Nominative case is independent of finiteness and agreement

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Abstract

In this paper, we argue that the conditions on the overtness of subjects and those governing the distribution of nominative case must be kept logically distinct. In typical nominative-accusative languages, nominative case is not assigned by finite T or by agreement with any functional head. Rather, even in prototypical subject position it is the default case, showing up when the conditions for the assignment of all other cases are not met. The appearance of a dependency is due to a confusion of conditions on nominative case with conditions on the overtness of subjects. Conditions on overtness and case-marking tend to coincide, but a careful look at the data shows that they are orthogonal to each other, and that the latter has more to do with conditions on coreference which in itself is a function of modes of clausal selection and degree of clausal dependency.

1 The connection with finiteness

Within Case theory, nominative case has long been tied to finiteness, being assumed to be assigned or checked by finite Infl/T (Chomsky 1980, etc.). The basic fact is that, in many familiar languages, finite clauses have nominative subjects, while non-finite clauses do not. Either their subjects receive some other case (e.g. accusative in ECM infinitives like (1b)), or they do not allow overt subjects at all, as in (1c).

(1) a. She is impartial.
b. I consider [her/*she to be impartial].
c. Leah tried [PRO/*she to be impartial].

This immediately raises the question of what exactly is meant by 'finite Infl/T' and 'finite clauses'. The traditional notion of finiteness is an imprecise conglomerate of morphological notions like marking for tense and agreement, syntactic notions like ability to appear in different embedded environments and licensing of different

subject types, and semantic notions like (in)dependence of temporal and referential interpretation. In order to make sense of claims that nominative case (or anything else) depends on finiteness, we will have to settle on a specific definition of the term. For present purposes, it will make most sense to start with an essentially morphological definition – a finite clause is one which contains marking for both tense and agreement, to the extent that these are marked in the language in question.[1] We adopt this understanding of finiteness because it seems to be the one typically underlying proposals about nominative case.[2]

Now, if nominative case is tied to finiteness, and finiteness is defined morphologically as above, the assumption would seem to be that tense and agreement always co-occur within a clause. In fact, while this may be a strong tendency in familiar languages, it is well known that there are exceptions. If we want to maintain the idea that nominative case is assigned in connection with finiteness, we must then determine what happens with the nominative when tense and agreement dissociate, and adjust our definition of finiteness accordingly. Reasoning along these lines has led to the proposal that nominative case is assigned specifically in connection with agreement, based e.g. on data like the following from European Portuguese (Raposo 1987).

(2) a. Será difícil [PRO aprovar a proposta].
will-be difficult PRO to-approve the proposal
'It will be difficult to approve the proposal.'

b. * Será difícil [eles aprovar a proposta].
will-be difficult they to-approve the proposal

c. Será difícil [eles aprovarem a proposta].
will-be difficult they to-approve-AGR the proposal
'It will be difficult for them to approve the proposal.'

We have here three examples of clauses appearing as complements of adjectives, all lacking tense-marking, and containing the *-r-* suffix that is typical of standard infinitives in Romance languages. In (2a) and (2b), there is also no agreement marking, thus what we have are unambiguously non-finite forms of the verb, and the examples show that an overt nominative subject is impossible in such clauses. The really interesting example is (2c), where the tenseless verb form **does** bear overt agreement, and an overt nominative subject is in fact possible. Raposo (1987)'s analysis of this pattern is that nominative case is assigned in connection with agreement, subjects of non-agreeing clauses thus receiving no case. The contrasts above can be then explained given standard assumptions of abstract Case theory, where DPs are only licensed to be overt if they are assigned case.

[1] Obviously, this will present difficulties in identifying finite clauses in languages where either agreement or tense is never marked overtly. Here, some other means of identification would be needed. In any case, the thrust of our arguments will be that finiteness as defined in this way will turn out to be irrelevant for case-assignment, casting doubt on whether it is a useful theoretical concept at all.

[2] In Section 6 we will suggest that a syntactico-semantic notion of varying anaphoricity of embedded clauses along temporal and referential dimensions is more useful than a morphological notion of finiteness.

This view on the assignment of nominative case has been maintained and has become standard in more recent Minimalist work. The connection is now typically formalized (e.g. Chomsky 2001) in terms of matching valued and unvalued features for case and agreement on DPs and T. The T that appears in 'finite' clauses bears a set of unvalued ϕ-features and an uninterpretable nominative case feature, while a DP starts out with a set of interpretable ϕ-features and an unvalued case feature. Agree between T and a DP simultaneously values the ϕ-features on T and the case feature on DP, ensuring that the DP which gets nominative case will be the one which triggers agreement.[3] In the following sections, we will present robust evidence from other languages showing that this connection cannot be maintained in such a strong form and will argue for an alternative approach to nominative as a default or Elsewhere case.

2 A weaker connection?

Consider first the evidence from Hungarian, Italian and other languages presented by Szabolcsi (2009). These languages actually allow overt nominative subjects in non-agreeing, unambiguously non-finite clauses, as in (3) from Hungarian and (4) from Italian:

(3) a. Utálok [**én** is magas lenni].
hate.1SG I.NOM too tall be.INF
'I hate it to be the case that I too am tall.'

b. Elkezdett [**kevesebb színésznö** kapni jó kritikákat].
prt-began.3SG fewer actress.NOM get.INF good reviews.ACC
'It began to be the case that fewer actresses were getting good reviews.'

(4) a. Ogni ragazzo vuole [lavorare sodo **anche lui**]
every boy wants work.INF hard also he.NOM
'Every boys wants it to be the case that he too works hard.'

b. Non sembro [cantare **solo io** su questo nastro.
not seem.1SG sing.INF only I.NOM on this tape
'It doesn't seem to be the case that only I am singing on this tape.'

Szabolcsi argues in some detail that the boldfaced nominative DPs in these examples really are located in the embedded clause and really are the subjects of those clauses. For example, the only interpretation of (4b) is one where 'only' scopes below negation. This is precisely as expected if *solo io* remains in the embedded clause (presumably with a null *pro* subject in the matrix clause), but would be surprising

[3]Pesetsky and Torrego (2001) propose that nominative is actually an uninterpretable tense feature on DP that agrees with the interpretable tense feature on T. This eliminates the need for (case) features which are uninterpretable both on probe and goal and also allows for an attractive account of certain subject/object asymmetries. The explicit connection between nominative and agreement is eliminated, but still a connection to T is retained and thus does not solve most of the problems for more traditional theories discussed here.

if it had moved up to become the subject of the matrix clause. Further evidence for the status of these overt nominatives comes from word-order, binding and intonation (see Szabolcsi 2009, for details).

On the basis of this, we clearly must abandon a strict one-to-one relationship between finite T and nominative DPs. However, Szabolcsi (2009) argues that the dissociation is actually relatively minor. She notes that the overt nominative subjects of infinitives in these languages are subject to a series of restrictions, which suggest a continued – albeit more indirect – connection to agreement.

