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## Case, Verb Morphology & Argument Structure in Choctaw: A Minimalist Account

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### 1. Introduction

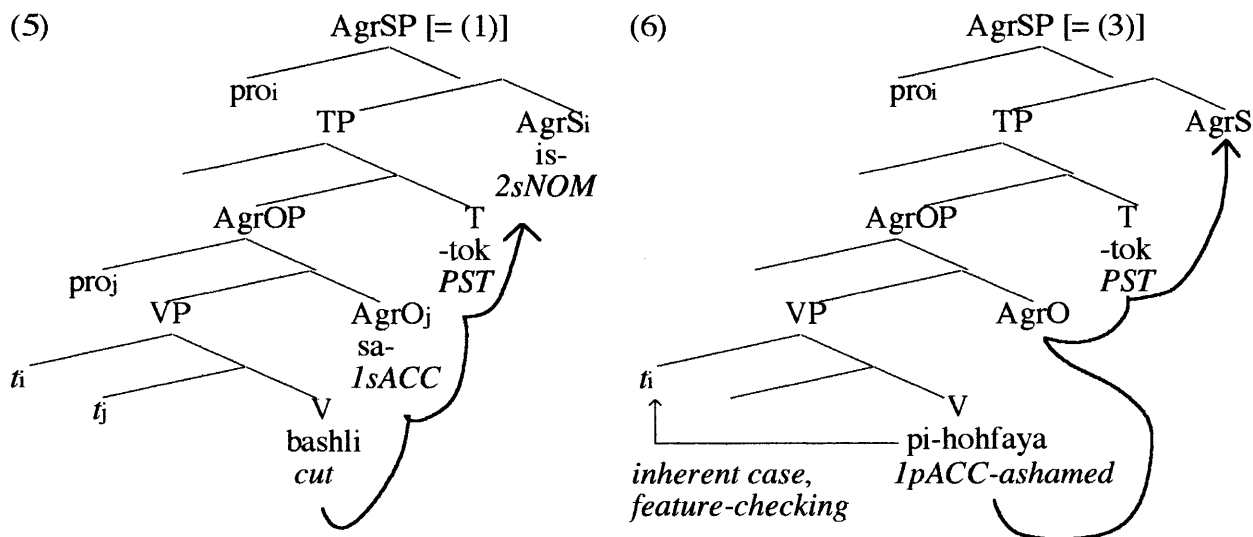
In this paper I will propose a new analysis of some facts described mostly by Davies (1981a, 1986) from Choctaw, a Native American language of the Muskogean family spoken mostly in Mississippi and Oklahoma. Choctaw has been claimed by various authors (Jelinek 1989b, Van Valin & Foley 1980, cf. Munro & Gordon 1982) to have an “Active/Stative” case system under which the marking of an intransitive subject can match either a transitive subject or a transitive object, depending on the semantics of the verb, as in (2) versus (3). (Notice that the person/number features and case of the arguments are marked on the verb.)

- |     |  |     |  |
|-----|--|-----|--|
| (1) | <b>Is-</b> <b>sa-</b> bashli-tok.<br><i>2sNOM-1sACC-cut -PST</i><br>‘You cut me.’ (Davies 1981a: 41) | (2) | <b>I:-</b> bali:li-tok.<br><i>1pNOM-run -PST</i><br>‘We ran.’ (Davies 1986: 14)        |
| (3) | <b>Pi-</b> hohfaya -tok.<br><i>1pACC-ashamed-PST</i><br>‘We were ashamed.’ (Davies 1986: 14)         | (4) | <b>Chī-</b> tako:bi-h.<br><i>2sDAT-lazy -PRED</i><br>‘You’re lazy.’ (Ulrich 1986: 242) |

I will argue instead that Choctaw actually has a NOM-ACC structural case system of the familiar sort, and that sentences like (3) involve quirky ACC case in the sense in which that term is used for Icelandic (cf. Schütze 1993), i.e. inherent case assigned by a particular verb in association with a specific  $\theta$ -role. I will show that subject ACCs of the type in (3) behave differently from both subject NOMs and object ACCs (1). I claim that ACC subjects check case- and  $\phi$ -features within VP. Choctaw also has DAT subjects as in (4)

that show hybrid behaviour, patterning in some ways with quirky ACCs and in others with structural cases. This will follow from the claim that DAT agreement is really two morphemes, a  $\theta$ -assigning postposition and a structurally case-marked object. I will show how a quirky- versus structural-case distinction explains numerous initially puzzling properties of Choctaw verbal morphology, including the order of morphemes, the alternations they undergo, and the environments in which they can be omitted. We will see that where previous accounts of Choctaw syntax required appeals to multiple strata or derivational levels, as in Davies's Relational Grammar analysis, the current approach takes advantage of the possibility afforded by the Minimalist framework of differences between relationships that hold within VP versus those that hold among elements in the functional projections above VP.

Before exploring these phenomena, I lay out my theoretical assumptions. I assume that structural case and agreement for subjects and direct objects work exactly as in the Minimalist paper (Chomsky 1993) (5). Notice that while I have shown the agreement morphemes under the Agr heads in the tree, I am assuming they are actually reflexes of feature-checking, *not* syntactic affixation. I assume that NOM NPs trigger subject agreement on the verb, which is glossed as NOM following Davies. (I have argued elsewhere (Schütze 1994a, 1994b) that the nominal suffixes that I gloss as SUBjective and OBLique are not case markers in Choctaw.) I assume that object ACC is the case assigned to complements of postpositions and nouns as well as verbs, that is, the structural case assigned by a lexical head; it must always be checked via an AGREEMENT projection. I assume that *quirky* ACC case is a feature assigned and checked by the verb on its own with an argument in Spec-VP, in conjunction with spec-head  $\phi$ -feature checking, as shown in (6). A quirky subject may move to subject position to satisfy the Extended Projection Principle, but once its features have been checked within VP it cannot check features again in AgrSP and cannot be assigned NOM case. I indicate this lack of checking in the trees by the absence of an index on AgrS.



