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Symmetrical Objecthood in Panoan Languages

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Abstract

This paper addresses the phenomenon of symmetrical objecthood using data from three Panoan languages: Shipibo-Konibo, Cashinawa, and Matsés. Symmetrical objecthood is defined as the possibility for both objects to display the same properties in double object constructions, such as ditransitives and applicatives. My proposal is that the structural Case assigned by a Multiple AGREE operation is responsible for the symmetry between both objects. This is put forth in the following definition: (1) X and Y are equidistant if a head H AGREES simultaneously with both X and Y. The reasons for this analysis are based on the following: i) The symmetrical properties displayed by the objects imply the movement of the lower object over the higher one. ii) Panoan languages have an ergative-absolutive case marking system, and in double object constructions, the objects display the same case (absolutive). Following Legate 2008, absolutive is a morphological default for accusative in objects and for nominative in intransitive subjects. I assume that object licensing comes from the accusative Case assignment. iii) Multiple AGREE (Hiraiwa 2005) is a single simultaneous syntactic operation: AGREE applies to all the matched goals simultaneously at the same point in the derivation. Thus, in a symmetrical object construction, small *v* multiply AGREES with the two objects and simultaneously assigns to them structural accusative Case. This analysis accounts for the following properties: free word order/extraction, reciprocalization, participant agreement (Valenzuela 2002), and others such as passivization and object agreement, which are present marginally in Matsés. For all these properties to take place, equidistance, which follows from (1), is needed to allow either object to display these properties. The paper also discusses the typological consequences of this account, arguing against a phase-based approach.

Symmetrical Objecthood in Panoan Languages

Teresa Torres-Bustamante*

1 Introduction

This paper will address the phenomenon of symmetrical objecthood using data from three Panoan languages: Shipibo-Konibo, Cashinawa, and Matsés. Symmetrical objecthood (SO) is defined as a construction in which both objects are allowed to express the same syntactic properties. In these Panoan languages, both ditransitive constructions and applicative constructions show symmetrical objecthood.

After laying out the major SO properties these languages display, I will argue in favor of seeing these properties as an instantiation of equidistance: namely, the equal access to movement for either object. I will propose that the assignment of structural Case to both objects by means of Multiple AGREE causes both objects to be equidistant, and therefore, symmetrical. I will also argue against a phase-based approach of this phenomenon (McGinnis 2001, 2002), showing that the strict correlation between phases and symmetrical/asymmetrical patterns is not accurate.

The structure of the paper is as follows: first, I present the assumptions I am making for symmetrical objecthood. Secondly, I discuss the core of my proposal regarding phrase structure, Case assignment and Multiple AGREE. Thirdly, I analyze the relevant object properties of these languages in terms of my proposal. Next, I show a brief picture of the typological consequences of my approach, contrasting it with the phase-based approach. Finally, I summarize the paper.

2 Assumptions

2.1 What are Symmetrical Object Languages?

The notion I follow for a symmetrical object language is one in which both objects are allowed to express the same syntactic properties. In Bantu languages, the issue of symmetrical and asymmetrical object languages has been widely studied. Within these types of languages, variation and specific properties are found. For Bresnan and Moshi 1993, true symmetrical object languages are those in which both objects can display object properties simultaneously. I discard that definition, since in Panoan languages, the relevant morphosyntactic properties are not easy to test in that view.

Regarding Panoan languages, Valenzuela (2003) and Fleck (2003) show that Shipibo-Konibo (SK) and Matsés respectively are languages in which symmetrical objecthood is observed. These authors claim that in these languages, in contrast with Bantu languages, there are no ways to distinguish between objects. However, this is a fuzzy issue. Even in SK, there are certain constructions (relative constructions, interrogatives, the animacy restriction in the benefactive applicatives) that seem to apply just for one of the objects. Moreover, I assume that the symmetry is derived by certain processes that apply to an asymmetrical phrase structure. I presuppose a strict linking of theta roles with specific and different structural positions. Having said this, my definition for a symmetrical object language is based upon the core characteristic for all these types of languages: fundamentally, the availability for both objects to display (almost) the same morphosyntactic properties, in a systematic way.

