

# CASE ASSIGNMENT IN DENYA

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This paper is written within the framework of Government-Binding Theory (GB) as seen in Chomsky (1981, 1982, 1986a, b) and deals with an aspect of case theory, case assignment as it applies to Denya. A comparative approach is adopted and it is shown that in many ways, case assignment in Denya and English are similar in that both conform to the case filter. However, the two languages display clear differences, differences which are accounted for on the basis of parametric settings. The last two sections are the core of the paper: analysis, explanation, and comparisons are given.

Cet article s'inscrit dans le cadre de la théorie sur le régisement (Chomsky 1981, 1982, 1986a, b) et traite de l'un des aspects de la théorie des cas, en d'autres termes, l'étude des cas, telle qu'elle se rapporte à la langue denya. On s'appuiera sur l'approche comparée pour démontrer que de plusieurs façons, le denya et l'anglais se rapprochent en ce sens qu'ils répondent tous les deux aux exigences du filtre de cas. Néanmoins, il y a certains points de divergences entre les deux langues, lesquelles divergences émanent de cadres paramétriques. Notons que les deux dernières sections qui prennent en compte l'étude analytique, explicative, et comparée qui est primordiale à l'ensemble du papier.

## 0. INTRODUCTION

Generally, in most languages, including Denya<sup>1</sup> and English, lexical NPs occur at S-structure in three distinct positions: the subject of a finite verb, direct object of an active transitive verb, and object of a preposition.<sup>2</sup> One reason why they occur in these positions and nowhere else is because they bear appropriate case. In a language like Latin or Russian, for example, the noun forms consist of two parts—a stem and a morpheme which indicates the semantic role of the NP. Thus in these languages, case marking is visible in the form of the suffixes.<sup>3</sup> Where this is not marked, the noun is not a well-formed word. Because this form of case marking is at the level of the word, it is usually called lexical or morphological case.

In some other languages like Denya or English, for example, the case of a noun is not overtly marked and therefore does not depend on its form, as it will be demonstrated throughout this paper.<sup>4</sup> Before going into more details, let us consider the basic assumption concerning case theory within the GB framework.

## 1. CHOMSKY'S CASE THEORY: BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

Chomsky's case theory is based on the notion of abstract case. The notion of abstract case is founded on the belief that in Universal Grammar (UG), all languages are essen-

<sup>1</sup> Denya is an Ekoid Bantu language spoken in Cameroon and Nigeria (Abangma 1987; Tyhurst and Tyhurst 1983). There are two tones in the language, high // and low. However, only high tone is marked, low tone being consistently omitted.

<sup>2</sup> Abbreviations in this article are: A - argument; AGR - agreement marker; COMP - complementizer; CP - complementizer phrase; EC - empty category; IMPF - imperfective aspect; INFL - inflectional node; IP - inflectional phrase; NP - noun phrase; PF - perfective; POS - possessive pronoun; PP - prepositional phrase; PRO - pronominal anaphor; PEC - pure pronominal empty category; SCM - subject concord marker; SBJ - subjunctive; SPEC - specifier; t - trace

<sup>3</sup> Consider the following forms of the Latin noun meaning 'woman' (taken from Cowper 1992:98).

Nominative:	femin -a
Accusative:	femin -am
Dative:	femin -ae
Genitive:	femin -ae
Ablative:	femin -ae

<sup>4</sup> It will be demonstrated later that this statement is not wholly true because in both Denya and English, the personal pronoun system displays morphological marking instead.

tially alike in their deep structure and that even where case is not overtly marked, it is there covertly. In Chomsky (1981) it is claimed that the [-N] category, V and prepositions (P)<sup>5</sup> are case assigners which assign objective case. Chomsky also noted that nominative case is assigned to the subject of a tensed clause/sentence by INFL if it contains [+AGR / TENSE]. In Chomsky (1986a, b) slight modifications are made to the theory. Now, all lexical categories, including [+N] are regarded as assigning case. He regroups the cases into two main types: inherent cases and structural cases.