## 2. Choctaw has non-nominative subjects

In order to argue that Choctaw has quirky subjects, I must first show that it has subjects at all. It has often been controversial whether certain polysynthetic languages have hierarchical clause structure, and in particular whether they have a structurally privileged subject position. I am going to argue that Choctaw clearly does.

The best arguments come from binding asymmetries involving Conditions A, B and C, which all show that the subject c-commands the object and not vice-versa:

- (7) a. *Il- ili- hottopali-tok.*                      b. \**Ili- pi- hottopali-tok.*  
*IpNOM-REFL-hurt -PST*                                  *REFL-IpACC-hurt -PST*  
 ‘We hurt ourselves.’                                  (‘Ourselves hurt us.’) (Davies 1981b: 239)
- (8) John-at *p̃isa-tok.*  
*John-SUB see -PST*  
 ‘John<sub>i</sub> saw him<sub>j</sub>/\*him(self)<sub>i</sub>.’ (Broadwell 1990: 258)
- (9) a. John ishki -it *ĩ- holloh.*                      b. \*John ishki *ĩ- holloh.*  
*John mother-SUB DAT-love*                              *John mother DAT-love*  
 ‘John<sub>i</sub>’s mother loves him<sub>j</sub>.’                      (‘He<sub>j</sub> loves John<sub>i</sub>’s mother.’)  
 (Broadwell 1990: 110)

One more argument comes from the VP pro-form *yohmi*, translated ‘do so’, which replaces objects, but not subjects (Broadwell 1990).

- (10) John-at takkon apa-kmã, **Bill-at** *yohmi-h.*  
*John-SUB apple eat -IRR.DS Bill-SUB do.so -PRED*  
 ‘John ate apples and Bill did too.’ (Broadwell 1992: 397)
- (11) \*John-at takkon apa-kmã, Bill-at **ahi** *yohmi-h.*  
*John-SUB apple eat-IRR.DS Bill-SUB potato do.so -PRED*  
 (‘John ate apples and Bill did potatoes.’) (Broadwell 1992: 397)
- (12) Bill-at talo:wa-kmã, an-akkiah *yohmi-li -h.*  
*Bill-SUB sing -IRR.DS I -too do.so -IsNOM-PRED*  
 ‘Bill sings, and I do too.’ (Broadwell 1990: 124)
- (13) John-at chi- *p̃isa-kmã*, Bill-at (**\*chi-**) *yohmi-h.*  
*John-SUB 2sACC-see -IRR.DS Bill-SUB (\*2sACC-)do.so -PRED*  
 ‘John saw you, and Bill did (\*you) too.’ (Broadwell 1992: 397)

Now, to show that particular non-NOM NPs are subjects, I take the possibility of anteceding the verbal reflexive *ili* as a diagnostic for subjecthood in Choctaw. (14)–(16) show that *ili* is strictly subject oriented, since in a double object construction neither object can antecede the other.

- (14) Hattak-at alla -yã **il-** *ĩ- kãchi-tok.*  
*man -SUB child-OBL REFL-DAT-sell -PST*  
 ‘The man<sub>i</sub> sold the child<sub>j</sub> to himself<sub>i</sub>/\*j.’ (Davies 1986: 18)
- (15) Oho:yo **ili-** *im- anõpoli-li -tok.*  
*woman REFL-DAT-talk -IsNOM-PST*  
 ‘I talked to the woman about myself/\*herself.’ (Davies 1981a: 57)
- (16) Chan holisso **ili-** *mi- ĩ- kãchi-li -tok.* [BEN = benefactive]  
*John book REFL-BEN DAT-sell -IsNOM-PST*  
 ‘I sold the book to John for myself/\*himself.’ (Davies 1986: 18)

I will now give a taxonomy of Choctaw subjects and show that they all pass the reflexive test.

An intransitive NOM subject can antecede a reflexive adjunct, as in (17). Intransitive ACC subjects show the same behaviour (18).

- (17) **Ili-** mi- toksali-**li** -tok. (18) **Ili-** mi- **sa-** nayokpa-h.  
*REFL-BEN-work -1sNOM-PST* *REFL-BEN-1sACC-happy -PRED*  
 'I worked for myself.' 'I am happy for myself.'  
 (Davies 1986: 18) (Davies 1986: 18)

A canonical agentive transitive clause takes a NOM subject and an ACC object; the subject can antecede an object reflexive, but not vice versa, as we saw already in (7). Finally, psych verbs can involve various combinations of Experiencer and Theme case marking, including ACC and DAT, but in every instance the Experiencer is the subject according to the reflexive test: a coreferential Theme can appear as a reflexive, but not vice versa. I conclude from these data that ACC and DAT Experiencers are quirky subjects, and that these Experiencers are always projected higher in the VP than Themes.

- (19) a. **II-** ili- yimmi.  
*1pNOM-REFL-believe*  
 'We believe ourselves.'  
 (Davies 1984: 349)
- b. **Ili-** pi- yimmi -h.  
*REFL-1pACC-believe-PRED*  
 'We believe ourselves.'
- (20) a. **IĪ-** nokhobi:la-**li** -h.  
*REFL.DAT-angry.at -1sNOM-PRED*  
 'I am angry with myself.'
- b. **IĪ-** sa- nokhobi:la-h.  
*REFL.DAT-1sACC-angry.at -PRED*  
 'I am angry with myself.'  
 (Davies 1986: 122)
- (21) a. **Ish-** ilim- ihaksi-tok.  
*2sNOM-REFL.DAT-forget-PST*  
 'You forgot yourself.'  
 (Davies 1986: 133)
- b. **Ili-** chim- ihaksi-tok.  
*REFL-2sDAT-forget -PST*  
 'You forgot yourself.'  
 (Davies 1981b: 240)
- (22) \***Am-** ili- nokhāklo.  
*1sDAT-REFL-pity*  
 ('Self pities me.')
- (23) \***Pi-** ilim- ihaksi-tok.  
*1pACC-REFL.DAT-forget-PST*  
 ('Ourselves forgot us.')
- (Davies 1981a: 57) (Davies 1986: 94)

### 3. NOM agreement reflects NOM case

I will now show how my account explains the behaviour of the verbal markers, beginning with NOM. First, there is at most one NOM morpheme per clause, which is explained because NOM assignment requires Tense, subject agreement requires AgrS, and there is only one of each of those in a clause. There can be multiple ACCs, because ACC can be assigned inherently as well as structurally, but NOM cannot. Second, NOM is associated with  $\theta$ -roles that are high on the thematic hierarchy: all Agents are NOM, almost all Experiencers can be NOM, and almost no other argument can be NOM, which is explained because the highest argument in the VP is the only one that can move to Spec-AgrSP, the NOM agreement position.