The central fact is that overt nominative subjects in infinitives in these languages are always obligatorily coreferent with the subject of the matrix clause if there is one. The way this plays out in particular is that we find them in control complements where they are controlled by the matrix subject, like (3a) above, and in raising complements where there is no matrix subject, like (3b) above, but not in object control complements, as in (5a) below. Contrast this with the related subject control version in (5b), which is grammatical:

(5) a. * Kényszerítettek (téged) [te is dolgozni].
forced.3PL (you.ACC) you.NOM also work.INF
Intended: 'They forced you to work, too.'

b. Kényszerültél [te is dolgozni]
was.forced.2SG you.NOM also work.INF
'You were forced to work, too.'

Presumably as a result of the coreference requirement, R-expressions are only allowed to appear as nominative subjects of raising infinitives like (6a), as there is no (thematic) subject in the matrix clause at all. In subject control infinitives, because the higher clause is expected to have a silent *pro* subject, a coreferent R-expression as in (6b) would be bound by the matrix *pro*, violating Principle C. On the other hand, the coreferent pronoun in (6c), though also bound by matrix *pro*, avoids running afoul of Principle B because the control clause constitutes a distinct binding domain.

(6) a. Elkezdett mindig csak Péter kapni büntetést.
began.3SG always only Peter get.INF punished
'It began to be the case that always only Peter got punished.'

b. * Utálna mindig csak Péter kapni büntetést.
would-hate.3SG always only Peter get.INF punishment.ACC
intended: 'Peter would hate it if always only he got punished.'

c. Utálna mindig csak ö kapni büntetést.
would-hate.3SG always only he get.INF punishment.ACC
'He would hate it if always only he got punished.

Note that these sentences furnish additional evidence that the overt nominative DPs are in the embedded non-finite clause, not the matrix clause, since otherwise there would be no explanation for the contrast between (6b) and (6c).

Szabolcsi (2009) argues that these facts can be explained if nominative case is still dependent on agreement with finite T, but – at least in these languages – the depen-

dency is a bit less direct than previously assumed. Specifically, she proposes that the embedded subjects in these examples obtain their nominative case by agreeing with the **matrix** finite verb. In other words, there is multiple Agree in these structures, where matrix T Agrees with and assigns nominative case to multiple DPs. Of course, in order for multiple Agree to be possible, the DPs involved will have to have the same ϕ-features, since otherwise there would be no feature matching. This means that the assignment of nominative to subjects of non-agreeing clauses is partially – but not completely – unified with assignment of nominative to subjects of agreeing clauses. In both instances, the nominative comes via Agree from a 'finite' T, which has matching ϕ-features. The distinction is that in the latter instance, Agree is more local, and is a (potentially) unique relation between one T and one DP, while in the former, the same T is entering into Agree with more than one DP. Szabolcsi makes use of this to propose her **Multi-agreement parameter**, according to which "[l]anguages vary as to whether a single finite inflection may share features with more than one nominative DP", [p. 6]. Thus, Hungarian and Italian have a positive setting for this parameter, and thus allow overt nominative subjects in the relevant clause-types, while English has a negative setting for it, and does not allow such nominatives.

3 Independence

However, even this assumption of an indirect dependency of nominative case on agreement is too strong. To begin with, Sundaresan and McFadden (2009) showed that a variety of languages allow overt nominative subjects in contexts with no plausible connection with either matrix or embedded agreement. Consider e.g. the adjunct embedded clauses in the Tamil examples in (7). These clauses have overt nominative subjects, yet are unambiguously non-finite, being built around a verb form that lacks the tense and agreement marking found on the highest verb in Tamil root clauses:

(7) a. [**vasu** poori porikk-a] raman maavu vaangi-n-aan
vasu.NOM poori.ACC fry-INF raman.NOM flour.ACC buy-PST-M.3SG
'Raman bought flour for Vasu to fry pooris'

b. [**naan** poori porikk-a] raman maavu vaangi-n-aan
I.NOM poori.ACC fry-INF raman.NOM flour.ACC buy-PST-M.3SG
'Raman bought flour for me to fry pooris'

Crucially, unlike in the examples Szabolcsi presents from Hungarian and Italian, the embedded nominative subjects here are not required to be coreferent with the matrix subject. Thus they can be R-expressions even when the matrix clause has a thematic subject, as in example (7a), and can even differ from the matrix subject (and the finite matrix verb) in ϕ-features, as in example (7b). The embedded subjects in examples of this kind do not bear the same ϕ-features as the finite matrix T or any other element in the sentence as a simple point of fact, thus it is difficult to imagine how they could be receiving nominative case via Agree. Indeed, as they appear within adjunct clauses,

the structural configuration for Agree with something in the matrix clause does not obtain.

The same point is made by data that Sundaresan and McFadden (2009) present from Middle English, for example (8):

(8) 'That were shame unto the,' seyde sir Launcelot, '[**thou** an armed knyght to sle a nakyd man by treson].'
'"That would be a disgrace on you," said sir Lancelot, "for you.NOM, an armed knight, to slay a naked man by treason".' (MALORY,206.3373)

Once again, we have an unambiguously non-finite embedded clause, lacking all tense and agreement marking, yet containing an overt subject *thou*. This *thou* is furthermore non-coreferent with the matrix subject *that*, and differs from it in ϕ-features, so again there is no possibility that it is receiving its nominative case via agreement with the finite matrix T. Here too the embedded clause is not a complement of the main matrix predicate – in this instance rather an appositive on it – and thus Agree across the clause boundary should anyway be ruled out for structural reasons.

We also find evidence for the independence of nominative from agreement and finiteness in the behavior of nominative objects in non-finite clauses, as in the Icelandic example (9a) from Sigurðsson (2006):

(9) a. Að líka svona fáránleiki/*fáránleika!
to like:INF such absurdity:N/*A
'To like such absurdity!'
b. Honum mundu ekki líka þeir.
him.DAT would.3PL not like.INF they.NOM
'He wouldn't like them.'

As shown by (9b) from Sigurðsson (2009), in a finite clause the verb *líka* 'like' normally takes a quirky dative subject and a nominative object which triggers agreement. What (9a) demonstrates is that this nominative does not disappear in clauses where overt agreement with the object disappears. Furthermore, since in this example the infinitive is in fact the root clause, there is no higher finite T or T of any kind with which the nominative DP could be agreeing. Nominative shows up here in the absolute absence of agreement in the entire sentence.

A similar argument can be made on the basis of long-distance case and agreement facts, discussed for Icelandic e.g. by Boeckx (2000):

(10) a. Jóni ?*virðist/virðast vera *talið/taldir líka hestarnir.
John.DAT seem.SG/PL be believed.NT.SG/M.PL like horses.NOM.M.PL
'John seems to be believed to like horses.'
b. Mér virðist/?*virðast Jóni líka hestarnir.
me.DAT seem.SG/PL John.DAT like horses.NOM.M.PL
'It seems to me that John likes horses.'