2.2 Absolutive case and Structural Case

All these Panoan languages present a fairly straightforward Ergative-Absolutive case marking system in double object constructions (DOC). I follow Legate 2008 in seeing absolutive case as a

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morphological default case. Tense assigns nominative Case to the intransitive subject, and small *v* assigns accusative Case to the objects. Both nominative and accusative Cases are realized morphologically as a default absolutive, and ergative is an inherent case assigned locally. I follow this approach since many of the features Legate lists for these types of languages are met by Panoan languages, such as the availability of other case morphemes, but the absence of nominative and accusative ones; the possibility of having multiple absolutive DPs (as in DOC); and the fact that the few agreement morphemes that the languages have appear on both ergative and absolutive subjects, which is a nominative pattern.

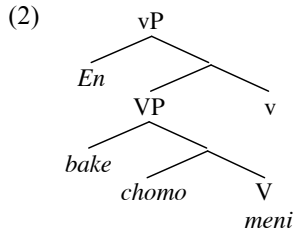
Structural Case is an object licenser: in symmetrical double object constructions, both objects get structural Case from small *v*. In asymmetrical object languages, just one of the objects (the one that displays the properties a single object has in a transitive sentence) gets structural Case, while the other gets inherent case (Baker 1988).

3 Proposal

3.1 Phrase Structure

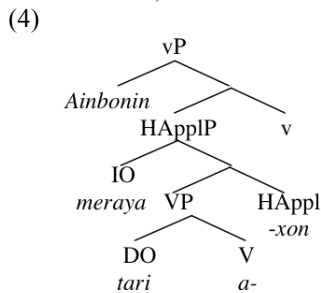
I assume for ditransitive clauses that the VP hosts the two arguments: the theme in its complement, and the recipient in its specifier. Thus, the SK sentence (1)¹ has the phrase structure in (2).

- (1) En-ra bake chomo meni-ke
 1:ERG-EV child jar give-COMPL
 ‘I gave the child a jar’



For the benefactive/malefactive applicative in these three Panoan languages, I consider them high applicatives in Pyllkkänen’s (2002) typology. There is an applicative head that is merged with the V before the small *v* phrase. The SK applicative sentence (3) has the phrase structure in (4)

- (3) Ainbo-nin-ra meráya tari a-xon-ke.
 woman-ERG-EV great.shaman:ABS tari:ABS do.T-APPL-CMPL
 ‘The woman made a tari (traditional men’s clothes) for the great shaman’ (Valenzuela 2003:700)

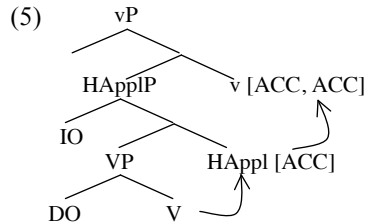


3.2 Accusative Case

In ditransitive sentences, small *v* has two accusative (ACC) features. In applicative sentences, small *v* has only one ACC feature, and the applicative head bears an ACC feature as well. This

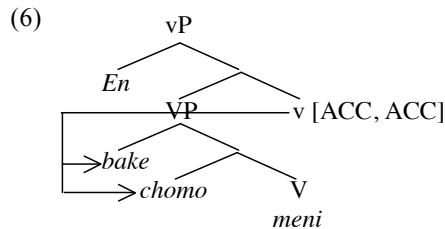
¹All examples are from my original fieldwork, unless the source is cited.

feature percolates to small *v* via head movement as in (5), so that small *v* is still responsible for the Case assignment. I propose that the applicative head bears this Case feature, given the fact that it is possible to have applicativization of intransitive stems. Percolation is also supported by the minimalist view that structural Case cannot be checked in the same domain in which a theta-role is assigned. In contrast, inherent case is assigned in the same position as the thematic role, and possibly the applicative head assigns this inherent case to one of the objects in asymmetrical languages.