The third set of facts explained by my account has to do with so-called hypothetical agreement. In certain irrealis clauses, a HYP prefix *ik-* is added to the verb, but if the verb would otherwise have borne NOM agreement, that agreement is *replaced* by a special hypothetical form. The NOM and HYP paradigms are compared in (29). All other person/number marking on the verb stays exactly the same.

- (24) a. **I:-** patoli -h.  
*1pNOM-touch-PRED*  
 'We touched it.'
- b. **Ki:-** pato:l-o -h.  
*1pHYP-touch -NEG-PRED*  
 'We didn't touch it.' (Ulrich 1986: 249)
- (25) a. **Ik- sa-** kapasso-o -h.  
*HYP-1sACC-cold -NEG-PRED*  
 'I'm not cold.'
- b. \***Ak-** kapass-o -h  
*1sHYP-cold -NEG-PRED*  
 ('I'm not cold.') (Davies 1986: 21)
- (26) a. **Ik- sã-** takob-o.  
*HYP-1sDAT-lazy -NEG*  
 'I am not lazy.'
- b. \***Ak-** takob-o.  
*1sHYP-lazy -NEG*  
 ('I am not lazy.') (Davies 1981a: 329)
- (27) **Ik- chi- si-** anokfohk -o.  
*HYP-2sACC-1sACC-understand-NEG*  
 'I don't understand you.'  
 (Davies 1981a: 52)
- (28) **Ik- chi- am-** ihaks -o -tok.  
*HYP-2sACC-1sDAT-forget-NEG-PST*  
 'I didn't forget you.'  
 (Davies 1981a: 53)
- |      |                      |                        |
|------|----------------------|------------------------|
| (29) | Nominative agreement | Hypothetical agreement |
|      | -li '1sNOM'          | ak- '1sHYP'            |
|      | ish-/is- '2sNOM'     | chik- '2sHYP'          |
|      | il-/i:- '1pNOM'      | kil-/ki:- '1pHYP'      |
|      | hash-/has- '2pNOM'   | hachik- '2pHYP'        |

Two features of this construction make sense under my analysis. 1) Under a subject-agreement analysis of NOM, this phenomenon looks very similar to subjunctive agreement in familiar languages, where a different paradigm of affixes is used. 2) Quirky subjects do not trigger HYP subject agreement ((25)–(28)), which follows if subject agreement is a reflection of feature-checking with AgrS.

The fourth set of facts constitute perhaps the strongest confirmation that both NOM and ACC are structural cases. The causative is the only productive construction in Choctaw that involves systematic case alternations. A verb with the causative suffix *-chi* takes all the same arguments as the unaffixed verb, plus a causer that always takes NOM agreement. If the subject of the original verb took NOM agreement, it takes ACC marking in the causative (30b). If the original subject took ACC or DAT marking, it always retains such marking (31b) and (32b).

- (30) a. **Is-** sa- bashli-tok.  
*2sNOM-1sACC-cut -PST*  
 'You cut me.' (Davies 1981a: 41)
- b. **Chi-** sa- bashli-chi -li -tok.  
*2sACC-1sACC-cut -CAUS-1sNOM-PST*  
 'I made you cut me.' (Davies 1981a: 416)
- (31) a. **Chi- sa-** banna-h.  
*2sACC-1sACC-want -PRED*  
 'I want you.' (Davies 1986: 65)
- b. **Chi- sa-** banna-chi -tok.  
*2sACC-1sACC-want -CAUS-PST*  
 'S/he made me want you.'  
 (Davies 1981a: 424)
- (32) a. **Chi- am-** ihaksi-tok.  
*2sACC-1sDAT-forget -PST*  
 'I forgot you.' (Davies 1986: 5)
- b. **Hattak-at chi- am-** ihaksi-chi -tok.  
*man -SUB 2sACC-1sDAT-forget-CAUS-PST*  
 'The man made me forget you.'  
 (Davies 1986: 137)

This is highly reminiscent of ECM in Icelandic, shown in (33) and (34). In both languages I argue that both NOM (as in (33a)) and the ACC that replaces it (as in (30b)) are

structural cases, since they clearly cannot be  $\theta$ -related; conversely, I argue that ACC and DAT subjects have inherent case since they do not change.

(33) a. **Krakkarnir** hafa brotið bátana í spón.  
*the.kids.NOM have broken the.boats.ACC in pieces*  
 ‘The kids have broken the boats in pieces.’

b. Allir telja **krakkana** hafa brotið bátana í spón.  
*all believe the.kids.ACC to.have broken the.boats.ACC in pieces*  
 ‘All believe the kids to have broken the boats in pieces.’

(Zaenen & Maling 1990: 145–146)

(34) a. **Mér** líkar við hann.  
*I.DAT like him.NOM*

‘I like him.’

