

A structural analysis of the inherent cases

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1. Introduction. In this presentation I will advance a featural analysis for the inherent cases that is motivated by morphological data. Any such analysis must answer two questions: What are the features that underlie the inherent cases, and what structure contains them? I propose that the inherent cases come in triplets, each consisting of a core feature which can take one of two modifiers. The data currently available is compatible with both a stacked structure (e.g. Caha 2009), and a non-stacked structure (e.g. Radkevich 2010).

2. The features. Consider the data in the table below, taken from Foley (1986).

| Case | Kâte | Selepet | Kunimaipa | Meaning | Features |
|----------|--------|----------|-----------|---------------|--------------------|
| ALLATIVE | -o-pek | -ɔn-gen | -ti | <i>to x</i> | [location, goal] |
| LOCATIVE | -o | -ɔn | -ha | <i>at x</i> | [location] |
| ABLATIVE | -o-nek | -ɔn-gebɔ | -ha-nanga | <i>from x</i> | [location, source] |
| INSTRUM. | -zi | -ɲe | -nanga | <i>with x</i> | [entity, source] |

These case markers are morphologically complex, indicating that they are not atomic elements, but have internal structure. The morphemes *-o-* and *-ɔn-* in Kâte and Selepet are common to the three cases Allative, Locative and Ablative. Following Harbour (2007), I propose [location] as the relevant feature these morphemes realise, as the common property of these meanings is ‘location’. In both languages, Allative and Ablative bear an extra morpheme. Since the meanings of these two cases are also complex (*to location x* and *from location x*), I posit the feature [goal] for the morphemes *-pek* and *-gen*, and [source] for *-nek* and *-gebɔ*.

This leaves Instrumental. Kunimaipa shows that Instrumental shares a property with Ablative: they share the morpheme *-nanga*. Since the meaning of Instrumental doesn’t include the concept ‘location’, [source] is the only possible feature for sharing (the knife being the non-agentive source of the cake-cutting in *I cut the cake with a knife*). We now have a problem with Kâte and Selepet: [source] is realised by both *-nek* and *-zi*, and *-gebɔ* and *-ɲe*. Harbour proposes that Instrumental must realise another feature, which I call [entity]; *-zi* and *-ɲe* (and *-ti*) are thus portmanteaus, while [entity] is phonologically null in Kunimaipa.

Continuing this line of reasoning, I predict another two feature bundles: [entity] and [entity, goal] (I assume the features [source] and [goal] have opposite meanings, and therefore cannot bundle together). Harbour argues that these bundles correspond to the Dative and Purposive cases Dixon (1980) describes for several Austronesian languages. Dative marks an *event for/at an entity*; Purposive an *action leading to an event*. Instrumental’s bundle [entity, source] is assigned to Austronesia’s Causative case, marking an *action caused by an event*. I address this double-up of the [entity, source] feature bundle in §3.

3. Expanding the inventory. You may have noticed that the features [source] and [goal] are semantically related; they are modifiers of [location] and [entity]. I propose to separate these two features from the others, to reflect their modificational status. The inherent cases can now be seen to come in triplets; there is a core feature (e.g. [location]), which can be modified by either [source] or [goal]. Expansion of the feature inventory is now restricted to features that complement [location] and [entity]. This immediately allows us to address the double-duty of the [entity, source] feature bundle: if a third feature [event] is added to the

inventory, we can separate the Instrumental and Causative cases (as shown for Yidiny (1)).

Another triplet of cases that is easily accommodated for in this system is the essive triplet of Finnish, which denotes a NP's state or change of state (1). Excessive [state, source] marks the change from some state (tähtäne-ntä, *from mental illness*); Essive [state] marks a state (säveltäjä-nä, *being a composer*); and Translative [state, goal] marks change to some state (terve-ksi, *to mental health*). The feature inventory can further be expanded by allowing specific denotations of [location]: Finnish, for example, has more than three locative cases. Elative, Inessive and Illative mark the meanings *out of*, *in* and *into* respectively, while Ablative, Adessive and Allative mark *off from*, *on* and *onto* respectively. There is no morphological (or semantically discernible) evidence that we need a feature in addition to [location], so the features [in/out] and [on/off] would be enough to distinguish these two triplets (Radkevich, 2010).

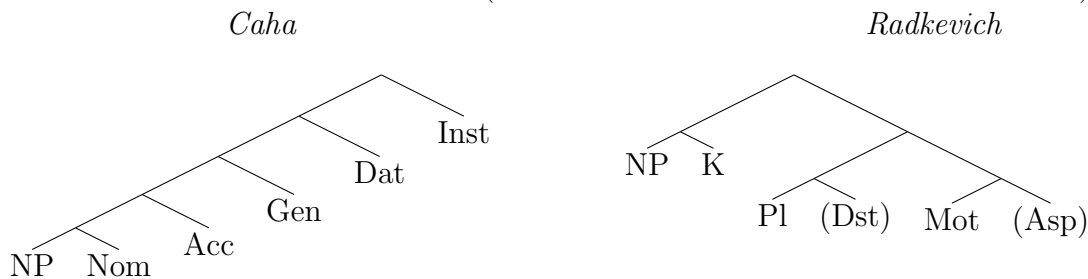
(1) *Case charts for Yidiny (Austronesian) and Finnish (Uralic)*

| | | | | | | | |
|-----------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|--------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| <i>location</i> | ABL -mu | LOC -da | ALL -da | <i>in/out</i> | ELATIVE -l-tä | INESSIVE -l-lä | ILLATIVE -l-le |
| <i>event</i> | CAUS -mu | DAT -nda | PURP -gu | <i>on/off</i> | ABLATIVE -s-tä | ADESSIVE -s-sä | ALLATIVE -an |
| <i>entity</i> | INST -da | | | <i>state</i> | EXCESSIVE -n-tä | ESSIVE -n-ä | TRANSLATIVE -ksi |

| | | | |
|---|---|--------|------|
| s | g | source | goal |
|---|---|--------|------|

The empty cells denoted by the feature bundles [entity] and [entity, goal] predict two further cases to complete the instrumental triplet in Yidiny. It's presently unclear what entity might be the non-agentive goal of an event, but Comitative case fits the bill for an entity that simply accompanies the event: *I go to the movies with my sister*. Shared morphology between the Instrumental and Comitative cases in Russian supports this analysis.

4. The structure of inherent case. I finish this presentation with a discussion about the structure of the inherent cases. Two main structures have been argued for: a stacked tree (Caha 2009) and a non-stacked tree (Radkevich 2010). My discussion of each will be informed by transparent morphology, syncretisms, and portmanteaus. The data is presently compatible with both tree structures; I discuss what we would need to see to conclusively settle on one structure over the other (unless I find decisive data in the meantime).



5. References. Caha, P. (2009). *The Nanosyntax of Case*. ★ Dixon, R. MW (1980). *The languages of Australia*. ★ Foley, W. A. (1986). *The Papuan languages of New Guinea*. ★ Harbour, D. (2007). *A Program for Case Features*. ★ Radkevich, N. V. (2010). *On location: The structure of case and adpositions*.