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An analysis of unusual case assignment in pronouns

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AN ANALYSIS OF UNUSUAL CASE ASSIGNMENT IN PRONOUNS

By

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1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to explore and analyze a certain set of unique Case realizations of English pronouns. These are instances of pronouns modified by an adjective, determiner, or other element. Given current linguistic theory, the morphological Case marking on the target pronouns is unexpected, and the goal of the thesis is to provide an account of this phenomenon. As an illustration of the central focus of this work, note that a bare pronoun in the subject position of a tensed clause is assigned Nominative Case, as shown in (1):

(1) He hated spiders. vs. *Him hated spiders[1]

However, if this subject pronoun is modified by an adjective and/or a determiner, it occurs in Accusative Case, as shown in (2):

(2) The old him hated spiders. vs. *The old he hated spiders

This particular data set is relatively unexplored in current linguistic literature. The thesis seeks to account for such data, as well as consider what insight the proposed analysis may give to current syntactic theory.

To begin, the thesis lays out necessary background information, drawing upon generative grammar as its foundation, and laying out Case Theory and default Case. Following this, each challenging data set will be analyzed in detail. The analysis proposed includes further development of the principles of default Case by extending a specific analysis of default Case,

[1] A star "*" before an example sentence is the standard notation to indicate that the example is ungrammatical.

that of Schütze (2001), into new domains. The thesis concludes with a summary of hypotheses posed and their potential impacts on the theory of syntax.

2. BACKGROUND

To orient the present analysis, the underlying principles of the analytical approach this thesis follows must first be outlined. There are many schools of thought which may impact how linguistic research is approached.[2] The present work operates under the paradigm of Generative Grammar, and particularly the Principles and Parameters model of the human language faculty.[3] In this section, the paradigm of generative grammar will be outlined, with focus on X-Bar Theory, providing the basic structure of phrases and sentences. Then, an introduction to Case Theory will be presented, as well as the phenomenon known as default Case. This provides the foundation upon which the analysis of the challenging data will be constructed.

2.1 Generative Grammar

Generative grammar is built on the underlying principle of sentence structure being determined by a set of linguistic rules that are hypothesized to be inherent to the underlying structure of the language in question. These rules are not determined by prescriptive notions of grammar, but rather are established through scientific analysis of language. It is important to stress that notions of grammaticality differ when studying linguistics. Traditional, prescriptive rules are generally byproducts of cultural norms, and not indicative of underlying linguistic rules. When discussing grammaticality in the present work, the linguist's notion of grammar will be

[2] See, for example, Newmeyer (1986); see also Harris (1993).
[3] Among many others, see Chomsky (1981), Carnie (2012)

used. Grammaticality, in the context of generative grammar, is thus the adherence to the innate rules of language.

The grammatical rules of interest to the present analysis revolve around syntactic theory. Syntax is the field of linguistics concerned with sentence creation and structure. Generative grammar assumes that certain sentence creation mechanisms are inherent to human language. Thus, there are generative rules which govern how a sentence may or may not be constructed, and nonadherence to these rules results in an ungrammatical structure. The rules necessary to begin analysis will be introduced in the next section.

2.2 X-Bar Theory

Another aspect of linguistic theory that must be clarified is X-Bar Theory.[4] This is a theory of human phrase structure, one that constrains the representation of the internal structure of the phrases of a language. It is based on the notion that each type of linguistic phrase has the same basic form. This basic form acts as a template for phrases, which all languages must conform to. X-Bar Theory also aligns with a core principle of generative grammar, in that there is a set rule of structure which is then actualized in various ways while adhering to the template.[5] The analysis laid out in this thesis utilizes multiple X-Bar structures to represent the examples presented. An advantage of this notation is the clear hierarchy established with X-Bar notation, which is able to highlight the embedding and distance between Case assigners and assignees, which, in turn, will provide a clearer account for the case of pronouns.

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[4] See Chomsky (1970) and Jackendoff (1977) for seminal work on X-bar Theory.
[5] While the basic structure of phrases of different categories is the same, the word order of the elements within the phrase can vary from language to language. For recent views on linguistic parameters, see Robert (2019).

Overall, generative grammar assumes that the core rules of syntax are innate to the human mind. There is a base human language faculty that is uniform throughout the species, and the theory of the language faculty is referred to as Universal Grammar, which predicts that there is a certain set of innate characteristics and a framework upon which each individual human language, like French or Japanese or English, is built. Universal Grammar does not suggest that every language is the same, at least not on the surface, but rather that every language is built upon the same sets of rules or constraints.

These brief properties of the syntactic framework this work's analysis is carried out in provides a foundation for some more detailed components of syntactic theory. Turning to Case, an in-depth overview of the relevant aspects of Case Theory shall be presented.

2.3 Case

An integral element of the syntax, Case is a grammatical feature that must be present on all DPs of a given sentence (Carnie, 2012).[6] Any noun with phonetic features must have an assigned Case in order for an utterance to be grammatical (Chomsky, 1981).[7] These are the underlying principles of Case Theory, a foundational and well-tested subcomponent of generative grammar.

In linguistic theory, there are two related but separate notions of Case. Abstract Case is the purely grammatical feature which is assigned via syntactic mechanisms and may or may not be represented in the phonological production of a given utterance. Morphological Case is the

[6] This thesis assumes the Determiner Phrase (DP) analysis of Abney (1987). In a phrase such as *the man*, the determiner *the* is the head of the DP, while the Noun Phrase (NP) is its compliment.
[7] For a general theory of Case, see Blake (2012).

varying forms of nouns, adjectives, and other elements residing within an NP or DP. These forms may be bound morphemes attached to these elements, or different forms entirely, and these forms are often, but not always, associated with the assigned abstract Case.

