

Shared hierarchy effects in agreement and case

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Agreement and case marking can be considered, respectively, head- and dependent-marking strategies for indicating the role that a nominal plays in relation to the larger structure that it is embedded in. We may therefore ask whether these two types of morphology arise via a single grammatical mechanism or two distinct ones. In this talk, I will consider person hierarchy effects to be a window into this issue. Taking as my starting place four commonly recognized varieties of person hierarchy effects found in the Person-Case Constraint, I show that these same hierarchy varieties occur elsewhere in agreement, focusing specifically on the typology of inverse marking systems. This suggests that the mechanism underlying agreement is constrained in a way that gives rise to this attested typology of hierarchy effects. I then demonstrate that most of these same varieties of hierarchy effects are found in global case splits. This parallelism between hierarchy effects in case and agreement points to a single grammatical mechanism underlying the two phenomena. This provides evidence that case is assigned via the operation responsible for agreement (e.g. Agree in Minimalism) and not via some separate mechanism such as configurational dependent case rules.