

Parametrizing selection and case alignment in nominals

The typology of alignment in nominals. Elaborating on previous findings about case marking in nominalizations (Koptjevskaja-Tamm 1993), this paper argues for the parameterisation of nominalization strategies as a way of deriving a dependency between case alignment in nominalizations and clauses. First, we observe that certain languages import (aspects of) their clausal alignment into the case alignment of adnominal arguments. Crucially, whatever their alignment is in the clausal (i.e. nominative-accusative vs. ergative-absolutive vs. active), the same alignment is found in nominals. On a macro-comparative level, it seems that among such languages, we can distinguish between languages that import only the default case of the clausal system and languages that import both the default and the dependent case. One important exception, however, is the nominative, which is never found in nominalizations involving nominalizing morphology (i.e. putting aside nominalized clauses/infinitives etc., which are simply turned into DPs through the presence of a determiner or a related functional category).

In addition to these observations, we also investigate the distribution of the genitive in languages with clausal-like nominal alignment. In languages without such alignment, the genitive neutralises all distinctions and serves as the only/default case, which is assigned to all core adnominal arguments, i.e. external and direct internal arguments of event nominals, as well as possessors of all types. In languages with accusative alignment (both in clauses and nominals), e.g. Turkish and Hebrew, the genitive remains the default case, assigned e.g. to possessors, external arguments in the presence of an accusative internal argument and to internal arguments in the absence of an overt external argument. In languages with ergative alignment in nominals, its distribution varies. It can co-exist with the absolutive (Chukchi), or it can co-exist with both the ergative and the absolutive (Archi, Nakh-Dagestanian), or it may only be available to possessors but not to arguments of event nominals (Lak, Nakh-Dagestanian). We are concerned with the question whether these dimensions of variation can only be captured through parameters specifically addressing alignment in the nominal domain (e.g. \pm clausal-like alignment, \pm dependent case (in ‘+clausal-like alignment’ languages only) etc.) or whether these can all be reduced to independent properties of nominalization in the respective languages. We develop an analysis which points to the latter line of thought.

Selecting heads in mixed projections. We follow the approach developed in Alexiadou, Iordachioaia & Schäfer (2011), who correlate differences across types of nominalization with the presence/absence of certain heads either from the nominal or the verbal spine/extended projection. **A. Nominative-Accusative systems.** In the light of this approach, it is tempting to argue that the absence of the nominative from the nominal domain of any language is due to the fact that *n* never selects TP. Nevertheless, this is not empirically correct. As shown by Siloni (1997), Hebrew action nominals constitute an example of TP-nominalizations. Therefore, the incompatibility of such nominalizations with the nominative should be an indication that (i) T in fact inherits its phi-features and its nominative-assigning capacity from C and that (ii) *n* is universally unable to select CP. This reinforces Alexiadou’s (2017) tentative generalisation that *n* never nominalizes propositions and situations. Extending this reasoning to the accusative, we argue that (i) the mere presence of agentivity does not suffice, (ii) like T, the accusative-case assigning capacity is inherited from Voice, (iii) the accusative in nominals is possible only if *n* selects VoiceP. Crucially, though, this possibility is parameterized. Evidence for the claim that the licensing of (overt) agents is not enough comes from the fact that e.g. German allows an overt (genitive) agent in the presence of an overt internal argument, but the accusative is still impossible. In Turkish, instead, Voice can safely be argued to be potentially present in nominalizations, as Turkish deverbal nouns can also include a passive voice morpheme. A necessary theoretical implication of the above is that agents are probably introduced by some high *v* head, which is the only projection that (active/transitive) Voice can select, thus recasting Burzio’s (1986) generalization. **B. Ergative-absolutive systems.** In ergative languages, the complete absence of ‘clausal’ cases correlates with the ‘size’ of the nominalized constituent, as predicted. Archi is a language that has two types of nominalizations/masdars reflecting this parametrization. First, Archi has a set of unaccusative verbs that obligatorily contain a light