There are many different Cases in the languages of the world, but for the purposes of this thesis, focus will be on the Cases which appear in the English language. These are Nominative, Accusative, and Genitive. Abstract Case begins as a feature of verbs, prepositions, and the tensed element, but through the process of constructing a sentence, this feature is assigned to DPs (Chomsky, 1981). For example, consider the following:

(3) Jenny saw them.
+ACC → +ACC

The transitive verb *see* inherently bears the Accusative Case, +ACC, and through the course of the derivation, must assign it over to the object DP in the structure. In (3), that object DP is the third person plural pronoun, which actualizes as *them* because of the Accusative Case it receives from the verb.

This assignment process requires the assigning element and receiving element to be in close proximity to each other within the sentence structure. The structural proximity between the two elements is what creates the environments in which abstract Case is assigned (Chomsky 1981; Carnie, 2012). For example, Accusative Case is assigned via a positional relationship between an active voice, transitive verb or a preposition. Nominative Case is assigned through the +tense element, which subsequently attaches to the verb. That is, Nominative case is inherently borne by +tense, T, and is assigned to the DP in the specifier position of T, as illustrated in the following:

(4) They T left the party.

+NOM ← +NOM

Genitive Case arises in the specifier position of a DP. In this structure, the DP itself receives Case, either Accusative or Nominative, but the presence of a noun or pronoun in the specifier position triggers Genitive assignment. Thus, consider the following example:

(5) the man's coat is warm

[[+GEN] +NOM] ← +NOM

The phrase *the man's coat* is assigned Nominative Case, as it is the subject of the verb *is.* However, the DP *the man* receives Genitive, as marked by the *'s*, because of its position relative to *coat*.[8]

After abstract Case is assigned, the structure can be handed over to the morpho-phonology. The Case Filter[9] checks to ensure that all DPs have received abstract Case; if a DP has not been assigned an abstract Case feature, a Case Filter violation results and the sentence is rendered ungrammatical (Carnie, 2012). For example, consider the ungrammaticality of the following construction:

(6) Jared tried the baby to sleep.

The DP *the baby* does not receive an abstract Case feature, thereby violating the Case Filter.

However, if the Case Filter deems a sentence grammatical, the structural information created by the syntax is handed over to the morpho-phonology, which then provides instruction

[8] There are many intricacies associated with Genitive Case that go beyond the scope of this thesis. See Lyons (2008).

[9] The Case Filter states that all DP's with lexical content must be assigned abstract Case in the course of the derivation.

on how to externalize the utterance, as speech or sign. In some languages, externalization manifests itself as a particular Case affix or a different word form altogether. For example, in Japanese, the subject which receives Nominative Case is marked with the particle *ga* and the object which receives Accusative case is marked with the particle *o*. Thus, when breaking down a simple structure such as the following (7), there are overt Case markers which express the assigned Case feature.

(7) otoko ga hon o yomimasu
man+NOM book+ACC read+pastT
The man read the book

This change can be seen in just the noun, or all elements of that particular phrase, as Case assigned to one phrase diffuses across to attach to and affect the nucleus or other elements of the phrase. (Chomsky, 1981). An example of a language which expresses Case this way is German, as seen in the sentence below:

(8) Der alte Mann hat den Hund
the+Nom old+Nom man had the+ACC dog
The old man had the dog

Overt Case marking appears on the determiners.[10] *Der* and *den* are two different forms of the determiner *the*, with the only difference being whether it is realized as Nominative or Accusative.

[10] See Schütze (2001) for additional examples of this type.

In other languages, including English, most nouns do not overtly express their case through morphology. However, whether or not Case is expressed morphologically, there still must be abstract Case assigned in order for a sentence to be grammatical.

Despite the lack of morphological Case on most English nouns, the pronominal system has still retained some Case distinction between Nominative, Accusative, and Genitive. Consider the three examples below:

(9) Janice talked to him.

(10) He talked to Janice.

(11) Janice talked to Martin.

In all three instances, Nominative and Accusative Case is assigned to one of the two nouns, however only some of them express this assignment overtly. In (9), *Janice* received abstract Nominative Case, while the third-person singular masculine pronoun received Accusative Case. However, this Case assignment is only overtly realized on the pronoun and not the proper noun. The Accusative-Case-marked pronoun is pronounced as *him*, not *he*. In comparison, that same pronominal element received Nominative Case in (10), and such assignment causes it to be overtly realized as *he* instead of *him*. Notice that the NP *Janice* did not change its morphological form regardless of receiving Nominative or Accusative Case. In English, almost all nouns remain the same overtly when assigned abstract Case, with the exception of pronouns. English pronouns, then, provide a window into the workings of the Case system, and will be the basis of the analysis throughout this thesis for that reason.

The overt realization of Case is known as morphological Case. That is, when a noun presents a change in its morpho-phonemic structure due to the Case it is assigned, the different forms it may take are morphological Case. In (10), *he* is not only the third-person singular masculine pronoun, but it is also Nominative. Likewise, the form in (9) is Accusative. There is no other difference between the two pronouns, so the form of one over another is solely impacted by the Case they are assigned. So, in this instance the abstract Case feature is realized as overt morphological Case.

