

The Syntax of Case and Agreement: its Relationship to Morphology and Argument

Structure

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In this thesis I argue for a non-arbitrary relationship between the syntax of case and agreement and its morphological realization, as reflected in the following linguistic universals: *1. If a language overtly case-marks the subject, it overtly case-marks the object; 2. If a language has overt object agreement, it has overt subject agreement* (Moravcsik 1974, Greenberg 1963, Comrie 1988, Lehmann 1982, inter alia). The goal of this thesis is to explain the nature of the morphology-syntax connection the above universals embody and explore the consequences it has for syntactic theory, grammars of individual languages, and for UG.

In this dissertation I depart from the Universal Approach (e.g. Chomsky 1981, Rouveret and Vergnaud 1980, and later in Chomsky 1995, 2000, Harley 1995, Sigurdsson 2003 inter alia) that treats case and agreement as universal properties of language and their overt realization as arbitrary and language specific. Building on a proposal presented in Pesetsky and Torrego 2001 that features are interpretable but may become uninterpretable if placed on a wrong head, I argue that case and agreement features are misplaced interpretable features used by languages to create PF-records of thematic relations. I further argue that misplaced features are not universal: in the absence of case and agreement features PF-records of thematic relations are preserved via rigid word order.

I further demonstrate that the restrictions on feature misplacement, together with the inherent properties of misplaced features and the syntactic configurations in which misplaced features are valued, account for the above universals, derive a constrained cross-linguistic case and agreement typology, and have consequences for (non)-configurationality. In particular, I argue that languages without case features, but with agreement features will be non-configurational, languages that have both case and agreement features may allow but not require NP dislocation, and finally languages that lack case and agreement features will have rigid word order. This is the topic of Chapter 4. In this thesis I also address (quirky) dative subjects (Chapter 2), infinitives (Chapter 3), and ergativity (Chapter 5).