### 1.1 INHERENT CASES

Nouns, adjectives, and prepositions are set to assign inherent cases at D-structure. The inherent cases are oblique cases assigned by prepositions and the genitive case assigned by nouns and adjectives. Consider the examples (1) and (2).

- (1) John went [PP *to the football field*].  
 Mary placed her book [PP *on the table*].  
 Mary came [PP *with her friend*].
- (2) *John's hat* is on the table.  
 my copy of *Evan's Dictionary*  
*her past achievements*

### 1.2 STRUCTURAL CASES

Chomsky (1986b) maintained that verbs together with [INFL + AGR] assign structural cases, objective (accusative) and nominative at S-structure in exactly the same manner as in the 1981 model. The main principle of case theory is a condition on S-structure representation, the case filter given in (3) below.

- (3) Case filter  
 \*NP if NP has phonetic form and no case (Chomsky 1981:49)

The case filter designates as ill-formed any lexical NP that is not marked for case. Thus any sentence containing a lexically filled NP with no case will be blocked by the case filter. Consider the following examples.

- (4) a. \*It seems [IP John to be angry].  
 b. EC INFL seems [IP John to be angry].  
 c. John<sub>i</sub> seems [IP t<sub>i</sub> to be angry].

In (4a), the complement subject John is not governed by a [+TENSE] INFL since the lower clause is [-TENSE] i.e., non-finite: 'John' therefore receives no case. At S-structure the case filter will rule out (4a) as ungrammatical. If we turn to (4b) we notice that 'John' receives a  $\theta$ -role but no case. There is motivation for movement of the NP. Thus 'John' is moved from the subject of the complement clause to the subject of the matrix clause. Here it is governed by INFL [+TENSE] and receives nominative case. This is an example of NP movement in raising constructions. The ungoverned subject position of the complement clause is now empty, marked by the trace t<sub>i</sub>. The case filter is therefore not violated and example (4c) is ruled as grammatical.

<sup>5</sup> Chomsky (1981) assumes that lexical categories are composed of feature complexes of at least [ $\pm$ N,  $\pm$ V]. On this basis we can define basic lexical categories:

$$\begin{aligned} N &= [+N, -V] \\ V &= [-N, +V] \\ A &= [+N, +V] \\ P &= [-N, -V] \end{aligned}$$

From this analysis the following classes can be derived:

$$\begin{aligned} [+N] &= \{N, A\} \\ [-V] &= \{V, P\} \\ [+V] &= \{V, A\} \\ [V] &= \{N, P\} \end{aligned}$$

## 1.3 CONDITIONS ON CASE ASSIGNMENT

We will summarize conditions/properties which we assume hold generally for all instances of case assignment but not discuss them in this article.

- (5) a. Case is assigned to  $N^{\max}$ .<sup>6</sup>  
 b. Case is assigned to all  $N^{\max}$ .  
 c. Case is assigned under government and adjacency.  
 d. Case assignment is obligatory.

Now we will compare case assignment in Denya with what happens in English.

## 2. CASE ASSIGNMENT IN DENYA

## 2.1 CASE ASSIGNMENT AND THE PERSONAL PRONOUN SYSTEM

Although case marking in Denya is predominantly abstract case as mentioned earlier, there is one area in the language where this is not the case. This is the personal pronoun system. Denya and English are similar in this respect in that both languages display morphological marking instead. In other words, personal pronouns in Denya and English occur in several morphologically different forms that are distinguished in terms of case as the following table shows:

