

November 4, 2005

CLASS 17: CASE THEORY I

Case plays an important role in syntax.

We typically distinguish:

- *morphological case*
- *abstract case*

Morphological case in Modern English is rather impoverished: **it only appears on pronouns.**

(Old English had a full case system, and Modern Greek still does, for example, or German.)

Here we have **nominative** and **accusative**.

- (1) a. **I / He / She / We** like the book.
 b. ***Me / Him / Her / Us** like the book.
- (2) a. Tassos likes **me / him / her / us**.
 b. *Tassos likes **I / he / she / we**.
- (3) a. Tassos gave the medal to **me / him...**
 b. *Tassos gave the medal to **I / he...**

In other languages, **all DPs** show case-marking:

- (4) a. **Der Mann** liest einen Roman.
the. man reads a. **novel**
 NOM.MASC ACC.MASC
- b. Die Frau mag **den Mann**.
 the. woman likes **the. man**
 NOM.FEM ACC.MASC
- c. Sie gibt **dem Mann** das Buch.
 she gives **the. man** the. book
 DAT.MASC ACC.NEUT

GENERALIZATION I (not quite correct)

Subjects are marked nominative case,

Direct objects are marked accusative case,

Indirect objects are marked oblique case.

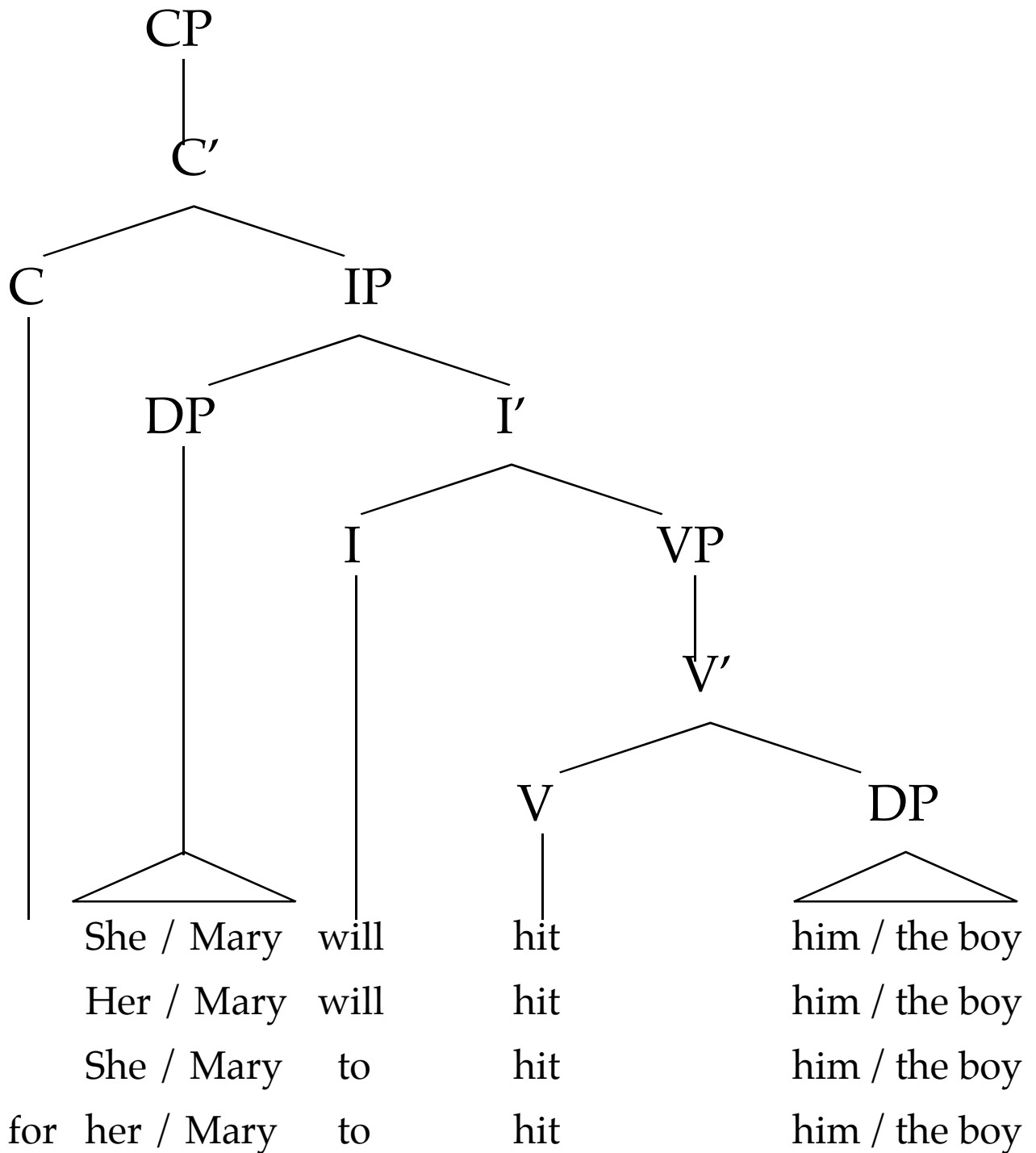
(Oblique = dative or genitive, for example.)

