Deriving Differential Object Marking:
Optional Licensers and Nominal Features[*]

Laura Kalin — laura.kalin@gmail.com

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1 Introduction

In this talk, I propose a new theoretical approach to Differential Object Marking (DOM) that is based around four main considerations, motivated by DOM patterns in Neo-Aramaic and general theoretical concerns:

1. To not rely on object height and verb adjacency
2. To connect (absence of) DOM with (absence of) licensing
3. To unify subject nominals and object nominals
4. To derive the definiteness/animacy hierarchies

What is DOM?

- DOM is a widespread and much-discussed phenomenon that splits objects into two classes (Silverstein 1976, Comrie 1979, Croft 1988, Bossong 1991, Aissen 2003, *i.a.*).

    1. Overtly-marked objects

        ◇ Case (e.g., Hindi, Turkish, Hebrew)
        ◇ Adposition (e.g., Spanish)
        ◇ Clitic-doubling (e.g., Macedonian)
        ◇ Agreement (e.g., Swahili, Senaya)

    2. Unmarked objects

Along what dimensions are objects differentiated?

- Animacy / person

(1)   1/2 > 3 Pronoun > Name > Human > Animate > Inanimate

- Specificity / definiteness

(2)   Pronoun > Name > Definite > Specific Indefinite > Nonspecific

→ DOM languages differ as to which scale(s) determine the differentiation of objects, and where along the scale the marked/unmarked cut off is made.

  – It always objects on the left side of the scale (the "more prominent"/"less canonical" objects) that are overtly marked.

(3)   DOM in Hindi (Bhatt 2007)
  a.   Mina   Tina-*(**ko**) dekh rahii   thii.
       Mina.F Tina-**DAT**   see PROG.F be.PST.FS
       'Mina was looking at Tina.'

  b.   Mina   ek   bacce-**ko** uṭhaa rahii   hai.
       Mina.F a/one child-**DAT** lift PROG.F be.PRES.3SG
       'Mina is picking up a particular child.'

  c.   Mina   ek   bacca uṭhaa rahii   hai.
       Mina.F a/one child lift PROG.F be.PRES.3SG
       'Mina is picking up a child.'

My proposal, in brief:

- All nominals can enter into Case/agreement relations, but not all nominals require licensing.

- Clauses typically have one obligatory licenser, with secondary licensers merging when needed for convergence (e.g., Bobaljik 1993, Rezac 2011).

- Unmarked objects in DOM systems are in fact unlicensed (following Danon 2006, Ormazabal and Romero 2013).

Roadmap of the talk:

2 The basic syntax of Senaya

Neo-Aramaic languages[1] are Semitic languages that developed from Old/Middle Aramaic vernacular dialects and survived to the modern day (Coghill 1999).

- The focus here will be on Senaya, originally spoken by Christians in the town of Sanandaj, Iran.

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[1]While these languages are often referred to as dialects, many are non-mutually-intelligible and have differences at all grammatical levels; for this reason I call them languages throughout the talk.

2.1 Grammatical characteristics of Senaya

Word order: SOV, but head-initial typologically

Nouns: Nominals are often determinerless, do not inflect for case. Pronouns can be dropped in both subject and object position.

Verbs: Root-and-template morphology and affixal/concatenative morphology.

- Root-and-template verb forms = "verb bases"
  - Can encode aspect, tense, or mood

(4) *Verb bases in Senaya*

Root	Imperfective	Perfective	Imperative	Infinitive
r-k-w ('ride')	rakw	rkuu	rkuu	rkaawa
q-ṭ-l ('kill')	qaṭl	qṭel	qṭol	qṭaala
s-m-x ('wait')	samx	smex	smox	smaaxa

- Some affixal morphology on verbs further encodes grammatical distinctions like aspect, tense, and mood.

★★ Other affixal morphology marks agreement with the verb's argument(s). ★★

  - There are **two paradigms of agreement morphemes**[2]
  - These morphemes sit in two slots following the verb, with S-suffixes preceding L-suffixes

(5) Agreement morphemes in Senaya

S-suffixes

	Singular	Plural
1st p.	-en(m.)/-an(f.)	-ox
2nd p.	-et(m.)/-at(f.)	-iiton
3rd p.	-∅(m.)/-a(f.)	-ii

L-suffixes

	Singular	Plural
1st p.	-lii	-lan
2nd p.	-lox(m.)/-lax(f.)	-looxon
3rd p.	-lee(m.)/-laa(f.)	-luu/-lun

  - Which arguments trigger agreement?
    ◇ All subjects
    ◇ Specific objects

- The agreement configuration (i.e., whether S-suffixes or L-suffixes reference the subject or object) varies by aspect of the verb base (perfective vs. imperfective).

  ⇒ Aspect-based agreement split

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[2]There is evidence in some Neo-Aramaic languages that L-suffixes are in fact clitics, resulting from clitic-doubling (Doron and Khan 2012, Kalin and van Urk 2015). This will not be crucial for the present talk, and in Senaya this evidence is absent, so for simplicity I continue to take both S-suffixes and L-suffixes to be just that: suffixes.