- (6) Table of personal pronouns in Denya and English<sup>7</sup>

Person and Number	Nominative (Subjective)	Accusative (Objective)	Genitive (Possessive)
1s	$\text{N} = \text{I}$	$\text{mé} = \text{me}$	$\text{wa/ya} = \text{my/mine}$
1p	$(\epsilon)\text{se} = \text{we}$	$(\epsilon)\text{sé} = \text{us}$	$\text{sé} = \text{our(s)}$
2s	$\text{o} = \text{you}$	$\text{wó} = \text{you}$	$\text{wié /jié} = \text{your(s)}$
2p	$(\epsilon)\text{nyu} = \text{you}$	$(\epsilon)\text{nyú} = \text{you}$	$\text{nyú} = \text{your}$
3s	$\text{a} = \text{he/she}$	$\text{ji} = \text{him/her}$	$\text{wuu/jii} = \text{his/her}$
3p	$\text{á} = \text{they}$	$(\epsilon)\text{bwó} = \text{them}$	$\text{bwó} = \text{their(s)}$

Notice that in the above table, in both languages, some pronouns show a merger or syncretism (Quirk et al., 1985:336) of forms. In English, 2s and 2p do not have separate case forms for nominative and accusative. In Denya, syncretism of case form is seen in 1p and 2p nominative forms. Forms for 3s and 3p are distinguished only on the basis of tone i.e., 3s has low tone, which is unmarked and 3p high tone / ' /. Again, in Denya, the form of genitive pronoun depends on the noun class of the head noun. Thus there is no single form for all the nouns. Of course, this is a common feature of noun-class languages, especially Bantu ones.<sup>8</sup>

If we consider any three forms in Denya as displayed on the table, for example, a 'he/she', **ji** 'him/her', or **jii** 'his/her', we notice that these forms occur in complementary distribution as the examples in (7) show.

<sup>6</sup>  $N^{\max}$  as used here stands for a maximal phrasal projection of N, which is the same as NP.

<sup>7</sup> 1s = first person singular; 1p = first person plural; 2s = second person singular; 2p = second person plural; 3s = third person singular; 3p = third person plural

<sup>8</sup> Compare the form of genitive pronoun in English and Denya in the following noun phrases.

<b>mendé</b> <b>wa</b>	<b>andé</b> <b>ba</b>
wife my	wives my
my wife	my wives

<b>gesá</b> <b>ya</b>	<b>usá</b> <b>ba</b>
basket my	baskets my
my basket	my baskets

<b>mmwó</b> <b>ma</b>	<b>mawí</b> <b>ma</b>
wine my	oil my
my wine	my oil

- (7) **a-cwó            fa    njuú**  
 AGR-came-PF here yesterday  
 He came here yesterday  
**\*ji-cwé            fa    njuú**  
 \*him-came-PF here yesterday  
**\*jii            cwé            fa    njuú**  
 \*his/him come-PF here yesterday  
**Eva    a-cyeé            ji / \*a / \*jii            nka**  
 Eva    AGR-give-PF him / \*he / \*his    money  
 Eva gave him (\*he/\*his) money.

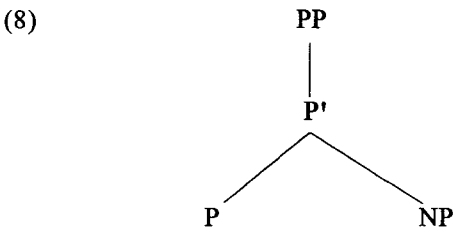
In fact, what these examples show is that case designations, nominative, accusative, and genitive in both languages are predictable on the basis of syntactic context.

## 2.2 THE MARKING OF INHERENT CASE IN DENYA

As noted in §1, nouns, adjectives and prepositions are said to assign inherent case at D-structure and that the inherent cases are oblique cases assigned by prepositions and nouns. Let us examine in some detail, Denya data to see how this is the case.

### 2.2.1 Assignment of oblique cases

Denya and English do not show any real differences when it comes to case marking of NPs that are governed by a preposition. The following diagram fits either English or Denya.



