

Noun Incorporation and Case Evidence from Sakha (Yakut)

Sakha, a Turkic language spoken in Siberia possesses an unusual verbalizing suffix –LAA that behaves as a derivational suffix in certain instances and as an incorporating light verb in others. As a derivational suffix, -LAA is promiscuous, attaching to essentially any uninflected non-verbal element:

- (1) ayikka ‘interjection of pain’ → ayikkalaa- ‘to express pain’
- (2) tuox ‘what’ → tuoxtaa- ‘to do what, provide with what’
- (3) ikki ‘two’ → ikkilee- ‘to do something twice’
- (4) tuus ‘salt’ → tuustaa- ‘to salt (food)’

In certain cases, depending on the resultant meaning of the form, the N+LAA combination acts as a simplified type of NI: while the noun cannot take any sort of case ending (although it may result in an accusative or dative reading of the IN), it may be modified:

- (5) Sargi oyo-nu kihil sharik-taa-ta.
Sargi child-ACC red balloon-pl-LAA-past.3
‘Sargy gave the child a red balloon.’

Cases such as those in (5), in which the –LAA suffix acts as a light verb, I interpret as being closer to NI in the sense proposed by Sadock in 1986. It is notable that those verbs which exhibit incorporation (and therefore allow for modification of the incorporated noun) select for the nearest noun, provided that such a noun would otherwise receive either marked structural case or inherent case as an individual noun. This phenomenon supports Bittner and Hale’s ’96 analysis of case as a KP shell over DPs. Because Bittner and Hale’s analysis requires a KP shell over only those DPs which will receive marked structural case (i.e. the accusative) or possess inherent case, we may conveniently assume that the light verb –LAA attracts the nearest KP (which may be the marked structural case (accusative) or an inherent dative), thereby altering the structure of the predicate and precluding the second object in a double-object construction from receiving the dative, as would normally occur in a non-incorporating construction. Compare (5) to (6) below:

- (6) Sargi oyo-γo kihil sharik-ni bier-de.
Sargi child-DAT red balloon-ACC give-past.3
‘Sargy gave the child a red balloon.’

The only previous analysis of Sakha NI by Vinokurova (2005) was inconclusive, relying on Hale and Keyser’s analyses of unaccusatives (1993, 1998, 2000) and relying heavily on prepositional constructions. The analysis presented in this paper not only relates NI to the shift in case shown in such constructions but relates this shift to Silverstein’s case hierarchy: nom>acc>dat (1980). I propose that the incorporation of a noun in a double-object construction that would normally receive the accusative case (c.f. (5) and (6) for ‘balloon’) prevents the indirect object from receiving the dative case (as in 6) and requires assignment of the accusative case (c.f (5) ‘child’), obeying Silverstein’s proposal that the accusative case takes precedence over the dative case.