Interim summary:
- Two aspectual verb bases: imperfective and perfective
- Two paradigms of suffixal agreement morphology: S-suffixes and L-suffixes
- Verbs bear agreement with subjects and specific objects (DOM)

2.2 Senaya's aspect-based agreement split

In Senaya, we see a unique aspect split among Neo-Aramaic languages which I call partial agreement reversal.

→ Here, *subject agreement is italicized* and **object agreement is bolded**.

- All data in this paper was gathered through fieldwork conducted in Los Angeles with Laura McPherson and Kevin Ryan.

(6) [PERFECTIVE] L-suffix for subject

  a. Axnii dmex-*lan*.
      we   sleep.PFV-*L.1pl*
      'We slept.'

  b. Axnii ksuuta ksuu-*lan*.
      we   book   write.PFV-*L.1pl*
      'We wrote a book(fem.).'

- Subjects trigger agreement in the form of an L-suffix on the perfective base.

- Object agreement is completely banned on the perfective base. Correspondingly, specific objects cannot appear with the perfective base.

(7) *Axnii oo   ksuuta ksuu(**-laa/-a**)-*lan*(**-laa/-a**).
     we   that book   write.PFV(**-L/S.3FS**)-*L.1pl*(**-L/S.3FS**)
   Intended: 'We wrote that book(fem.).'

In the imperfective, object agreement takes the form that subject agreement had in the perfective (L-suffix), and subject agreement surfaces uniquely (S-suffix).

(8) [IMPERFECTIVE] S-suffix for subject, L-suffix for (specific) object

  a. Axnii damx-*ox*.
      we   sleep.IMPF-*S.1pl*
      'We (will) sleep.'

  b. Axnii ksuuta kasw-*ox*.
      we   book   write.IMPF-*S.1pl*
      'We (will) write a book(fem.).'

  c. Axnii (oo) ksuuta kasw-*ox*-**laa**.
      we   that book   write.IMPF-*S.1pl*-**L.3FS**
      'We (will) write the(/that) book(fem.).'

The overall picture we have is this:[3]

- A = transitive subject; O = transitive object; S = intransitive subject
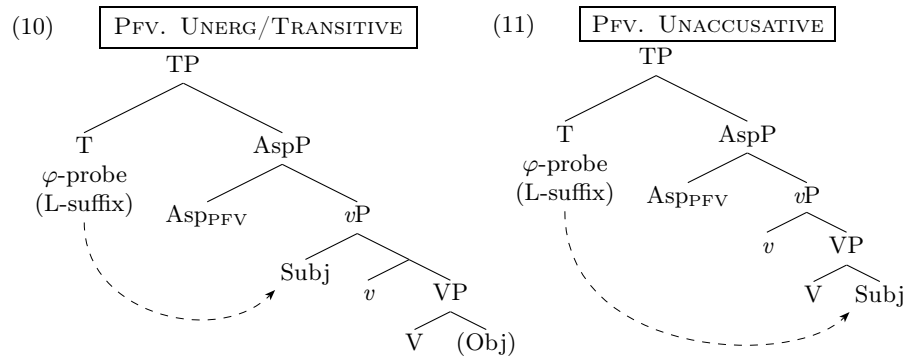
(9) AGREEMENT ALIGNMENT
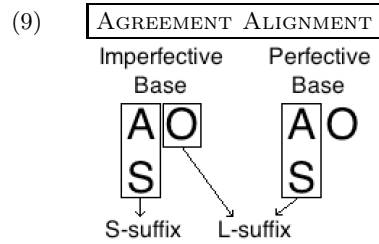
2.3 Basic syntactic account of Senaya

Following Kalin and van Urk (2015), I assume the following basic syntax:

- Licensers/agreement loci:
  - T and Imperfective Asp
  - BUT not v or perfective Asp
- Morphological spell-out:
 - Agreement with T: L-suffix
  - Agreement with Asp: S-suffix

Perfectives

(10) PFV. UNERG/TRANSITIVE

(11) PFV. UNACCUSATIVE

- If there is an object, it cannot be licensed/agreed with, because there is only one available licenser/agreement locus, T.
- v is inactive in Senaya, so vP is not a phase.

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[3]Thanks to Kevin Ryan for suggesting this way of organizing the data.

Imperfectives

(12) IMPF. UNERGATIVE

(13) IMPF. UNACCUSATIVE
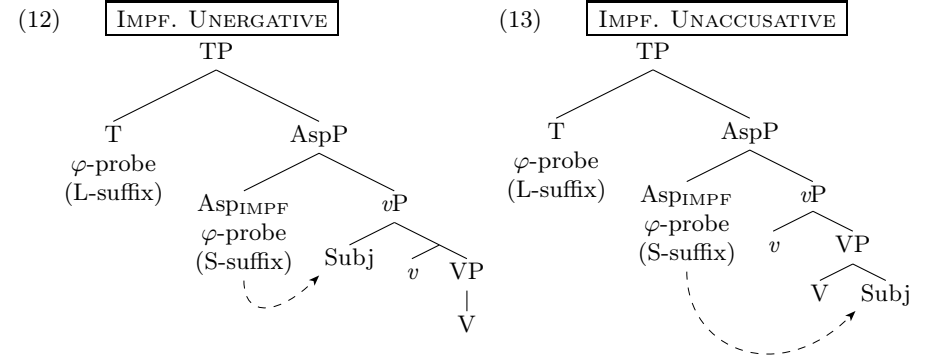
- Asp merges before T, and thus takes over subject agreement/licensing.
- T does not find an agreement target in intransitives, and this does not cause a crash (Preminger 2011).
- Since Asp licenses/agrees with the subject, T is free to agree with/license an object:[4]