In both examples above, we find a nominative object *hestarnir* 'the horses' in an unambiguously non-finite clause. Unlike in example (9a), however, here the non-finite

clause is embedded within an apparently finite clause – the verb *virðast* 'seem' in (10a) is a present tense, 3pl agreeing form, while *virðist* 'seems' in (10b) is a present tense, 3sg agreeing form. Unlike in the Tamil and Middle English examples above, the embedded clauses here are in fact complements of the main predicate in the finite matrix clause, meaning that we have an appropriate structural configuration for agreement. Indeed, in structures like (10a), we clearly do have agreement between the embedded object and the matrix verb, as the two co-vary in ϕ-features, here both being 3rd person plural, distinct from the 3rd person singular of the matrix subject *Jóni* 'John'. *Jóni* originates in the embedded clause, where it is assigned quirky dative case by the verb *líka*, but raises up to matrix subject position because the matrix verb, having no external θ-role to assign, takes no DP arguments. The broader Icelandic facts make it clear that it is the dative case on the raised subject that blocks it from triggering agreement (see e.g. Boeckx 2000, Sigurðsson 2004, among many others, for data and discussion). This, in turn, is what allows the embedded object to trigger agreement. One might think, then, that this agreement is also what is responsible for the nominative case on that embedded object.

However, (10b) shows that this cannot be correct. Here, an additional dative experiencer *mér* 'me' is added to the matrix clause, which occupies the matrix subject position. This prevents the embedded experiencer *Jóni* from raising into the matrix, leaving it in a position that intervenes between the embedded object and the matrix verb. However long-distance agreement works in sentences like (10a), the presence of the intervening dative in (10b) blocks it, and the form that the matrix verb takes is the default, non-agreeing 3rd person singular. If nominative case is dependent on agreement, it should not be available for the embedded object here, which does not trigger agreement. Clearly, though, case-assignment is unaffected here, as *hestarnir* shows up again in its explicitly nominative form. Again, the evidence indicates that agreement is **not** a necessary condition for nominative case. Note that we are not arguing that there is no relationship at all between morphological case and agreement. Here as in examples from many other languages, the possibility of agreement with a DP seems to depend on the case the DP bears – usually on its being nominative (see Bhatt 2005, Bobaljik 2008, among many others for discussion of some of the relevant patterns). It is a dependency in the opposite direction – nominative requiring agreement – that we are arguing against.

Even Portuguese, which seemed to present evidence in favor of the nominative-finiteness connection raises potential difficulties. Specifically, some varieties of spoken Brazilian Portuguese have lost overt agreement. Yet they still allow overt nominative subjects in clauses which appear to be non-finite just like the European Portuguese ones discussed above, except for the lack of overt agreement (Pires 2002):

(11) a. A Maria ligou antes de [nós/ eu/ *mim sair]
The Maria called before of we/ I:NOM/ *me:ACC leave-INF
'Maria called before we/I left.'

b. [O Carlos e o Pedro/ eu/ *mim chegar cedo] não
[The Carlos and the Pedro/ I:NOM/ *me:ACC arrive-INF late] not

surpreendeu ninguém.
surprised no one
'Carlos and Pedro/me arriving late did not surprise anyone.'

If it is the special agreement found on European Portuguese 'inflected infinitives' that allows them to appear with overt nominative subjects, as argued by Raposo (1987) and often assumed since, then we should expect such nominatives to have been lost along with that agreement in the Brazilian dialects. The fact that this has not happened suggests that agreement is not responsible for the possibility of such overt DPs, but that there is a deeper syntactic property of the relevant embedded clause types in these languages that distinguishes them from prototypical infinitives that allow only silent PRO as their subjects.[4] We will return to this point in Sections 5 and 6 below.

4 Nominative is default case

If nominative is not tied to finiteness, we must ask what it is that **does** determine its distribution. In other words, what assigns the nominative in the examples we've been looking at if not finite T? An important related concern is how the nominatives in these lesser known environments are related to run-of-the-mill nominatives in the subject position of unambiguously finite clauses. Is there a special mechanism for nominative assignment that comes into play in these contexts, operating in addition to what handles the nominative in standard subject positions, or should the data discussed in the previous sections lead us to propose a new unified mechanism of nominative case assignment that can handle both sets of environments and abandon any dependence on agreement?

We will argue here for an approach of the latter kind. Specifically, we propose that in the languages examined so far, nominative is simply the default case, and it appears in both finite subject position and the various other positions we've examined in just this capacity, because no other more marked case has been assigned. In this section we will show that such an approach is well-motivated and can account for the observed patterns of nominative case-marking more completely and more simply than an approach that assumes a dependence on agreement.

To begin with, we must say a few words about the assumptions about morphological case and case-assignment that we must adopt in order to make such a proposal. First, whatever is responsible for determining the positions in which DPs can and

[4]One could of course argue that what is responsible for the assignment of nominative case (and ultimately the licensing of overt subjects) is not morphological agreement per se, but the abstract syntactic Agree operation which underlies the morphology. One could then say that the changes in Brazilian Portuguese have only affected the surface morphology, leaving the abstract syntactic system intact. In other words, the Brazilian examples would indeed involve inflected infinitives licensing the overt nominative, the inflection would just happen to be null. However, such a position would verge on being unfalsifiable. Any time we come across data where a nominative is found in the absence of overt agreement, we can rescue the proposed correlation by positing abstract agreement.

cannot be overt, it is independent of morphological case. We will discuss this point in some detail in Section 6. What is relevant for now is the simple point that if there is such a thing as a default case, we cannot explain the obligatory covertness of DPs in certain positions as resulting from the failure of case to be assigned, since the default case should be able to appear and trivially license overt DPs in all positions. Second, we assume that each morphological case is assigned according to a rule or principle that specifies the conditions under which that case is appropriate. The form of such rules, the conditions to which they are sensitive, and the stage of the derivation at which they apply are not crucial for our purposes – all that matters is that for a given DP in context, the conditions for the assignment of each specific case either will or will not be met.

Given this background, we propose that in any language with a morphological case system, there will always be one case which functions as the default. When the conditions for assignment of all other cases fail to be met for a particular DP, that default case will be assigned to it. This is just another instance of an 'Elsewhere' as commonly found in morphological and phonological systems (as discussed by Kiparsky 1973, and in much subsequent work). In the languages we have been discussing up to now, we propose that it is the nominative that serves as the default case, and indeed this seems to be the common pattern in languages with nominative-accusative case systems.

In fact, evidence for the existence of default case and for the status of nominative as the default in many familiar languages has already received a fair amount of discussion in the literature (first and foremost, see Schütze 2001). The contexts that have most frequently been mentioned in this connection are ones where the relevant DP appears somehow outside of a normal sentential context, e.g. citation forms, appositives and vocatives. Perhaps the most convincing examples come from left dislocation. A priori, we might expect the dislocated DP to agree in case with the resumptive element with which it is coreferent, and indeed it often does. However, sometimes this concord fails (under conditions that may differ across languages), and a default case shows up, as in the following examples from Schütze (2001) showing the same pattern in five different languages:

(12) a. Me, I like beans. (English)
b. Der/*Dem Hans, mit dem spreche ich nicht mehr.
the:N/*D Hans with him:D speak I not more
'Hans, I don't speak with him anymore.' (German)
c. Vanja/?Vanju, ego ja ne ljublju.
John:N/?A him:A I don't like
'John, I don't like him.' (Russian)
d. al-kitaab-u qaraʔt-u-hu.
the-book-N read-1SG-it
'The book, I read it.' (Arabic)
e. Strákarnir, við þá hafði aldrei verið talað.
boys-the:N with them:A had never been spoken

'The boys, they had never been spoken with.' (Icelandic)

The case that we get in this context is indeed nominative in each of these languages – with the notable exception of English, which we will discuss in detail in Section 4.1. Indeed, in each of these languages we find the recurring pattern of nominative showing up in various environments where normal case rules do not apply (again, see Schütze 2001).

