'*She to go and he to follow her, t'is the best anymore*': Theoretical Implications of 'unmarked' and 'default' nominative Case in English, past and present

Since Case Theory was originally formulated as an explanatory principle (Vergnaud 1976 > Chomsky 1981), it has been generally accepted that nominative Case in English—as expressed by morphological nominative case in the pronominal system—is exclusive a property of finite clauses; specifically, NOM is taken to be a reflex of a more abstract relationship between features of a finite T and the argument contained in/merged into its specifier position.

(1) a. It seems [that *they* like syntax/*they* to like syntax].
    b. [For her/*She* to say that] surprised me.
    c. She wants very much [for them/*they* to take care of her dog].

That empirical assumption has proven remarkably persistent, notwithstanding many conceptual and technical developments in syntactic theory—cf. Chomsky (2000, 2001); Pesetsky & Torrego (2001), Butt (2005), Bobaljik & Wurmbrand (2008), Baker (2015). This is surprising in light of rather clear evidence of a double dissociation between [+tense] *per se* and nominative case-marking cross-linguistically. On one hand, work originating with Raposo (1987) shows that selected infinitival verbs in Portuguese may have nominative subjects; in Brazilian Portuguese, as Pires' (2002) examples in (2) illustrate, this possibility is not limited only to those that display morphological agreement; see also Longa (1994), Landau (2004); Szabolsci (2009).

(2) a. A Maria ligou antes de   [eu/*mim   sair]
       the Maria called before of I.NOM/*me.ACC leave-INF
       'Maria called before I left.' [= before I to.leave]
    b. [O Carlos e   o eu/*mim   chegar   cedo] não surpreendeu ninguém
       the Carlos and the I.NOM/*me.ACC arrive- INF late] not surprise   no one
       'Carlos and Pedro/me arriving late did not surprise anyone.'

Conversely, 'quirky case' constructions in Icelandic reveal dative-subjects in [Spec, TP] binding subject-oriented reflexives—in (3a)—as well as nominative-marked *objects*, in (3b) (Zaening, Maling & Thráinsson 1985, Thráinsson 2007); see Sigurðsson (1997), for arguments that dative subjects really are subjects, Harley (1995) for arguments that the nominative-marked DPs really are objects, in these constructions.

(3) a. Hanaᵢ grunar [að þú elskir sigᵢ].
       her.DAT suspects that you love her. REFL
       'She suspects that you love her.'
    b. Morgum   studentum   liki/*lika   verkið.
       many-DAT.PL student-DAT.PL like.SG/like.PL job.NOM
       'Many students like the job.'

Of course, this cross-linguistic evidence does not directly force rejection of the idea that NOM is necessarily linked to finite T *in English*, since—at least in theoretical analyses that allow for parameterization—it is plausible to suppose that different sets of features, some of which are only accidentally related to T, are responsible for case-licensing in other languages (*phi*-features being an obvious candidate). Much more problematic, though, is the fact that nominative subjects appear to have been fully available in unselected infinitival contexts in Late Middle English and Early Modern English, as illustrated by the examples in (4) below, from Visser (1963/1973). The theoretical implications of these sentences were first considered in Duffield (1989), and subsequently (independently) in Sundaresan & McFadden (2009), McFadden & Sundaresan (2011), both groups of authors draw the conclusion that nominative case is not necessarily assigned by T but is—or perhaps *was* in English—an 'unmarked' or 'default' case; see Preminger for discussion of the difference.

(4) a. *I* to make me blith or glad.....[th]at nu mai be [14ᵗʰ C]
    b. *A* king to kepe his lygis in justice, Without doute that is his offise [1385]
    c. *Men* to seye to women wel, it is best And nor for to despise hem ne depraue. [1402]
    d. *A preest* for to freli take and chose of alle maidens to hem a wijf...was allowed of Poul [1449]
    e. *Thou* to love that loueth not the, is but grete foly [1470]

However convincing McFadden & Sundaresan (2011)'s general explanation might be, it provides no satisfactory explanation for the loss of nominative-infinitives in English. In fact, their account of Present Day

English is quite *ad hoc*: '*… the English 'nominative' is not really the same kind of case as what we call nominative in typical nominative-accusative languages, hence we should not be surprised that it does not function as the default case in the language.* (2011:13)' Arguably, though, this failure to account for the diachronic loss of nominative subjects is a good thing—since they never fully disappeared: indeed, the main point of Duffield's (1989) paper was to call attention to Hiberno-English examples such as those in (5) and (6) (Henry 1977):

(5) a. 'T'is an aise to the gate, *they* to be married.'
    b. 'T'was a loss to the country, *Michael* to die.'
    c. '*She* to go and *he* to follow her, t'is the best anymore.'
(6) a. '…they just give him a slap or something like that and *he*, oh *he* to be afraid of the life of him.'
    b. 'D'you mind the day, and *we* in the old castle?'
    c. 'I heard the hens cacklin', and I went over to see what it was, and here it was a fox, and *he* with a hen.'

In contrast to other researchers, who used diachronic and non-standard synchronic varieties of English essentially only as *prima facie* challenges to the standard +Tns<—>Nom association, Duffield (1989, 1993) attempts to link the possibility of nominative subjects in non-finite clauses in HE to the acceptability of two other phenomena observed in many HE varieties, both of which are illicit in Standard varieties of English: (a) NPI subjects in root clauses, illustrated in (7); and (b) 'Singular Concord' with non-pronominal subjects, in (8) Henry (1995):

(7) a. But from that day out, *anyone* that was on the meitheal, or anyone in the parish never said a bit t' him, or never done…made a move to have sport on him or anything like that..(cla-mv)
    b. Aha. Although *anybody* don' seem to like to live in Russia...They're all trying to get out of it..(ker-mc)
    c. you couldn't pick a daisy but it was a sin. Now, *anything* is no sin... (bel3-mc)

(8) a. Them eggs *is* cracked/*They *is* cracked/They *are* cracked.
    b. Them ones *wants* more than them other ones.

In the original articles, Duffield develops Henry (1992, 1995)'s analysis of Singular Concord: adopting contemporaneous technology (Pollock 1989), Henry assumes that Nom Case in HE is already assigned by a functional projection below Negation. The highest FP in the root clause is taken to be AgrP, not TP; non-agreeing (i.e., non-pronominal DPs) need raise no higher, and need not agree (aux shows default sg. Agreement). Subject NPIs are licensed in virtue of having a case-marked copy within the scope of negation (Duffield 1993). On this analysis, the diachronic loss of nominative subjects in infinitivals in Standard English, as well as absence of the other two properties, stems from the loss of AgrP, and subsequent re-analysis of the root projection as TP, as in (9); *cf.* Roberts (1985).

(9) [$_{AgrP}$ [$_{Neg}$ [$_{TP}$ [NOM] …..]]] → [$_{TP}$ [NOM] [Neg [….]]]

Although this analysis is outdated in certain respects—especially in its construal of AgrP as an autonomous projection, and its appeal to Case as a driver of syntactic movement, it still offers greater empirical coverage than its competitors. At presentation, I will consider how the analysis can be best squared with current Minimalist approaches.

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