(14) IMPERFECTIVE TRANSITIVE
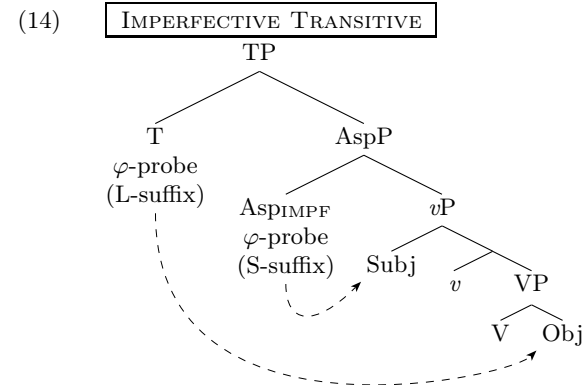
Some observations about the structures:

- There is no additional agreement locus in the perfective, and only nonspecific objects are allowed.
- There is an additional agreement locus in the imperfective, but still only specific objects enter into an agreement relation.
- → Nonspecific objects need not and cannot trigger agreement. Specific objects, on the other hand, must trigger agreement.

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[4]I assume that the subject does not intervene here because the subject is either inactive/invisible after itself agreeing, or raises to spec-TP before T probes.

2.4 A closer look at DOM in Senaya

(In this section, the nominal and agreement of interest are bolded.)

A. Subjects always trigger agreement.

(15) *Perfectives: Subjects agree obligatorily; morphological form = L-suffix*

    a. **Xa ksuuta** mpel-**aa**.
        a   book   fall.PFV-L.3FS
        'A book fell.'
        (Subject is non-agentive, nonspecific, indefinite, inanimate)

    b. **Aayet** ksuu-waa-**lox**.
        You   write.PFV-PST-L.2MS
        'You wrote (a long time ago).'
        (Subject is agentive, specific, definite, animate)

(16) *Imperfectives: Subjects agree obligatorily; morphological form = S-suffix*

    a. **Xa ksuuta** molp-**aa**.
        a   book   fall.IMPF-S.3FS
        'A book is falling (but I don't know which).'
        (Subject is non-agentive, nonspecific, indefinite, inanimate)

    b. **Aayet** kasw-**et**-waa.
        You   write.IMPF-S.2MS-PST
        'You used to write.'
        (Subject is agentive, specific, definite, animate)

B. It is specificity, and not some other factor, that determines whether an object must trigger agreement.

- Animacy, definiteness, and affectedness play no role.

- The presence or absence of the indefinite determiner plays no role.

(17) *Imperfectives: Objects agree if specific; morphological form = L-suffix*

    a. Aana (**xa**) **ksuuta** xazy-an-**aa**.
        I   a   book   see.IMPF-S.1FS-L.2MS
        'I see a (specific) book (e.g., on the table).'
        (Object is specific, indefinite, inanimate, unaffected)

    b. Aana **oo ksuuta** kasw-an-**aa**.
        I   that book   write.IMPF-S.1PL-L.3FS
        'I (will) write that book.'
        (Object is specific, definite, inanimate, affected)

    c. Pooles kod yooma **baxt-ee** naasheq-∅-**laa**.
        Paul every day wife-3MS kiss.IMPF-S.3MS-L.3FS
        'Paul kisses his wife every day.'
        (Object is specific, definite, animate, affected)

(18) *Non-agreeing objects interpreted as nonspecific*

    a. Aana (**xa**) **ksuuta** kasw-an.
        I   a   book   write.IMPF-S.1PL
        'I will write a book.'
        (Object is nonspecific, indefinite, inanimate, affected)

    b. Aana kod yooma **yaale** xazy-an.
        I   every day   children see.IMPF-S.1FS
        'I see some children every day.'
        (Object is nonspecific, indefinite, animate, unaffected)

- Some interim conclusions:

  – Only specificity matters for DOM in Senaya.

  – Specific nominals (subjects and objects) must trigger agreement.

  – Nonspecific nominals can trigger agreement.

    ◇ Nonspecific subjects, even if unaccusative, agree, (15a)/(16a).

  – L-suffixes are not relativized to only agree with specific nominals.

    ◇ Nonspecific subjects in perfective aspect trigger L-suffix agreement, as in (15a).

- Natural next questions:

  – Do specific/agreeing nominals occupy a higher position?

  – Do nonspecific/non-agreeing nominals need to be verb-adjacent?

