

A recipe for readjustment - the view from Telugu

PLC 47
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1. Introduction

- *Nominative* vs. *oblique* stems for nouns: a common areal feature in South Asia
- The *nominative* stem appears in subject position, and the *oblique* in all other cases/with postpositions (i.e., case markers and postpositions *trigger* the oblique)
- Examples: Tamil *maram* ‘tree.NOM’ vs. *maratt-* ‘tree.OBL’; Hindi *kamra* ‘room.NOM’ vs. *kamre-* ‘room.OBL’
- Telugu has two types - strongly suppletive nouns (*house* below) and weakly suppletive nouns (*ocean* below)

(1) **Strongly Suppletive: *illu* ‘house’**

Case	Form
NOM	illu- \emptyset
ACC	in̩ʈi-ni
GEN	in̩ʈi-\emptyset
DAT	in̩ʈi-ki
LOC	in̩ʈi-lō

(2) **Weakly Suppletive: *samudram* ‘ocean’**

Case	Form
NOM	samudram- \emptyset
ACC	samudrāni-ni
GEN	samudram- \emptyset
DAT	samudrāni-ki
LOC	samudram-lō

- Many nouns in Telugu are invariant
- Other case markers/postpositions in the language (e.g. *paina* ‘above’, *gurinci* ‘on the topic of’, etc.) behave the same way as the locative *-lō* in both paradigms.

Claims & Contributions

- I argue that the oblique alternation in **strongly suppletive nouns involves two separate Vocabulary Items** for the two stem alternants (i.e., true suppletion), while the alternation in **weakly suppletive nouns is phonological readjustment**, with a single VI for the stem
- Previous argumentation in favor of readjustment rules (Harley & Tubino Blanco 2013, *ao*) has focused on phonological naturalness - I instead argue for a suppletion/readjustment split based on **case containment, linear adjacency, and morphosyntactic conditioning**.
- The Telugu pattern is an important case study for questions about the constraints on readjustment and suppletion - **what is the general form of a readjustment rule?**

Roadmap

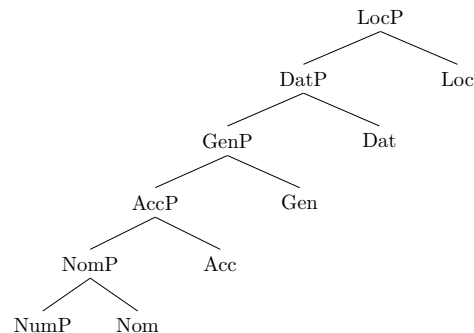
- **Part 1:** Arguments for a suppletion/readjustment split in Telugu obliques
- **Part 2:** Building the readjustment analysis

2. There are two types of oblique in Telugu

2.1 Argument 1: Case Containment & *ABA

- **Case containment hypothesis** (Caha 2009, others): More ‘complex’ cases/postpositions include ‘simpler’ cases/postpositions.
- Let’s assume the following hierarchy from Caha (2009):

(3) **Simplified version of Case Containment Hierarchy (Caha 2009):**



- Allomorphy triggered by a certain case must also be triggered by all higher cases - this predicts ABB patterns and crucially never ABA patterns.
- A paradigm that shows an ABA pattern must be phonological.

2.1.1 Applying the Diagnostic

Strongly suppletive obliques are triggered by morphosyntactic case features

- Let’s take another look at the *house* paradigm:

(4) **Paradigm for Telugu *illu* ‘house’**

Case	Form
NOM	illu- \emptyset
ACC	in̩ʈi-ni
GEN	in̩ʈi-\emptyset
DAT	in̩ʈi-ki
LOC	in̩ʈi-lō

(5) **Nominative VI**
[$\sqrt{\text{HOUSE}}$] \rightarrow illu

(6) **Oblique VI**
[$\sqrt{\text{HOUSE}}$] \rightarrow in̩ʈi / $_$ [_kACC]

- *Any* version of case containment which assumes nominative to be the simplest case predicts the pattern of strongly suppletive nouns.

Weakly suppletive obliques are not triggered by case features

- On the other hand, the the *ocean* paradigm is not nearly as well-behaved:

(7) **Paradigm for Telugu *samudram* ‘ocean’**

Case	Form
NOM	samudram- \emptyset
ACC	samudrāni -ni
GEN	samudram- \emptyset
DAT	samudrāni -ki
LOC	samudram-lō

- We see an ABABA pattern, doubly violating the predictions of the containment hypothesis
- Unless we throw out containment entirely, we are forced to think of this as a phonological alternation, and not structurally-governed allomorphy

2.1.2 Could some other version of case containment work?

- What if the weakly suppletive paradigm isn’t phonological, but in fact the Cahaian hierarchy isn’t correct for Telugu?
- Let’s assume that the representation of a given case does not vary across nouns, and that all cases and postpositions are on a single hierarchy
- The only possible hierarchy which could explain both paradigms at once would be one in which ACC and DAT are higher than LOC