While evidence of this kind is strongly suggestive of the idea that the nominative can appear as a default case in these languages, it leaves two questions unanswered. First, why is it the nominative and not the accusative or some other case that is the default in so many languages? Second, what is the connection between the nominative that appears in the clear default contexts and the one that appears on subjects of prototypical finite clauses? We would like to argue that the answers to these two questions are intimately related.

The status of the nominative as the default case is a recurrent pattern across languages, and thus it would be hard to argue that this is merely coincidental. We can make sense of it if we consider in a bit more detail the conditions under which the various cases are assigned in nominative-accusative languages. First, we need to single out the non-structural cases – i.e. what are variously called inherent, lexical and quirky cases.[5] However, the non-structural cases can usefully be classed together in distinction to the structural cases. They are assigned by a specific syntactic head – depending on the particular example and theory adopted, a P, Applicative head or lexical verb or adjective – in highly local fashion to (one of) its thematic argument(s), and they take precedence in a clear way over the structural cases – if a DP meets the conditions for both a structural and a non-structural case, it will bear the non-structural case (see e.g. Yip, Maling, and Jackendoff 1987).

The structural cases, on the other hand, are generally thought to be assigned in a rather different way, though details of implementation vary widely across specific theoretical proposals. Theories differ in whether these cases are assigned by functional heads and if so which ones, and what kind of syntactic relation or operation implements that assignment. What they have in common is that the structural cases are not tied to specific thematic relations or lexical items and do not require as strict a type of locality for their assignment. Furthermore, there is a consensus that the pair of structural cases in typical nominative-accusative languages are in a kind of dependency relationship, as has been discussed by Burzio (1986), Yip et al. (1987), Marantz (1991), Bittner and Hale (1996), Sigurðsson (2006) and McFadden (2007). Specifically, accusative is only assigned in the presence of the right kind of higher structural argument – typically marked nominative. We can abstract away from the (highly controversial) details of formalization of this relationship, and characterize the basic idea as follows:

(13) **Dependent accusative**

[5]By lumping these together, we are not claiming that they are just different names for a single type of case, as there are good reasons to make at least some of the distinctions that underlie the choice of different labels here (see e.g. Woolford 2006).

When two DPs occur in the same minimal domain, and neither one bears a non-structural case, assign accusative to the lower one.

The reference to a minimal domain in this definition is replaced in specific implementations by notions of locality like the phase, clause or co-argumenthood, preventing e.g. the assignment of accusative to the subject of an embedded unambiguously finite clause in dependency on the matrix subject.[6] The reference to non-structural cases simply reflects the fact that these take precedence over the structural cases as mentioned above. If a DP can be assigned a non-structural case, it will not be able to bear dependent accusative. It is perhaps less obvious why we insist that the higher DP in the dependency relationship also bear a non-structural case. The simple fact of the matter is that in most nominative-accusative languages, dependent accusative does not appear on the object of a verb with a non-structurally case-marked subject. Instead, that object bears nominative, as in the Icelandic example in (14) below, repeated from (9b) above.

(14) Honum mundu ekki líka þeir.
him.DAT would.3PL not like.INF they.NOM
'He wouldn't like them.'

This is of course part of the reason for thinking that there is a dependency between the structural cases. It is not immediately obvious whether the dependency requires actual nominative on the higher DP or just a DP that is not marked with a non-structural case, but either way the requirement will not be met in sentences like (14), thus the object cannot be marked accusative.[7]

Regardless of the details of how the dependency is to be analyzed, there is consensus that while accusative case is dependent in this fashion, the nominative has no corresponding restrictions. It is the unmarked member of the structure pair. We would like to argue that the default status of the nominative is tied to precisely this fact. The fact that nominative is unmarked with respect to the accusative is just a specific instantiation of the fact that it is unmarked with respect to all other cases.

Indeed, given this background it is natural to suppose that when the nominative appears it is always as the default case, not just in exceptional contexts like left dislocation, but also in run-of-the-mill instances where it marks the subject of prototypically finite clauses. Consider that, in a simple transitive clause, where nothing is present which can assign a non-structural case, the object will be assigned accusative by rule (13). For the subject, this rule will not be able to apply, thus if nominative is the default case, it will be predicted to appear here without the assumption of anything further, like a specific rule for assigning nominative in connection with agreement.

[6]Note that, whatever the correct notion of locality here is, it is clearly and uncontroversially less strict than that required for assignment of the non-structural cases.

[7]The issue turns in large part on the analysis of ECM infinitives, where the embedded object receives accusative below an accusative – rather than nominative – subject. See Sigurðsson (2006) and McFadden (2009) for some discussion.

Now, in order to properly evaluate this proposal, it is crucial to keep in mind exactly what we mean by default case here. There is a common misconception, based on a fixation on examples like those in (12) above that, because default case functions as a last resort when all else fails, it should somehow be restricted to marginal contexts like left dislocation, and thus be uncommon. But of course the logic of how Elsewhere operates in linguistic theory, and a basic observation of how defaults work in clear empirical cases, tell us that we should have no such expectation. Elsewhere forms are precisely **not** restricted, and can and will show up in any context where none of the paradigmatic alternatives is licit. If those alternatives have heavy restrictions, this may mean the majority of all relevant contexts. E.g. in English the /z/ suffix is the default marker of the plural on nouns and is used in the vast majority of contexts, since the alternatives, /∅/, vowel mutation, /ən/ and /rən/ are all highly restricted. Thus there is no reason for us to expect that the nominative as default case should be particularly uncommon.

Note furthermore that if we accept the evidence presented by Schütze (2001) that languages like Icelandic use the nominative as a default case in at least some contexts, the only alternative to what we are proposing here is that there are in fact two kinds of nominative in such languages – one that is assigned by some mechanism to subjects of prototypical finite clauses, and another that appears by default. Now, it may well be that such an analysis is correct. There are other examples of cases that seem to have two distinct means of assignment, e.g. there is good evidence that German and Icelandic have non-structural instances of accusative in addition to the structural instances assigned by something like (13).[8] However, our null hypothesis should clearly be that each case has a single means of assignment, and we should only depart from this if there is clear evidence that two distinct rules or operations are necessary. We are aware of no such evidence for distinguishing two types of nominative, thus we submit that default case status should be extended to subjects of prototypical finite clauses.

Crucially, this reasoning extends equally well to subjects (and, sometimes, objects) in non-agreeing positions as well. If nominative is generally the default case in nominative-accusative languages, we expect it to appear in such positions whenever the conditions for accusative and non-structural cases are not met. We thus have an explanation for the mysterious nominative case in the examples from Tamil, Middle English, Icelandic and Brazilian Portuguese that we discussed in Section 3 above. Consider again the Tamil example (7a) from above, repeated here as (15):

(15) [**vasu** poori porikk-a] raman maavu vaangi-n-aan
vasu.NOM poori.ACC fry-INF raman.NOM flour.ACC buy-PST-M.3SG
'Raman bought flour for Vasu to fry pooris'

The verb *porikka* 'fry' in the adjunct embedded clause is not associated with any lexical case, and there is nothing else in the clause to assign a non-structural case. The subject DP *Vasu* in the embedded clause can thus be considered for the structural cases. The

[8]See e.g. McFadden (2006) for evidence and discussion.

conditions for assignment of accusative in (13) are not met, because there is no higher DP in the relevant minimal domain.[9] Thus *Vasu* receives nominative as the default case, and the facts are correctly accounted for. Theories that tie the nominative to finiteness or agreement, on the other hand, are at a loss to handle such examples in an insightful way.

