

On the relation between C and T, \bar{A} -movement, and “marked nominative” in Dinka

Coppe van Urk, MIT

Summary: The traditional view of C and T is that they are merged with different features and so perform different roles within the clause. A number of authors have suggested, however, that the features of T are derivative of C (e.g. Stowell 1982; Chomsky 2008; Miyagawa 2010). Chomsky (2008) proposes that the features of T are always inherited from C. In this paper, I provide evidence for this approach from the Nilotic language Dinka (South Sudan), in which the features of C and T are not segregated, but both present on C. As a result, \bar{A} -dependencies go hand in hand with changes in case and ϕ -agreement, so that ϕ -agreement consistently targets \bar{A} -moving phrases. To provide evidence that T performs no licensing work in Dinka, I analyze an unusual case alternation with subjects, in which the subject is in the unmarked case when initial, but in a dedicated, morphosyntactically marked case otherwise, referred to as “marked nominative” (König 2006, 2008; Dimmendaal 2012). I argue that “marked nominative” reflects the insertion of a case-assigning P (Rezac 2011), a repair used whenever \bar{A} -movement of a non-subject targets Spec-CP, depriving the subject of its usual case assigner, C.

1. \bar{A} -movement, case, and agreement. Dinka (Nilotic; South Sudan) has CP-level V2 (Anderson 1991, 2002; Van Urk & Richards, to appear). However, the XP that moves to Spec-CP triggers ϕ -agreement on a prefix on the 2nd-position verb/auxiliary (the auxiliary *cé* below):

- (1)a. *Mîr* *a-cé* *yín* *tîŋ*. b. *Mîr* *a-cá* *tîŋ*.
giraffe.ABS 3S-PRF you see giraffe.ABS 3S-PRF.1S see
‘A giraffe saw you.’ ‘A giraffe, I saw.’

This is true across all types of \bar{A} -movement, including focus and *wh*-movement, even when long-distance (2) (plural XPs trigger *ke* at each *vP*-edge, see Van Urk and Richards, to appear):

- (2) *Yeyíŋà* *e-ke-yíi* *ke* *tàak*, *e-ke-cíi* *Áyèn* *ke* *gám* *kitàp*?
who.PL PST-PL-IMPF.2S PL think PST-PL-PRF.NS Ayen.NOM PL give book.ABS
‘Which people were you thinking that Ayen had given a book to?’

In addition to this, as evident in (1a–b), the XP in Spec-CP is assigned case, so that it *always occurs in the unmarked case* (called the *absolute* here, following Dimmendaal 1983).

2. Dinka C as a case assigner. These orders are not base-generated. Dinka shows abundant evidence for intermediate movement (Van Urk and Richards, to appear) and a distinct strategy of resumption. Also, these movements show reconstruction and are island-sensitive. I suggest instead that, in Dinka, the features of C and T are not segregated, but present on the same head (Chomsky 2008; Miyagawa 2010). This means that, in addition to hosting \bar{A} -dependencies, *Dinka C is a case assigner*, so that an \bar{A} -moved XP triggers ϕ -agreement and case at C.

3. Subjects and “marked nominative”. If the ϕ -probe ordinarily associated with T is on C and targets XPs undergoing \bar{A} -movement, we expect that \bar{A} -movement of a non-subject should interfere with subject licensing. In fact, non-initial subjects surface in a special, morphosyntactically marked case, referred to as “marked nominative” (e.g. König 2006, 2008) (3a–b).

- (3)a. *Ayén* *a-cé* *cuín* *cám*. b. *Cuín* *a-cíi* *Áyèn* *cám*.
Ayen.ABS 3S-PRF food.ABS eat food.ABS 3S-PF.NS Ayen.NOM eat
‘Ayen ate food.’ ‘The food, Ayen ate.’

I will show the distribution of this case is unlike familiar cases. Instead, I propose that it represents a repair, to license a subject left caseless because C is agreeing with a different XP.

4. “Marked nominative” \neq ergative. The presence of “marked nominative” is not linked to transitivity or semantic properties of the verb, surfacing even with unaccusatives (4a–b).

- (4)a. *Galám* *a-cé* *dhuòŋ*. b. *Cé* *gálám* *dhuòŋ*?
pen.ABS 3S-PRF break PRF pen.NOM break
‘The pen broke.’ ‘Did the pen break?’

