Differential Object Marking by A’-status
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The puzzle

In Choctaw, in-situ non-subjects are optionally case-marked:

(1) Alikchi-yat tákkon-(a) apa-tok.  
Doctor-nom peach-(acc) eat-pst  
‘The doctor ate a peach.’

(2) Bill-at [katah-(a) i-kangmi] afaama-tok?  
Possessor Bill-nom [who-(acc) dat-cousin] meet-pst  
‘Whose cousin did Bill meet?’

A’-movement makes case-marking obligatory (cf. Broadwell 2006):

(3) Tákkon-*(a) alikchi-yat.  
Topicalization peach-(acc) doctor-nom  
‘A peach, the doctor ate.’

(4) Katah-*(a) Bill-at [i-kangmi] afaama-tok? Wh-mvt  
who-(acc) Bill-nom [dat-cousin] meet-pst  
‘Whose cousin did Bill meet?’

Extraposition doctor-nom eat-pst peach-(acc)  
‘The doctor ate it, a peach.’

Proposal: this pattern is Differential Object Marking.

- DOM is typically conditioned by intrinsic properties of nominals, 
  e.g. definiteness, specificity, animacy, person, namehood, etc.
- The Choctaw pattern assimilates to DOM if A’-status is also an 
  intrinsic property of a nominal.

Q-particle theory allows us to encode A’-status in an NP’s extended projection.

The solution: Q[uCase]

DOM as an exceptional case requirement

A recent approach to DOM: differentially-marked NPs have a special 

- [uCase] is introduced by some head in the nominal spine, e.g. D, 
  leading to definiteness-based DOM (as in Hebrew):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definite NP</th>
<th>Indefinite NPs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definiteness</td>
<td>Indefiniteness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DP</td>
<td>N or Spec</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D[uCase] SpecP</td>
<td>SpecP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spec NumP</td>
<td>Num N or Spec NumP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Num N</td>
<td>Num N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

No [uCase] feature = no need for case!

Movement is a prereq for obligatory case-marking...

Non-argument NPs in A’-positions are optionally case-marked:

(8) Walmart-(a) kana-p-atok  
Walmart-(acc) someone-dem-nom 1sg.dat-shout-pst  
‘Some guy shouted at me at Walmart.’

(9) Himmak nittak-(a) ish-balil-aachi-h-g?  
now day-(acc) 2sg.erg-run-fut-tns-q  
‘Are you going to run today?’

Explanation: adjunct topics are base-generated in A’-positions 
(Haegeman 2000, 2012). They lack Q, so no obligatory case.

...and it’s got to be A’-movement

Short movement within the middlefield does not induce case marking:

Caseless object can move over participial phrase

(10) ⟨Bashpo-(ya)⟩ [tōshpa-t] (bashpo-(ya)) haloppachih!  
knife-(acc) [be.quick-ptcp] knife-(acc) sharpen  
‘Hurry up and sharpen that knife!’

(11) Oft-(a) [hattak-(a)] [waheviwa-t] (hattak-(a)) liyohli-tok.  
dog-nom man-(acc) [bark-tpcp] man-(acc) chase-pst  
‘The dog chased the man, barking continuously.’

Caseless object can move over other object

(12) ⟨iti-(ya)⟩ kātos (iti-(ya)) ish-aboyya-chi-tok.  
tree-(acc) cat tree-(acc) 2sg.erg-climb-caus-pst  
‘You made the cat climb the tree.’

Support for Q: case on pied-piped constituents

In cases of pied-piping, only the moved constituent requires case-marking:

(13) [katah-(a) i-kangmi-*(y)u] Bill-at [afaama-tok?  
who-(acc) dat-cousin-(acc)] Bill-nom meet-pst  
‘Whose cousin did Bill meet?’

Explanation: Q[uCase] sits atop the A’-moving constituent, not the possessor within it.

Conclusion

DOM may be conditioned by A’-status. This is expected if:

- DOM is conditioned by intrinsic properties of nominals.
- A’-status is an intrinsic property of nominals.
- Q-particle theory of A’-movement

→ Question: why is case optional on non-A’-moved NPs?

References


N.B. In-situ objects are not (pseudo)incorporated

(Pseudo)incorporated NPs are indefinite and non-specific (Mason 2001, Dayal 2011). Not true of Choctaw unmarked NPs:

(14) Chinashshik-at a-kana naalhii-tok.  
wasp-nom 1sg.dat-friend sting-pst  
‘The wasp stung my friend.’

(15) Kanah-at Buck naa balili-im-oppangi-tok.  
someone-nom Buck ish-aboyya-chi-tok.  
dat-break-pst  
‘Someone chased Buck’s car’

(Pseudo)incorporation requires the NP be adjacent to the verb.

→ Not true of unmarked objects: (11), (12), (13).

→ Not true of unmarked possessors: (2), (10).