4.1 Excursus on English

As noted above, English doesn't immediately seem to fit in with what we are claiming here. The left-dislocated DP in (12a) has the oblique form *me* normally found on objects, not the nominative form *I* normally found on subjects of prototypically finite clauses.[10] Indeed this seems to be the clear default case in the language, at least in most colloquial varieties (see Parrott 2007, for discussion of the facts, which are far more complicated and interesting than we can do justice to here). We must ask then why English should differ from Tamil, Icelandic, German and other languages in this way, and whether this constitutes a problem for our analysis.

We would like to argue that the crucial point is that English does not have the same structural case system as the typical nominative-accusative languages listed above. In particular, the alternation between the two structural cases is not actually determined by anything like rule (13). This can be shown e.g. by the fact that both nominative and oblique are possible on the sole DP in a clause:

(16) a. I'm eating.
b. Us linguists dress well.

Instead, there is a very different kind of rule at work, and its operation can be seen nicely in the contrast between (16a) and (16b). It seems that nominative is assigned to a pronoun that is by itself in the specifier of tensed T. If anything gets in the way – like the modification structure in (16b) – nominative assignment fails, and the oblique shows up as the default case. The crucial point is that in English, it is the nominative for which there are special conditions. Thus it is the nominative which is marked, and the oblique which is the Elsewhere, the default. Put somewhat differently, the English 'nominative' is not really the same kind of case as what we call nominative in typical nominative-accusative languages, hence we should not be surprised that it does not function as the default case in the language.

In principle, this is no different from the fact that, in ergative-absolutive languages, it is generally the ergative that is assigned according to specific conditions (perhaps

[9] In this example, it doesn't much matter how we define the minimal domain for (13), as the embedded clause is an adjunct, and thus we do not expect it to interact with the DPs in the matrix clause. Even ignoring this, whether we define the minimal domain in terms of clauses or phases, the embedded clause here would constitute a minimal domain of its own. Of course, *Vasu* will count as a higher DP with respect to *poori* according to (13) in this example.

[10] We will refer to the case of forms like *me, him, her* in English as oblique rather than accusative to reflect the fact that they have a far wider distribution than accusative forms in typical nominative-accusative languages.

quite different from the conditions on accusative in nominative-accusative languages. See e.g. Woolford 1997, Legate 2008, for discussion), while the absolutive functions as the default. Given the obvious differences between nominative-accusative and ergative-absolutive systems, we know that there must be some parametrization in the way that languages assign their cases. The claim of a system like ours involving default case is that the differences are specified purely in terms of the rules for the non-default cases, with the distinct distributions of the default case across languages falling out from this.

5 Why does it look like nominative depends on agreement?

In spite of the preceding discussion, there is still no denying that there is a strong tendency in many languages for nominative case to coincide with agreement. This is initially puzzling under our account. If there is no actual dependency between the two, why do they tend to co-occur? Put another way, if nominative case is not assigned in connection with agreement, why don't we see nominatives more frequently outside of agreement-triggering subject position? We would like to argue that this falls out in large part from restrictions on the overt pronunciation reference of subjects in embedded clauses, which interact with case-assignment rules, but are strictly orthogonal. In brief, the idea is that in most positions outside the subject of prototypical finite clauses, nominative case is either specifically ruled out or systematically obscured by independent factors.

First of all, the operation of rule (13) combined with the fact the nominative is the Elsewhere case, will normally keep the nominative out of non-subject positions. Objects will generally be in the same minimal domain as a higher DP, thus will usually be assigned accusative. The exception is when this higher DP is marked with a non-structural case, which bleeds the assignment of accusative to the object via (13). In such circumstances, demonstrated in (17) repeated again from above, we do indeed find default nominative outside subject position as our theory predicts:

(17) Honum mundu ekki líka þeir.
him.DAT would.3PL not like.INF they.NOM
'He wouldn't like them.'

Subjects are of course different – being the highest DPs within a clause, they are generally also the highest DPs within the relevant local domain for (13), thus we can understand why they generally will not bear accusative and, being rather the typical bearers of nominative.

Still, this does not explain why we don't see more nominatives in the subject positions of non-finite clauses. We think that this is because of the combined operation of two distinct factors, each of which blocks the appearance of clearly nominative DPs in one group of non-finite clause types. The first is that many types of non-finite clause have special case-assignment mechanisms which apply to their subjects because of

the distinct structural status of the clauses themselves. E.g. in many languages certain classes of non-finite clause are in some sense nominal behavior and thus assign genitive case to the highest structural DP. Similarly, non-finite clauses are often structurally smaller than prototypical finite clauses. This can have the result that they do not constitute distinct minimal domains for purposes of case-assignment, such that (13) can assign accusative to the subject on the basis of a dependency on a DP in a higher clause – roughly the phenomenon of ECM. E.g. in (18a) the embedded clause is fully finite, with the main verb bearing agreement and tense-marking, while in (18b) it is unambiguously non-finite, bearing neither.

(18) a. Ich höre, [dass der Zug ankommt].
I.NOM hear that the.NOM train arrive.3SG
'I hear that the train is arriving.'
b. Ich höre [den Zug ankommen].
I.NOM hear the.ACC train arrive.INF
'I hear the train arrive.'

In the former example the embedded clause constitutes a minimal domain of its own, and the embedded subject is marked with default nominative. In the latter, the embedded clause constitutes no such domain, and the embedded subject is clearly marked accusative, under our analysis because of the dependency relation with the matrix subject *Ich* 'I', triggering rule (13).[11] Since we are arguing that nominative is an Elsewhere case, this sort of pattern is precisely what we should expect. Any more marked case will take precedence over the nominative, so we should not be surprised to see the nominative edged out in specific contexts where special mechanisms are available to assign other cases.

The second and perhaps more important factor which blocks clear nominatives in non-finite clauses is the appearance in the relevant positions of a controlled PRO subject whose case is not overtly apparent. Of course, one of the claims of Case theory was that the appearance of silent PRO in such infinitives was due to the unavailability of nominative case, so we have to be careful here. However, there is ample evidence that this is simply incorrect: the lack of an overt subject does not necessarily mean the unavailability of nominative case. Consider the Icelandic example (19) from Sigurðsson (1991):

(19) Strákana langaði til að PRO komast allir í veisluna.
boys-the:A wanted for to PRO get all:N.PL to party-the
'The boys wanted to all get to the party.'

The adjective *allir* in the embedded clause shows nominative plural agreement. This cannot be agreeing with anything in the finite matrix clause, because the coreferent DP there – *strákana* 'the boys' is accusative (*langa* 'want' being one of the verbs that

[11]Note that there is independent support that the embedded clause in (18a) constitutes a domain for locality while that in (18b) does not from other syntactic behaviors like reflexive-binding and scrambling.

assigns quirky accusative to its subject), not nominative. Instead, it must be agreeing with PRO in the embedded clause, which thus must be nominative, even though the embedded clause is non-finite (see vanden Wyngaerd 1994, for similar data from Latin and Ancient Greek).

