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EXTREME MORPHOLOGICAL SHIFT: VERBAL CASE IN KAYARDILD

Kayardild and the other Tangkic languages of Northern Australia are well known for their typologically unusual and complex case systems (Evans (1995, 2003a), Dench and Evans (1988)). Their extensive case stacking properties, and their use of case to mark clausal tense/aspect/mood properties (so called `modal' case (Evans 1995)) have received much attention in recent LFG literature (Andrews 1996, Nordlinger 1998, Nordlinger and Sadler 2000, Sadler and Nordlinger 2002). In this paper we discuss the phenomenon of 'verbal case' (Evans 1995, 2003b), as yet unaddressed in these theoretical accounts, by which nominals are inflected with an alternative set of semantic case markers causing them to inflect like verbs, while still functioning syntactically as nominals. The phenomenon of verbal case poses a number of challenges for theories of morphology and the morphology-syntax interface. We argue that it can be naturally captured in a theoretical model that assumes a strict separation of morphology and syntax, as in LFG. Building on much recent work in LFG-based morphology arguing for a distinction between morphological features (m-features) and syntactic features (s-features) (e.g. Sadler and Spencer 2001, Ackerman and Stump (in press), Sells (in press)), we propose that such a distinction is required at the categorical level also: verbal case converts a nominal stem into a *morphological* verb, while maintaining its *syntactic* category of noun. We show how this approach interacts with the constructive case model of Nordlinger (1998) to provide a unified account of Kayardild case at the morphosyntactic level, despite the substantial differences in morphological structure.

Verbal cases are similar in function to the regular cases, but differ in taking morphologically verbal endings agreeing with the main verb in tense/aspect/mood, rather than the modal case inflections usually found in this function with NPs inflected with regular cases. In (1a) the regular allative case marker is followed by the proprietive case, the modal case appropriate for potential mood. In (1b), on the other hand, the verbal allative case is used, and is followed instead by the verbal inflection agreeing with the TAM of the verb. The use of the verbal allative here implies that the subject doesn't intend to reach the specified location, whereas the regular allative simply specifies the direction of motion. Otherwise the two forms are functionally equivalent, despite the difference in morphological structure.

(1a)  *ngada*      *warra-nangku*     *dathin-kiring-ku*      *ngilirr-iring-ku*
      1sgNOM   go-NEG.POT      that-ALL-MPROP       cave-ALL-MPROP
      'I will not go to that cave.'

(1b)  *ngada*      *warra-nangku*     *dathin-kiiwa-nangku*    *ngilirr-iiwa-nangku*.
      1sgNOM   go-NEG.POT      that-V.ALL-NEG.POT      case-V.ALL-NEG.POT
      'I will not go to that cave.'

Evans (1995, 2003b) argues extensively that these verbal cases are inflectional, rather than derivational. Among the evidence for this is the fact that they behave exactly the same as other cases, exhibiting complete concord across all constituents of the NP (1b) and participating in 'stacking' structures (2). In (2), the ablative case is used to denote a meaning of 'belonging' on the embedded adnominal NP. In accordance with the principle of complete concord, each member of this NP is then inflected with the verbal allative case in agreement with the head noun *mala* 'sea' which it modifies.

(2)    [[*jatha-naba-yiwa-tha*        *dangka-naba-yiwa-tha*]    *mala-yiwa-tha*]
       other-ABL-V.ALL-ACT      man-ABL-V.ALL-ACT       sea-V.ALL-ACT

       *warra-j.*
       go-ACT
       '(The dugong) went onto another man's sea (territory).'

That these forms inflected with verbal case are nominal and not verbal in the syntax is shown by their appearance within deeply embedded NPs (2), the fact that they function as regular NPs fulfilling argument roles of the verb (3), and that they are subject to the same ordering principles within the NP as regularly inflected nominals (Evans 2003b).

(3)  *ngada*        *wuu-ju*       *dathin-ku*     *wirrin-ku*
     1sgNOM         give-POT       that-MPROP      money-MPROP

     *ngijin-maru-thu*       *thabuju-maru-thu* .
     my-V.DAT-POT            e.brother-V.DAT-POT
     'I will give the money to my elder brother.'

We argue that these verbal case-inflected forms are morphologically verbs (m-verbs), while syntactically nominals (s-nominals). Being nominals in the syntax, they are subject to all of the principles governing other NPs, such as complete concord, and NP-internal ordering principles. For the purposes of the morphology, however, these forms are verbal and must therefore receive verbal inflections. The m-verbal status of these forms is clearly demonstrated by the fact that they must be morphologically nominalised before receiving regular case inflections. Consider the following:

(4)  [[*ngijin-mirdi-n-da*        *dul-wirdi-n-da* ]          *jardi-y*]
     my-V.DEN-NMZR-NOM           place-V.DEN-NMZR-NOM       mob-NOM
     'people staying at my place'

In (4) the NP inflected with the verbal denizen case is functioning adnominally, and must therefore be inflected with the nominative case in agreement with the head noun *jardi* 'mob, group of people'. However, since they are morphologically verbal, the verbal case-inflected nominals cannot take the regular nominative case without first being (morphologically) nominalised.

This seemingly incongruous requirement that a syntactic *nominal* be *nominalised* before nominative case inflection is natural on an account in which these verbal-case inflected nominals are morphologically verbal, despite being nominals in the syntax. This situation is reminiscent of other well-known cases of morphological shift in which, for example, cells in a verbal paradigm are filled with forms inflected as if they were adjectives (Spencer to appear). The crucial difference, however, is that the morphological shift in the Kayardild case is triggered by the verbal case inflection. The nominals in (3), for example, inflect regularly as morphological nominals until the verbal allative is added, after which they become morphological verbs. The verbal cases, then, convert a stem from an m-nominal to a m-verb, while keeping the syntactic category of nominal. This can be represented informally for the verbal allative as in (5):

(5)  *The realisation of Case:V.Allative in the paradigm of X, where X is of m-category N and s-category N, is Xyiwa of m-category V (modulo any applicable morphophonological processes).*

Since 'Xyiwa' is of m-category V, the realisation of TAM features such as 'negative potential' (1) must involve inflections appropriate for m-verbs (namely, the verbal TAM features). At the morphosyntactic level, however, the verbal allative is identical to the regular allative, constructing an f-structure as in (6), following Nordlinger's (1998) constructive case approach to case marking in Kayardild and other Australian languages. The encoding of clausal TAM on these forms will naturally fall out of the constructive case model, which already accounts for the encoding of clausal TAM on regularly-inflected NPs via modal case marking. In this way, we provide a unified morphosyntactic account of the many complex aspects of Kayardild case, while capturing the significant differences in morphological structure.

(6)
$$\left[ \text{ADJ}_{\text{ALL}} \left[ \begin{array}{ll} \text{CASE} & \text{ALL} \\ \text{PRED} & \text{"X"} \end{array} \right] \right]$$