

Dependent Case Licensing in Minimalist Grammars

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In this talk, I investigate the consequences of one-to-many licensing relationships on the example of case. Dependent Case Theory (Marantz 1991, Baker 2015) has proposed that a single noun phrase can assign accusative case to arbitrarily many other noun phrases in particular structural configurations. Taking a licensing view rather than an assignment view on the distribution of case, this implies that accusative case can be licensed by a single licensor on arbitrarily many licensees. Employing Minimalist Grammars (MG; Stabler 1997) as rigorous formalization of derivation trees, I argue that the distribution rules for case can be formalized as (at most) monadic second-order constraints, which are known to be translatable into an MG with refined Merge-features (Graf 2013). However, an implementation of case as Move-features is not feasible because such an MG would violate the SMC by needing to "count" and would thereby generate non-regular derivation tree languages. I argue that this increase in complexity can be avoided because the SMC can be suspended for licensing relationships that involve neither displacement of phonological nor of semantic features. As a side effect, I show that Dependent Case Theory is not more complex than head-licensing approaches (Chomsky 2000, 2001).