The evolution of Case in two Otomanguean languages of Mexico

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Case marking systems often evolve diachronically from adpositions via a stage in which a former adposition now acts as a case-marking particle (Butt and King 2004, Rákosi and Laczkó 2011, inter alia). The correct analysis of such particles can be difficult to determine; do they continue to function as adpositions or have they now become instantiations of a syntactic Case part of speech? What are the intermediate stages of such a development like?

Two Otomanguean languages from Mexico -- Copala Triqui (CT) and San Juan Quiahije Chatino (SJQ) -- show case systems that shed light on two stages of the evolution of case systems from prepositions. Both CT and SJQ are head-initial languages with differential object marking for in-situ accusatives under similar conditions:

San Juan Quiahije Chatino

Copala Triqui

1a   *Ntqan⁴² Ma³rko²⁴ qin⁴ Sa³na²⁴ /(qin⁴) xneq² /(*qin⁴) jyaq².*   b.*Que-ne'en Juán (man) Mariá /chuvee/yumi'*

     com:see Marco acc Susana/(acc) dog/(*acc) soap   com-see Juan (acc) Maria/dog/soap

     'Marco saw Susana/the dog/the soap'   'Juan saw Maria/the dog/soap'

Both the CT and SJQ accusative are sensitive to the definiteness and animacy of the object. CT shows optionality of the accusative in elicitation, but quantitatively accusative is extremely frequent with human and animal objects and very infrequent with inanimate objects. SJQ has grammaticized the same scale and requires accusative before human objects, prohibits it before inanimates, and makes it optional before animal objects.

Copala Triqui accusative as Case   Of these two languages, the CT accusative is the one that shows the clearest signs of reanalysis as Case. Unlike other head-initial phrases in the languages (such as PP or NP), the CT accusative cannot be pied-piped when constituents are fronted for Contrastive or Interrogative Focus. Contrast 2(a,b) with (3a,b):[1]

2 a. [$_{PP}$ Rihaan chii] achráá Juán 'Juan sings *for the man*.'   a'. ¿[Me síí rih<u>aa</u>n] achráá Juán?   'Who does J. sing for?

      for   man   sing   Juan   who   for   sing   Juan

   b. [$_{NP}$ Xnii chii] c-achráá.   '*The man's son* sang.'   b'. ¿[Me síí ch<u>ii</u>] c-achráá?   'Whose son sang?'

      son   man   com-sing   who   son   com-sing

3 a.[$_{CaseP}$ *Man Mariá] que-ne'en Juán. 'Juan saw <u>Mary</u>.'   a'. *¿[Me síí man] que-ne'en Juán? 'Who did Juan see?

      acc Maria com-see Juan   who acc com-see Juan

   b.[$_{NP}$ Mariá] que-ne'en Juán. 'Juan saw <u>Mary</u>.'   b' ¿[Me síí] que-ne'en Juán?   'Who did Juan see?

      Maria com-see Juan   who   com-see Juan

These facts fit much more readily in a grammar where *man* is a special part of speech, Case. Perhaps the easiest accommodation is via the PS-rules which license the initial focus phrase; they can specify that such phrases are limited to phrases of certain categories (NP, PP) but not others (CaseP, VP, CP). [2]

SJQ Monotransitives versus Ditransitives   An initial examination of SJQ monotransitives like (1a) seems to show that the accusative marking in the language is purely prepositional, with the object in such an example showing a full range of phrasal behavior. However the account becomes more interesting when monotransitive SJQ clauses like (1a) are compared to ditransitives like (4) where *qin⁴* has both accusative and dative functions. Here the evidence from the syntax shows that the dative *qin⁴* is a Preposition, while the accusative *qin⁴* has developed into Case:

(4)   *Yjwiq²   Sa³na²⁴   qin⁴   Ti³la²⁴   qin⁴   Tyu¹⁴⁺⁰.*   'Susan sold (i.e. engaged) Tila to Pedro.'

    com:sell Susana   acc   Tila   dat   Pedro

Evidence for the Prep/Case distinction in SJQ   As noted by Cruz et al (2010), a true preposition like the *qin⁴* marking

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1   The a' and b' sentences also show some additional complications. Most interrogatives in CT are compounds of *me*, an interrogative element, plus a second element that shows the sortal type (animate, inanimate, place, time, etc.). Pied-piped interrogatives undergo a word order inversion which changes the normal head-initial order of these phrases. The second element of such inverted phrases undergo tone-lowering (marked by underscores).