5. “**Marked nominative**” ≠ **nominative**. “Marked nominative” is also unlike nominative, however. Not only is it morphosyntactically marked (the absolutive surfaces in all default contexts), it is assigned by some prepositions (Andersen 2002) (5a–b).

- (5)a. Yín n̄hià̄r ỳòn è **Máyèn**. b. Cúin a-c̄ī cá̄m (ne **Áyèn**).
 you love house.LNK P Mayen.NOM food 3S-PF.PAS eat P Ayen.NOM
 ‘You love Mayen’s house.’ ‘The food was eaten by Ayen.’

In addition, note that Dinka has a distinct passive (5b), in which the subject appears finally.

6. **PCC repairs**. I suggest a parallel between “marked nominative” and repairs for the Person-Case Constraint (PCC) (Rezac 2011). The PCC bans 1st/2nd person DPs in the context of certain DPs. In some languages, this can be repaired by realizing one of these in an oblique form. In French, for example, a pronominal indirect object may be realized as the locative clitic *y* or in a full PP *à eux* just in the context of a PCC violation (6a–d) (Couquaux 1975).

- (6)a. Je la leur/*y ai présenté. c. Je vous %y/*leur ai présenté.
 I 3P.CL 3P.CL/Y have introduced I 2P.CL LOC/3P.CL have introduced
 ‘I have introduced them to them.’ ‘I have introduced you to them.’
 b. *Je l’ ai présenté à eux. d. Je vous présenté à eux hier.

Similar repairs are found in Chinook, Basque, and Finnish (Rezac 2011). Rezac (2011) argues that, in these cases, K or P structure is added as a Last Resort to license a DP.

7. “**Marked nominative**” as **P-insertion**. Along the same lines, I propose that “*marked nominative*” is assigned by a *silent preposition*, inserted to license the subject when another XP moves to Spec-CP (depriving the subject of its usual case assigner, C). This is a Last Resort operation, at the end of a phase, to rescue a caseless nominal, just like PCC repairs (*cf.* Béjar and Rezac 2011, Halpert 2012). This proposal explains the case alternation and the oblique-like distribution of “marked nominative”. Dinka actually only has one structural case, the absolutive, which therefore serves as the structural default. “Marked nominative”, in contrast, is strictly a prepositional case, sometimes assigned by an overt P and sometimes by a silent one.

8. **Non-finite contexts and yes-no questions**. Evidence for this proposal comes from the availability of “marked nominative” in non-finite clauses. In clauses headed by the irrealis/future auxiliary *bé*, which lack tense contrasts, “marked nominative” is still available (7).

- (7) Bòl a-cé Ayén l̄ṅ [bé **Ád̄it** j̄à̄].
 Bol.ABS 3SG-PRF Ayen.ABS encourage.TR IRR Adit.NOM leave
 ‘(lit.) Bol encouraged Ayen for Adit to leave.’

In contrast, the availability of absolutive *does* vary by clause type and hinges on properties of C. It is absent in non-finite clauses without active C/T (6), and in *yes-no* questions (e.g. 4b).

9. **Subjects are not merged as PPs**. Further support for the Last Resort nature of “marked nominative” comes from PPs. PPs become nominal when moving to Spec-CP, but, unlike with subjects, this involves the suffix *-ne*, an allomorph of P, on the 2nd-position verb/auxiliary (8).

- (8) **P̄à̄l** a-cé-**ne** Áyèn cúin cá̄m.
 knife.ABS DCL.SG-PRF-PREP Ayen.NOM food.ABS eat
 ‘With a knife, Ayen ate food.’

Conclusion: This paper argues that the features of C and T need not be strictly separated, since they are merged on the same head in the Nilotic language Dinka. Because the ϕ -features of T are on C, \bar{A} -movement co-occurs with ϕ -agreement and case assignment. Since T itself plays no licensing role in Dinka, non-initial subjects require a repair, “marked nominative” case.

Selected references: Andersen, T. 2002. Case inflection and nominal head marking in Dinka. *Journal of African Languages and Linguistics* 23. - König, C. 2008. *Case in Africa*. OUP. - van Urk, C. & N. Richards. To appear. Two components of long-distance extraction. *LI*.