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Rare Phenomena in Case Marking and Their Implications for a Theory of Typological Distributions

The talk addresses cross-linguistically rare phenomena in case-marking focussing on distributional and functional aspects rather than on formal ones (an example of the latter is the ‘tonal case’ as attested in a number of African languages). Apart from better known phenomena, such as ‘double case’ (Plank (ed.) 1995), these include ‘distributed case’ where cases appear in different morphological slots (as in Koasati) or when cases can be alternatively marked on the noun, or on the verb (as in Abkhaz). A deviant case of case distribution on the clausal level is found in Iraqw, where case suffixes may attach to a “wrong” NP. Turning to functional properties of cases, the paper discusses a number of cross-linguistically unusual functions, such as ‘presentational case’ in Samoan, ‘modal cases’ and ‘verbal cases’ in Kayardild, as well as the ‘designative case’ in Tungusic languages, which assigns two different grammatical functions to two different NPs. Further, I address cross-linguistically unusual alignment patterns, including marked nominatives, pronominal ergatives, as well as the double oblique pattern with the same (oblique) case marking both A and P arguments (as found in some Iranian languages). The paper discusses the possible diachronic scenarios under which these unusual patterns arise.

I also address the question why the patterns under discussion are rare. First, a rare pattern may result from a **conflict** between a grammaticalization path and a **functional constraint**. Second, a pattern may be rare as it requires **co-occurrence of several different conditions**, quite often belonging to different domains (cf., e.g., the conditions under which case displacement in Iraqw arise). Third, functionally deviant cases may result from **incomplete grammaticalization cycles** (e.g., pragmatic cases, not fully reanalyzed, remnant or emergent cases in Australian languages).

References

Malchukov, Andrej (2009). Rare and exotic cases. In Andrej Malchukov & Andrew Spencer (eds.) *The Oxford Handbook of Case*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 635-651.

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