- (9) a. **Eva    a-kele            genó    ne    etó**  
 Eva    AGR-cut^IMPF tree    with axe  
 Eva is cutting a tree with an axe.
- b. **\*Eva    a-kele            genó    etó**  
 Eva    AGR-cut^IMPF tree    axe  
 \*Eva is cutting a tree axe
- (10) a. **Eva    a-cyeé            nka    etá    Eno**  
 Eva    AGR-give^PF money to Eno  
 Eva gave the money to Eno.
- b. **\*Eva    a-cyeé            nka    Eno**  
 Eva    AGR-give^PF money Eno  
 \*Eva gave money Eno
- c. **Eva    a-cyeé            Eno    nka**  
 Eva    AGR-give^PF Eno money  
 Eva gave Eno money

Example (9a) is grammatical but (9b) is not. This is because (9a) fulfils the case filter conditions while (9b) does not. In (9a), the prepositional phrase, **ne etó**, 'with

an axe' contains a NP that is properly assigned case. The preposition **ne**, the head of the maximal phrasal projection, governs the NP **etóó** and thus case marks it. In (9b), V assigns case to the NP **genóó** which it governs but it does not assign case to **etóó** because it does not govern it.

Thus, the NP **etóó** does not have a case assigner. The sentence is therefore ruled out. This explains equally the grammaticality of (10a) and the ungrammaticality of (10b). For the moment, we leave undiscussed the grammaticality of (10b) which has to do with the phenomenon of double object construction (DOC) discussed in §2.3.2.

### 2.2.2 Assignment of genitive case in Denya

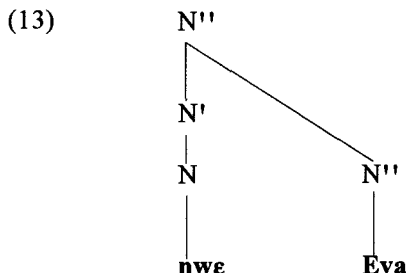
Let us start the assignment of genitive case in Denya by considering the Denya examples in (11) with their corresponding free translation in English.

- (11) a. **nwe** **Eva**  
 book Eva  
 Eva's book
- b. **móto nte wa**  
 car father my  
 my father's car
- c. **mámye wuú**  
 dog his  
 his dog
- d. **mejeé wa**  
 friend my  
 a friend of mine = my friend

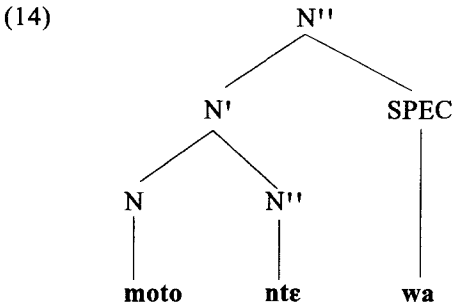
In English, the possessive element 's is affixed to the subject of an NP serving as the realization of case for the NP to which it is affixed. Thus in (11a), case is assigned to the subject Eva, in 'Eva's book'. It is worth noting that the personal pronouns discussed in §2.1 do not occur with 's because they are inherently cased-marked in the lexicon whereas the non-pronominal nouns are not. One piece of evidence to show that 's affix functions as a case marker is that both 's affix and the feature [GENITIVE] cannot occur in the same NP.<sup>9</sup> Consider the phrases in (12).

- (12) a. \* my's book  
 b. \* his's wife.

Let us look again at the Denya examples given in (11a) and (11b). The NPs in (11a) have the structure in (13) and the NPs in (11b) have the structure in (14).



<sup>9</sup> Case Uniqueness Principle (Freidin 1992:60) is formulated to prohibit NPs that are multiply marked for case. The Case Uniqueness Principle is stated as follows:  
 'A lexical NP may have only one case marking.'



A careful examination of (11), (13), and (14) will reveal the following facts about NPs assigned genitive case in Denya.