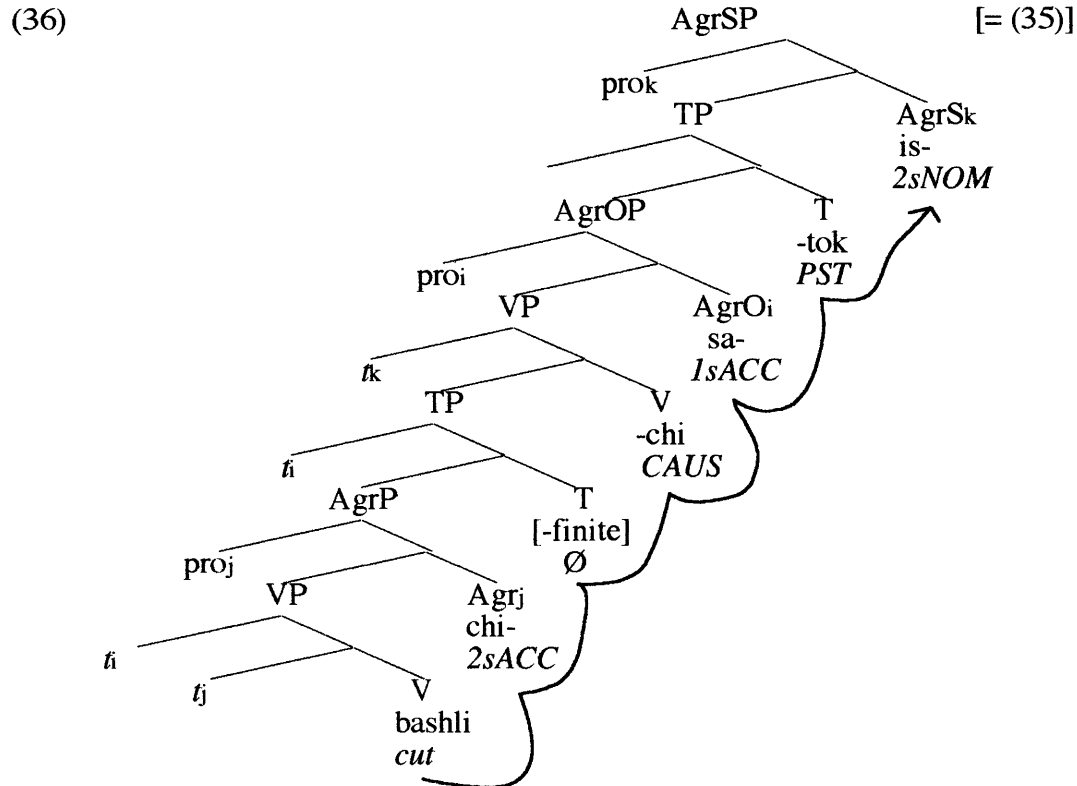
b. María telur **mér/ \*mig** líka við hann.  
*Mary believes me.DAT/\*me.ACC to.like him.NOM*  
 ‘Mary believes me to like him.’

(Thráinsson 1979: 352)

I treat the Choctaw causative much like an ECM verb, that is, as a predicate that can assign structural ACC case via AgrOP. This is shown for sentence (35) in tree (36).

(35) **Is- sa- chi- bashli-chi -tok.**  
*2sNOM-1sACC-2sACC-cut -CAUS-PST*  
 ‘You made me cut you.’

(Davies 1981a: 416)



If the main verb is transitive, it licenses its own object via an AgrP dominating the lower VP. The higher VP is dominated by a full set of functional projections, licensing the NOM subject as usual. The lower subject (Causee) checks features in matrix AgrOP and gets ACC if it lacks inherent case. Since there is only one Tense+AgrS complex in the construction, the Causee could not surface as a second NOM. A quirky embedded subject (31b) undergoes checking in the lower VP and thus cannot change case. The order of agreement morphemes, as in (35), mirrors the clause structure: Causer–Lower Subject–Lower Object.

#### 4. ACC agreement reflects ACC case

I turn briefly to demonstrating how my proposal that ACC object marking reflects ACC case-marking helps to explain its distribution. The same morphemes that appear as ACC markers for direct objects also appear in other environments where we expect to find ACC objects. In particular, an ACC morpheme signals the object of a postposition:

- (37) Katos-at **sa-** bilĩka binili-tok.  
*cat -SUB 1sACC-near sit -PST*  
 ‘The cat sat near me.’ (Davies 1981a: 36)

NOM forms can never occur here; in fact they only ever appear on verbs. This asymmetry is explained if NOM case can be assigned only by Tense+AgrS. Precisely the same argument can be made based on ACC pronoun complements to nouns:

- (38) John-at **sa-** holbatoba pĩsa-tok.  
*John-SUB 1sACC-picture see -PST*  
 ‘John saw a picture of me.’ (Broadwell 1990: 92)

Again, NOMs never occur here. Instead, a possessor subject of a noun is marked with a DAT. (I return to the analysis of DAT in §6.)

#### 5. Subject ACC as quirky case

Having discussed the analysis of structural case, I turn now to quirky case. My claim concerning quirky accusative is that the ACC argument bears an inherent case feature that ACC objects lack. This feature, along with person/number features, is checked in Spec-VP. Crucially, a quirky ACC subject can never check features with an Agr head, because it will already have done so within VP.

The first consequence of this claim is that an ACC subject, despite its structural subjecthood, cannot trigger (NOM) subject agreement, as we have already seen, because it cannot accept NOM case and cannot check  $\phi$ -features in AgrS. Note that in Icelandic, ACC subjects contrast with NOM subjects in exactly the same way:

- (39) a. Verkamennirnir breikkuðu veginn.  
*the.workers.NOM widened.3p the.road.ACC*  
 ‘The workers widened the road.’  
 (Zaenen & Maling 1990: 142)
- b. Þú beiðst mín.  
*you.NOM waited.for.2s me.GEN*  
 ‘You waited for me.’  
 (Andrews 1990: 170)

- (40) a. Mig langar að fara til Íslands.  
*me.ACC longs.3s to.go to Iceland*  
 ‘I long to go to Iceland.’
- b. Drengina vantar mat.  
*the.boys.ACC lacks.3s food.ACC*  
 ‘The boys lack food.’  
 (Andrews 1982: 461)



This lack of feature-checking between an ACC subject and AgrS also explains a surprising interaction with the switch-reference system of Choctaw. Coreferential NOM subjects in a matrix and an embedded clause must trigger same-subject marking on the lower Comp (41), but if the lower subject is a quirky ACC, it allows different-subject marking even when coreference holds (42).

