

## Case assignment and ‘long-distance’ agreement in a phase model of syntax revisited

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**I. The problem** In Chomsky’s (2005) model of syntax, it is assumed, by analogy to the relation C-T, that V does not have phi-features in itself, but inherits them from  $v$ , the phase head. The uninterpretable phi-features act as a probe that seeks for an active (i.e., still having an unchecked structural case feature) local goal within its c-command domain (= its sister). As the result of this Agree relation the case feature of the NP (internal argument) is valued for ACC. This assumption poses a problem for the case of Genitive of Negation (GoN) assignment in Polish. Since it is obviously the presence of negation that is responsible for GEN marking of the internal argument of a transitive verb in Polish (cf. (i)), we have to somehow bring the negation into play. However, given that NegP is located above  $v$ P, and given that  $v$ P constitutes the first phase of derivation, negation should not be able to influence the case marking of the object. This is so because in this scenario Neg<sup>o</sup> would not belong to the lexical subarray out of which the  $v$ P phase is constructed. Furthermore, given the condition that the properties of the probe/selector must be exhausted before new elements of the lexical subarray are accessed to derive further operations (Chomsky 2000), we will actually predict that  $v$ -V has to have its uninterpretable phi-features checked and the case feature of the direct object must be valued/deleted under matching of phi-features already within  $v$ P, or otherwise the derivation would crash. In other words, we would predict that the direct object of a negated transitive verb in Polish should be marked for ACC, contrary to fact. My solution to the problem at hand (see Witkoś 2003 for an alternative account) starts with the argument that NegP (or more generally: Pol(arity)P) belongs to the first phase of derivation, the ‘inner phase’. After clarifying this issue, I will go on to develop a new account of case assignment to cover (but importantly not restricted to) the case of GoN in Polish. The following assumptions will be made.

**II. The proposal** *First*, there is a difference between structural case and inherent/lexical case. Structural case is understood as [ $u$ Case <sub>$\tau$</sub> ] (uninterpretable/unvalued) (cf. Pesetsky&Torrego 2004). In order to get rid of this uninterpretable feature, an NP must undergo an Agree relation with a functional head which has uninterpretable phi-features; structural case (NOM/ACC) is thus associated with phi-features in the sense that subject-verb and object-verb agreement results in structural case assignment. The value of the assigned case is determined at the point of TRANSFER, i.e., valuation itself is part of the operation TRANSFER. In contrast, inherent/lexical case is analyzed here as [Case<sub>[val]</sub>] (valued/(presumably) interpretable). The point is that the value of the [Case] feature in this case is lexically specified or determined in some other way which – importantly – is different from the way in which the value of structural case is determined. *Second*, there are two structural case assigners: C-T and  $v$ -V (assuming with Chomsky 2005 that T inherits its phi-features from C, and by analogy, V inherits the phi-feature from  $v$ ); cf. (ii). *Third*, and this is the most crucial assumption, the [ $u$ Case] feature of an NP undergoing an Agree relation with  $v$  ( $v$ -V) does not need to be valued for ACC (as argued by Chomsky 1998 et seq.). Rather, its actual value depends on whether there is some other NP with an uninterpretable structural case feature present in the structure (a similar idea to Marantz’ 1991 view of “dependent case”; see also Harley 1995). *Fourth*, NOM as the most unmarked case is assigned first unless there is yet another XP with an unvalued structural case feature (cf. Woolford 2003, 2006 for a similar view; see also Sigurðsson 2006 for a related, but technically different proposal). In this sense nominative assignment as such is dissociated from T. In (iii) two possible situations are illustrated. In (iii-a), XP has a [ $u$ Case <sub>$\tau$</sub> ] feature. In accordance with the assumption above, the [ $u$ Case <sub>$\tau$</sub> ] feature of YP is valued for ACC (which is the second least