- (a) Genitive case assignment in Denya is not realized morphologically by affixation of some element to the NP.
- (b) Like in Russian, an N functions as a genitive case assigner in the appropriate syntactic configuration; unlike English where 'of' or possessive insertion must take place because N cannot be a case assigner.
- (c) The examples above confirm Chomsky's claim that "if the category  $\alpha$  has a case to assign, then it may assign it to an element that it governs" where government is defined as in (15).

(15) GOVERNMENT

A governs B iff

(i) A is  $X^0$ , for some X

(ii) A m-commands B

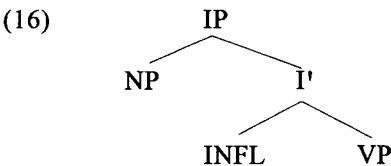
(iii) For all maximal projections, Y, if Y dominates B then Y dominates A.

- (d) Genitive case assignment here conforms to the conditions of case assignment given earlier in (5).

## 2.2 MARKING OF STRUCTURAL CASES IN DENYA

### 2.2.1 INFL as assigner of nominative case

It was noted earlier that structural cases are assigned by INFL and V. INFL or simply I', non-lexical head of IP, governs the subject NP as the tree in (16) shows.



According to Chomsky (1981), the INFL node is a collection of features [+TENSE, AGR]. Where INFL is [+TENSE], it will contain AGR, a node which underlies subject verb agreement, consisting of the features person, gender, and number. Consider the paradigm in (17).

- (17) a. [+TENSE, +PERSON] = finite
- b. [-TENSE, +PERSON] = subjunctive
- c. [+TENSE, -PERSON] = participle
- d. [-TENSE, -PERSON] = infinitive

As in the case of Tuki (Bilola 1991), another Bantu language spoken in Central Cameroon, only (17a), (17b), and (17d) are attested in Denya. Before illustrating these,

it is worth mentioning that Denya unlike most other Bantu languages does not have morphologically marked tense (Abangma 1987). If we used [+TENSE] in this paper to describe Denya examples, it is to mean abstract tense. However the category of aspect, perfective and imperfective, is more relevant in defining finiteness in Denya. Thus in Denya, the finite form will involve a selection of [+ASPECT, +PERSON]. Aspectual forms will be either perfective ( $\emptyset$ -suffix) or imperfective (+{-ge}).

Examples of (17) in Denya are given in (18)-(20).

- (18) a. **Eva a-sé nka**  
Eva AGR-receive<sup>PF</sup> money  
Eva took money
- b. **Eva a-sé-le nka**  
Eva AGR-receive<sup>IMPF</sup> money  
Evais receiving / receives money
- (19) a. **Eva a-ké Eno á-sé nka**  
Eva AGR-say<sup>PF</sup> Eno AGR-receive<sup>SBJ</sup><sup>PF</sup> money  
Eva said Eno should receive money
- b. **Eva a-ké Eno á-sé-lé nka**  
Eva AGR-say<sup>PF</sup> Eno AGR-receive<sup>SBJ</sup><sup>IMPF</sup> money  
Eva said Eno should be receiving money.
- (20) a. **Eva a-kele-ge mán-se nka**  
Eva AGR-want-<sup>IMPF</sup> to-receive money  
Eva wants to receive money
- b. **Eva a-cwó mán-se nka**  
Eva AGR-come<sup>PF</sup> to-receive money  
Eva came to receive money.

In (18a) and (18b), the presence of the subject concord marker (SCM), the AGR element, is obligatory in all finite clauses, whether they have a perfective meaning as in (18a) or imperfective meaning as in (18b). Thus (18a) and (18b) correspond to the description given in (17a). The AGR in (18a) and (18b) is a- '3s (SCM) ' and belongs to gender class one in the language. In (19a) and (19b) the verb form in the complement clauses is the subjunctive. Notice the form of the perfective subjunctive in (19a) and the imperfective subjunctive in (19b). The subjunctive form differs from the finite form mainly, in tonal marking. The subjunctive receives high tone on the AGR, the stem, and the suffix. This is true of perfective as well as imperfective forms. A subjunctive construction must show obligatory agreement with the subject. A subjunctive verb occurs only in the complement clauses. In (20a) and (20b), the complement clauses have the infinitive form of the verb, marked by the prefix *mán-*. Notice that the infinitive clauses in (20) lack both a subject and AGR. Notice also that the form of the verb in the infinitive clauses remain the same whether it is preceded by the perfective or imperfective form of the matrix verb.