- (41) a. Tobi apa-**li** -**cha** oka ishko-li -tok.  
*bean eat-1sNOM-SS water drink-1sNOM-PST* [SS = same subject]  
 'I ate beans and drank water.'
- b.\*Tobi apa-**li** -**na** oka ishko-li -tok.  
*bean eat-1sNOM-DS water drink-1sNOM-PST* [DS = different subject]  
 ('I ate beans and drank water.') (Davies 1986: 9)
- (42) **Sa-** hohchafo-**na** tobi ho-poni-li -tok.  
*1sACC-hungry -DS bean cook -1sNOM-PST*  
 'I was hungry, so I cooked some beans.' (Davies 1986: 9)

I have argued (Schütze 1994b) that switch-reference in Choctaw is sensitive to the indices of higher and lower AgrS's; since a quirky ACC subject is not in a checking relationship with the lower AgrS, the two Agr's need not be coindexed in a sentence like (42), which explains why DS marking is possible.

Some of the most striking predictions based on a contrast between structural and quirky accusative case involve differences in when they can be omitted. In general, Choctaw allows the verbal morphology associated with an NP to be omitted if the NP itself realizes person and number features. Thus, NOM subject agreement is omissible in the presence of an overt first- or second-person pronoun:

- (43) a. Pishn-ako:sh **i:-** habli-tok. b. Pishn-ako:sh habli-tok.  
*we -EMPH.SUB 1pNOM-kick -PST we -EMPH.SUB kick -PST*  
 'We kicked.' 'We kicked.'  
 (Broadwell & Martin 1994: 3)

The same is true for ACC object marking:

- (44) a. **Chi-** p̄isa-li -h. b. Chishn-akō p̄isa-li -h.  
*2sACC-see-1sNOM-PRED you -CONTR.OBL see -1sNOM-PRED*  
 'I see you.' 'I see you.' (Broadwell 1992: 395–396)

Similar patterns have been noted in Romance, and I assume that a similar explanation is involved: roughly speaking,  $\phi$ -features of Agr must be morphologically realized, but this only needs to happen once; if a full pronoun realizes person and number features, the corresponding verbal morphology is not necessary, as in Sportiche's (1992) Doubly-filled Voice Filter.

Crucially, however, an overt pronoun does *not* license the omission of a *quirky ACC subject* marker:

- (45) a. An-ako:sh **sa-** niya-h.  
*1s -EMPH.SUB 1sACC-fat -PRED*  
 'I am fat.'
- b.\*An-ako:sh niya-h.  
*1s -EMPH.SUB fat -PRED*  
 ('I am fat.')  
 (Broadwell & Martin 1994: 4)

- (46) a. An-at -o chĩ- sa- nokkilli-h. b.\*An-at -o chĩ- nokkilli-h.  
*Is -SUB-CONTR 2sDAT-1sACC-hate -PRED Is -SUB-CONTR 2sDAT-hate -PRED*  
 ‘I hate you.’ (‘I hate you.’) (Davies 1986: 124)

In contrast, the ACC *object* markers of psych verbs are omissible, just like other ACC objects.

- (47) a. Sa- chim- ahchiba-h -ō?  
*1sACC-2sDAT-tired.of-PRED-Q*  
 ‘Are you tired of me?’  
 b. Ano chim- ahchiba-h -ō?  
*Is 2sDAT-tired.of-PRED-Q*  
 ‘Are you tired of me?’ (Davies 1986: 97)

The generalization is clear enough: structural ACC can be omitted, quirky ACC cannot. Inherent case is a feature that cannot be deleted. One way to implement this is to say that omission is licensed in general when features of a functional head such as Agr can be realized on its Spec, a full pronoun, instead of on a head. Since there is no Agr that shares features with quirky ACC, there is no specifier element that can license omission of the verbal ACC morpheme. Inherent case is crucially a feature of the lexical verb head that assigns it and the argument that receives it, and can never be a feature of functional heads. In fact, it must be realized on the verb.

Another place where quirky and structural ACC contrast in omissibility is with the pro-verb *yohmi*. We already saw that *object* ACC marking must be omitted on *yohmi* (13), but we now see that quirky subject ACC is not omitted (48).

- (48) John-at niya-kmā, an-akkia sa- yohmi-h.  
*John-SUB fat -IRR I -too 1sACC-do.so -PRED*  
 ‘John is fat and I am, too.’ (Broadwell & Martin 1994: 5)

Just as a full pronoun could not realize the inherent case feature, the pro-verb cannot do so either.

Choctaw has a complex construction involving a “completive” auxiliary that allows clitic climbing similar to that found in “Restructuring” constructions in Romance. In this construction, NOM agreement can appear either on the main verb or on the auxiliary, and so can an ACC object marking, if each is the only overt agreement morpheme.

- (49) a. Bashli-t ish- tahli -tok.  
*cut -PART 2sNOM-complete-PST*  
 [PART = participial]  
 ‘You finished cutting it.’ (Broadwell p.c.)  
 b. Ish- bashli-t tahli -tok.  
*2sNOM-cut -PART complete-PST*  
 ‘You finished cutting it.’ (Broadwell p.c.)
- (50) a. Fammi-t sa- tahli -tok.  
*whip -PART 1sACC-complete-PST*  
 ‘He/she finished whipping me.’ (Broadwell p.c.)  
 b. Sa- fammi-t tahli -tok.  
*1sACC-whip -PART complete-PST*  
 ‘He/she finished whipping me.’ (Broadwell p.c.)