C. Agreeing and non-agreeing objects occupy the same position.

C1. Agreeing and non-agreeing objects can appear before or after an IO.

(19) *Specific/agreeing object can appear before or after IO*

    a. Aana **oo ksuuta** [ta d-on yaale] maxw-an-**aa**.
        I   that book   to GEN-the children show.IMPF-S.1FS-L.3FS
        'I (will) show that book to the children.'

    b. Aana [ta d-on yaale] **oo ksuuta** maxw-an-**aa**.
        I   to GEN-the children that book   show.IMPF-S.1FS-L.3FS
        'I (will) show that book to the children.'

(20) *Nonspecific/non-agreeing object can appear before or after IO*

    a. Aana **xa ksuuta** [ta d-on yaale] maxw-an.
        I   a book   to GEN-the children show.IMPF-S.1FS
        'I (will) show a book to the children.'

    b. Aana [ta d-on yaale] **xa ksuuta** maxw-an.
        I   to GEN-the children a book   show.IMPF-S.1FS
        'I (will) show a book to the children.'

C2. Agreeing and non-agreeing objects must appear after low VP adverbials.

(21)   *Specific/agreeing object cannot appear outside of VP adverbial*

    a. Pooles [gaw 'eshta sa'aate] **oo   beesa** baanee-∅-**lee**.
        Paul in   six   hours   that house build.IMPF-S.3MS-L.3MS
        'Paul will build that house in six hours.'

    b. *Pooles **oo   beesa** [gaw 'eshta sa'aate] baanee-∅-**lee**.
        Paul that house in   six   hours   build.IMPF-S.3MS-L.3MS
        'Paul will build that house in six hours.'

(22)   *Nonspecific/non-agreeing object cannot appear outside of VP adverbial*

    a. Pooles [gaw 'eshta sa'aate] **xa beesa** baanee-∅.
        Paul in   six   hours   a house build.IMPF-S.3MS
        'Paul will build a house in six hours.'

    b. *Pooles **xa beesa** [gaw 'eshta sa'aate] baanee-∅.
        Paul a house in   six   hours   build.IMPF-S.3MS
        Intended: 'Paul will build a house in six hours.'

- More interim conclusions:

  - Nonspecific objects are not licensed via pseudoincorporation in Senaya.
  - Specific objects in Senaya do not trigger agreement as a consequence of raising into a higher domain.
  - → DOM crosslinguistically, then, cannot be entirely dependent on object height and verb adjacency.

- A natural conclusion to draw from the Senaya data is that nonspecific objects are not licensed/do not get their Case feature valued.

  - We're then left with two possibilities:
    1. Nonspecific objects do not have a Case feature, e.g., because they lack a D layer (Massam 2001, Danon 2006, Lyutikova and Pereltsvaig 2013, *i.a.*).
    - → **But, nonspecific subjects get Case/trigger agreement!**
    2. Nonspecific objects have a Case feature, but it does not need to be valued.

3 Proposal

Main considerations:

1. To not rely on object height and verb adjacency
2. To connect (absence of) DOM with (absence of) licensing
3. To unify subject nominals and object nominals
4. To derive the definiteness/animacy hierarchies

The proposal, in a nutshell:

1. All nominals are able to receive Case/be agreed with.

   ⇒ All nominals have a Case feature and phi features.

2. But, not all nominals require licensing (Case/agreement).

   ⇒ Not all nominals have an <u>uninterpretable</u> Case feature (*u*Case).

   - The subset of nominals that require marking in DOM systems indicates the subset of nominals that need licensing (have *u*Case).
   - E.g., specific nominals in Senaya have *u*Case, while nonspecific nominals just have an unvalued Case feature.

3. Clauses typically have exactly one licenser, in the T region.

   - Since the T region is above *v*P (the theta region), the obligatory licenser will always Agree with the highest nominal in *v*P (i.e., the subject).
   - All other nominals (i.e., objects) are licensed only when...
   (a) there is an available secondary licenser, and
   (b) the nominal requires licensing.

3.1 Formal ingredients in the account

3.1.1 Case valuation as a by-product of agreement

I assume the standard, basic architecture of Case licensing via agreement (Chomsky 2000, 2001):

(23)
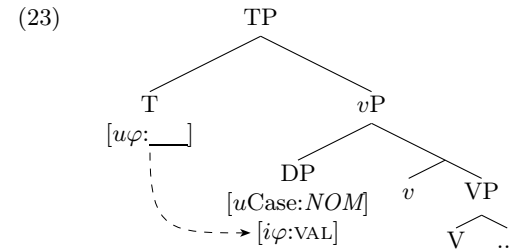
My claim: Nonspecific nominals in Senaya have a Case feature, but this Case feature does not need to be valued.

- In a Chomskyan agreement/Case system, this is impossible:

  - If a feature is unvalued, then it is also uninterpretable.
  - Uninterpretable features cause the derivation to crash.
  - Therefore any unvalued feature will cause a crash.

3.1.2 Four types of features

The standard Chomskyan feature system can be modified to accommodate nominals that have a Case feature but lack Case.

