Does Case Leave Ununified and Unsolved?

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Aims This workshop aims to pursue the following two controversial topics and relevant issues which have been discussed in generative grammar:

(1) Topics to be addressed
   A. Is case domain-specific? For instance, is nominative/ergative case required to be licensed within an upper domain of a clause (cf. Tense)?
   B. Which factors cause case morpheme to be realized? For instance, does its syntactic role or semantic interpretation necessitate it to occur syntactically?

(2) Relevant Issues
   i. Are heads responsible for case license via Agree (Agree-based Analysis)?
   ii. If two nominals have a certain syntactic relation in the same domain, does it suffice to satisfy a case license condition? (Dependent Case Analysis)
   iii. Are other syntactic pieces (cf. φ-features) necessary for case license?

After that, the speakers of this workshop will attempt to shed some light on some aspects of the fundamental question; why does case exist?

Syntactic Domains First of all, case is often said to be domain-specific. For example, nominative/ergative case is licensed within an upper domain including T, whereas accusative case is checked within a lower domain (cf. *v**P). This clearcut observation leads to a hypothesis that heads assign case. Namely, T is responsible for nominative/ergative case, while *v** or Voice is in charge of accusative licensing. This type of analyses is called Agree-Based Analysis (AA). The recent version of AA is a phase-bound (domain-specific) Agree (Chomsky 2000, 2001), where structural case on syntactic objects (SO) is determined by c-commanding heads. If case is assigned by T, its case value is Nom, while its value is Acc if it is assigned by *v**.

On the other hand, though dative and absolutive case marked nominals are often observed in a lower domain, some dative case marked nominals are often supposed to be located in an upper domain and many argue that absolutive case marked nominals occupy a TP-Spec in intransitive verb constructions. This drives lots of researchers to posit Dependent Case Analysis (DCA), which says that case is assigned according to the relationship between nominals in a specific domain. Under DCA, case value is determined dependently based on c-command relations between nominals (cf. Baker & Bobaljik 2017). In addition to the assumption by Baker (2015) in (3), Baker (2024) states (4) adopting a phase domain-based analysis:

(3) The dependent cases may vary from domain to domain.

(4) If NP1 and NP2 are both spelled out for the first time in domain XP and NP1 c-commands NP2 in XP, then NP1 c-commanding NP2 in a later spell out domain YP is not considered for purposes of dependent case assignment in YP.

Baker (2015, 2024), assumes that a spell-out domain is a complement of a phase head, following Chomsky (2001), corresponding to a phase domain.

These two analyses share the assumption that phases play a significant role in determining a domain of case assignment. Here, one serious question comes up; why are some case values specific to certain syntactic domains? Further, under AA, we need to address factors explaining why T/Infl and *v** are responsible for case values and investigate features involved in Agree. These inquiries should help us find the route to understand certain crucial aspects of case.

Case Realization Cross-linguistically, case is often realized as case marking particle. This case marker may drop under certain syntactic circumstances, though it must be realized under certain syntactic environments. For example, case-markers may drop in Japanese when it is adjacent to a verb assigning case, whereas it must be realized, when it goes into a domain different from the verb via scrambling, as shown in (5):

(5) a. Kinoo Sana-ga siai(-ni) de-ta.
   Yesterday Sana-nom game-Dat join-Past
   "Yesterday, Sana joined a game."

b. Kinoo [siai(*-ni)]$_i$ Sana-ga t_i de-ta.

The case marker drop suggests case marking particles may possess independent status. In fact, Sato & Ginsburg (2008) observe a case-stranding ellipsis is possible in Japanese in (6):

(6) a. Honto-ni Ohtani-ni at-ta no!? b. Δ-ni mi-ta yo!
really Ohtani-Dat see-past Q *e*-Dat see-Past excl
"Did you see Tom Cruise in Tokyo." "I saw him!"

If the realization of case morphemes (here, case-marking particles) is the source of parametrization, the independent status of case marking particles may derive interesting language differences. This question should shed light on the existence of case.

Finally, it has been said that case can be attached to nominals which have semantic effects (cf. Diesing 1992). For example, Manzini (2024) suggests that in (7a) a nominal with a case marker *a* in Spanish may co-appear with a clitic denoting viewpoint/perspective centers. Also, Baker (2024) makes observation that *ko*-marking in Hindi has specificity in (7b):

(7) a. Maria le dio el libro a Juan.
Maria him.dat gave the book a Juan
"Maria gave the book to Juan."
b. Ram-ne chiTThhi-**ko** Anita-ko chiTThii bhej-aa.
Ram-erg letter-acc Anita-Dat letter send-perf.M
"Ram sent the letter to Anita."

Recently, some authors including Chomsky (2024) and Legate (2024) suggest that case is a property of externalization, which means it is a mere illusionary syntactic object, making no semantic and syntactic contribution. However, if case realization has real semantic effects as indicated above, case is equipped with genuine syntactic functions triggering semantic properties, leading us to the core conceptual characteristics of languages.

Talks The workshop will consist of four talks and a brief introduction. Along with AA, Munakata argues that, adopting Agree based on copy formation by Komachi & Omune (2024), case assignment reflects a copy pair formation of features. Especially, he claims particular case values play a role in connecting the propositional domain to the clausal domain, whereas default case appears when no mismatch between the access to a phase by Conceptual-Intentional System and that by SensoriMotor System is observed. Also, Moritake examines the way Case/case is assigned to DPs in Japanese. Many authors have presented their own analysis, but the actual formulation of the Case assignment/valuation mechanism is still under debate (Kuroda 1978, Baker 2015, and Saito 2016, among others). Moritake suggests that among the previous analyses, the analysis based on the merger and excorporation of heads (Saito 2012) or the one appealing to upward Agree (Moritake 2022) is theoretically and empirically feasible.

On the other hand, Yamaguchi discusses the application and modification of DCT in Japanese. Building on Aoyagi (2004), Yamaguchi (2025) attempts to provide a DCT-based account particularly of dative subject constructions and oblique (*kara*/*de*) subject constructions lacking a nominative phrase. Furthermore, although Aoyagi assumes that dative case in Japanese is assigned inherently, Yamaguchi argues that dative case may instead be assigned structurally, especially in causative constructions that permit passivization of the causee. Moreover, Yamaguchi argues that such structural dative assignment is not governed by a rule like that proposed by Baker (2015) for Sakha—namely, one based on the relation between two elements within vP—but may instead follow a rule like that proposed by Hopperdietzel and Yıldız (2025), in which dative case is assigned to the middle element when three elements are present. Finally, Sakamoto and Yamashita analyze the pattern of dative case marker drop in Japanese. DPs with dative case marker *ni* may exhibit different kinds of thematic roles, and this difference apparently correlates with the availability of case marker drop. Sakamoto and Yamashita argue that abstract Case marking and pseudo noun incorporation play a role and derive the interpretive behaviors of the phenomenon.

Selected References
Baker 2015. *Case: Its Principles and its Parameters*: CUP. **Baker & Bobaljik** 2017. "On Inherent and Dependent Theories of Ergative Case," in Coon et al. eds. *The Oxford Handbook of Ergativity*: OUP. **Chomsky** 2000. "Minimal Inquiries," in Martin et al. eds. *Step by Step*: MIT Press. **Manzini** 2024. "DOM and ergative as structural oblique cases in an Agree framework," in Sevdali et al. eds. *The Place of Case in Grammar.* OUP.