(8) **Hypothetical Hierarchy I**
[[[[[NOM]GEN]LOC]ACC]DAT]

- Recall that LOC is a placeholder for a whole class of postpositions
- Such a hierarchy is implausible and has not been posited in previous work (Hardarson 2016, Starke 2017, Middleton 2021, Radkevich 2010, *ao*)
- Another option: a split hierarchy?
- Let’s say accusative and dative were in a different hierarchy from genitive and locative/postpositions

(9) **Hypothetical Hierarchies II**
[[[NOM]ACC]DAT]
[[[NOM]GEN]LOC]

- This explains weakly suppletive nouns but makes the strongly suppletive pattern look coincidental

2.2 Argument 2: Adjacency

- Bobaljik (2012) posits that differences in locality restrictions could be used to diagnose between suppletion and readjustment
- A reasonable assumption: suppletion can be triggered non-adjacently, readjustment cannot be.

Strongly suppletive obliques can be non-adjacent from their trigger

- Quantifiers can occur after the nouns they modify:
- (10) కుక్కలన్ని పడుకున్నాయి
kukka-l-anni paḍu-k-unn-ā-yi
dog-PL-all.NOM fall-REFL-to.be-NONFUT-3PL.NH
‘All the dogs are sleeping’
- When post-nominal, quantifiers intervene between noun and case:
- (11) నేను కుక్కలన్నిటిని చూసాను
nēnu kukka-l-anniṭi-ni cūs-ā-nu
1SG.NOM dog-PL-all.CT.OBL-ACC see-PST-1SG
‘I saw all the dogs.’
- We can use this construction to test our hypothesis about adjacency
 - When *illu* ‘house’ is used in this construction, it can (optionally) be in the oblique:

- (12) నేను ఇంటంతటిని కొన్నాను
nēnu int-antaṭi-ni kōnn-ā-nu
1SG.NOM house.OBL-all.MS.OBL-ACC buy-PST-1SG
‘I bought the whole house.’

- If this alternation were purely phonological, this is unexpected

Weakly suppletive obliques must be adjacent to their trigger

- When a quantifier intervenes between it and the accusative, the noun *samudram* ‘ocean’ cannot be oblique:
- (13) నేను సముద్రమంతటిని చూసాను
nēnu samudram-antaṭi-ni cūs-ā-nu
1SG.NOM ocean-all.MS.OBL-ACC see-PST-1SG
‘I saw the whole ocean.’
- (14) *నేను సముద్రాసంతటిని చూసాను
*nēnu samudrān-antaṭi-ni cūs-ā-nu
1SG.NOM ocean.OBL-all.MS.OBL-ACC see-PST-1SG
Intended: ‘I saw the whole ocean.’
- Since linear adjacency between the trigger and the noun stem is required for this type of oblique, it must be a phonological effect.

2.3 Argument 3: What exactly is triggering the allomorphy?

- In outward-looking contextual allomorphy, allomorph choice can only be sensitive to the abstract morphosyntactic representation of the triggering morpheme, not its actual surface form (Bobaljik 2000)
- This predicts that a different, non-case suffix appearing after the noun stem should not trigger a different choice of allomorph

Strongly suppletive obliques are not triggered by nominal agreement

- Telugu features **nominal agreement** morphemes (Aitha 2018) which occur in, among other contexts, nominals like *We students*.
- When such a nominal is in subject position, it is in the nominative, so we expect the stem noun to be in its nominative form, regardless of whether a nominal agreement morpheme occurs after it or not

(15) నేను ఇల్లువి పడ్డాను.
 nīvu illu-vi paḍḍā-vu
 2SG.NOM house-2SG fall-PST-2SG
 ‘You, a house, fell.’

- For weakly suppletive obliques, we predict that the presence of phonological material after the stem can affect its form, even given the same abstract case syntax.

Weakly suppletive obliques are triggered by nominal agreement

- This is exactly what we see - nominal agreement triggers the oblique stem of *ocean*, even though the noun is still in the nominative:

(16) నేను సముద్రాన్ని పడుకున్నాను
 nīvu samudrāṇi-vi paḍu-k-unn-ā-vu
 2SG.NOM ocean-2SG fall-REFL-be-PST-2SG
 ‘You, an ocean, are asleep.’

- Given that both stem alternants can occur in the nominative, it is difficult to maintain the hypothesis that weakly suppletive obliques are actually sensitive to case at all

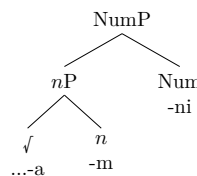
(17) Summary of arguments:

	Strongly supp. nouns	weakly supp. nouns
Does it violate *ABA?	*	✓
Is it constrained by adjacency?	*	✓
Is it only about case?	✓	*

3. The Anatomy of a Readjustment

- The alternation in the paradigm for *ocean* (and so for all weakly suppletive nouns) is phonological
- Given this, the underlying form for the *-am* and *-āni* stems should be the same
- a-m-ni*, where *-m* is a *n* head, and *-ni* is a SG head.