As previously noted, an NP or DP which does not receive abstract Case is a violation of the Case Filter, which thus renders a sentence ungrammatical (Chomsky, 1981). For example, consider the following sentences:

(12) *Kate is proud the garden

(13) Kate is proud of the garden

The absence of the prepositional element in (12) makes the sentence ungrammatical. This is because *proud*, unlike a transitive verb or preposition, does not inherently bear an abstract Case feature–that is an important lexical distinction between verbs and adjectives. It is this lack of Case attached to the second noun phrase, *the garden,* that leaves the sentence ungrammatical. The addition of the preposition *of* in (13) provides Case to this noun phrase, resulting in grammaticality. This is how *the garden* receives Accusative Case. *Of* is semantically empty, and its presence is solely to assign abstract Case to *the garden* in this instance.

However, the addition of prepositions is not enough to save every instance of ungrammaticality. For example, consider the two following ungrammatical sentences:

(14) *Jared tried the baby to sleep

(15) *Jared tried of the baby to sleep

Clearly, the addition of the preposition *of* is unable to salvage the ungrammatical utterance (14), as shown in (15). Thus, *of* can be inserted only with adjectives[11] and not with verbs or the tense element.

This subsection has outlined some of the basic principles and properties of a component of the syntax called Case Theory. The central mechanisms of Case Theory are well-tested, and there is clear evidence supporting it. The phenomenon of Case Assignment is a well-understood aspect of grammatical theory and is supported by empirical evidence from a wide range of languages. However, in addition to these notions of Case Theory, a brief examination of the phenomenon known as default Case will provide further insight into the process of Case assignment. Next shall be an examination of default Case.

2.4 Default Case

Default Case, as described by Schütze (2001), is a morphological Case assigned in positions "that are not associated with any Case feature assigned or otherwise determined by syntactic mechanisms". In other words, if a Case-receiving element is in a position where it is unable to receive abstract Case assignment, it can receive default Case. In his definition, Schütze assumes the distinction between morphological and abstract Case outlined above; they are separate, but possibly overlapping processes. In this regard, he sets the precedent that while the

[11] The preposition *of* also arises with N which, like adjectives, do not have an abstract Case feature to assign. See Chomsky (1981).

majority of linguistic constructions will contain morphological Case features which match the assigned abstract Case, there is potential for instances where morphological Case arises without the presence of an underlying abstract Case feature. It is these instances in which default Case can be observed.[12]

According to Schütze, the default Case may vary by language. In one diagnostic for determining the default Case of a particular language, constructing an utterance lacking any Case assigning elements may reveal the default Case. For example, consider the following exchange:

(16) Q: Who wants to go to the park?

(17) A: a. I do vs. *Me do

b. Me vs. *I

When formulating a question such as in (16), there are two possible ways in which a respondent may structure their answer. In (17a), the response *I do* is grammatical, while *Me do* is not. This is due to the morphological Case form the first-person singular pronoun takes. The presence of the tensed verb *do* creates a Case assigning environment, and as such, the pronominal element within proximity to this Case assigner must match the assigned Case, which in this instance is Nominative. In such an example, the tense element (which ultimately surfaces on the verb) transfers the Nominative Case to the pronoun, which then signals to the morphology that the element must be pronounced using the Nominative form. In this instance, that is the form *I*, which then creates the grammatical construction *I do*. *Me* is the Accusative form, which does not match the assigned Nominative Case, and the discrepancy between the two is what makes *Me do*

[12] For further discussion of Default Case, see Alotaibi (2020) and also Schütze (1997).

ungrammatical. In short, the abstract Nominative feature cannot be morphologically realized as Accusative.

However, in example (17b), there is a distinct difference in which pronoun form is considered the grammatical response. Without the presence of the verb *do,* the tense element is also eliminated from the construction, which would be the Case assigning element in this scenario. This is the heart of Schüze's notion of default Case. In instances where a Case-receiving feature, in this case the first-person singular pronoun, is in a position where it cannot receive abstract Case, it may revert to what is known as default Case. In English, the default Case is the Accusative, which is illustrated by the grammaticality of the proposed responses in (17b), where it is the Accusative form *me*, not *I*. Languages other than English may use other Cases as their default. As Schütze (2001) points out, default Nominative arises in Icelandic, Greek, Russian, Latin, and Arabic. But for the purposes of this work, the English default Accusative Case will make up much of the present analysis.

This section has outlined the core ideas of the generative grammar approach to syntax. The basic principles of an important subcomponent of syntax, Case Theory, has been laid out, as well as the notion of default Case according to Schütze (2001). With this background in place, this thesis turns to the data that seems to challenge certain predictions of Case Theory and suggest analyses of this data.

3. THE CHALLENGING DATA

Despite the extensive research which developed Case Theory, there are still structures arising with Case assignment that challenges the theory. In the present analysis there will be four different data sets which contain instances of Case assignment that run contrary to the prediction

laid out by Case Theory. It is the goal of this thesis is to account for such data, and the tool with which such analyses will be made is the notion of default Case, revised and extended. The default Case does not directly account for the data presented, but with additional analysis and constraints placed upon default Case, hypotheses may be formed which are able to explain these counterexamples to the theory. The analyses following each data set build off the foundational explanation of default Case presented by Schütze and contain additional new mechanisms which allow for the default Case to explain, or partially explain, these phenomena.

3.1 Embedded Pronoun

The first set of data involves a pronoun which has been embedded within a larger DP. Under current notions of Case assignment, the whole DP receives the abstract Case feature, and the morphology follows this instruction to produce the matching pronominal form. However, in certain instances where there is no abstract case assigned, Schütze's default Case takes hold and provides a morphological Case to unassigned DPs. Consider the following examples:[13]

(18) I hated chocolate. vs. *Me hated chocolate.