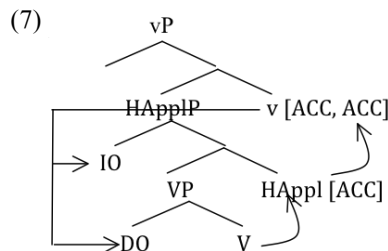


3.3 Multiple AGREE

Multiple AGREE is an operation that takes place between a single probe and multiple matching goals simultaneously at the same point in the derivation. (Hiraiwa 2005). It is unrestricted, meaning that a single head can probe for several goals in a single operation. Panoan languages allow for multiple objects in absolutive: for instance, in sentences that involve both causativization and applicativization. In (6) small *v* bears the two ACC case features. Small *v* is the probe that scans its c-command domain and finds two goals: the two objects.



In an applicative sentence of a transitive clause, as in (3) above, small *v* and the applicative head each bear one ACC feature. Via head movement, the ACC feature in the applicative head can percolate to small *v*. Then, small *v* can probe the two objects and assign the ACC features as in (7) below.



Hiraiwa's proposal does not imply that multiple agreement triggers equidistance effects. However, given my analysis that Multiple AGREE licenses both arguments as objects, then, it allows them to show the same morphosyntactic properties, (and these properties clearly involve the crossing of one object over the other. Under my analysis, this will not constitute a minimality violation.)

I propose that the symmetry has to do with the multiple structural Case that small *v* can assign to both objects via Multiple AGREE. I will claim, then, that the symmetrical objecthood derives from the establishment of equidistance for extraction/movement/Agree operations.

Given Chomsky's Shortest Movement (1993), only the closest element to the landing site is allowed to move there. Closeness to the target is defined in (8)

- (8) X is closest to Z, iff Z c-commands X and there is no possible intervener Y that c-commands X but not Z.

Movement of the lower object over the higher one would be a violation of (8), only if both objects had not become equidistant to the target by means of Multiple Agree. To be equidistant, then, following previous definitions (Chomsky 1993), means that X is as close to Z as Y is. Movement of X over Y, then, does not constitute a minimality violation, provided that they are equidistant. Thus, I claim that Multiple AGREE (for structural Case purposes) not only makes possible the multiple structural Case valuation in the objects, but also creates equidistance between them. This is put forth in the definition in (9).

- (9) X and Y are equidistant if a head H AGREES simultaneously with both X and Y.

4 Object Properties

There are several properties that show symmetrical objecthood in these languages. I consider the following ones: free word order/extraction, reciprocalization, participant agreement, object agreement, and passivization. However, not all of them apply to the three languages, as Table 1 shows.

	Free word order (extraction/scrambling)	Reciprocalization	Participant Agreement	Object Agreement	Passive
SK	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	N/A
Cashinawa	Yes	Yes	Yes	N/A	Not tested
Matsés	Yes	Not tested	Not tested	Yes	Yes

Table 1

4.1 Free Word Order

Panoan languages are SOV, with ERG-ABS case marking. Both objects display the same case marking (absolute) and free word order between them is permitted, as is shown in the Cashinawa example (10).

- (10) a. Juan-en jawen ebu madi tsaka-xun-xu-ki
 Juan-ERG 3POS mother:ABS añuje:ABS kill-APPL-PAST-CMPL
 b. Juan-en jawen ebu madi tsaka-xun-xu-ki
 Juan-ERG-EV 3POS mother:ABS añuje:ABS kill-APPL-PAST-CMPL
 'Juan killed an *añuje* for his mother'

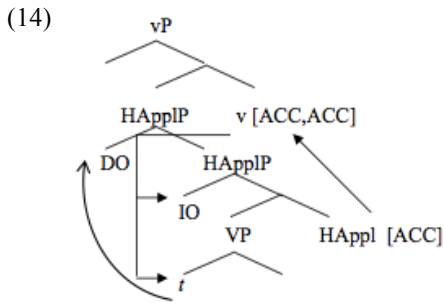
Either object can be displaced to the left or the right of the clause. SK examples are in (11); Cashinawa (12), the dislocated object should take the morpheme *-dan*, a topic marker.