GENERALIZATION II (correct, today's class)

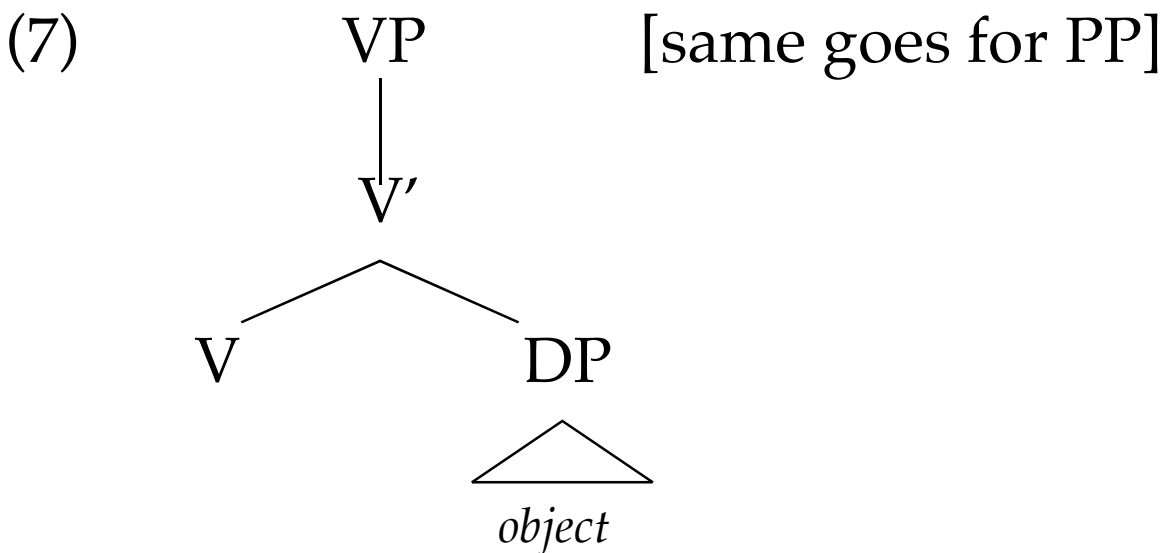
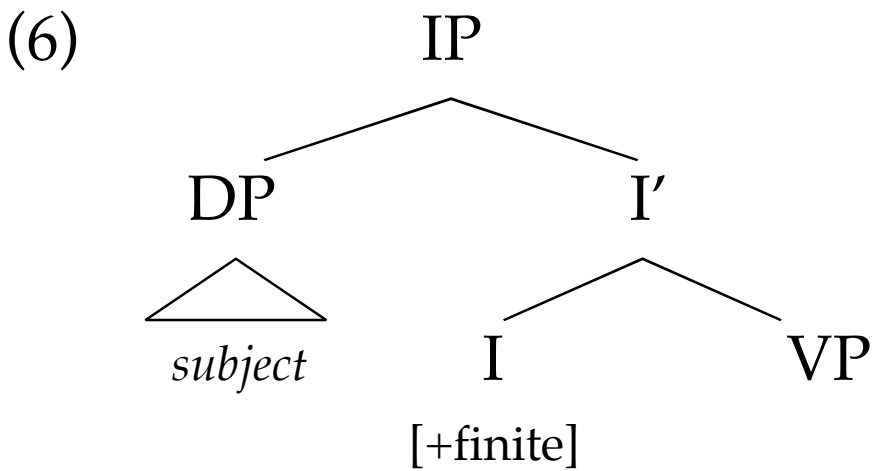
All nominal expressions (DPs) bear case.

Once we know more about case, we can relativize the approximate Generalization I — but first let's get to grips with Generalization II: *How does English DPs differ in Case if we can't see it (as with pronouns)?*

(5)



- **nominative case is controlled by finite I:**
I assigns NOM to DP
- **accusative case is controlled by V and P:**
V and P assigns ACC to DP



(8) *m-command*

A node α m-commands a node β iff the first maximal projection dominating α dominates β .

(9) *α assigns Case to β iff*

- (a) *α is a Case-assignor (= V, P, or finite I) and*
- (b) *α m-commands β .*

- (10) a. Ja pročitai knigu v Moskvje.
 I read book.ACC in Moscow.LOC
 'I read the book in Moscow.'
- b. * Ja pročitai v Moskvu.
 I read in Moscow.ACC
intended: 'I read in Moscow.'