(19) Old me hated chocolate. vs. *Old I hated chocolate.

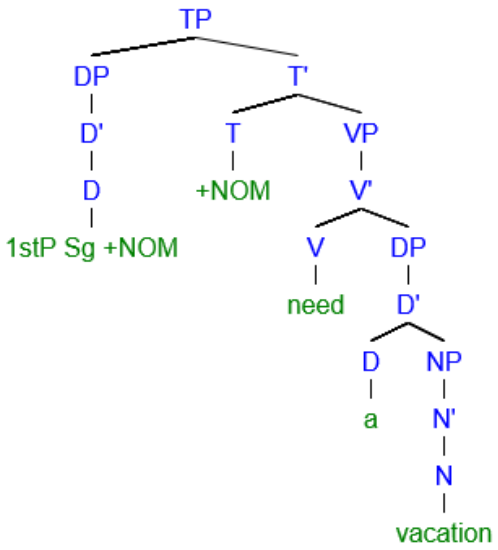
(20) The old me hated chocolate vs. *The old I hated chocolate.

In (18), the first person pronominal element is expressed in the Nominative Case, as expected by the Case assignment rules of Case Theory.[14] The tense element has assigned abstract Nominative

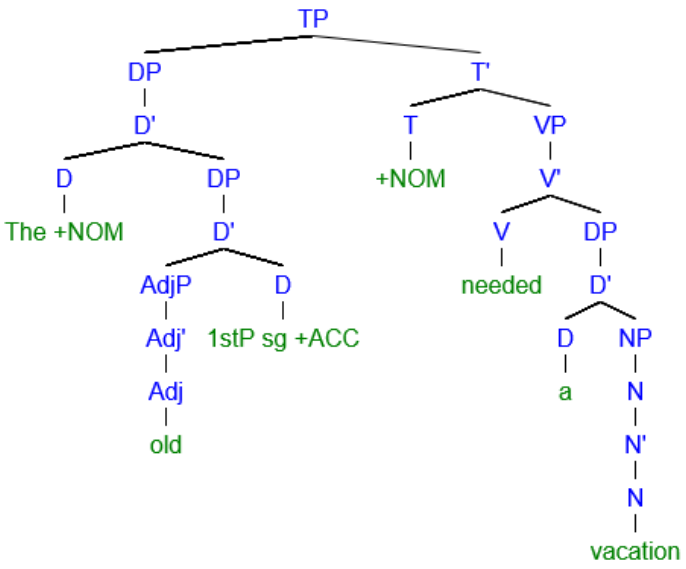
[13] For earlier views on some related data, see Klima (1964), and Schütze (1997, 2001).
[14] With Schütze, it is assumed that a pronoun is a Determiner and thus is the head of DP, a view traced to Postal (1969).

Case to the DP, and thus the pronoun is morphologically actualized as such. However, when the DP takes on more structure, the Case assignment seems to change. In (19) and (20), the pronoun is no longer expressed as Nominative, and instead takes on the Accusative morphological Case. Upon first glance, the additional elements seem to block Nominative Case assignment to the pronominal element, resulting in the default Case that Schütze proposes. According to Schütze's analysis, any Case-receiving object that is not in a Case-receiving position takes default Case, and that is what seems to be happening here. For a clearer illustration, see the tree structures compared below:

(21) I need a vacation.



(22) The old me needed a vacation.



The clearest difference between these two examples is the DP in the specifier position of the TP. In (21), the pronominal element is the only part of the DP, so when T distributes Nominative Case, it is able to attach to it to create *I* (rather than the Accusative *me*). However, in (22), the pronominal element is embedded, as proposed for similar constructions in Schütze. There is a second DP that has been embedded into a larger DP. When T distributes Case in this structure, it attaches to the larger DP, but does not appear to impact the embedded DP. As previously noted, Case assignment requires close structural proximity, and in the example (22), the pronoun is significantly further down the tree structure. This distance, it is assumed, makes it impossible for Case to be assigned directly to the embedded DP, so it receives no abstract Case.

In Schütze's analysis, default Case arises in instances where the object in question does not associate with any abstract Case feature assigned and is unable to receive Case through other syntactic means. However, it is known that abstract Case is able to diffuse to each element within a DP that receives Case. This is not noticeable in English as the morphological Case makes no distinction outside of the pronominal system, but in other languages, Case features may be

present on nouns, adjectives, and determiners. Consider the example (8), discussed in the previous section. In such languages it appears that each of these elements generally takes the morphological form which matches the abstract Case assigned to the whole phrase.[15]

In (22), the embedded DP is still a constituent of the larger DP which receives abstract Case. It could be argued that, due to the Case spreading just reviewed, that this is not an example of a default Case environment, as the embedded pronoun has the chance to receive Case through its relation to the higher DP. However, this is clearly not what happens in this example, as the pronoun takes the Accusative, and therefore the default Case, in what is otherwise a Nominative case position.

It is clear in (22) that Case cannot be assigned directly from the tense element, as the embedded pronoun is too deeply embedded into the structure of the subject DP. If it could, the expected Case would be Nominative and not Accusative. It is also clear that there is nothing within the vicinity of the embedded DP which can provide additional Case assignments. The only possible way for the embedded pronoun to receive Case would be through the diffusion of Case from the parent DP as a constituent of it. However, that does not happen, as the pronoun ultimately ends up with Accusative. Thus, this diffusion must be blocked by something within the structure, and this analysis hypothesizes the blocking element to be the introduction of the embedded DP.