- (11) a. Ainbo-nin-ra tari a-xon-ke, meráya.
 woman-ERG-EV tari:ABS do.T-APPL-CMPL great.shaman:ABS
 b. Tari-ra ainbo-nin a-xon-ke, meráya.
 tari:ABS-EV woman-ERG do.T-APPL-CMPL g.shaman:ABS
 'The woman made a tari for the great shaman.' (Valenzuela 2003:702)
 (12) Jawen ebu-dan Juan-en madi tsaka-xun-xu-ki
 3POS mother:ABS-TOP Juan-ERG añuje:ABS kill-APPL-PAST-CMPL
 'Juan killed an *añuje* for his mother'

Fleck (2003) points out that word order cannot be used to distinguish between the patient and recipient objects. In (13) it is possible to change the order of the objects, and either meaning is possible, regardless of the order. As a result, ambiguity can arise.

- (13) *cun champi mibi mene-nu*
 1GEN daughter:ABS 2ABS give-Intent:1
 ‘I’m going to give you my daughter’ or ‘I’m going to give my daughter to you.’ (Fleck 2003:867)

As we see, either object is allowed to move freely. The core of my proposal is that Multiple Agree makes both objects equidistant from the target of movement. The free word order is explained as movement of the base object over the applied one as in (14); the landing position could be an extra specifier position in HApplP.



4.2 Reciprocalization

In SK, either object can be reciprocal with the subject, such as the applied object in (15), or the primary one in (16).

- (15) *Ja-bo-ra kokoti-bo be-xon-anan-ai.*
 3-PL:ABS-EV fruit-PL:ABS bring-APPL-REC-INC
 ‘They bring fruit for each other.’ (Valenzuela 2003:708)
- (16) *E-a-ra nokon bake-baon noko-ananan-xon-ke.*
 1-ABS-EV POS1 child-PL:ERG meet-REC-APPL-CMPL
 ‘My children met each other for me.’ (Valenzuela 2003:709)

It is noted that this correlation depends on the morphological ordering of the reciprocal and applicative suffixes within the main verb. When the reciprocal is attached first, only the primary object can be reciprocal with the subject as in (17).

- (17) *’etai-bo-ra sai.ik-anan-xon-ke jaton patron*
 Worker-PL:ABS-EV yell.AUX-REC-APPL-COMP 3plPOS boss
 ‘The workers fought each other benefiting their boss’ /*‘The workers fought with the boss for each other’

In contrast, when the applicative is attached first, either interpretation is available² as in (18), which supports the symmetrical view. The associative applicative also works that way as in (19).

- (18) *Tetai-bo-ra sai.i(k)-xon-ananan-ke jaton patron*
 Worker-PL:ABS-EV yell.AUX-APPL-REC-COMP 3plPO boss
 ‘The workers fought with the boss for each other’/‘The workers fought each other for the boss’

²Certainly, there is a preference for the applied object to be reciprocal with the subject.

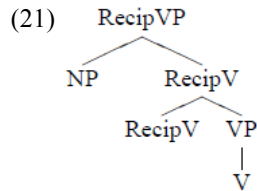
- (19) Nato joni-bo-ra a-kin-anan-ai.
 This man-PL:ABS-EV do.T-ASSOC-REC-INC
 ‘These men are helping each other.’ / ‘These men are helping someone / others who will later help them too’. (Valenzuela 2003:806)

Cashinawa also shows this pattern: in (20), either object can be reciprocal with the subject, and the suffix order is APPL-REC.

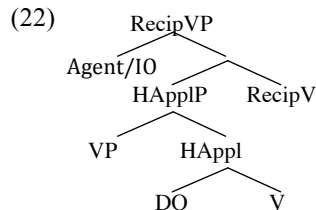
- (20) Jatu (ibubis) ea jene-xun-name-ki
 3PL (emphatic) 1ABS to separate/to let go of-APPL-REC-COMPL
 ‘They have separated for my benefit/They let me go of them, for their benefit’

Reciprocalization is an important test to determine symmetrical objecthood. When the applicative morpheme is attached in the derivation before the reciprocal, we can interpret the subject as reciprocal either with the direct object or the applied one³. I propose, then, a morphosyntactic structure that follows Baker’s Mirror Principle.