Consider what this means. The nominative is generally available and typically is assigned to the subject of non-finite clauses, provided the conditions for no more marked case are met. However, we typically do not see it, because these clauses require their subjects to be covert for independent reasons. Only in special circumstances in languages with the right morphological resources do we find evidence for this nominative, but this is a fact about the conditions on when subjects may and may not be overt, not about the assignment of nominative case. What exactly does control the distribution of overt subjects is an extremely difficult question and goes beyond our central aims for this paper – as long as the conditions are orthogonal to case-assignment, our central claims about the independence of nominative case from finiteness and agreement and its status as default case can be maintained. In the following Section we will offer some suggestive discussion of these issues, falling well short of a real account of subject DP distribution, but offering some support for its orthogonality from nominative case.

6 What regulates subject DP distribution?

We have presented evidence to show that a subject DP may appear with nominative case in finite and non-finite clauses alike – despite appearances, there is no direct causal relationship between the finiteness of a clause and its ability to host a subject with nominative case. The reason it looks like there is a correlation between nominative case and finiteness is because the subjects of nonfinite clauses are typically covert – thus, the case marking on these subjects is (trivially) non-apparent. That is, it is not the case that subjects of nonfinite clauses are covert because they lack nominative case; rather, these subjects are covert for independent reasons. Covert subjects of nonfinite clauses may indeed carry nominative case (indeed, structures like that in (19) indicate that they do) – but this is obscured because of the subjects' morphophonological silence.

In the section immediately below, we discuss what the independent factors governing subject (c)overtness are – in doing so, we will hope to show that nominative case itself does not play a part. We propose that the factors governing a subject's status as silent or overt are tied to the degree of syntactico-semantic clausal dependency and on the manner in which the clause is anchored to its selecting predicate.

6.1 Syntactico-semantic restrictions on DPs: reference

If, as we argue here, subject DP distribution is strictly dissociated from Case licensing, what is it actually regulated by? Following Sundaresan and McFadden (2009), we propose the following. Contrary to Case theory, DPs themselves have no special

Table 1: Selectional restrictions on clauses and on their subjects

Anchoring	Clausal (in)dep.	Subject (in)dep.	Subject example
Compl.	temp./mod. anaph.	anaphoric	controlled pro under *try*
Compl.	temp./mod. dep.	coreferent/indep.	OC pro/indep. under *want*
Adj.	independent	anaph./indep.	purpose adjuncts in Tamil
Compl.	independent	independent	subj. of *that*-CP under *discover*
Root	independent	independent	indep. subject of root clause.

needs and must obey no special rules beyond theta-selection and the standard rules conditioning the merge of any element in the structure.

Briefly, we propose that the properties of a subject DP fall out of syntactico-semantic selectional restrictions on complementation and clausal embedding in general, which are imposed by c-commanding functional heads. These restrictions influence subject DPs only indirectly. The embedded subject is not directly selected – what *is* selected by the higher functional head (a higher *v* or C) is actually a type of clause. The degree of temporal/modal dependency of this embedded clause on its matrix one as well as the way in which it is anchored to the matrix (e.g. via adjunction, complementation or conjunction – to name three broadly classified anchoring strategies) in turn affect the syntactico-semantic properties of the subject that occurs in this clause. Many of the selectional restrictions on clauses and, in turn, on the subject DPs of these clauses, particularly the syntactico-semantic ones are, moreover, cross-linguistically consistent – allowing us to draw rough generalizations like those in Table (1).[12]

The generalizations in (1) are meant to depict a broad and very simplified template of the correlations between the syntactico-semantic properties of the selected clause as a whole and the nature of its subject DP. As such, the correlations portrayed in it should be treated as tendential and not as strictly deterministic in any way. That said, we can now attempt to flesh out the templatic relationships in (1) as follows.

Obligatory control infinitives selected under *try*-class predicates instantiate the first paradigm. Such clauses tend to be temporally anaphoric on their matrix clause and tend to take anaphoric subjects that are covert (in other words, they take obligatorily controlled pro-subjects):

(20) a. John$_i$ tried [pro$_i$/*for Bill to eat the rice].
b. Raman$_i$ pro/*Vasu saadatt.ai saappi.ḍ.a paa.tt.aan
Raman.nom pro/*Vasu.nom rice.acc eat.inf try.pst.3msg
'Raman$_i$ tried [pro$_i$/*for Vasu to eat the rice].'

Clauses that are selected by *want*-class predicates tend to be less anaphoric on their matrix clauses than those selected by *try*-class verbs. Such clauses take controlled

[12]In describing the degrees of clausal dependency in Column 2 of Table (1), we appropriate the terminology proposed in Landau (2004) who essentially introduces a dependency hierarchy with anaphoric clauses being the most modally and/or temporally dependent on their embedding ones, dependent clauses being somewhere in-between and *that*-CPs and root CPs being fully functionally independent.

PRO subjects but they can also take overt, non-coreferential subjects – these instantiate the paradigm of dependent clauses depicted in (1). Still other contexts such as those pertaining to clausal adjuncts place no restrictions, and we get an alternation between the overt and covert subjects. This is the situation in Tamil adjunct infinitives (7):

(21) a. John wanted [Bill/PRO to eat the rice.]
b. [vasu/PRO poori porikk-a] raman maavu vaangi-n-aan
vasu.NOM/PRO poori.ACC fry-INF raman.NOM flour.ACC buy-PST-M.3SG
'Raman bought flour for Vasu to fry pooris/to fry pooris.'

Finally, root clauses and other prototypical finite clauses (such as clauses embedded under *discover*-class verbs) generally do not allow anaphoric subjects (though they may have coreferent ones):

(22) ROOT CLAUSES:
a. John/*PRO bought flour.
b. Raman/pro/*PRO maavu vaangi-n-aan (Tamil)
Raman/pro/*PRO flour buy-PST-M.3SG
'Raman bought flour.'

(23) COMPLEMENTS OF *discover*-CLASS PREDICATES:
a. Mary-Jane$_i$ discovered [$_{CP}$ that Bill/she$_i$/*herself$_i$ was flush out of money.]

What this shows is that specific verbs and other predicates differ – and, for the most part, differ in systematic and predictable ways – in what kinds of clausal complements they can select. This in turn affects the type of subject (anaphoric vs. dependent vs. independent) that may occur within that clause.

But this discussion has been merely descriptive so far – i.e. it delineates a typology of clausal selection and, derivatively, of subject selection patterns, but doesn't address the question of *why* these patterns are the way they are. Put another way, it doesn't answer questions like the following: **why** is it that *try* (and the similar Tamil *paar*) requires an anaphoric complement, while *want* (and the parallel Tamil *veɳḍ*) can take a less dependent one? I.e., what independent factors determine the selectional properties of specific heads? These are the questions we attempt to answer now.