It seems that the embedded DP in (22) is unable to receive Case from the same source that the parent DP received it from. The Case assigned to the highest DP is blocked from

[15] This phenomenon is sometimes referred to as Case Concord; see, for example, Carstens (2000).

diffusing down to the embedded DP, and it seems to be the introduction of embedding itself which prevents Case assignment to reach the pronoun. The embedded pronoun is structurally too far from the Nominative Case assigner to receive abstract Case. The presence of a secondary DP prevents the abstract Case feature from reaching the pronoun, and this, in turn, creates the environment for default Case. The pronoun defaults to Accusative case in (22) for essentially the same reason as it defaults to accusative in an environment such as example (17) in the previous section.

3.2 Reflexivity

During the process of exploring the data set comprising the embedded pronouns, an interesting phenomenon occurred when introducing a reflexive pronoun. As is well-known from Binding Theory, a reflexive pronoun must agree with its local antecedent for the features person, gender and number.[16] The antecedent is what determines the person, gender, and number of the reflexive pronoun. Consider this straightforward example which demonstrates a reflexive pronoun:

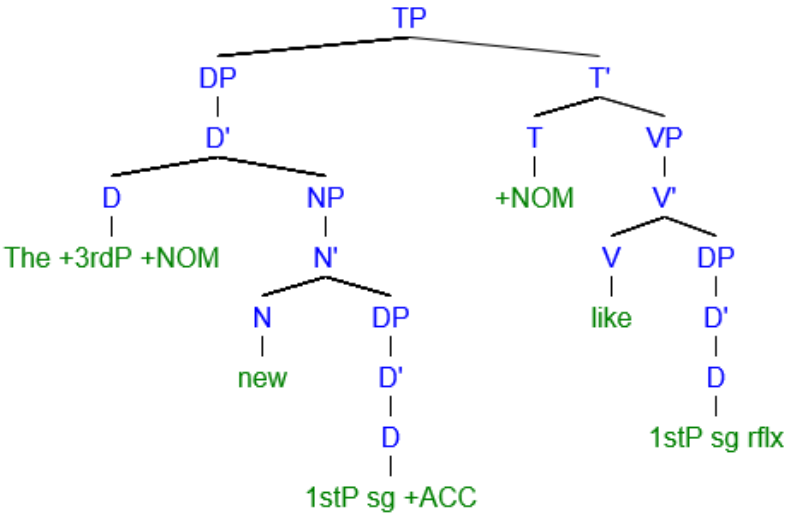
(23) I like myself. vs. *The man likes myself.

As expected, the reflexive pronoun takes the first person form, as its antecedent is the first person singular pronoun. However, it was shown above that embedding a pronoun can have an impact on its morphological Case, and that raises additional questions. If a pronoun is embedded, as in (22) above, can it still serve as the antecedent of a reflexive pronoun and control that reflexive's

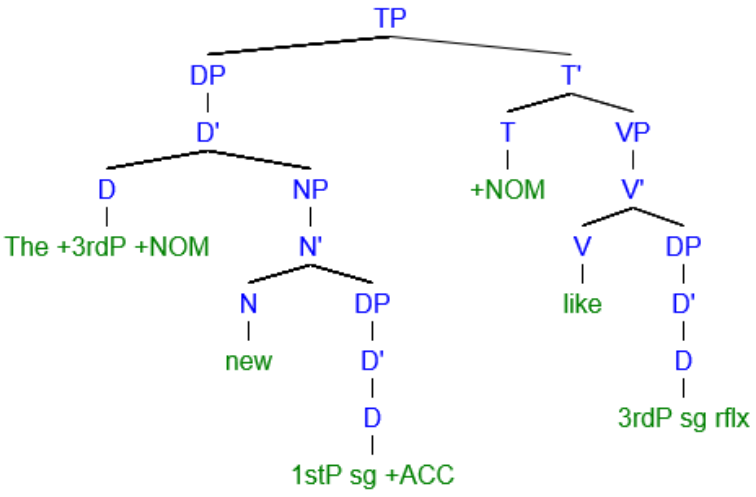
[16] See Chomsky (1981) and subsequent work on Binding Theory.

person, gender and number features? Consider, then, the following two examples, which showcase the extended effects of embedding:

(24) The new me likes myself.



(25) The new me likes himself.



Notice the grammaticality of each. The reflexive pronoun appears to be able to take the form of the first person singular or the third person singular, regardless of the fact that the embedded pronoun in both examples is the first person singular pronoun.

An initial analysis of this suggests that the difference between *myself* and *himself* may lie, at least in part, in the interpretation of these two sentences. There is a notion with these, and other embedded pronoun examples, that the entity *the new me* is in fact separate from the speaker. One might consider *the new me* as a part to whole relation, where there is a mental distancing effect, which then allows the speaker to refer to that version of themself in the third person. This perception shift, therefore, might be a factor that allows for the reflexive pronoun form found in (25). This thesis is unable to fully explore this particular analysis, however further psycholinguistic research may provide insight into how this phenomenon may impact the reflexive pronoun in these instances.