I will follow Bruening’s analysis for reciprocals (2006) in Kichaga, which also accounts for the interaction between the reciprocal and the benefactive in SK and Cashinawa. In Kichaga, the fixed order APPL-REC, as in SK, allows for both interpretations. Bruening treats the reciprocal as a kind of Voice head, which takes as a complement a verbal phrase with an unsaturated argument. The argument that is projected in [Spec,RecipVP] is both the agent and the unsaturated argument of VP, as we can see in (21).

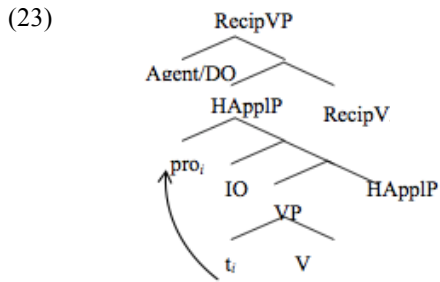


The ambiguous order is APPL-REC. In this case, it is now the applicative phrase that has the unsaturated argument. Thus, the reciprocal interpretation comes from the fact that the argument in [Spec,RecipVP] is both the agent and the applied object. The structure in (22) gives us such an interpretation.

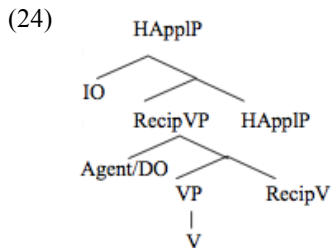


In cases in which the reciprocal interpretation is with the direct object, there is a null argument in the direct object position (complement of V) which then raises to [Spec,AppIP]. That way, the argument of RecipVP is both the agent and the theme. Following McGinnis’s approach, Bruening argues that there is no minimality violation since the raising of the lower object to Spec,AppIP is allowed by the EPP feature in the applicative head. In my proposal, I also allow for the movement of the null theme over the IO, since they are equidistant.

³This situation is similar to symmetrical Bantu languages as Kichaga in which either object can be reciprocal with the subject, (Bresnan and Moshi 1993:54). This is also reported for Misantla Totonac with respect to both reflexives and reciprocals (MacKay and Trechsel 2008:248, e.g., 37–39).



Regarding the order REC-APPL (only coreference with the DO), if we follow the Mirror Principle, RecipVP takes as a complement the VP with the unsaturated argument. Then, the only possible interpretation will be one in which the argument of RecipVP is both the agent and the direct object. The applicative phrase merges above RecipVP, and therefore there is no way of generating a different interpretation, as shown in (24).



4.3 Participant Agreement

This term refers to the phenomenon in which adjuncts bear marking oriented to the subject or the object (see Valenzuela 2003 for a full explanation), as in (25a) and (25b) respectively.

- (25) a. E-n-ra kachio-xon ninká-ke.
 1-ERG-EV in.the.forest-A hear-CMPL
 ‘I heard it from the forest.’ (I was in the forest; the noise may have come from the forest or not; lit. ‘I heard it in the forest.’) (Valenzuela 2003:373)
- b. E-n-ra kachio-kea ninká-ke.
 1-ERG-EV in.the.forest-from:O hear-CMPL
 ‘I heard it from the forest.’ (the noise came from the forest) (Valenzuela 2003:373)

The applied object can participate in this adjunct orientation as the Cashinaw example in (26) shows.

- (26) Ainbu-bu-n bawa-xun-kan-ikiki juni-bu ni-medan
 women-PL-ERG cook-APPL-3PL-PR men-PL forest-LOC

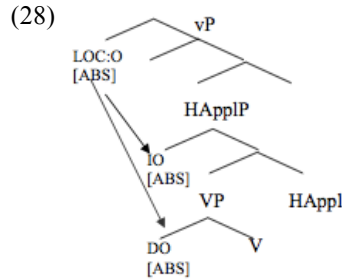
In the SK example in (27), the adjunct is oriented either to the DO or to the IO (or both).