It is reasonable to think that selectional behavior ultimately has a (conceptual)-semantic basis. Thus, 'want' expresses a relation between an individual and a proposition whereas 'try' expresses a relation between an individual and a property which that individual will saturate. Yet other predicates don't entail a relationship between an agent and a proposition at all. Chierchia (1989) [p. 21] makes essentially the same point and proposes that selecting predicates be classified according to the following semantic characteristics (formatting ours):

- PROPOSITIONAL PREDICATES: [select] only S (example: 'is likely').
- RELATIONS OF INDIVIDUALS TO PROPERTIES AND PROPOSITIONS: [select] tensed S and INF/GER (example: 'believe', 'know', etc.).
- RELATIONS OF INDIVIDUAL TO PROPERTIES: [select] (subjectless) INF/GER (example: 'try', 'practise', etc.).

> The above typology embodies a non trivial claim on what relations can be lexicalized in the languages of the world. It claims that relations of individuals to propositions should alternate with relations to properties, which has consequences for syntactic subcategorization: it provides us with a markedness scale as to what to expect.

The discussion in Chierchia (1989) is primarily semantic in nature (though it is, by no means, meant to preclude the possible involvement of syntax) – whereas we are more interested in understanding the syntactic principles that are involved in the selection of clauses (and, derivatively, in the selection of subjects within those clauses). Nevertheless, the fundamental intuition that the selectional properties of (propositional and other) predicates stem from their own conceptual-semantics is one that we share with this seminal work. Landau (2004) is another important work, developed from a primarily syntactic perspective this time, that also makes claims whose intuitions we share at the core. Landau proposes that clauses be classified as (temporally and modally) anaphoric, dependent, and independent (labels that we have appropriated in our own discussion above). Importantly, furthermore, he attempts to capture the correlations between such clausal dependencies and the referential dependency of the clausal subject by means of the following rule (Landau 2004, 842, ex. 39):

> *R-assignment Rule:*
> For $X^0_{[\alpha T, \beta Agr]} \in \{ I^0, C^0 \ldots \}$:
> $\emptyset \rightarrow$[+R]/X^0__, if $\alpha = \beta =$ '+'
> $\emptyset \rightarrow$[-R]/elsewhere.
> Put simply, the R-assignment rule states that whenever I^0 or C^0 are specified for [+T, +Agr], then they automatically come to bear [+R]; any other feature constitution – [+T, -Agr], [-T, +Agr] or [-T, -Agr] – is associated with [-R]. Notice that lack of [T] or [Agr] renders the rule inapplicable, i.e., no [R] value is assigned.

To fully understand Landau's R-assignment in the context of the current discussion, it should be mentioned that the various combinations of [$\pm$T] and [$\pm$Agr] yield degrees of clausal dependency which we have captured under the labels of "anaphoric", "dependent" and "independent" – terms that we actually appropriated from Landau (2004); the [$\pm$R] feature encodes whether the subject is referentially anaphoric or independent[13]. Landau himself is very candid in this paper that the R-assignment rule is a stipulation and that it is not immediately apparent how to reduce it to more basic principles. Indeed, this is no trivial issue – the R-assignment rule states an explicit relationship between clausal anaphoricity and nominal subject referentiality; as such, it attempts to forge a link between modal, temporal, and nominal domains. Motivating such a connection is no small task. Nevertheless, we would like to venture the preliminary proposal here that a promising place to look for answers to this deep question is in the realm of a Kratzerian situation semantics (Kratzer To appear) which attempts to motivate the parallels between modal, temporal, nominal and, potentially also spatial, domains by means of enriching situations

[13]Note that referential dependency need not be encapsulated in terms of a strictly binary feature; for instance, we assume that there is a third class of (accidentally) coreferent DPs that are possible under *discover*-class predicates for instance (see again (23)).

Table 2: Clausal and subject (in)dependence and subject (c)overtness

Clausal (in)dep.	Subj. (in)dep.	Subj. (c)overtness
Temp./mod. anaph.	anaph.	tends to be covert (OC pro)
Temp./mod. dep.	anaph./indep.	can be overt or covert
Indep. root/embedded clause	indep.	tends to be overt

with coordinates pertaining to all these domains. Further discussion of this subject would take us too far afield and, indeed, the answers are still far from clear, so we say no more about this at this juncture. The important point to take away from this, in any case, is that purely (morpho-)syntactic operations involving case and agreement are not responsible for this correlation.

The discussion so far has revolved around the selectional properties of predicates (via intermediate functional heads), the syntactico-semantic features and anchoring properties of the clauses embedded by them and, by transitivity, the referential properties of the subject DPs of the selected clauses. Stipulations like Landau (2004)'s R-assignment principle above, are attempts to delineate a systematic correlation between clausal features and the referential features of their subjects. But there is one other point that needs to be addressed, particularly from the point-of-view of the main discussion of this paper (the nature of case and case-assignment on DPs), and this is the morphophonological overtness and silence of subject DPs. We turn to a brief discussion of this point next.

6.2 The orthogonality of subject reference and clausal finiteness with the (c)overtness of subjects

There is an undeniable correlation between the finiteness of a clause and the morphophonological (c)overtness of its subject DP which can be represented by the following generalized and simplified metric:

(24) Finiteness-Subject (c)overtness Correlation:
   a. Subjects of finite clauses tend to be overt.
   b. Subjects of nonfinite clauses tend to be covert.

A more intricate and fleshed-out version of (24) is given in Table (2). Perhaps more so than with the purely syntactico-semantic restrictions on DPs such as their referential (in)dependence, discussed in detail above and summarized in Table (1), we expect a greater degree of parametric variation with respect to restrictions on the morphophonological properties of DPs represented in the last column of (2). This type of variation is instantiated in the well-known typological distinction between *pro*-drop and non-*pro*-drop languages: that is, subjects of root clauses and of fully temporally independent *that*-clauses such as those embedded under *discover*-class predicates, may be morphophonologically silent in null subject languages. Coversely, at the other end of the finiteness cline, the subject of a nonfinite clause may be overt as we have already seen in this paper for languages as wide ranging as Hungarian,

Italian, Middle English and Tamil. Nevertheless, the tendencies encapsulated in (24) are fairly robust. Standard Case theory tried to explain these correlations by claiming that subjects of non-finite clauses were caseless (or, in the Minimalist version (Martin 1996), received a special "null" Case) which in turn prevented them from being spelled out. One of the main goals of this paper has been to argue for severing the connection between subject case and clausal finiteness and, by extension, to subject pronounceability. But this means that the broad correlation between finiteness and subject (c)overtness must fall out of independent factors and in the rest of this section, we discuss what these factors might be and what conditions they themselves may be regulated by. At the outset we would like to clarify that the precise formal characterization of the properties that affect the pronounceability of a DP remains an open question and we have nothing substantive to contribute to this point here; we refer the interested reader to Sundaresan (2010) for some initial speculations on this issue manipulating the interplay of phase locality and cyclic Spell-Out and to Livitz (2010) for a Spell-Out proposal in terms of defective intervention and claiming that any comprehensive explanation of these patterns must be able to account not only for the tendential rules but also for the important exceptions to the rule (which are mentioned above: little *pro* subjects in fully finite clauses and overt DPs in nonfinite clauses).