ACC *subject* marking contrasts with object marking in that, at least for some speakers, it must stay on the main verb and cannot climb to the auxiliary:

- (51) a. Sa- niya-t taha -h.  
*1sACC-fat -PART complete-PRED*  
 ‘I’m completely fat.’  
 ‘I’ve gotten really fat.’  
 b. %Niya-t sa- taha -h.  
*fat -PART 1sACC-complete-PRED*  
 ‘I’m completely fat.’ (Broadwell & Martin 1994: 7)

This once again is explained if the inherent case property of the main verb must be realized on that verb. In particular, once the ACC subject has checked features in the lower VP, it will not be able to check any features higher in the clause, even if it moves there for EPP reasons. Thus, it cannot trigger any marking upstairs.

One further interesting fact concerns the possibility of climbing both structural NOM and ACC markers in the same clause; the options are as in (52):

- (52) a. Oklah **i:- hachi-** fammi-t tahl -a:chĩ-h.  
*p 1pNOM-2pACC-whip -PART complete-IRR -PRED*  
 ‘We’re going to whip all of y’all.’
- b. Oklah fammi-t **i:- hachi-** tahl -a:chĩ-h.  
*p whip -PART 1pNOM-2pACC-complete-IRR -PRED*
- c. Oklah **hachi-** fammi-t **i:-** tahl -a:chĩ-h.  
*p 2pACC-whip -PART 1pNOM-complete-IRR -PRED*
- d. \*Oklah **i:-** fammi-t **hachi-** tahl -a:chĩ-h.  
*p 1pNOM-whip -PART 2pACC-complete-IRR -PRED* (Broadwell p.c.)

That is, both morphemes can be on the main verb, both can be on the auxiliary, or subject agreement can be on the auxiliary while the object marker stays on the main verb, but the opposite is impossible: the object marker cannot “raise” while the subject agreement stays downstairs. It is clear how my analysis can explain the contrasts in (52). Recall that I take NOM agreement to be a reflex of checking with AgrS, and ACC marking to be a reflex of checking with AgrO. Thus, the bad sentence (52d) would involve the object checking features with the auxiliary in AgrOP upstairs while the subject checked features in AgrSP downstairs. This is ruled out on the assumption that a clause with a transitive verb could not have AgrS without also having AgrO. If the lower clause did have an AgrO, the object could have checked features there and would then be unable to check them again in a higher AgrO. The converse (52c) *is* possible, however: the lower clause can have AgrO without having AgrS—in fact, that is precisely the structure we already needed to account for causatives.

## 6. DAT as a $\theta$ -marking postposition

Finally, I show how DAT subject marking fits into the analysis laid out so far. I claim that so-called DAT agreement consists of an ACC person/number morpheme followed by the postposition *im*, as can be seen in the paradigms in (53). The combination of ACC marking plus a postposition can be found with heads that are more clearly postpositional, as in (54) and (55).

- |      |                   |                         |
|------|-------------------|-------------------------|
| (53) | Accusative marker | Dative marker           |
|      | sa-/si- ‘1sACC’   | (s)am-/ (s)ã- ‘1sDAT’   |
|      | chi- ‘2sACC’      | chim-/chĩ- ‘2sDAT’     |
|      | pi- ‘1pACC’       | pim-/pĩ- ‘1pDAT’       |
|      | hachi- ‘2pACC’    | hachim-/hachĩ- ‘2pDAT’ |
- 
- |      |  |      |  |
|------|--|------|--|
| (54) | <b>Si-</b> <b>a:-</b> holabi-h.<br><i>1sACC-LOC-lie -PRED</i><br>‘He lied about me.’<br>(Ulrich 1986: 262) | (55) | <b>Wa:nota:-mã</b> <b>a:y-</b> ikbi -h.<br><i>yard -DEM.OBL LOC-make-PRED</i><br>‘He made it in the yard.’<br>(Ulrich 1986: 263) |
|------|--|------|--|

This immediately explains why, as noted earlier, most possessor subjects of NPs are marked DAT: the DAT postposition assigns the possessor  $\theta$ -role to its complement, which can surface either as an ACC marker, as in (56), or a full NP, as in (57).

- (56) **Chi -m** issoba  $\tilde{i}$ - shilli -li -tok.  
*2sACC-DAT horse DAT-comb-1sNOM-PST*  
 'I combed your horse.' (Davies 1986: 115)
- (57) Am- ofi -t **miko  $\tilde{i}$ -** takkon apa-tok.  
*1sDAT-dog-SUB chief DAT-apple eat-PST*  
 'My dog ate the chief's apple.' (Davies 1981c: 45)

Further motivation for the claim that DAT is implicated in assigning the  $\theta$ -role of its complement is a contrast found with other incorporated postpositions in Choctaw, (58) and (59) versus (60):

- (58) Katos nāna:yalhto (**\*a:-**) fokki-lih. (59) Tama:ha (**\*a:y-**) iya-lih.  
*cat box (\*LOC-)put -1sNOM town (\*LOC-)go -1sNOM*  
 'I put the cat in the box.' 'I went to town.'  
 (Broadwell 1990: 111) (Broadwell 1990: 112)
- (60) Illīpa kani:mi-kā lowak apakna **a:-** nona:chi-chah...  
*food some -COMP.DS fire top LOC-cook -SS...*  
 'She cooked some food on the fire and...' (Broadwell 1990: 56)

These data show that a true locative argument whose  $\theta$ -role is assigned by the verb cannot additionally be marked by the LOC postposition, while a non-argument phrase bearing that role does require the postposition. Hence, I suggest that when DAT appears on a verb, it too is required for  $\theta$ -assignment.

As we see in (61), DAT subjects cannot trigger subject agreement, because they have their  $\phi$ -features checked within VP.