- (27) Ani nonti-n benbo-bo atsa xeati a-xon-kan-ai
 big canoe-LOC:O men-PL yuca drink do-APPL-PL-INC
 ‘They are preparing masato for the men who are in the canoe’/They are preparing masato in the canoe for the men’

This feature could be seen as similar to depictive secondary predication in other languages. It

is a property that also distinguishes between symmetrical and asymmetrical object languages.⁴

The locative phrase is an adjunct of small v. This comes into the numeration with a case feature (either absolutive orientation or ergative orientation). Then, it probes a goal that has the feature to match with. Given that both objects have already gotten their structural case valued, they can now be possible matching goals with the locative phrase. I propose then, an Agree operation for participant agreement constructions. In (28), given that the locative phrase is in absolutive, it will probe down the tree in search for possible matches. The ergative subject is not relevant since it does not bear the appropriate case-marker. So, the two objects can be modified by the locative phrase.



4.4 Others

The main tests for symmetrical objecthood in Bantu languages are object agreement and canonical passivization. In those languages, both objects can trigger object agreement and both can be the subject of a passive. Panoan languages do not show these properties, but Matsés has partial object agreement with the 1st person singular enclitic pronoun, and it also has a kind of passive construction.

Regarding passivization, in this kind of construction, the ergative subject is omitted, but the objects remain in absolutive. Either object can be oriented to a subject interpretation, as in (29).

- (29) aton champi aton piac (abi-bi) mene-ad-o-sh
 3GEN daughter:ABS 3G nephew:ABS (3Abs-Emph) Give-Pass-Past-3
 ‘His daughter allowed herself to be given to his nephew’/ ‘His nephew allowed himself to be given his daughter’ (Fleck 2003:870)

The fact that there is a specific passive morpheme that acts as a detransitivizer suggests that this construction has one of the objects in S position (subject of intransitive stem). There is not only a semantic demotion of the agent, but also a formal operation by which one of the objects raises to S position, and that is why there is no change in case marking. There is also a 3rd. person subject morpheme on the verb. If we adopt such an analysis, then, either object can raise to S (Spec,T)⁵, since both are already equidistant to the target of movement.

In Matsés, the 1st person singular object enclitic can be oriented towards either the IO or DO, as in (30).

- (30) mibi mene-o-sh-i
 2ABS give-past-3-1obj
 ‘He gave me to you/He gave you to me’ (Fleck 2003:870)

The fact that the sentence is ambiguous leads to the analysis in which either object can establish an agreement relationship with the verb. Via Multiple AGREE this is possible: both objects AGREE with small v, and then, their phi features can be equidistant for agreement operations.

⁴For instance, in English, only the DO could be modified as in *John ate the meat raw*, but not IO *John_i told him_j the news drunk_{i/*j}*. Pylkkänen (2008:33) establishes that only in high applicatives is the applied object available for depictive modification.

⁵As we said before, according to Legate (2008), S (the subject in absolutive) is case marked by T.

5 Typological consequences

5.1 Against a Phase-based Approach: McGinnis (2001, 2002)

According to McGinnis, High applicatives correspond with symmetrical objects, and low applicatives with asymmetrical ones. High applicatives head a phase (in whose domain the lower object is trapped), but due to an EPP feature, this lower object can raise and be closer than the lower object to the target of movement. Low applicatives do not head a phase, and both objects are inside the vP phase. Thus, only the higher object has access to the escape hatch. Therefore, the asymmetry between high and low applicatives is derived from a difference in whether or not they head phases⁶. The problem with this analysis is that some applicatives are semantically high, but asymmetrical; the contrary is attested as well, as we see in Table 2.

