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Long distance Case assignment and intervention☆

Pauli Brattico *

University of Helsinki, Finland

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Abstract

A common assumption in linguistic theory is that structural Case assignment constitutes a clause-bound, local dependency. Finnish Case assignment is at odds with any such analysis. Here, structural Case assignment penetrates non-finite clause boundaries, adjunct-adverbial boundaries and even noun heads. What constraints such wild behavior has remained a mystery. This article finds that Finnish structural Case assignment is constrained by a peculiar kind of intervention/relativized minimality condition. A distinction between full intervention, where complete feature set is involved, and partial intervention, where only a subset of the relevant features are involved, finds support in our analysis. Starke's (2001) multi-feature intervention analysis will be developed to explain the phenomenon. In addition, the Chomsky–Hiraiwa Multiple-Agree hypothesis finds strong support in this work, but the theory of phases and Phase Impenetrability Condition (PIC) does not.
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1. Introduction

This paper examines Finnish long distance Case assignment. The following is a way to illustrate the phenomenon. Example (1) shows, first, that in Finnish the form of a finite verb affects object Case assignment.[1]

☆ My collaboration with Dr. Anne Vainikka has been helpful in sharpening my thinking about Finnish Case assignment, long distance Case assignment in particular. Also, the three Lingua reviewers provided detailed, critical, but also encouraging feedback that has been a great asset. Professor Anneli Pajunen once wrote that Finnish is not an interesting language enough be of much interest to the international research community. I don't think that way. I want to use this occasion to thank my parents for giving me such an amazing language.

* Tel.: +358505439468.
E-mail address: Pauli.J.Brattico@gmail.com.

[1] Much of the grammatical information conveyed by means of prepositions in English is expressed by means of suffixes in Finnish. While listing the abbreviations for these suffixes, I will occasionally give equivalent prepositional constructions in English to make the text more accessible. This is done for illustrative purposes only and has no theoretical status. The following abbreviations will be used: A/A-INF = A-infinitival, corresponding to the English to-infinitival; ACC = accusative Case; ADV = adverbial, general label not specifying the type of the adverbial; AP = adjective phrase, including the participle adjective phrase; DP = determiner phrase; ESSA = the present form of the TUA-adverbial (also the temporal adjunct, roughly 'while doing something'); GEN = genitive Case; IMPASS = impersonal passive verb; KSE = KSE-adverb (roughly 'in order to do something'); INF = a general label for infinitival verb forms; LDCA = long distance Case assignment; MA = MA-infinitival or MA-adjunct (the latter roughly 'by doing'); MA-INF = MA-infinitival; NOM = nominative Case; PRTCPL = participle; PIC = Phase Impenetrability Condition; PRT = partitive Case; RM = relativized minimality; TUA = the TUA-adverbial (also the temporal adjunct, roughly 'after doing something'); VA = VA-infinitival.

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(1) a. Me voitettiin arvonta/ *arvonnan
We.NOM won.IMPASS lottery.NOM lottery.GEN
'We won the lottery.'
b. Me voitimme *arvonta/ arvonnan
We.NOM won.1PL lottery.NOM lottery.GEN
'We won the lottery.'

Whether the main verb is in an impersonal form (IMPASS) or in an active finite form determines how the direct object is case-marked. Why verb forms affect direct object cases in Finnish in this way will be explained later. Interestingly, the pattern generalizes to the direct objects of *adverbials* (2).

(2) a. Me rikastuttiin [voittamalla arvonta/ *arvonnan]
We.NOM got.rich.IMPASS by.winning lottery.NOM lottery.GEN
'We got rich by winning a lottery.'
b. Me rikastuimme [voittamalla *arvonta/ arvonnan]
We.NOM got.rich.1PL by.winning lottery.NOM lottery.GEN
'We got rich by winning a lottery.'

The direct object case inside an adverbial clause is determined by the form of the matrix clause verb. There are several such constructions in Finnish, discussed later in detail. We can therefore say that Finnish exhibits ''long distance Case assignment'' of sorts. Indeed, the long distance nature of Finnish Case has been noted in the past (Ikola, 1950, 1986; Hakulinen et al., 2004; Wiik, 1972; Toivonen, 1995; Ross, 1967; Reime, 1993), although its nature remains an elusive mystery. Notice how odd it is to have Case assignment transmitting from the matrix clause into an adverbial. This is odd because most grammatical theories have regarded adjuncts as closed grammatical environments (e.g. islands), and it is very rare to have morphosyntactic relations going in and out of such environments. Perhaps because of this, rigorous analyses of the phenomenon have surfaced only recently. Vainikka and Brattico (2014) propose that the genitive direct object Case in (2b) is assigned by a matrix agreement head (Agr), while the nominative is assigned by finite C (2b). Their idea is to analyze long distance Case assignment as an extension of the regular, local Case assignment mechanism, such that it reaches a remote location as a side-effect. However, not everything can be reached. Toivonen (1995) and Vainikka and Brattico (2014) report that not all adverbials tolerate external interference. Example (3) shows that the form of the finite verb does not determine the form of the direct object Case inside another adverbial (the TUA-adverbial, roughly 'after V-ing'):

(3) a. Me ostettiin monta uutta arpalippua [voitettuamme *?arvonta/ arvonnan]
We.NOM bought.IMPASS several new tickets.PRT after.winning lottery.NOM/ lottery.GEN
'We bought several tickets in order to win the lottery.'
b. Me ostimme monta uutta arpalippua [voitettuamme *arvonta/ arvonnan]
We.NOM bought.1PL several new tickets.PRT after.winning lottery.NOM/ lottery.GEN
'We bought several tickets in order to win the lottery.'

Why the adverbial in (3) blocks long distance Case assignment while the adverbial in (2) doesn't remains unknown. In other words, we don't know what grammatical principle regulates Finnish long distance Case assignment and, thus, what ultimately causes its exceptional ''long distance'' nature. My purpose here is to try to tackle this problem.

I will make use of a relativized minimality/intervention condition proposed by Starke (2001). I begin by examining the set of grammatical features which trigger long distance Case assignment both at the transmitters' end and at the receivers' end. There are several such features, as shown by previous research. The finite verb form is but one among many. I then argue that long distance Case assignment is blocked by grammatical junctions which contain the exact same feature set. I will call this effect *full intervention*. Interestingly, partial feature match makes long distance Case assignment *optional*. Such constructions show labile object Case assignment, in which there is either great uncertainly or free alteration with respect to which of the case forms is perceived as grammatical. This situation will be called *partial intervention*.

A formalization is proposed within the minimalist probe–goal framework of Chomsky (2000, 2008), with certain key assumptions derived from Starke (2001). Specifically, following Reime (1993), Vainikka and Brattico (2014) and Brattico (2012a), I assume that in Finnish, polarity (Pol), T (tense) and the light verb *v* bear uninterpretable phi-probes and trigger structural Case assignment. Case assignment is viewed as a consequence of Agree(probe, goal). I will argue that (i) long distance Case assignment results when the direct object goal remains *active* after local Agree and thus picks up nonlocal case transmissions and, following Starke (2001), (ii) it is completely blocked if the probe and goal are intervened by functional heads possessing polarity, tense-aspect and phi-features and partially blocked if a non-null subset of these features intervene. The blocking effect observed in the example (3) thus results from the presence of certain grammatical

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