<sup>10</sup> In Abangma (1987) a detailed description of Denya verb forms is given. The {-ge} suffix in Denya verbal system stands for all the variants of the imperfective suffix as shown below.

{-ge} -le / -ne / -me / {-V} / -ge

Notice the suffixes in the following verbs:

STEM	PERFECTIVE( $\emptyset$ )	IMPERFECTIVE {-ge}
se 'receive'	a-se 'he took'	a-se-le 'is receiving/receives'
bé 'dance'	a-bé 'he danced'	a-be-ne 'is dancing/dance'
tó 'shoot'	a-tó 'he shot'	a-to-me 'is shooting/shoots'
feré 'remove'	a-feré 'he removed'	a-fere-ge 'is removing/removes'
she 'abuse'	a-she 'he abused'	a-she-e 'is abusing/abuses'
sha 'refuse'	a-sha 'he refused'	a-sha-a 'is refusing/refuses'
bó 'run'	a-bó 'he ran'	a-bo-o 'is running/runs'

Notice also that {-V} stands for a lengthening of the vowel.

It should be clear therefore, that just as in English, the agreement marker, the AGR in Denya exists as a constituent of INFL in order to assign nominative case. Where it is absent, as in (20a) and (20b), to have a lexical NP in the subject position of the complement clause would be a violation of the case filter and results in ungrammaticality.<sup>11</sup>

### 2.3.2. V as assigner of accusative/objective case in Denya

Let us begin by considering examples (21)–(23).

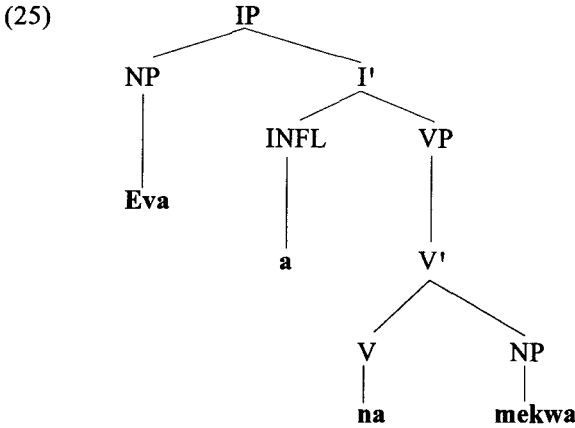
- (21) a. **Eva a-na mekwa**  
 Eva AGR-buy<sup>PF</sup> box  
 Eva bought a box.
- b. **\*Eva a-na**  
 Eva AGR-buy<sup>PF</sup>  
 \*Eva bought
- (22) a. **Eva a-cyeé Eno nka**  
 Eva AGR-give Eno money  
 Eva gave Eno money.
- b. **\*Eva a-cyeé nka Eno**  
 Eva AGR-give money Eno  
 \*Eva gave money Eno.
- (23) a. **Eva a-kwá makwa**  
 Eva AGR-sing<sup>PF</sup> song  
 Eva sang a song
- b. **Eva a-kwiá gekwia**  
 Eva AGR-cough cough  
 \*?Eva coughed cough  
 Eva coughed
- c. **Eva a-chíf uchí**  
 Eva AGR-sneeze sneeze  
 Eva sneezed.
- d. **Eva a-bé mabeé**  
 Eva AGR-danced<sup>PF</sup> dance  
 \*Eva danced dance  
 Eva danced.