- Insights from Pesetsky and Torrego (2007) and Preminger (2011):

    - P&T: Features can be unvalued but interpretable.
    - Preminger: Unvalued features do not cause a crash of the derivation.

    (24)   *Possible types of features*
    - a.   [F:___] = unvalued
    - b.   [F:VAL] = valued
    - c.   [uF:___] = uninterpretable, unvalued ($\rightarrow$ will cause a crash)
    - d.   [uF:VAL] = uninterpretable, valued

- Nominals in Senaya:

    - Specific nominals have uninterpretable and unvalued Case, (24c).
    - Nonspecific nominals have unvalued Case, (24a).

How do specific nominals and nonspecific nominals end up with different sorts of Case features?

- Feature sharing (Pesetsky and Torrego 2007)
- Feature distribution across DP (Danon 2011)

3.1.3 Features are distributed and shared across the nominal

Pesetsky and Torrego (2007):

(25)   *Agree* (Feature sharing version)
- (i)   An unvalued feature F (a *probe*) on a head H at a syntactic location α (F$_\alpha$) scans its c-command domain for another instance of F (a *goal*) at location β (F$_\beta$) with which to agree.
- (ii) Replace F$_\alpha$ with F$_\beta$ or F$_\beta$ with F$_\alpha$,[5] so that the same feature is present in both locations.

(26)

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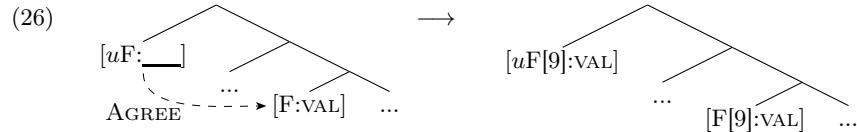
[5] This is a slight revision of feature-sharing Agree as suggested by Pesetsky and Torrego (2007:269,fn. 9). It is assumed that "recoverability considerations might prevent replacement of the valued occurrence by the unvalued occurrence." In other words, if one instance of F is valued and another is unvalued, it is the valued instance that replaces the unvalued one.
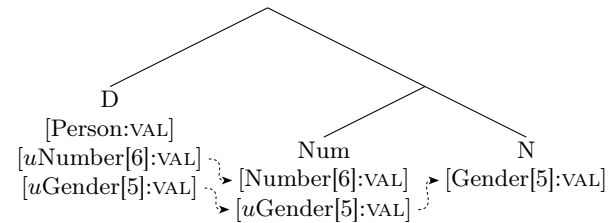
Danon (2011): Feature-sharing within the nominal ends up 'collecting' values for all the φ-features on the highest head in the nominal, typically D.

$\Rightarrow$ All of the φ-features are accessible as a bundle to φ-probes on the spine.
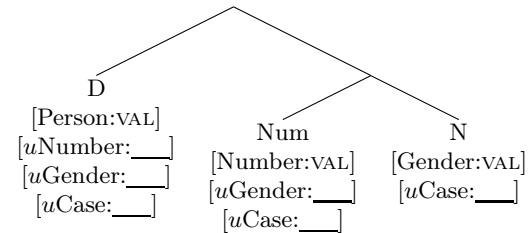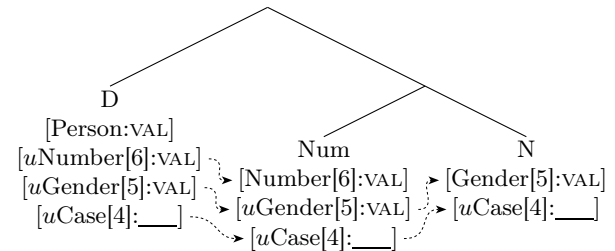
(27)   a.
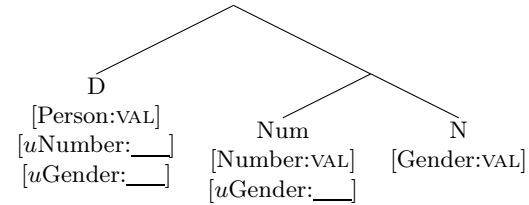
b.

- Danon also suggests that a Case feature might be present on every projection inside a nominal, such that each head is "active" (visible for probing).
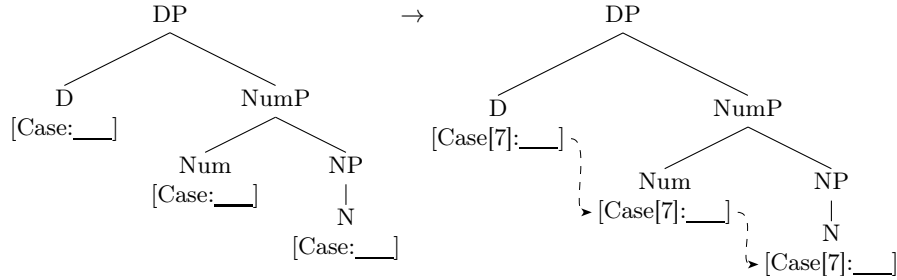
(28)   a.

b.