There is one additional important point that is worth making, namely: the syntactico-semantic properties of DPs must be kept logically distinct from their morphophonological ones (such as whether they are overt or covert): as we have already made clear, the correlations given in (24) and (2) are tendential, involve significant exceptions to these tendencies and do not reflect directly causal and deterministic relationships. To bolster the point, that the syntactico-semantic properties of subject DPs must be kept logically separate from their morphophonogical silence/presence, even further, we present the following mini dataset from Tamil which we then corroborate with supporting data from Hungarian and Italian (Szabolcsi 2009). (25) involves a matrix *try*-class verb above an infinitival complement. The subject of the infinitive would normally be a standard obligatorily-controlled PRO but, and interestingly, an overt subject is possible if it is contrastively focussed. Tellingly, furthermore, the only overt form allowed is the SE-anaphor *taan*, which is interpreted *de se* and is obligatorily coreferent with the matrix subject just like its silent PRO variant. Note, crucially furthermore, that *taan* is distinctly nominative:

(25) raman$_i$ PRO/*taan*/*vasu saadatt.ai saappi.ḍ.a paa.tt.aan
raman.NOM PRO/self.NOM/*vasu.NOM rice.ACC eat.INF try.PST.3MSG
"Raman$_i$ tried [$_{CP}$ PRO$_i$/for *himself*$_i$/*for Vasu to eat the rice."]

It is of course necessary to show, as Szabolcsi has illustrated for the relevant Hungarian and Italian cases, that *taan* isn't just an emphatic marker doubling a separate subject in (25). This can be demonstrated straightforwardly, because *taan* **does** have a use as an emphatic marker, which is however clearly distinct from its use here. When *taan* is emphatic, it suffixes to the constituent to be emphasized. This suffixation can be diagnosed by the fact that it feeds a (regular) process of voicing assimilation,

whereby voiceless stops are voiced when immediately following a nasal or vowel within the same phonological word, yielding *daan* in examples like 26a. Crucially, embedded subject *taan* is not voiced. Furthermore, it can even co-occur with the emphatic *daan* as in 26b, strongly arguing that *taan* is in fact the embedded subject and not itself an emphatic marker. The sentences in (26) below thus show conclusively that *taan* in these sentences is neither an emphatic marker on the matrix subject nor an emphatic marker on a possibly null embedded one:

(26) a. raman.daan pariccai.yai erud.a paa.tt.aan
raman.NOM.SE exam.ACC write.INF try.PST.3MSG
"Only Raman tried to write the exam."
b. raman.daan taan pariccai.yai erud.a paa.tt.aan
raman.NOM.SE SE.NOM exam.ACC write.INF try.PST.3MSG
"Only Raman tried for himself to write the exam."

Most importantly for the purposes of the current discussion, the data in (25) illustrates that the nominal anaphoricity of the embedded subject (instantiated by its obligatory coreference and obligatory *de se* interpretation with respect to the matrix subject) must be kept strictly separate from the fact of its overtness or silence. The paradigm here is, furthermore, precisely parallel to what Szabolcsi reports for Hungarian and Italian. However – and this brings us back to the main thesis of this paper – given the grammaticality of (7b) in Tamil, we know that the restriction to a coreferent SE-anaphor in (25) can't reflect a requirement that the overt nominative subject of an infinitive agree with matrix T. Rather, the coreference requirement must be related to the complement-taking properties of the matrix verb, and be treated as being strictly orthogonal to the availability of nominative case. This point is driven home by the data from Swedish in (27), from Lundin (2003):

(27) Han önskar sig/*Kalle kunna springa 50 kilometer.
he wishes SE/*Kalle be-able-to run 50 kilometers
'He$_i$ wishes that he$_i$/*Kalle$_j$ could run 50 kilometers.'

We have here a species of infinitive where an overt subject is possible, but only if it is the anaphor *sig*, coreferent with the matrix subject. This is again parallel to the Szabolcsi facts and the Tamil facts in (25), but the casee here is accusative, not nominative, and there is no involvement of agreement. The fact that accusative is assigned – presumably via some sort of ECM – is simply independent of the coreference requirement on the DP. As for examples like (7b), repeated here as (28) they show that languages like Tamil have an infinitival structure which can appear in contexts like adjunct position, where overt subjects non-coreferent with the subject of the matrix clause are possible.

(28) [**naan** poori porikk-a] raman maavu vaangi-n-aan
I.NOM poori.ACC fry-INF raman.NOM flour.ACC buy-PST-M.3SG
'Raman bought flour for me to fry pooris'

Such overt subjects will be nominative, in spite of the lack of agreement, for the same reason that subjects of finite clauses are nominative. That is, no other more specific

case can be assigned here, and nominative is the default. Again, the availability of the nominative is strictly independent of the fact that these subjects need not be coreferent with the matrix subject, as shown by the comparison with (25), where coreference is required, but nominative is still possible.

A valid question to pose at this juncture is why languages like Hungarian don't behave like Tamil: specifically, why it is that Hungarian appears to allow overt subjects in nonfinite clauses only in clause types where there is obligatory coreference between the matrix and embedded subjects. Along the same lines, it would make sense to ask why English-type languages lack even the more restricted possibility of the Hungarian ones: English doesn't allow any overt subjects – coreferent or otherwise – in nonfinite clauses of the type discussed in Szabolcsi for Hungarian. This is an important question that pertains to the very locus of parametric variation in subject licensing and clausal complementation: we have nothing insightful to offer at this juncture. Nevertheless, we maintain that, given the types of counterevidence instantiated in structures like Tamil (28), Hungarian (3), Middle English (8) and many other languages – the reason can have nothing to do with the licensing of nominative case on the subjects of these clauses. Languages like Hungarian and Italian happen to only have infinitives of the latter kind and English doesn't have infinitives of either kind but agreement is no more relevant to the nominative there than it is in Tamil.

7 Conclusions and outlook

The primary goal of this paper has been to argue against theories which hold that nominative case is dependent on finiteness, being assigned in connection with agreement. We have shown that the distribution of subject DPs, whether overt or silent, must be kept logically distinct from the licensing of nominative case on these DPs. As part of our argumentation, we have presented counter-evidence from a variety of languages like Hungarian, Italian, Tamil and Middle English to illustrate that these languages have overt DP subjects with nominative case in unambiguously nonfinite clauses. We have also presented converse evidence involving floating quantifiers from Icelandic to demonstrate that, even when the subject of a nonfinite clause is covert (i.e. obligatorily controlled PRO), it may bear nominative case.

Based on this type of empirical evidence, we have proposed an alternative theory of DP distribution wherein DPs themselves require no special licensing due to case/Case. The restrictions on the syntactico-semantic properties of subject DPs fall out of the temporal and modal dependency properties of the clause they are the subject of; this temporal/modal dependency on the part of the clause is, in turn, a function of the manner in which it is selected by a higher predicate (via C) and of the way in which it is anchored to a higher clause, if present (such as complementation, adjunction, coordination). The overtness and covertness of a subject must be kept logically distinct from the referential properties of the DP as well as from the finiteness of the clause it occurs in: contrary to conventional wisdom, overt DPs are licit in nonfinite clauses and, conversely, covert DPs (little *pro*) are licit in fully finite clauses.

In order to explain the frequent presence of nominative case on subjects, we propose, contra standard Minimalist licensing theories, that nominative case is the default case on a DP. Accusative case and other oblique cases are assigned under more specific rules to DPs that are lower down in the clause; thus, subjects are left with nominative case.

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