There is a further factor in (24) and (25) that needs to be considered, namely, the verb agreement pattern. In each of the embedded pronoun examples given above, the verb has taken the form which agrees with the third person subject, regardless of the person of the pronoun in that position. In (24), for example, *The new me likes…*, notice that the verb takes the suffix *-s*, which is the conjugation form indicative of a third person subject.[17] However, the pronoun form in that example is *me*, the first person. This suggests that the embedded pronoun is not what controls verb agreement. That the higher DP alone controls agreement with the verb aligns with current knowledge of verb agreement, as the subject must be syntactically close to the verb in

[17] Although Schütze notes the agreement pattern, he does not consider the data presented above on reflexives; thus for Schütze the subject is simple 3rd person. The data presented here suggests that the matter is more complicated than that, since the pronoun within subject DP can apparently control the person and gender of the reflexive.

order to agree with it. As with the abstract Case assignment, the verb can only reach as far as the parent DP, and that DP must have the third person feature in order to produce verb forms such as the ones seen in this data set. It is unclear currently what exactly is causing this DP to take the third person rather than the person of the embedded pronoun, but it is clear that the DP must have that feature. This additionally supports the hypothesis posed in the previous section, which suggests that something about embedding a DP blocks Case assignment, and additionally constrains the embedded DP from interacting with the verb agreement process.

However, it seems that the obstruction does not impact antecedent assignment with reflexive pronouns. In (25), the reflexive pronoun takes the person of the highest DP in subject position. However, in (24), the reflexive pronoun is able to bypass that DP and penetrate past the barrier which blocked Case and verb agreement, and take the embedded pronoun as its antecedent. This suggests that the embedded pronoun is not completely enclosed and cut off from syntactic processes within the structure. There are some elements this embedded pronoun is still able to interact with, even though it is unable to control agreement or receive abstract Case.[18]

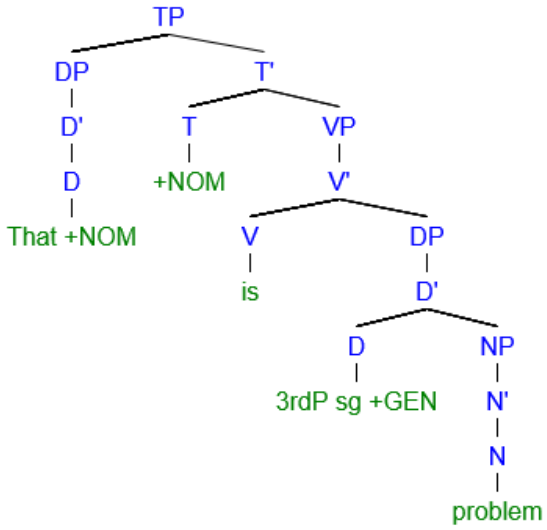
3.3 Category Shift

The next set of data is comprised of instances where a pronoun undergoes a category shift, or otherwise takes on attributes of another grammatical category. Because of this shift, the

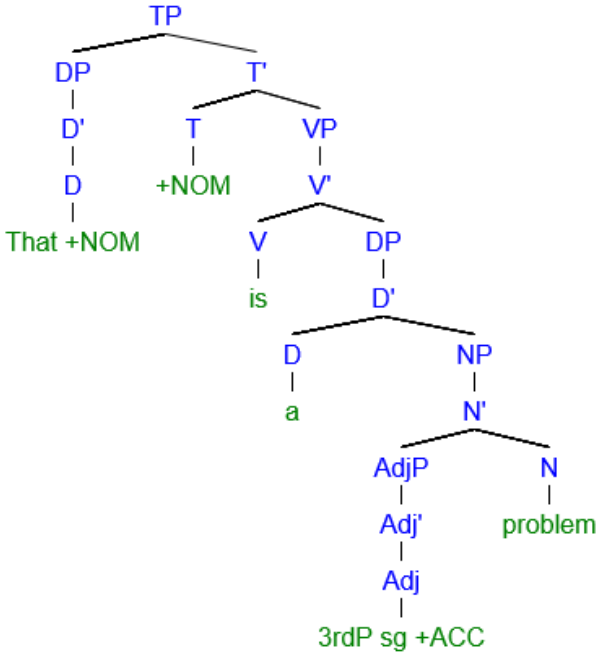
[18] An alternative view is that the embedded pronoun is functioning logophorically; it is well-known that logophoric pronouns can take a wider range of antecedents than regular reflexives; see, for example, Cult (1997). Further exploration goes beyond the scope of this thesis.

pronominal element is pushed further away from a Case assigner, in a similar fashion to the embedded pronoun examples previously shown. Consider the following:

(26) That is his problem.



(27) That is a him problem.



The pronoun form in (26) is the third person Genitive pronoun, which received its Case due to the position of the pronoun within the DP.[19] However, when introducing an additional determiner, in this instance the indefinite article *a,* the pronoun is shifted further away from that verb. This creates the same distance problem found in the previous two data sets. This analysis hypothesizes that with this additional embedding or distance introduced, the pronoun is too far away from the Case assigner to receive abstract Case, and therefore it defaults to morphological Accusative. One might argue that in (27), the complement of the copular *be* is an Accusative position; for example, it is grammatical to get *That's him (on the phone).* Perhaps, then, the Accusative Case is expected, as the pronoun is still part of a DP which receives abstract Accusative Case from the verb. However, consider this construction:

(28) A him problem is never a me problem.

Here, the pronoun is within a DP that is clearly in a Nominative position, and yet the same result as the first data set arises: the pronoun has Accusative. Thus, the additional element before the pronoun must prevent abstract Case from assigning and influencing the pronoun embedded into the structure, and it is the default Accusative that results.

Note that the category of the pronominal element in cases such as (28) is not clear. Is *him* an adjectival modifying the head noun *problem,* or is *him* nominal? In either case, the crucial point is that the pronominal element is embedded with a larger DP, much like the first data set, and for the same reason as described previously, it is the presence of the embedded DP which prevents abstract Case assignment, thereby triggering default Accusative. In addition, it is clear

[19] See Abney (1987) for discussion.

that these pronouns have a different function than the Genitive pronoun presented in (26), and this difference is reflected in the structure, and therefore the Case, of the pronoun.