The result:

- Valued φ-features are collected in the highest head of the nominal, along with an unvalued Case feature that is also shared across the nominal.

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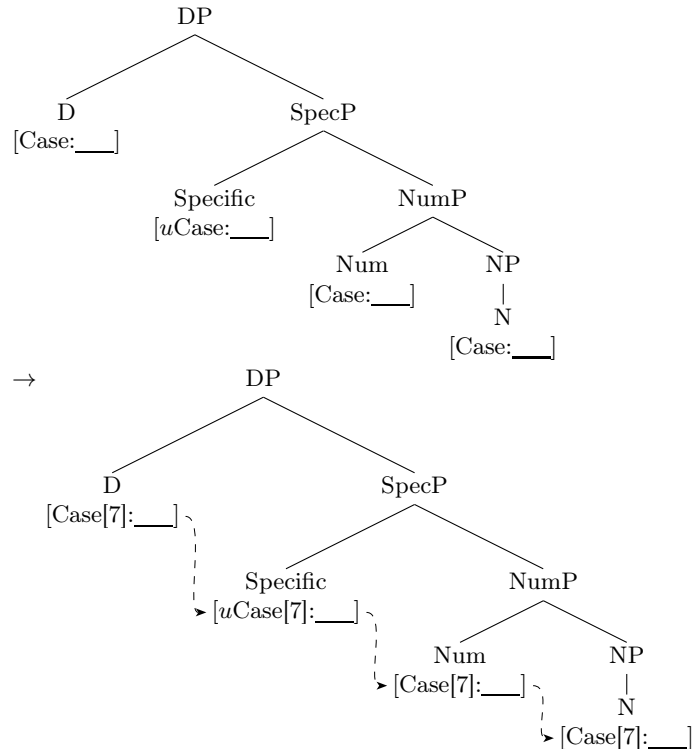### 3.1.4 Uninterpretable Case is introduced in certain projections

The core proposal: Nominal features (e.g., specificity, animacy) are projected as heads, and languages differ as to which nominal projections bear uCase.

- Only if a nominal has an instance of uCase does the nominal need licensing.

- In Senaya, Case is uninterpretable only on the Specific head; this projection introduces (inherent) specificity inside the nominal (Lidz 2006).

(29) Nonspecific nominals in Senaya: No uCase, do not need licensing

```
        DP                              DP
       /  \              →             /  \
      D    NumP                       D    NumP
[Case:___]  /  \              [Case[7]:___]  /  \
          Num   NP                         Num    NP
      [Case:___]  |                   [Case[7]:___]  |
                  N                                   N
             [Case:___]                         [Case[7]:___]
```

(30) Specific nominals in Senaya: Have uCase, need licensing

```
          DP
         /  \
        D    SpecP
  [Case:___]  /  \
         Specific   NumP
      [uCase:___]   /  \
                  Num    NP
              [Case:___]  |
                          N
                     [Case:___]
```

```
→            DP
            /  \
           D    SpecP
    [Case[7]:___]  /  \
            Specific    NumP
         [uCase[7]:___]  /  \
                       Num    NP
                  [Case[7]:___]  |
                                 N
                           [Case[7]:___]
```

(31) Abbreviated DPs (adding a bundle of valued φ-features)

  a. Nonspecific nominals in Senaya   b. Specific nominals in Senaya

```
        DP                          DP
    [Case:___]                  [uCase:___]
     [φ:VAL]                     [φ:VAL]
```
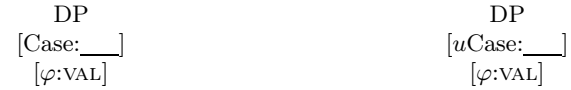
A welcome consequence:

- **Implicational hierarchies reproduce much of the DOM animacy and definiteness hierarchies.**

(32) a. $1/2 > 3$ Pronoun > Name > Human > Animate > Inanimate

  b. Pronoun > Name > Definite > Specific Indefinite > Nonspecific

- For example, in Senaya, any DP that is specific (i.e., specific indefinites and all nominals higher on the definiteness hierarchy) will have a SpecP, and will therefore have uCase.

- In a language where animacy induces DOM, uCase on AnimP will ensure that nominals that are, e.g., human or $1/2$ person will also need licensing.

3.1.5 Distribution of licensers in the clause

Lastly, I adopt the theoretical idea that there is one obligatorily active nominal-licensing locus in every finite clause (similar to Bobaljik 1993, Rezac 2011).

- In my account, the obligatoriness of a nominal licensing locus translates to some functional head (e.g., finite T) always merging with a φ-probe.

- Correspondingly, in every derivation, this φ-probe will Agree with the closest nominal.

Languages also have non-obligatory nominal licensing loci, which merge only when there is a nominal that needs licensing (again similar to Bobaljik 1993, Rezac 2011).

- Deciding whether or not to activate a secondary licensing locus can be seen as an economy calculation (Chomsky 1995) or as a last resort operation (Rezac 2011).