(18) Posited UR for weakly suppletive nouns



3.1 -m is the realization of a *n* head

- All weakly suppletive nouns end with *-m*
- samudram* ‘ocean’ is in a very large class of Sanskrit borrowings:

(19) Sanskrit borrowings in Telugu

Sanskrit	Telugu	Translation
samudra	samudra-m	ocean
āścarya	āścarya-m	surprise
iṣṭa	iṣṭa-m	wish, desire
ānanda	ānanda-m	happiness
...

- The root *samudra-* can also appear bare form or with a different suffix

(20) సముద్ర మట్టం
 samudra maṭṭam
 ocean level
 ‘sea level’

(21) సముద్రపు దొంగ
 samudra-pu donga
 ocean-ADJ thief
 ‘pirate’

- The *n* head realized as *-m* is selected by a set of lexical roots ($\sqrt{\text{OCEAN}}$, $\sqrt{\text{SURPRISE}}$,...).

3.2 Oblique *-ni* is the realization of singular number

- The sequence *-ni* in weakly suppletive obliques is in complementary distribution with and shows up in the same position as the plural suffix *-lu*:

(22) Singular: *samudram* ‘ocean’

(23) Plural: *samudrālu* ‘oceans’:

Case	Form
NOM	samudra-m- \emptyset
ACC	samudrā- ni -ni
GEN	samudra-m- \emptyset
DAT	samudrā- ni -ki
LOC	samudra-m-lō

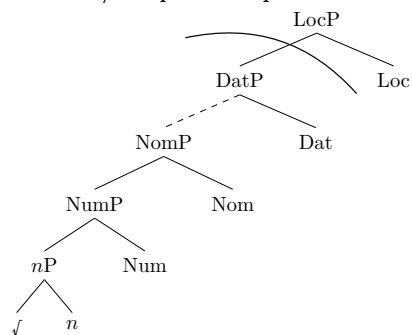
Case	Form
NOM	samudrā-lu- \emptyset
ACC	samudrā- la -ni
GEN	samudrā-la- \emptyset
DAT	samudrā- la -ki
LOC	samudrā-la-lō

- The SG head realized as *-ni* selects for *nPs* headed by *-m*

3.3 Case vs. Postpositions - a prosodic split

- **Generalization I:** The nominalizing suffix *-m* is deleted before singular *-ni* and plural *-lu*
- **Generalization II:** The SG suffix *-ni* is deleted *unless* it is followed by accusative *-ni* or dative *-ki*
- We can make sense of this if we posit the following prosodic boundary:

(24) The Case/Postposition Split:



- This split is familiar - many languages differentiate between core cases and adpositions
- Suffixes inside the boundary are all monomoraic, while those outside are largely multimoraic

(25) Inside vs Outside Suffixes

Inside	Outside
[SG]: <i>-ni</i>	[LOC]: <i>-lō</i>
[PL]: <i>-lu</i>	[COM]: <i>-tō</i>
[ACC]: <i>-ni</i>	[BEN]: <i>-kōsam</i>
[DAT]: <i>-ki</i>	'from': <i>-nunci</i>
[1SG]: <i>-ni</i>	'about': <i>-gurinci</i>
[2SG]: <i>-vi</i>	'in front of': <i>-mundu</i>
[1PL]: <i>-mu</i>	'behind': <i>-venaka</i>

Readjustment Rules

- **-ni-deletion:** If the singular suffix *-ni* is final in the prosodic domain, delete the final syllable in the domain.
- **-m-deletion:** If the nominalizer *-m* is not final in the prosodic domain, delete it and compensatorily lengthen the preceding vowel.
- These rules are ordered - *-ni*-deletion bleeds *-m*-deletion

3.4 Could it be about word length?

- In Yidij, disyllabic and trisyllabic noun stems have different ergative, ablative and genitive case markers (Dixon 1977)

(26) Yidij case paradigms

Case	'kangaroo sp.'	'initiated man'
ERG	mabi- ŋ	mulari- ŋgu
ABL	mabi- m	mulari- mu
GEN	mabi- n	mulari- ni

- This is argued to be due to constraints on metrical foot structure (Embick 2010)
- In Telugu, there is no such alternation based on word length:

(27) Telugu case paradigms

Case	'ocean'	'desire'
ACC	samudrā-ni-ni	iṣṭā-ni-ni
DAT	samudrā-ni-ki	iṣṭā-ni-ki

3.5 What can a readjustment rule look like?

- (28) English:
 [vTELL] → tel
 [vTELL] → toʊl / _ [TPST]
- (29) Hiaki (Harley & Tubino Blanco 2013):
 [vPON] → pon
 [vPON] → poona / _ Asp
- (30) Telugu:
 [NumNI] → ni
 [NumNI] → ø / _+

- The structural condition in Telugu is phonological, not structural

4. Conclusion

- Telugu weakly suppletive oblique alternation is readjustment
- A new approach to demonstrating the suppletion/readjustment split
- Prosodic split between case/postpositions - generalizable?

5. References

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