3.4 Postmodification

The final set of data examines instances of postmodification. For example, consider the grammaticality of the following sentences:

(29) We parents worry for our students.

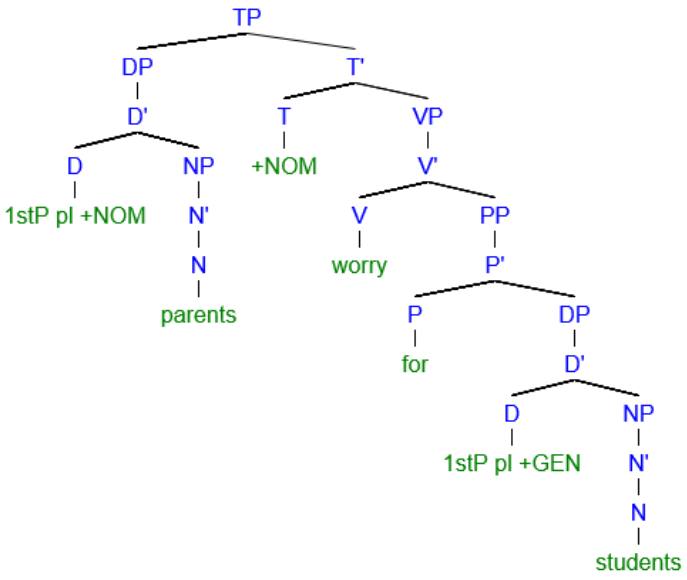
(30) Us parents worry for our students.

Both of these examples are grammatical, and it is simple enough to explain the form of (29), as that is the expected Nominative Case form. However, (30) is equally grammatical[20] but the explanation offered as to why that may be the case is unclear. Schütze proposes that a structure "with the pronoun in some lower position" is what allows (30) to be formed, though Schütze does not provide any further details as to what that structure may be (Schütze, 2001). Thus, the present analysis must consider the possibilities, given what has already been determined about the default Case, and elaborate on this concept.

To begin, consider the structure below:

(31)

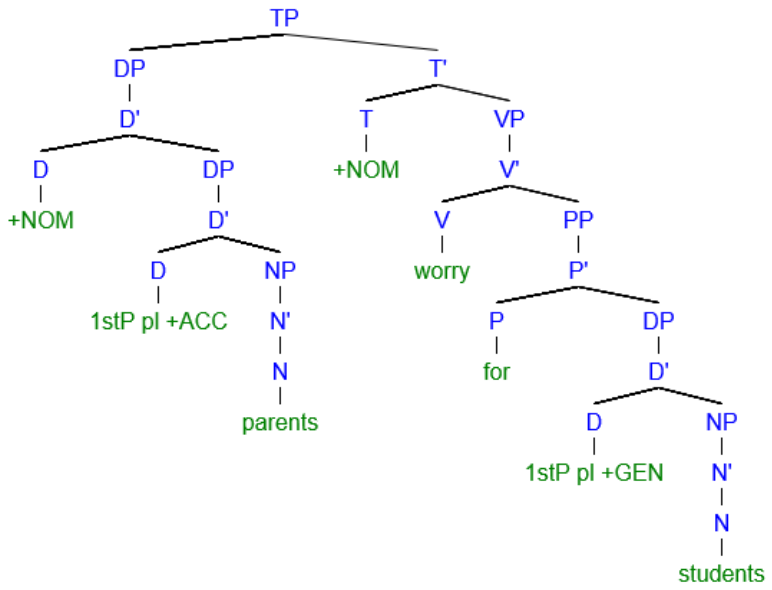
[20] Recall the fundamental distinction made at the outset between prescriptive grammar and linguistic theory. (30) might be unpreferred prescriptively, but it is grammatical as far as linguistics is concerned since it is systematically used by speakers. For further discussion see Pinker (2014).



The pronominal element remains the head of the highest DP, which receives the abstract Nominative Case feature from the tensed element of T. That Case is allowed to diffuse downwards and attach to the pronominal head. The postmodifier *parents* is not in a position to block or impact Case, so the Nominative Case *we* is actualized in this construction.

However, there must be some element of the structure of (30) which blocks the assignment of Nominative Case. Recall that Schütze states that perhaps the pronoun could be in some lower position, which would then trigger the default Accusative case. However, the notion of the pronoun appearing in a lower position seems unlikely given the current construction, as there is no lower DP and no additional elements in front of it which would force the pronoun lower. One could assume Schütze meant the lower position in a literal sense, and embed the DP construction of (31) into an empty DP, creating the following construction:

(32)



