DOUBLE-MARKING OF PROMINENT OBJECTS: A CROSS-LINGUISTIC TYPOLOGY[1]

Peter Arkadiev
(Institute of Slavic Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences; Institute of Linguistics, Russian State University for the Humanities; Institute of Modern Linguistic Research, Sholokhov Moscow State University for the Humanities)

Since the introduction of head- vs. dependent-marking as a typological parameter by Nichols (1986), not much attention has been paid to marking of arguments simultaneously by case-marking and verbal cross-referencing. Notable exceptions are Siewierska (1997) and Bakker & Siewierska (2009). The latter claim that "the likelihood of an argument exhibiting both overt agreement and case marking" declines according to the hierarchy A(gent) > P(atient) > R(ecipient). I argue that this claim must be qualified against data from a variety of genetically and areally unrelated languages where a well-defined and cross-linguistically recurrent type of non-A argument systematically exhibits double-marking.

As is well-known in Romance linguistics (e.g. Leonetti 2008), referential/specific objects (both ditransitive Rs and monotransitive Ps) in Spanish dialects and Romanian are both case-marked by an adposition and "doubled" by a cross-referencing clitic. Similar situations, when case-marking and cross-referencing of objects co-occur rather than exclude each other, can be observed in numerous languages, such as Amharic, Burushaski, Dera, Macedonian, Maithili, Mollala, Neo-Aramaic, Sentani, Thulung Rai, Usan, Yade.

I propose to classify these phenomena according to the following parameters: (i) what kind of non-A argument (P, R, or both) participate in double-marking; (ii) which factors determine double-marking (animacy, specificity, semantic role, or combinations thereof); (iii) is the same marker used both for P and R, as in e.g. Spanish, Maithili and Mollala, or these roles are distinguished in head-marking, dependent-marking, or both, as in Romanian and Burushaski; (iv) whether head- and dependent-marking can occur independently of each other (cf. Baker 2012 on Amharic).

The existence of strikingly similar patterns of double-marking of ditransitive recipients and animate/definite/specific monotransitive patients in a variety of unrelated languages suggests that this morphosyntactic pattern should be recognized as a cross-linguistic type of argument encoding. Moreover, it is obvious that double-marking of prominent objects is motivated by well-known universal functional preferences favouring overt case-marking of and overt agreement with animate/definite/thematic objects (cf. Givón 1976, Bossong 1985, Dalrymple & Nikolaeva 2011).

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