2   Or perhaps a more insightful analysis would connect the limited movement possibilities of CaseP to other instances where Case needs to be licensed in specific configurations.

recipients in SJQ allows two primary patterns in focus constructions; in both the preposition is stranded at the site of the gap. In variant (a), the focused element is alone in the filler slot, and in variant (b) a copy of the preposition accompanies the focused element[3]

5   Yjwiq^2 Sa^{3}na^{24} jyaq^2 qin^4 Tyu^{14+0} 'Susana sold soap to Pedro.'
     com-sell Susana soap to   Pedro

6a.   Tyu^{14} yjwiq^2 Sa^{3}na^{24} jyaq^2 qin^1.   b.   Qin^4 Tyu^{14} yjwiq^2 Sa^{3}na^{24} jyaq^2 qin^1.
      Pedro com-sell Susana soap to   to   Pedro com-sell Susana soap to
      'To Pedro, Susana sold soap.' (*var A*)   'To Pedro, Susan sold soap.' (*var B*)

Cruz et al (2010) discover, but do not explain the fact that in contrast to this, the first object in a ditransitive has neither variant stranding pattern (7a,b). Its only possibility for contrastive fronting is as a bare NP without the accusative (7c):

(7) a. * *Ti^{3}la^{24} yjwiq^2 Sa^{3}na^{24} qin^4 qin^4 Tyu^{14+0}*.   b.*qin^4 Ti^{3}la^{24} yjwiq^2 Sa^{3}na^{24} qin^4 qin^4 Tyu^{14+0}*.
     Tila com:sell Susana acc   dat Pedro   acc   Tila   com:sell Susana acc dat Pedro
          [variant A]   [variant B]

   c.✓ *Ti^{3}la^{24} yjwiq^2 Sa^{3}na^{24} qin^4 Tyu^{14+0}*.
      Tila com:sell Susana   dat Pedro   'Tila, Susan sold to Pedro.'

The SJQ condition on accusative case on the first object in the ditransitive is thus identical to the restriction on the CT accusative CaseP. An overtly accusative marked CaseP does not participate in the Focus constructions of the language; only a bare NP does so. Note however that (7c) violates the otherwise exceptionless DOM rules by failing to mark a human object.

Ambiguity in monotransitives Returning to the monotransitive clauses in SJQ (1a), we may ask whether the *qin^4* in such clauses is also Case or whether it is a Preposition. For these clauses, the focus data are not distinct from the pattern seen with prepositions. The pattern where the object is fronted as a bare NP is ungrammatical:

8 a.   Ti^{3}la^{24} ntqan^{42} Mar^{3}ko^{24} qin^4.   b.   Qin^4 Ti^{3}la^{24} ntqan^{42} Mar^{3}ko^{24}qin^4 .
       Tila   com:see Marco acc   acc Tila   com:see Marco acc
       'Tila, Marco saw' (var A)   'Tila, Marco saw.' (var B)

   c.   *Ti^{3}la^{24} ntqan^{42} Mar^{3}ko^{24}.
       Tila   com:see Marco

This might suggest that *qin^4* is always prepositional in such clauses. Yet the differential object data in (1a) point to an analysis of *qin^4* as Case, since the animacy of the object determines the presence of *qin^4* - a relationship unlike that of a typical preposition to its object.

SJQ has already shown evidence of avoiding CaseP in focus. We argued earlier that in ditransitives, objects are realised as CaseP in situ as as NP in focus (4 vs 7c). For monotransitives, we propose that objects may be realised as CaseP in situ as as PP in focus, using an alternate analysis of *qin^4* as a preposition which assigns accusative. The failure of (8c) is due to the failure of a human object to receive accusative case. In the ditransitive, we hypothesize that the alternate analysis of *qin^4* as an accusative-assigning preposition is inhibited by the presence of a second *qin^4* in the same clause.

Thus the monotransitive *qin^4* is capable of two analyses in the grammar of SJQ. Its syntax has traits of both prepositional and case-like behavior that make it unlike any other word in the grammar. Both these Otomanguean languages show an intriguing restriction on the movement of CaseP that allows us to detect the full grammaticization of the Copala Triqui accusative and the grammaticization in progress of the San Juan Quiahije Chatino accusative.

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3   The correct analysis of the Variant (A) forms seems straightforward — a stranded P and a focused object of P, but the best analysis of the variant (B) is far less clear.