If there is no EA, e.g. in a passive, the IA raises to [Spec, TP] for the EPP and therefore is assigned unmarked nominative case.

Implications: In the phase-based configurational case model, if DPs at the phase edge can be reassigned case at the next highest phase, the model can account for a wide variety of "two step" case patterns, such as the object case alternation in Finnish. This approach can also account for case patterns involving the ν P and DP phases, such as Finnish and Estonian numeral constructions where the numeral reflects the DP's structural case and the NP is partitive.

(1) *Disjunctive case hierarchy:*
 lexical case → dependent case → unmarked case (Marantz 1991)

(2) *Nominative-genitive case competition:*

a. $EA \rightarrow \text{NOM}$, $Adjunct_1 \rightarrow \text{GEN}$, $Adjunct_2 \rightarrow \text{GEN}$

Tarja luotti Kekkose-en [**yhde-n vuode-n**] [**kolmanne-n kerra-n**]
 Tarja.NOM trusted.3SG Kekkonen-ILL one-GEN year-GEN third-GEN time-GEN
 ‘Tarja trusted Kekkonen for a year for a third time’

b. $Adjunct_1 \rightarrow \text{NOM}$, $Adjunct_2 \rightarrow \text{GEN}$

Kekkose-en luote-ttiin [**yksi vuosi**] [**kolmanne-n kerra-n**]
 Kekkonen-ILL trust-PASS.PAST one.NOM year.NOM third-GEN time-GEN
 ‘Kekkonen was trusted for a year for a third time’

c. $Adjunct_2 \rightarrow \text{NOM}$

Kekkose-en luote-ttiin [**kolmas kerta**]
 Kekkonen-ILL trust-PASS.PAST third-NOM time-NOM
 ‘Kekkonen was trusted for a third time’

(Maling 1993)

(3) *Partitive-nominative/genitive alternation:*

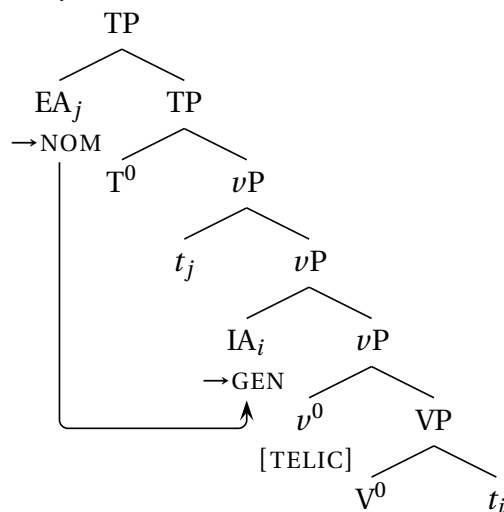
a. *Atelic* → PTV:

Ammui-n **karhu-a**
 shot-1SG bear-PTV
 ‘I shot at the/a bear’

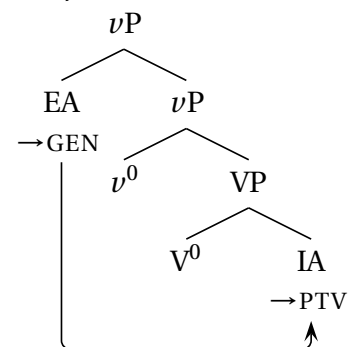
b. *Telic* → GEN

Ammui-n **karhu-n**
 shot-1SG bear-GEN
 ‘I shot the/a bear’ (Kiparsky 1998)

(4) a. *CP-phase:*



b. *νP -phase:*



Selected references

- Kiparsky, Paul.** 1998. Partitive case and aspect. In *The Projection of Arguments: Lexical and Compositional Factors*, 265–308. **Kratzer, Angelika.** 2004. Telicity and the meaning of objective case. In *The Syntax of Time*, 389–423. **Levin, Ted, and Omer Preminger.** in press. Case in Sakha: Are two modalities really necessary? *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory*. **Maling, Joan.** 1993. Of nominative and accusative. In *Case and Other Functional Categories in Finnish Syntax*, 49–74. **Marantz, Alec.** 1991. Case and licensing. In *Proceedings of the 8th Eastern States Conference on Linguistics (ESCOL 8)*, 234–253. **Preminger, Omer.** 2011. Agreement as a fallible operation. Doctoral Dissertation, MIT.