

A NOTE ON CASE ASSIGNMENT :
A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
ENGLISH AND ANCIENT/KOINE GREEK *

A k i h i k o C H I K A M A T S U

0. Introduction

Ancient Greek is known for its rich inflectional system. We can safely say that a grammatical "behavior" of a case is to be directly observed in the language. English, however, is somewhat different and in this investigation I will investigate a difference in case-marking between the two languages. It is hoped that it will contribute to the attempt to clarify the mechanism of the Universal Grammar.

What is discussed in this article are the following:

- (0-1)a. The assumption of a null case-assigning complementizer in Gr.: i.e., a Greek counterpart of *for*.
- b. Agreement between subject and predicative through predication relation.
- c. The postulation of the empty subject in Greek infinitival clause to be governed and case-marked.

The linguistic varieties which are considered here are Ancient and Koine Greek. Both are dealt with in this article without any clear distinction. Koine came from the Attic dialect of Ancient Greek and has some distinct characteristics from Attic but the differences between them are not too sharp and I suppose that they are not relevant to my purpose. Therefore, they can be treated approximately identically. Henceforth, I will call the dialect concerned here A/K Greek (A=Ancient/K=Koine).

1. *FOR*-complementizer in English

In English, an overt subject has a nominative case. In the

present version of Principles and Parameters framework, the subject NP is analysed as occurring at the specifier position of IP (INFL(ection) phrase), which is a category corresponding to S (sentence) in the former framework of transformational grammar. AGR (i.e., agreement element) in Infl, which is the head of IP, assigns nominative case to the subject NP through SPEC(ifier)-Head agreement.

We have another case called Exceptional Case Marking(ECM). In an infinitival complement, the subject NP cannot be case-marked by Infl, since it lacks the nominative assigner, AGR, in infinitival complement. The subject in an infinitival clause doesn't have the nominative but the accusative case, as shown in (1-1) below:

(1-1)a. Mary believes [*him* to be clever].

b. Mary is eager [*for* [*him* to be here]].

In (1-1a), the matrix verb, *believes*, assigns accusative to the embedded subject(*him*), whereas in (1-1b) the complementizer, *for*, assigns the accusative to the embedded subject(*him*), since it has a prepositional nature.

The subject NP in an infinitival clause could also be caseless. As to an overt NP, it cannot be caseless by virtue of Case Filter as shown below:

(1-2)Case Filter

At S-Structure, every lexical NP needs Case¹⁻¹.

Therefore, the subject must be a null element, in the case that it lacks a case, as in (1-3):

(1-3)I tried [_{CP}[_{IP}PRO to understand the problem]]¹⁻²

In (1-3), the embedded subject cannot receive any case, since the CP(complementizer phrase), which blocks case assignment, intervenes between the matrix verb(*tried*) and the embedded subject position. In this case, the Case Filter prevents the embedded subject from having phonetic content.

2. Null prepositional complementizer in A/K Greek

In this section a null prepositional complementizer in Ancient Greek, which is analogous to *for* in English, will be postulated.

In Ancient Greek, an overt subject in an Infinitival clause is usually accusative, whereas a subject in a finite clause has a nominative case. An example is given below:

(2-1) *nomizoo gar [humaas emoi einai kai patrida kai philous]*
(X.A.1.3.6., Smyth(1956:§ .1975)

(think_{1SG}--for--[you_{PL}-ACC--me_{DAT}--be_{INF}--and--fatherland_{ACC}--and--friends_{ACC}])

"For I think you are both a homeland and friends for me."

This example seems to be parallel to (1-1.a.). That is to say, the embedded Infl cannot assign any case to the embedded subject, since the embedded Infl lacks AGR and the matrix verb *nomizoo* (I think) assigns an accusative case to the embedded subject NP, instead.

See the following example:

(2-2) *rhabbi, kalon estin [heemaas hoode einai], ... (Mark, 9.5.)*

(teacher_{VOC}--good_{NBUT-NOM/ACC}--is_{3SG}--[us_{ACC}--here--be_{INF}])

"Teacher, it is good for us to be here."

In (2-2), it seems that the embedded subject *heemaas* cannot have any case, if there is no case-assigning complementizer (such as *for* in English) and the matrix verb *estin*, which is not transitive, cannot assign case to the embedded subject, even if the infinitival clause occurs in a VP-internal position.

In this case, one cannot but assume that there must be a sort of case-assigning complementizer which has no phonetic content in the embedded clause. Namely, the sentence (2-2) has the following structure (κ^P is a null prepositional complementizer):

(2-3) *rhabbi, kalon estin [_{CP} κ^P [_{IP} *heemaas hoode einai*]], ...*

(Mark, 9.5.)

(teacher_{VOC}--good_{NBUT-NOM/ACC}--is_{3SG}--[κ^P [us_{ACC}--here--be_{INF}]])

In (2-3), the null complementizer κ^P , which has a prepositional aspect, assigns an accusative case to the embedded subject (*heemaas*).

3. Case Marking and Predication

Case Filter, which was mentioned in section 1, is applied at least to the arguments. Here it becomes a problem whether a predicat

ive NP has case. Maggie Browning (personal communication) suggested that one possible idea is that only arguments are relevant to the Case Filter (recall the temporal nominals used adverbially, as in *It's fine today*).

In English, the distinction in nouns between nominative and accusative is almost "abstract". That is, the nominative form is morphologically identical with the accusative form, with the exception in pronouns. Therefore, this problem of whether the predicative is case-marked or not cannot be observed directly.

