

Accusative case in PPs

In some Indo-European languages, such as most Slavic ones, Latin, or German, a number of prepositions with spatial meanings take nominal complements in two different cases: an inherent case (e.g. dative, locative, or instrumental), as in (1), and accusative (2). Traditional grammar generalizes that accusative is assigned in the context of a change of state, most frequently of location, in which the relevant PP denotes the result state of this change. Locative, or other oblique cases, are assigned in PPs that modify the entire event (structurally represented as the VP), usually for place. In more formal terms, accusative is linked to the denotation of the goal, or in a decompositional approach to event semantics – of the predicate of the result subevent.

The following generalizations can be made: 1) accusative case is assigned irrespective of the preposition, but directly depending on the denotation of the verb and the relation it establishes to the PP, 2) accusative case can be assigned to a nominal expression appearing as the complement of a preposition only if the eventuality also involves an entity undergoing a change (in position in this case), which is generally the VP-internal argument, and 3) PPs taking a nominal complement in accusative always denote a secondary resultative predicate of the VP-internal argument undergoing a change of location, which is then simultaneously the subject of the secondary predicate and for which the default case is also accusative.

We propose the following account for these generalizations. We argue that only the inherent cases are directly assigned by the P, given the assumption that the P itself is locative only (as opposed to directional), whereas accusative case is not assigned by the P. Instead, we propose that it is a structural case and that the same kind of structural configuration that is responsible for accusative case on internal argument DPs is also responsible for accusative case on PP complements. In doing so we extend Zwart's (to appear) idea of accusative case as a reflex of a hierarchical relation between subjects and predicates to accusative case inside secondary (non-verbal) resultative predicates. More precisely, we argue that the nominative-finiteness complex of the TP domain has a parallel in the domain of the result subevent of telic eventualities: the subject of the result subevent (the undergoer of change) and the predicate of the result subevent agree, and this agreement is marked by the accusative case, the default case of the undergoer. Accusative is first assigned to the undergoer, by a telic verb (or the syntactic structure it projects), and then the resultative predicate receives the same case as the marking of the resultative predication in the result subevent.

A case in support of our view is when in a telic eventuality, a PP denotes a secondary predicate of the direct object, but where the direct object does not express the undergoer, and consequently the secondary predicate does not denote the result predicate. Such is the case in (3), where Marija is in the hospital before, during and after the eventuality and all that changes is Jovan's location: he moves from in the hospital to out of it. The case assigned to the nominal complement of the PP involved is accusative, as predicted by our analysis. Another fact supporting our analysis relates to the features that are involved in finiteness: person, gender and number. While person cannot be marked on the secondary predicate as it is a PP and not a verb – the remaining two features can, but are not marked on result predicate PPs. The nominal complement takes the neutral form (singular neutrum). This is expected if there is a strict division of features with respect to the kind of agreement they mark (adjectival agreement can be explained in terms of their reduced relative clause origin).

Three facts may seem to question the proposed analysis. One is that often telic eventualities are described without an overt constituent lexicalizing the result predicate, as in (4a). We argue that accusative is always first assigned to the undergoer, as the default case marking this role, and only then by agreement also to the complement of the preposition in resultative PPs. Hence, this does not present a problem for our analysis: when the resultative predicate is not overtly specified, it has fully incorporated into the verb, and accusative surfaces only on the undergoer. The second possible objection comes from unaccusatives where the undergoer

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bears nominative, instead of the accusative case, as in (4b). This problem can be solved in terms of a hierarchy of cases: if the marking of nominative has a priority over the marking of accusative, and there is only one candidate, the accusative will be overwritten by nominative. The presence of only one candidate makes the recoverability of the undergoer role straightforward and computationally simple. Note that a hierarchy of cases is needed independently to account for the fact that accusative case overrides the inherent cases that appear with these PPs when there is no resultative meaning. Finally, there are cases where the same participant is both the agent and the undergoer, as in (4c). This is only a problem for our analysis in as much as it is a problem for any analysis that accounts for the particular V-PP combinations in terms of secondary resultative predication (unlike, for instance, Rothstein, 2004), and there are ways to overcome the issue which is entirely independent of the kind of account in terms of event decomposition or not (see, for instance, Neeleman & van de Koot, 2002, who do not assume event decomposition but still analyse such V-PP combinations on a par with resultatives). For the rest, the discussion of the pattern in (4b) applies.

Our analysis gives a neat formal account of the well-known property of case marking inside spatial PPs in the languages under discussion and opens new directions for analyzing case assignment in general and the nature of structural as well as inherent cases.

- (1) a. Elena čital knigu **na avtobuse.** Russian
 Elena read book.ACC on bus.LOC
 'Elena read a (the) book on the bus.'
- b. Hans schob den Wagen **in dem Graben.** German
 Hans pushed the.ACC cart in the.DAT ditch
 'Hans pushed the cart inside the ditch.'
- (2) a. Elena položila knigu **na sumku.** Russian
 Elena put book.ACC on bag.ACC
 'Elena put a (the) book on the bag.'
- b. Hans schob den Wagen **in den Graben.** German
 Hans pushed the.ACC cart in the.ACC ditch
 'Hans pushed the cart into the ditch.'
- (3) a. Jovan ostavi Mariju **u bolnici.** Serbo-Croatian
 Jovan left Marija.ACC in hospital.LOC
 'Jovan left Marija in the hospital.'
- b. Marija je ofarbala sobe **(u) plavo.**
 Marija Aux painted room.F.PL.ACC in blue.N.SG.ACC
 'Marija painted the room blue.'
- (4) a. Jovan je slomio vazuu. Serbo-Croatian
 Jovan Aux broken vase.ACC
 'Jovan broke the/a vase.'
- b. Marija skliznuu bazenu.
 Marija slid in swimmingpool.ACC
 'Marija slid into the swimmingpool.'
- c. Jovan ode u bolnicu.
 Jovan went in hospital.ACC
 'Jovan went into the hospital.'

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