The examples in (21)–(23) represent distinct verb classes in Denya. The example in (21a) represents a typical active transitive verb that obligatorily requires an object. Thus (21a) conforms to the requirement that:

- (24) A lexical NP can occur at S-structure in a position next to and c-commanded by [+V -N].

(21a) has the following S-structure in (25).

<sup>11</sup> This statement is made even though there is the phenomenon of 'exceptional case marking' in English. The subject of ECM will be dealt with in §3.



This example conforms to what we have said earlier, that if a category A has a case to assign, then it may assign it to an element that it governs. In this example, surely, V governs NP and assigns it objective case. In (21b), we see an example where V ought to govern an element but which is not realized at S-structure. This makes the sentence deviant.

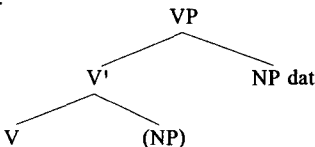
If we turn to (22a), we confront the problem of case marking in double object construction (DOCs) found in English and very common in Bantu languages.<sup>12</sup> If we assume that each case assigner can only assign one case (Chomsky 1982, Jaeggli 1982, Stockwell 1981) it would appear that one of the postverbal NPs in a DOC, such as (22a), would not receive case. This problem was realized by Chomsky (1982) and two alternative solutions to it were proposed. One alternative is for us to assume that the first NP after the verb receives case from the verb and the second NP gets its case in some other way that is not yet well understood. This alternative appears less satisfactory. In his second alternative, Chomsky thinks that DOC such as (22a), should have a structure such as the one in (26).

(26) I [ VP [ V' gave John] the money].

In this example, John receives case from the verb and the money gets its case from V'. It is clear that each assigner assigns only one case and we notice that the constraint on adjacency will be respected. It is also worth remarking that this explanation is similar to the one given by Jaeggli (1982) for the assignment of case to dative NPs in French.<sup>13</sup> Without getting into details of discussing this type of construction, we will adopt (26)–(27) as a possible structure that underlies (22a).

<sup>12</sup> Double object constructions have received a great deal of attention from Bantuists. It has been noted that in Bantu verbs that cannot take two objects NPs are rare. See Hualde (1986) for further discussion; and following others: Duranti (1979); Hyman and Duranti (1982).

<sup>13</sup> Jaeggli (1982:31) gives the following structure as underlying dative constructions which are similar to DOCs.





'believe' and 'expect' as noted above and also in the corresponding passives of these verbs and also in causative constructions. Consider the examples in (30).

- (30) a. John made [IP Mary to come]  
 b. \*Eva a-pyε [IP Eno mán cwə]  
 Eva AGR-make<sup>PF</sup>[IP Eno to come]  
 Eva made [Eno to come]

In (30a), we notice a causative construction which involves CP-deletion. As noted above, the matrix verb theta marks the embedded subject and assigns it objective case. This accounts for the presence of a lexical NP in the context of [NP to VP]. In the case of Denya, exemplified by (30b), the same process of CP-deletion has taken place but the sentence is ungrammatical. It seems reasonable to argue that in this case, the matrix verb cannot theta mark and therefore does not assign case to the embedded subject and since the embedded VP is an infinitive [-TENSE], it cannot assign nominative case to the embedded subject. The result is that (30b) is ruled out. For (30b) to be acceptable in Denya, it must be given as (31).

- (31) Eva a-pyε [Eno a-cwó]  
 Eva AGR-make<sup>PF</sup>[Eno AGR-come<sup>PF</sup>]  
 Eva made Eno (to) come.

This example is an acceptable sentence in Denya because the embedded subject receives nominative case from the embedded INFL [+TENSE]. What is clear in this example is that CP-deletion in Denya is not a sufficient condition for ECM. In this respect, Denya is similar to Italian as noted by Burzio (1986) or Spanish as noted by Chomsky (1988) in that it does not assign case freely across the clause boundary. This difference between English on the one hand and Denya and the other languages mentioned on the other, constitutes a parametric variation which the language learner must acquire.

