# On the Limits of Syntactic Movement: Hyperraising in P'urhepecha

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## Introduction

Two fundamental questions of syntax: (cf. Kayne 2016)

(1) What **rules and principles** govern how words can (and *can't*) be put together to form larger structures (phrases, clauses, sentences)?

(2) To what extent are these rules and principles universal (or: how much do they vary from language to language), and why?

One domain in which these questions arise in extremely interesting ways: **movement**—i.e., movement of phrases from particular positions in a sentence to others.

**Example:** In English, the verb *seem* can take as its complement an infinitival clause. There are well-formed sentences that end like this:

(3) …seems [to be happy].

*Seem* can alternatively take as its complement a *that*-clause with a visible subject:

(4) It seems [that **Sophie** is happy].

But if we try to combine these two patterns—by giving *seem* as its complement an infinitival clause with a visible subject—something strange happens: the subject is forced to ascend (or **"raise"**) into the main clause.

(5) ✗ It seems [**Sophie** to be happy].
(6) ✓ **Sophie** seems [___ to be happy].

And although the subject of the infinitival clause *has* to raise, the subject of a *that*-clause *can't* raise in this way. Compare (4) with (7-8):

(7) ✗ **Sophie** seems [that ___ is happy]. ∼ (8) ✗ **Sophie** seems [___ is happy].

Let's use the term **core movement** to refer to any movement that changes the fundamental grammatical role of a phrase (e.g., subject, object). The core movement in (6) transforms the subject of the subordinate clause into the subject of the main clause.

These English data raise a lot of questions. One big one:

(8) Why can't the subject of a *that*-clause undergo core movement? ((7-8))

## One possibility: the Case Hypothesis

Here's one possibility. In English, an infinitival clause can't assign its subject any **Case** (e.g., Subject Case [*she*] or Object Case [*her*]): ✗ *It seems [she/her to be happy]*.

So the subject of an infinitival clause raises into the main clause so that it can get Case—specifically, Subject Case: *She seems [___ to be happy]*.

But the subject of a *that*-clause can get Case right where it is—specifically, Subject Case: *It seems [that she is happy]*.

So it doesn't need to *raise* to get Case—and because it doesn't need to, it *can't*.
(adapted from Chomsky 2000, 2001)

Here, I present novel data illustrating a phenomenon I call **hyperraising to object** in **P'urhepecha**, a language of Mexico with no known relatives spoken by >120,000 people, mostly in the central-western state of Michoacán…

…specifically, in the variety spoken on the island of **Janitzio** on Lake Pátzcuaro.

We'll see that in Janitzio P'urhepecha, even when a Noun Phrase can get Case right where it is (being the subject of a *that*-clause), it can still undergo **core movement** into the next clause up.

This challenges the Case Hypothesis. The human capacity for language does *not* inherently restrict **core movement** to *only* those Noun Phrases that haven't gotten Case yet (cf. Carstens & Diercks 2013, Halpert & Zeller 2015, Petersen & Terzi to appear, and refs. therein).

## The phenomenon: "*-ni* + *eska*" in Janitzio P'urhepecha

In Janitzio P'urhepecha, a *that*-clause (rather, an *eska*-clause) normally has a **subject** in Subject Case:

(9) Uekasïndisï **eska Xumo** uaka  ma k'umanchikua.
  they.want  that  Xumo make a  house
  'They want Xumo to build a house.'

But when the *eska*-clause is the complement of any of a few verbs (*ueka*- 'want', *uetarincha*- 'need', and [for some speakers] *mite*- 'know'), its subject can show up in **Object Case** (marked by the suffix *-ni*), and to the **left** of the subordinating conjunction *eska*:

(10) Uekasïndisï **Xumuni**  eska uaka  ma k'umanchikua.
  they.want  Xumo-OBJ that  make a  house
  'They want Xumo to build a house.'

If the Noun Phrase marked with *-ni* ("**NP-*ni***") raises from the subordinate clause, this can't be due to its need for Case: it could have gotten Subject Case in the subordinate clause (as in (9)).