verb. When nominalized, the nominalizer attaches to the root of the lexical verb and the light verb disappears. Interestingly, the resulting nominalization can only have genitive arguments, while absolutive is unavailable. Second, transitive and unergative verbs take a different nominalizer that attaches to the lexical verb. Unlike the first type of masdars, internal arguments are absolutive, while external arguments can be either ergative or genitive. Importantly, the alternation between the two cases (ergative and genitive) is not free and corresponds to two meanings –factual and process. The Archi nominalizations suggest that (1) vP is the minimum requirement for clausal cases; (2) ergative case is licensed higher than vP, probably in VoiceP (Polinsky et al 2016). Finally, there are ergative languages that does not allow non-genitive cases in action nominals (Georgian, Nash 2017) or only allow absolutives (Chukchi, Polinsky 2017). Crucially, the distribution/availability of both ergative and absolutive appears to be the result of the interplay between (i) the varying source of the ergative in the clausal domain (high vs. low, TP vs. vP) and (ii) the size of the verbal constituents that can be nominalized. The former observation is exemplified by the contrast between Chukchi and Lak, i.e. Gen-Abs and Erg-Abs alignment in nominals. As argued by Bobaljik and Branigan (2016), Chukchi ergative is TP-licensed, thus we predict that we do not find this case in nominals of VoiceP size. This prediction is borne out. On the other hand, Lak is a language where ergative is vP licensed, thus the prediction is that ergative should be available in vP-nominalizations. This prediction is borne out, as well. Another point of variation is the locus of absolutive case licensing (vP vs. TP, see Coon et al 2014), which can also derive differences between Georgian and Lak. Georgian absolutive is high, thus AspP size nominals (McGinnis-Archibald 2016, Finn 2017) are actually expected not to have absolutive marked arguments in nominalization. On the other hand, in Lak, where absolutive is low, this case is freely available in action nominals. The size of nominalizations can be diagnosed either through the types of verbal/voice/aspectual/tense morphology which is found in nominalizations, or through the types of possible modification (durative/aspectual/agent-oriented/adverbial etc.) and other diagnostics from Alexiadou, Iordachioaia & Schäfer (2011).

Clausal-like alignment in non-deverbal nominals? Our approach so far relies on the assumption that case-assignment of ergative-absolutive and nominative-accusative alike relies on the availability of the respective verbal/clausal heads in the DP, rather than on a parameter that allows nominal projections to mimic the case-assigning algorithm of clauses. This view would be challenged if it turned out that even nominals without any verbal structure (either overtly realized or demonstrably present, giving rise to related entailments) can license cases such as the accusative or the absolutive. Indeed, we know of no languages in which the accusative would be possible. Nevertheless, we consistently see an absolutive realization of possessor/genitive arguments in a number of indigenous South American languages (see Nonato 2014 etc), in the absence of verbalizing morphology or eventive readings. For instance, Kadiwéu, a language with active alignment, seems to resist any deverbal or eventive nominalizations. Nevertheless, its head-marking of genitive constructions is agreement with the genitive argument, which is identical to the agreement morpheme for internal/absolutive arguments of verbs. Interestingly, however, when the genitive argument is an alienable possessor, agreement has to be preceded by a morpheme identical to the voice morpheme of antipassives. The absolutive agreement morpheme on its own is only possible on inalienably possessed nouns. We take this to suggest that inalienable possessors are indeed internal arguments, direct complements of the predicate (see also Alexiadou 2003). All other types of argument, alienable possessors or individuals with some other pragmatically recoverable relationship to the noun, cannot be ergative, in the absence of any *v*-structure, and their realization is only possible through their *promotion* to the absolutive, through the antipassive. Thus, in an active alignment system such as the one in Kadiwéu, where the absolutive can also be assigned to internal argument of non-verbal relational predicates, then the absence of *v*-structure blocks the higher case but cannot block absolutive assignment. Thus, the South American pattern does not constitute a challenge to the idea that parameterization of DP-internal cases depends solely on whether *n* selects elements that license these same cases in the clausal domain.