	High applicative	Low applicative
Symm.Obj.	Kichaga benefactive/ Panoan appl.	Panoan ditransitive constructions
Asymm.Obj.	Chichewa benefactive Kinyarwanda locative (McGinnis 2004)	Kinyarwanda locative (McGinnis 2001) English DOC

Table 2

McGinnis' response to Chichewa benefactives is to allow only the tucking in option. Thus, even though it is a high applicative, only one of the objects would be closer to the subject position. Allowing a high applicative that is not symmetrical makes fuzzy the correlation between high/low and symmetrical/asymmetrical applicatives. The high applicative was proposed as a phase⁷ due to the motivation that the lower object can escape the PIC in order to participate in the same operations as the higher object. There is not much sense if the lower object can escape, but because it tucks in with the higher one, the asymmetry is maintained as in a low applicative. Whether stacking or tucking in options are available has to be specified for each language.

5.2 Proposal's Typology

Since I am not committed to a phasal approach, there is no such correlation between high/low applicatives and symmetrical/asymmetrical ones. Any possibility is allowed. The symmetry/asymmetry depends on the Case assignment and Multiple AGREE. The equidistance notion is simpler for explaining the fact that in symmetrical languages, both objects can participate in the same operations. So, even if the Chichewa benefactive is a high applicative, the asymmetry is explained because of the lack of structural Case for one of the objects, and so, Multiple AGREE cannot take place, and both objects are not equidistant. Panoan ditransitives have the semantics of a low applicative (transfer of possession) but both objects are symmetrical. There is no problem in allowing this, since the symmetry is derived by other means.

5.3 A Brief Note on Morphological case

I follow here a clear distinction between Structural Case and morphological case, seeing the latter as a post-syntactic realization of the former. Multiple AGREE does not necessarily correlate with overt or non-overt case marking, nor does it correlate with identical or non-identical case marking on the objects. This leaves open the possibility that languages with non-overt case morphology could be asymmetrical as well (some Bantu languages), and that overt ACC-ACC structures could be symmetrical as in Korean or asymmetrical as in German. Regarding non-identical case mark-

⁶McGinnis dispenses with the notion of equidistance and proposes that the double specifiers are hierarchically ordered. Thus, the optionality about which object becomes the subject of a passive in a symmetrical language depends on whether the direct object moves above (stacked) or below (tucked in) the IO.

⁷Phases and phonological phrasing correlations do not hold as well: there are some symmetrical languages that parse their objects together, and some asymmetrical ones that parse them separately, and the inverse case also holds (as in Chichewa and Kichaga).

ing, ACC-DAT languages such as Czech and Latin are asymmetrical. ABS-DAT languages such as Basque are also asymmetrical. It could even be the case that a symmetrical applicative makes use of non-identical case marking. Legate (2001) claims that Warlpiri's ethical dative construction allows both objects to share the same properties⁸, and the object marking is ABS-DAT. What matters in symmetrical objecthood is that both objects get the same structural Case in the syntax, and this could be spelled out in different ways in the morphology. Interestingly, some transitive verbs in Warlpiri allow for an absolutive/dative alternation. This alternation is not shown in other ACC-DAT languages, even if it is possible to have transitive verbs that assign DAT instead of ACC as in Czech. Therefore, it makes sense that in Warlpiri, morphological dative case is a realization of structural Case.

6 Summary

In this paper, I claim that symmetrical objecthood is generated by means of Multiple AGREE, which licenses both objects with structural Case. Furthermore, Multiple AGREE makes the objects equidistant, which explains a main symmetrical property: namely, the availability of the lower object to cross over the higher one. For Panoan languages (specifically, Shipibo-Konibo, Cashinawa, and Matsés), given certain characteristics that meet Legate's (2008) proposal, I analyze absolutive case as a default morphological case that realizes structural accusative Case. These three pieces of my proposal (structural Case, equidistance, and Multiple AGREE) explains the properties that are shared by the objects in these Panoan languages.

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⁸Previous analysis by Simpson (1983) explains this symmetry characterizing the dative object as an adjunct, what makes it display object properties (this is consistent with a non-configurational view).