- For concreteness, I adopt an economy-based view of this calculation:

(33) *Economy Condition on Agreement:*
      Fewer Agree relations are preferred over more Agree relations.

⇒ If a derivation will converge without the activation of a secondary licensing locus, then the derivation lacking the secondary locus is the preferred one.

3.2 Putting it all together

The basic components of the account:

(i) Nominal features are projected as functional heads in nominal structure.

(ii) All of these heads bear unvalued Case, and Case is shared throughout the nominal through feature-sharing.

(iii) Languages differ as to where in nominal structure uninterpretable Case is introduced, and it is only nominals with uninterpretable Case that require Case valuation.

(iv) Languages have both obligatory and secondary nominal licensing loci—the former are always merged, and the latter are only merged when needed for licensing reasons.

The consequence is DOM:

- A nominal that is the closest nominal to an obligatory nominal licensing locus will always get Case/trigger agreement, regardless of that nominal's licensing needs (i.e., whether or not the nominal has uninterpretable Case).

    - Since the obligatory licensing locus is (typically) in the high inflectional domain, the subject will always get Case/trigger agreement.
    - This derives the rarity of Differential Subject Marking.

- All other nominals (typically, objects) get Case/trigger agreement when:

    (a) the nominal requires it (the nominal has uninterpretable Case) and
    (b) there is a secondary nominal licensing locus available to value the nominal's Case.

4 Implementing the account for Senaya

Recall the basic data and analysis (Kalin and van Urk 2015):

- Perfective aspect, (34): All subjects trigger agreement, via Agree with T

- Imperfective aspect, (35):

    - All subjects trigger agreement, via Agree with Asp
    - Specific objects trigger agreement, via Agree with T

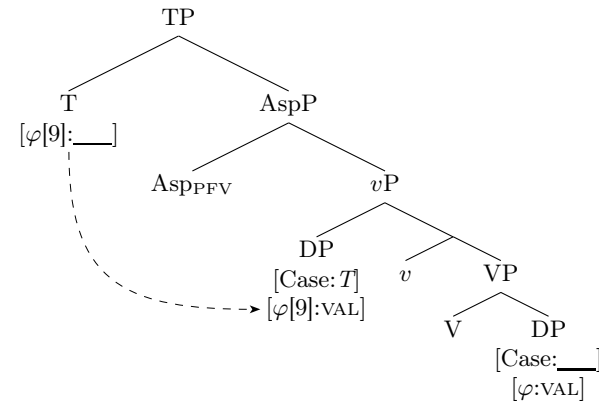DOM-relevant properties of Senaya:

- In perfective aspect, T is the obligatory licensing locus; there is no secondary licensing locus.

- In imperfective aspect, Asp is the obligatory licensing locus; the secondary licensing locus is T.

- SpecP introduces uCase.

(34) PFV. UNERG/TRANSITIVE   (35) IMPF. TRANSITIVE
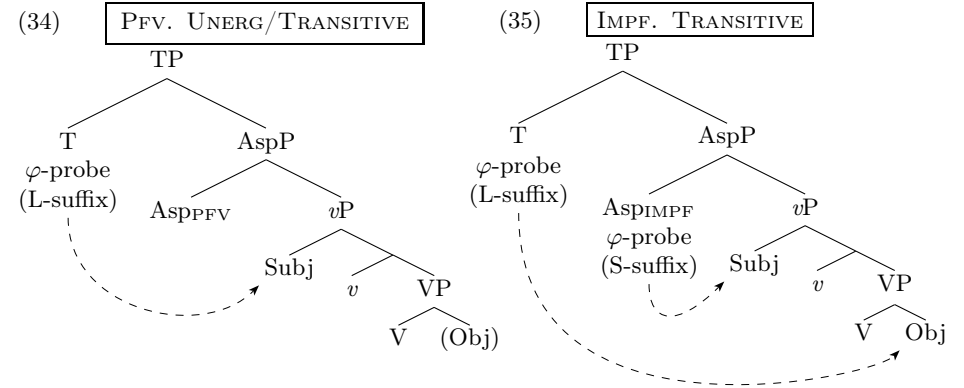
Significant results for the perfective:

- In a canonical perfective, T will agree with the highest nominal, the subject, regardless of the subject's features. (There is no DSM.)

- In object position of a canonical perfective, no agreement/Case is available, because there is no secondary licensing locus.