- (61)  $\tilde{A}$ - tako:bi-h.  
*1sDAT-lazy -PRED*  
 'I'm lazy.' (Broadwell 1987: 48)

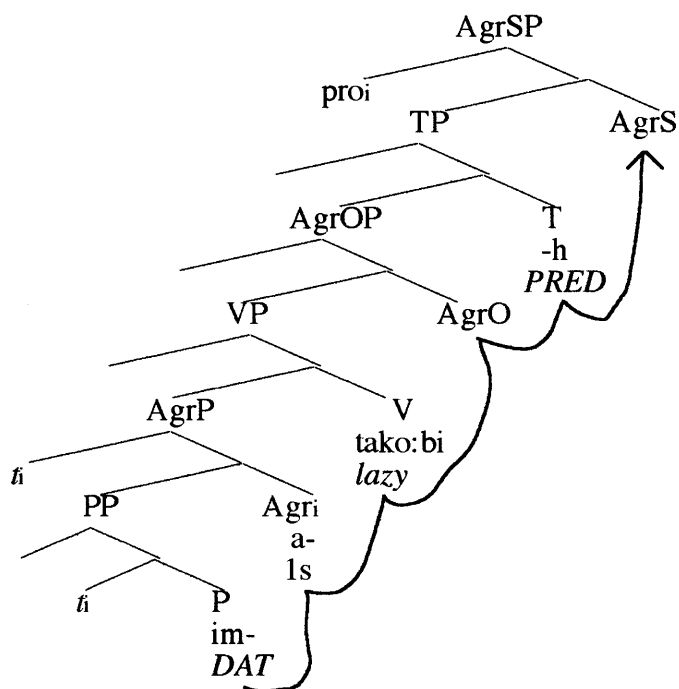
Again, Icelandic DAT subjects show the same behaviour:

- (62) Strákunum hafði/ \*höfðu verið kalt.  
*the.boys.DAT had.3s/\*had.3p been cold.DFLT*  
 'The boys had been cold.' (Sigurðsson 1991: 333–334)

In particular, I claim that in Choctaw the  $\phi$ -features of the DAT argument are checked in an AgrP dominating the PP whose head is the DAT postposition, as in (63). Thus, the ACC marker portion of so-called "DAT agreement" in fact reflects structural ACC case assigned by the postposition and checked by its Agr projection.

(63)

[= (61)]



As with ACC subjects, DAT subjects do not necessarily trigger same-subject marking under coreference across clauses, because they too are not coindexed with AgrS.

- (64) Alla -t chim- iskali ĩ- kania-na chokka ia -tok.  
*child-SUB 2sDAT-money DAT-lose -DS house go-PST*  
 'The child lost your money and went home.'

(Davies 1986: 9)

The facts about the omissibility of DAT markers are more complex than those for ACC because two morphemes are involved. First consider an embedded subject that is coreferential with a superordinate subject; numerous verbs allow the lower subject agreement to be omitted in this environment, which I treat as a control construction.

- (65) a. **Ish-** hilha -h.  
*2sNOM-dance-PRED*  
 'You dance.'

- b. Hilha-h chi- banna-h.  
*dance-PRED 2sACC-want -PRED*  
 'You want to dance.' (Ulrich 1986: 242)

In this construction, the pronoun object of DAT can be omitted as well, but the postposition portion definitely cannot.

- (66) a. **Ā-** tako:bih.  
*1sDAT-lazy*  
 'I'm lazy.' (Broadwell 1987: 48)

- b. **Ī-** tako:bih ikhāna-li -h.  
*DAT-lazy know -1sNOM-PRED*  
 'I know I'm lazy.' (Broadwell p.c.)

- (67) Holisso(-t) \*(am-) ihaksi-ka -t ikhana-li -h.  
*book(-SUB) 1sDAT-forget-COMP-SS know -1sNOM-PRED*  
 'I know I forgot the book.'

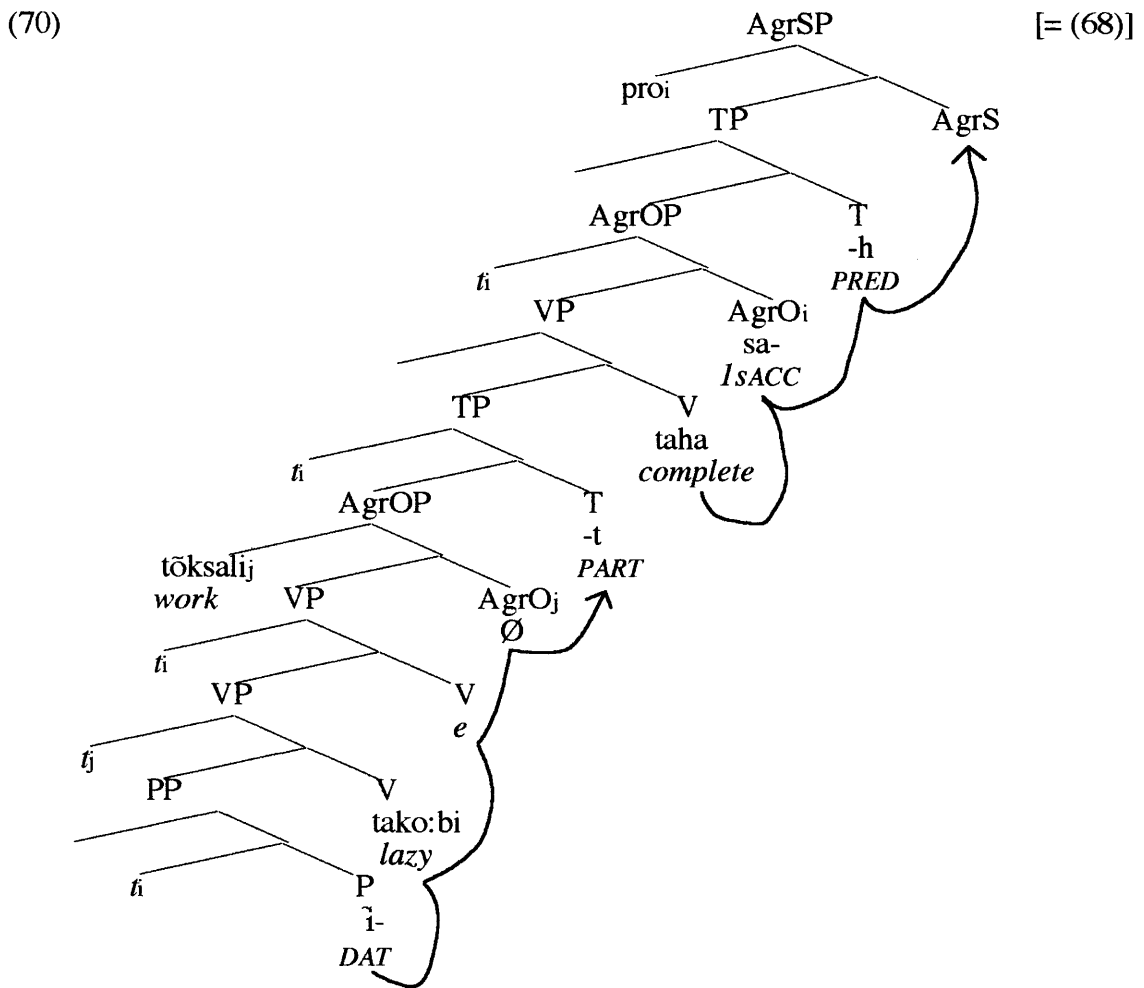
(Davies 1986: 31, 91)