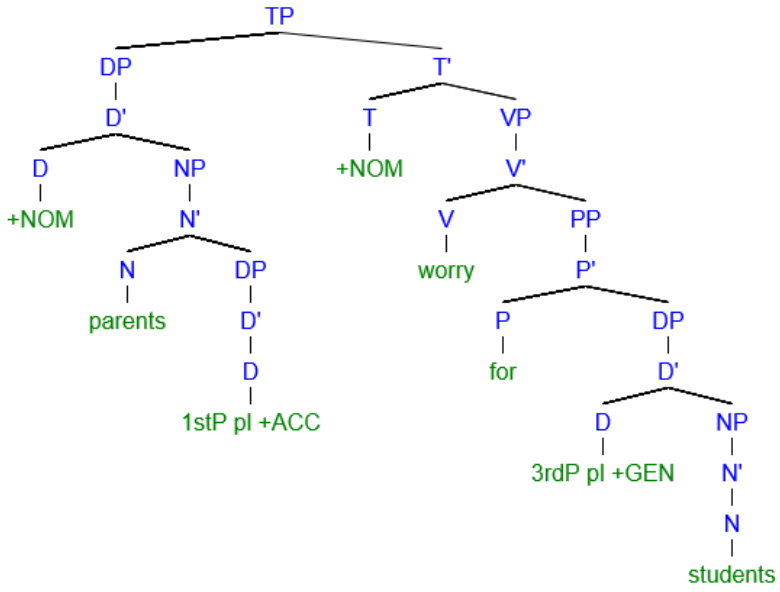
Constructing (32) as such would force the pronoun to take default Case. Nominative Case would attach to the empty DP, and diffusion would be blocked by the introduction of the embedded DP, thereby forcing it to take default Case. However, there are a few problems with this construction. The first, and perhaps most obvious, is the unnecessary complication of being able to embed into an empty DP in the first place. If this were the proper construction, then technically any sentence could be forced into a default Case by simply embedding the DP inside another. This is clearly not allowed, otherwise sentences such as *Me went to the movies* would be just as grammatical as *I went to the movies* so long as *me* is embedded in an empty DP.

The embedded DP in this example raises another issue. The NP within the DP would, in this construction, also be blocked from receiving Case. Chomsky argues that every noun must receive Case for a sentence to be grammatical, and this construction violates that requirement (Chomsky, 1981). There is no evidence to suggest that default Case is allowed to diffuse in the same way that assigned Case can, though there is no construction identified at this time which allows for testing of such properties. Regardless, this construction, while simple in theory, raises

many more issues which, in the perspective of this analysis, render it an unlikely solution to the present issue.

Therefore, this analysis will draw from data previously discussed in this thesis, and take a different approach to the embedded pronoun required for this construction. Considering the productivity of the embedded pronoun presented as the first set of data, consider the following postmodification construction:

(33):



The deep structure proposed in this analysis mirrors that of the embedded pronouns presented as the first data set in this thesis (See Example 22). At first glance, one might argue that the semantically empty DP raises the same issues as the rejected analysis. However, this analysis requires movement, as the embedded pronoun raises up into the empty DP after Case has been assigned in order to get the expected word order. To do so, there would need to be an empty space for it to raise to, and in this case, the empty DP serves that function.

4. CONCLUSION

After carefully analyzing the above data sets, a revised framework of default Case can be laid out. To summarize the four data sets, this thesis analyzed how embedded pronouns, reflexive pronouns, postmodification, and adjectival pronouns interacted with Schütze's notions of default Case. In addition, the analysis expanded upon Schütze's framework, allowing for a more precise understanding of the circumstances that allow for default Case.

First, it is important to note how Chomsky's (1981) diffusion analysis for Case assignment plays an integral role in creating the environment needed for default Case. In all four data sets, the introduction of default Case relied upon the foundation of the embedded pronoun. In this first example, it was argued that despite the ability for assigned abstract Case to diffuse to other elements within the DP, there must be a point at which that diffusion is blocked. It is suggested, therefore, that the presence of a lower DP must be the point at which this diffusion ends. Chomsky points out that all DPs and NPs must receive Case, and the presence of default Case in this lower DP suggests that each DP must be assigned Case from a different source. An NP embedded in a DP may receive Case through diffusion, but a DP cannot receive Case through diffusion from a higher DP, as shown in example (22). Therefore, the introduction of an embedded DP is the catalyst needed to build the environment in which default Case can arise.

An interesting note on default Case is its ability to change the person of the DP. As discussed in the section highlighting the reflexive pronoun, the two DPs can carry conflicting information. For example, verb agreement with instances of default Case suggests that the DP is interpreted as third person, regardless of the pronoun. This is only true in the singular, as the plural embedded pronoun presented in the postmodification section retains its expected verb

agreement. But as shown in the reflexive pronoun case, the embedded pronoun itself still retains its person, and the reflexive pronoun is able to "choose" which of the two conflicting persons to take. The verb is unable to make that choice due to its proximity requirement. The embedded pronoun is too far away to agree with for the same reason it was unable to provide it Case in the first place. However, reflexive pronouns have greater reach, and thus are able to penetrate the protective shell of the higher DP to agree with the pronoun itself, despite also being able to take the person of that higher DP. This, of course, raises the question as to why this person change occurs in the first place, and why it only happens in the singular. The first question has no clear answer, but there is a way to consider the second through cross-linguistic analysis. In English, all standard verb endings for plural subjects take the same form. There is a chance that the plural forms do change agreement from first to third person in the same pattern as in the singular, but such a change would not be discernible with English.

All of the present analyses may be tested via cross-linguistic analysis. Considering the language's default Case and constructing situations wherein a pronoun must be embedded in a DP should yield similar results to the findings in this analysis. As Accusative is not the default Case for every language, determining the default for another language and testing how it reacts in these particular environments would provide additional evidence for or against the theory laid out. It would be expected that, in a language where the default Case is Nominative for example, an embedded pronoun phrase *the old me* would be constructed as *the old I*, and receive the Nominative Case even in an abstract Accusative setting.

This thesis has provided additional necessary groundwork in analyzing the Case features of these data sets. The extended analysis of default Case is crucial to understanding how Case is

assigned in these instances, and further research into these examples will continue to expand understanding of this phenomenon within linguistic theory.

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