    - Since nonspecific nominals do not have uCase, they can grammatically surface in this position, while specific nominals cannot.
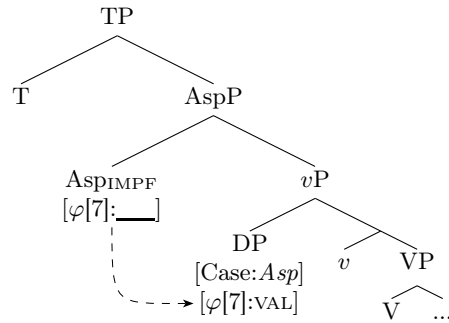
(36) PERFECTIVE nonspecific subject, nonspecific object
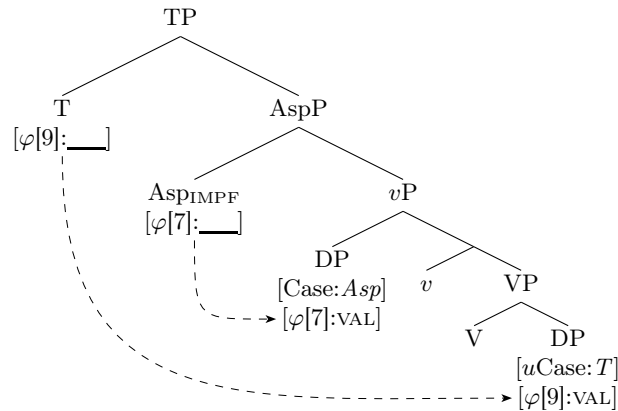

Significant results for the imperfective:

- In the imperfective, Asp is the obligatory licensing locus; T is the secondary licensing locus.

    - The highest nominal will always Agree with Asp, (37)-(38).
    - T is an active licensing locus only when there is a lower nominal with uCase, (37).

(37) $\boxed{\text{IMPERFECTIVE}}$ nonspecific subject

```
              TP
             /  \
            T    AspP
                /    \
         Asp_IMPF     vP
         [φ[7]:___]   /  \
              ┆      DP    \
              ┆   [Case:Asp] v   VP
              └--→[φ[7]:VAL]     /  \
                               V    ...
```
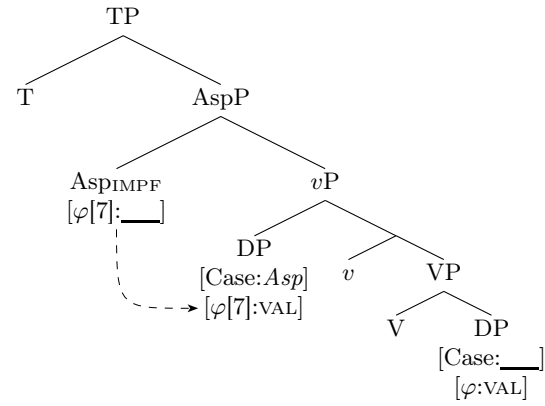
- Asp agrees with the highest nominal.

- T does not act as a secondary licensing locus, since there is no nominal that needs licensing.

(38) $\boxed{\text{IMPERFECTIVE}}$ nonspecific subject, specific object

```
              TP
             /  \
            T    AspP
         [φ[9]:___] /   \
              ┆ Asp_IMPF   vP
              ┆ [φ[7]:___]  /  \
              ┆        DP    \
              ┆     [Case:Asp] v   VP
              ┆     [φ[7]:VAL]     /  \
              ┆                   V    DP
              ┆                     [uCase:T]
              └------------------→ [φ[9]:VAL]
```

- Asp agrees with the highest nominal.

- The derivation only converges if T is active as the secondary licensing locus, since otherwise the object (which has uCase) would go unlicensed.

(39) $\boxed{\text{IMPERFECTIVE}}$ nonspecific subject, nonspecific object

```
              TP
             /  \
            T    AspP
                /    \
         Asp_IMPF     vP
         [φ[7]:___]   /  \
              ┆      DP    \
              ┆   [Case:Asp] v   VP
              └--→[φ[7]:VAL]     /  \
                               V    DP
                                  [Case:___]
                                  [φ:VAL]
```

- The Economy Condition on Agreement, (33), rules out a derivation where T is a licensing locus, since the derivation converges without this, (39).

5 Conclusions and future directions

The core idea proposed here is that not all nominals need abstract licensing.

- Rather, the need for abstract licensing is introduced with certain pieces of functional structure in the nominal.

- All nominals are able to get Case/trigger agreement, since a Case feature is introduced in the smallest piece of nominal structure, on N itself.

- In instances of DOM, certain objects do not get licensed because:

  (i) they do not require licensing (they lack uCase), and

  (ii) they are not the closest nominal to an obligatorily-merged nominal licenser.

Main benefits of the account:

- No need to stipulate the definiteness/animacy hierarchies.

- No need to stipulate a fundamental difference in licensing needs or featural content between subjects and objects.

Variation in which objects are marked in DOM systems arises from the interaction of two factors that vary crosslinguistically:

 (i) where in nominal structure uninterpretable Case merges; and

 (ii) where in clause structure argument licensers (obligatorily or optionally) merge.

There are several tasks that need to be taken up in future work to support the account presented here.

- Investigations of parallel DOM and DSM effects within a single language, e.g., Turkish (Kornfilt 2008).

- Separation of nominals that do not need licensing (e.g., nonspecific nominals, no *u*Case) from PRO (no Case feature at all).

- Generalization to a broader range of languages.

  - The system presented is well-equipped to handle instances of disjunctive DOM, e.g., objects are marked if specific or animate, as in Kannada (Lidz 2006).

  - This system is less well-equipped to handle conjunctive DOM, e.g., objects are marked only if both specific and animate, as is the case in Spanish (Rodríguez-Mondoñedo 2007).

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