### 3.2 CASE MARKING AND EQUI OR CONTROL VERBS

Equi or control verbs form the largest single group in Denya.<sup>15</sup> In English, this class includes verbs such as 'hope', 'want', 'try' as illustrated in (32).

- (32) John hopes [CP[EC] [IP PRO to leave]]  
 John tried [CP[EC] [IP PRO to leave]]  
 John wanted [CP[EC] [IP PRO to leave]]

In all these examples, government of the embedded subject by the main verb is not possible because CP, a maximal phrasal projection constitutes a barrier to government. As such PRO, a base-generated pronominal anaphor, is permitted but not a lexical NP. Now consider the following Denya verbs: *ka* 'try', *kele* 'want' and compare them with their English counterparts in (33).

- (33) a. Eva a-ka [CP[EC] [IP PRO mánchwó / manjye]]  
 Eva AGR-try[CP[EC] [IP PRO to<sup>come</sup> / to<sup>go</sup>]]  
 Eva tried [CP[EC] [IP PRO to come / to go]]  
 b. Eva a-kele-ge [CP[EC] [IP PRO mányε menyéé]]  
 Eva AGR-want-IMP[CP[EC] [IP PRO to<sup>eat</sup> food]]  
 Eva wants to eat food.

<sup>15</sup> In Abangma (1992:70) following Chomsky (1981), Burzio (1986), it was argued that if we considered two lexical parameters, the ability to assign a  $\theta$ -role to the subject position and the ability to trigger CP-deletion, the class of verbs which categorize for a sentential complement fall into four classes (see reference above for further discussion).

In these examples, we notice that the equi verbs *ká* and *kelé* in Denya behave exactly like 'try' and 'want' in English. The embedded subject must be PRO for the reasons explained above.

### 3.3 CASE ASSIGNMENT VIA MOVEMENT

In a language like English, we have shown so far that a lexical subject of an infinitival IP can be assigned case in situ by an adjacent case assigner like **for**-complementizer or by V, under government. However, it is also possible in English for a lexical subject of an infinitival construction to receive case by moving to a position which is governed by a case assigner. Two contexts in which this happens includes raising and passive constructions. Because Denya lacks both constructions, case assignment via movement is therefore not motivated.

## 4. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

In this paper, we noted that case theory requires that NPs which are realized phonologically must bear abstract case and that an NP bears abstract case only if it stands in a particular relationship with another element that we call the case assigner. We have demonstrated that case assignment in Denya does not only reveal a number of similarities but also differences with that in English. As regards similarities, both Denya and English assign morphological case to the personal pronoun system while they reserve abstract case assignment to the rest of the grammar. Another area of similarity is in the assignment of oblique cases of NPs governed by a preposition. Further we also notice that in the two languages, so far as structural cases are concerned, INFL and V assign nominative and accusative case respectively. We realize that case assignment in Denya conforms to the general conditions of case assignment. In this regard, we have shown that case is assigned to all  $N^{\max}$  under government and adjacency and that case assignment is obligatory.

Some areas of differences include the marking of genitive case, exceptional case marking, and case marking via NP-movement. As regards genitive case marking we establish that in Denya it is not realized morphologically by affixation of some element to the NP as in the case of English; that like in Russian an N functions as a genitive case assigner in the appropriate syntactic configuration unlike English where 'of' or possessive insertion must take place because N (excluding adjectives) cannot be a case assigner. When we turn to ECM, we note that this exists in English and not in Denya. In other words, English is an ECM language while Denya is a non-ECM language. As regards case assignment via movement we remarked that Denya lacks passive as well as raising constructions and that case assignment via NP movement in these constructions is not at all motivated.

This study lends credibility to case theory and more specifically to the case filter because it is capable of giving adequate explanations to the grammaticality or ungrammaticality with or without overt NPs in languages as far apart and distinct as Denya and English.

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