These facts make sense if the DAT head participates in  $\theta$ -role assignment to the subject argument it is associated with, and therefore can never be deleted, while the ACC morpheme is merely getting structural case, checked in an AgrP, and thus can be deleted just like regular ACC objects can elsewhere.

Turning now to clitic climbing, the facts are exactly what we expect given the account so far. When the downstairs verb takes a DAT subject, the DAT postposition stays downstairs, but upstairs we can have the person/number portion, that is the structural ACC (68). One cannot raise the entire PP and leave no marking on the downstairs verb, however (70).

- (68) Tōksali  $\bar{i}$ - tako:bi-t sa- taha -h. [cf. (61)]  
*work DAT-lazy -PART IsACC-completely-PRED*  
 'I'm completely lazy about work.' (Broadwell p.c.)

- (69) a.  $\bar{A}$ - palammi-t taha -h. b.\*Palammi-t  $\bar{a}$ - taha -h.  
*IsDAT-suffer -PART complete-PRED suffer -PART IsDAT-complete-PRED*  
 'I've suffered a lot.' ('I've suffered a lot.') (Broadwell p.c.)



The immobility of the DAT postposition is expected: it has no motivation to move, and since it is needed for the downstairs verb to assign a  $\theta$ -role, it cannot be base-generated elsewhere. The possibility of its ACC complement climbing suggests that when an additional licensing Agr Phrase is available, this argument need not do feature-checking locally, but can raise out of PP to a higher AgrOP, stranding the preposition, as in tree (70). Note that this option is never available in monoclausal constructions, because AgrOP is not a licensed position for an intransitive verb and is needed for the object in a transitive verb, but since we independently wanted this auxiliary construction to allow a full host of Agr projections upstairs, the possibility becomes available just in this instance.

Finally, I turn to the order of morphemes on the verb. Jelinek (1989a) has observed that when a transitive verb has a non-NOM subject, the subject marker is closer to the verb stem than the object marker. In contrast, a NOM subject marker on the very same verbs is always furthest from the verb stem. Notice crucially that (71a) versus (72a) have the opposite order of DAT and ACC marking, depending on which is the subject. This shows that there can be no generalization about the order of affixes based solely on their case. Therefore, no purely morphological ordering template can derive this generalization, the syntax must be appealed to.

- (71) a. **Ā-** **chi-** nokkilli-h -ō?  
*1sDAT-2sACC-hate -PRED-Q*  
 'Do you hate me?'  
 b. **Is-** **sã-** nokkilli-h -ō?  
*2sNOM-1sDAT-hate -PRED-Q*  
 'Do you hate me?' (Davies 1986: 120)
- (72) a. **Chi-** **pim-** ahchiba kiyo-h.  
*2sACC-1pDAT-tired.of not -PRED*  
 'We are not tired of you.'  
 b. **I:-** **chim-** ahchiba kiyo-h.  
*1pNOM-2sDAT-tired.of not -PRED*  
 'We are not tired of you.' (Davies 1986: 131)
- (73) a. **Chi-** **banna-li** -h.  
*2sACC-want -1sNOM-PRED*  
 'I want you.'  
 b. **Chi-** **sa-** **banna-h.**  
*2sACC-1sACC-want -PRED*  
 'I want you.' (Davies 1986: 65)

This generalization falls out directly from my analysis by simply assuming that morphemes appear on the verb in the order in which their corresponding arguments check features with the verb. Thus, a quirky subject in Spec-VP checks before a structurally case-marked object in Spec-AgrOP, which in turn checks before a subject in Spec-AgrSP, so that NOM or HYP agreement is always the outermost person/number marker.

## 7. Conclusions

What appeared at first sight to be a uniform system of NOM, ACC and DAT agreement with arguments in Choctaw has turned out to be better understood as a more familiar system in which structural case/agreement is checked in one way, whether assigned by a verb, a tense head, or a postposition, and inherent case/agreement is assigned in a different way. This difference has many syntactic reflexes, which we have been able to explain in a principled way. The cornerstone of this account has been the claim that Choctaw has quirky case in something like the sense familiar from work on Icelandic, and that this case marking is reflected in the verbal morphology rather than the nominal morphology. Cross-linguistically, "quirky" arguments display a syntactic inertness that falls out from a small number of assumptions that are fairly natural within the Minimalist program. In particular, they do not trigger subject agreement on the verb, which I have taken to reflect the absence of a coindexing relationship between that subject and AgrS. It will obviously be important to explore to what extent the analysis of Choctaw proposed here carries over to other languages with quirky case.

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