Let us recall the German inflectional system, which is richer than that in English. The following distinction between determinative and predicative adjective are found:

(3-1)a. inflected / __ N (Determinative use):

 e.g. blind-e Liebe "blind love"

 b. not inflected / COPULA __ (Predicative use):

 e.g. Die Liebe ist blind- ϕ . "Love is blind."³⁻¹

Thus, the predicative seems to be caseless in German, at least *prima facie*.

In contrast, a predicative AP/NP has an overt ending in A/K Greek. It seems that predicative AP/NP agrees with the subject. See the following example:

(3-2) pro gar toutoon toon heemeroon anestee Theudaas [legoon

[einai *tina heauton*]], ... (Acts, 5.36.)

(before--for--these--the--days--rose_{SG}--Theudas_{NOM}--

[saying_{PART}--[be_{INF}--someone_{ACC}--himself_{ACC}]])

"For he stood up a few days before, saying he was a personage..."

In (3-2), the predicative NP *tina* "someone" in the embedded clause has an accusative case, agreeing with the embedded subject *heauton* "himself". This holds for other ECM cases, as in (3-3):

(3-3) nuun *soi* exestin *andri* genesthai.

(Koozu, 1960: Xenoph. An. 7.1.21.)

(now--you_{SG-DAT}--it is allowed--man_{DAT}--become_{INF})

"Now, it is possible for you to become a man."

Probably, the impersonal verb *exestin* "it is allowed" is

subcategorized for a dative object. Therefore, it assigns the dative to the embedded subject *soi* "you". The predicative NP *andri* "man" is dative, agreeing with the embedded subject.

The rule called Predication gives a predicative phrase the same index as subject NP³⁻². It can be hypothesized that features of gender, number, and case in subject NP are copied to the predicative phrase. Thus the predicative phrase is indirectly assigned a case through co-indexation, at least in A/K Greek.

The predication relation is not confined to the construction with copula. In this article, the problem that the case-agreement through the predication relation is an idiosyncratic characteristic of the construction with copula is left open.

4. Empty subject in A/K Greek

In English, a sort of empty category PRO occurs at the subject position, if there is no case-assigning complementizer (*for*) in infinitival CP, as seen in (1-3), which is repeated here as (4-1):

(4-1) I tried [_{CP} [_{IP} PRO to understand the problem]]

In Greek also, some empty subject can be assumed in infinitival clause. See the sentence below:

(4-2)a. [*philanthroopon einai*] dei (I.2.15.)

(*humane*_{ACC}--*be*_{INF}--*must*_{IMPERS})

"People must be humane."

The sentence is thought to have the following structure:

(4-2)b. [_{CP} [_{IP} *e*_i [_{VP} [*philanthroopon*_i *einai*]]]] dei

Because the predicative phrase *philanthroopon* has an accusative case, there must be an embedded subject to agree with. Namely the empty subject *e* in (4-2.b.) must have an accusative case.

The empty subject in the English example (4-1) is *PRO*. The *PRO* must be ungoverned by virtue of the condition called PRO Theorem, and so, it cannot have any case. On the other hand, the empty subject must have a case in A/K Greek. The null subject in (4-2) must be governed and case-assigned by a null prepositional complementizer κ^P . Then (4-2.b.) must be modified into the representation below:

(4-2)c. [CP κ^P [IP, φ (ACC)] [VPphilanthropon₁ einai]] dei

A dative subject in a sort of ECM case can be altered into an accusative case in some examples, as in (4-3):

(4-3) *exestin heemiin agathois/agathous einai.*

(Smyth, 1956: § 1978)

(it is possible--USPL-DAT--goodPL-DAT/goodPL-ACC--beINF)

"It is possible for us to be good."

Here assume that the impersonal verb *estin* can select either IP or CP. Then we will have the two representations below:

(4-4)a. *exestin [IPheemiin₁ (DAT) [VPagathois (DAT)] einai]].*

b. *exestin heemiin₁ [CP κ^P [IP, φ (ACC)] [VPagathous (ACC)] einai]].*

In this way we can understand why the alternation between dative and accusative is found in the subject position in infinitival clause.

5. Conclusion

In this article, the assumption of a null prepositional complementizer, κ^P , is proposed. Its function is parallel to *for* in English. The difference is that Greek κ^P does not have phonetic content while in English *for* is overt. We can conclude that the difference is a lexical one.

Next, Greek has a subject-predicative agreement. Probably, such a relation might be found in English also, and yet it is not evident but "invisible" in a way, partly because the English inflectional system is not so rich (or so complicated) as A/K Greek.

The case-filter in (1-2) is not accessible to the predicative in English. Since the null subject in an English infinitival sentence has the status of *PRO*, which is caseless, a case-agreement does not always hold between a subject and predicative phrase in English. On the other hand, the null subject in a Greek infinitival construction can be governed and be case-marked (it might possibly have some status like *pro*).⁵⁻¹ Therefore the case-agreement between the subject and the predicative is obligatory and so the latter is

also case-marked in A/K Greek.

Notes

* Data used in this article and not a small part of the basic ideas which underlies this research are based on my MA thesis (Chikamatsu,1989a), which was not written in the GB framework, though. I am grateful to the editorial committee of *PROPYLAIA*, the proofreader, and others.

1-1 Lasnik and Uriagereka(1988:ch.1.(20)).

1-2 It is cited from Lasnik and Uriagereka(1988:ch.2.(67)). *PRO* is a sort of null element, which has anaphoric and pronominal character.

3-1 (3-1.a.) is cited from Wildhagen,K. and W.Heraucourt(1972), and (3-1.b.) is from Sakurai(1968:§ 60).

3-2 See Williams(1980).

5-1 This difference between the two languages may have something to do with *pro*-drop parameter, although more detailed investigation is needed, in order to confirm this point.

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