This is especially clear given that NP-*ni* can be linked to a **quantifier** in the subordinate clause that's in **Subject Case** ((11)). Subject Case really is available and ready to be assigned in these *eska*-clauses.

(11) Uekasïngani **Alonsuni, Pakuni  ka Pukini  eskas**ï **iamindueecha** ch'anaaka.
  I.want  Alonzo-OBJ, Paco-OBJ, and Puki-OBJ that  all(SUBJ.CASE)  play
  'I want Alonzo, Paco, and Puki (three dogs) to all play.'

So if NP-*ni* *raises* from the subordinate clause, it does so even though it could have gotten (Subject) Case there—posing a major challenge to the Case Hypothesis.

## Does NP-*ni* raise from the subordinate clause?

*-ni* + *eska* challenges the Case Hypothesis only if NP-*ni* *raises* from the subordinate clause. So, does it? Or is it "born" in the main clause—in which case (9) may have a structure along the lines of 'They want in relation to Xumo that he build a house'?

Three strands of evidence that NP-*ni* does *raise* into the main clause:

**Closeness:** NP-*ni* must "correspond" to the subject of the subordinate clause; it can't correspond to the object of the subordinate clause. This is a hallmark of **core movement**.

(12) ✗ Uekasïngani **Bertani**  eska Elena jananariaka ___.
  I.want  Bertha-OBJ that  Elena respect
  literally:  'I want Bertha that Elena respect.'
  intended meaning:  'I want Elena to respect Bertha.'

**Island-sensitivity:** NP-*ni* can't "correspond" to a Noun Phrase inside an **island**—i.e., a phrase that other phrases can't move out of. Islands restrict movement, suggesting that *-ni* + *eska* is a movement phenomenon.

(13) ✗ Uekasïngani **juramutini**  eska k'uanatsentaaka uariti [relative clause = island enga
  I.want  president-OBJ that  return  woman  who
  minarikuka ___].  literally: 'I want the president, that the woman who knows ___, return.'
  has.met  intended meaning: 'I want the woman who knows the president to return.'

**Escape-hatch blocking:** A *-ni* + *eska* structure doesn't allow anything (else) to move out of the *eska*-clause. That suggests that NP-*ni* itself has moved out of the *eska*-clause, "blocking its escape hatch" (a well-known property of structures involving movement).

(14) ?✗ ¿**Amb**eri  uekasïngi **Aliciani  eska** kustaaka ___?
  what-you want  Alice-OBJ that  play
  intended meaning: 'What (music) do you want Alice to play?'

These three pieces of evidence show that NP-*ni* truly *raises* out of the subordinate clause.

## Analysis

I'll illustrate my proposal about how (most of) a *-ni* + *eska* sentence is built using the following one as an example:

(15) ?Mentku isï mintsitani jiongoni uekasïndi **Juanni**  Maria **eska** jaruatpeaka k'umanchikuarhu.
  always thus heart  with  wants  John-OBJ Mary that  help  in-the-house
  'Mary always wants **John** with all her heart to help out at home.'

First, the subordinate *eska*- (*that*-) clause is built. Its subject, *Juanu*, gets Subject Case, as usual.

In Janitzio P'urhepecha, the subordinating conjunction *eska* 'that' can optionally bear a feature [**NEED:Noun Phrase**], which forces the closest Noun Phrase to move to its immediate left (cf. Cable 2012). In a *-ni* + *eska* sentence, the version of *eska* bearing [**NEED:Noun Phrase**] is used, and raises the subject of the subordinate clause to its left:
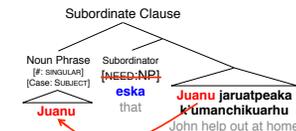


Once at the left edge of the subordinate clause, the subordinate subject *Juanu* is close enough to the main clause to enter into new **core relations**. An element in the main clause called *v* agrees with *Juanu* in Number (this is visible in the plural) and assigns it Object Case in return (on top of the Subject Case it already has). This *v* also bears the feature [**NEED:Noun Phrase**], so *Juanu* (now *Juanu-ni*) moves to its left to satisfy this feature.
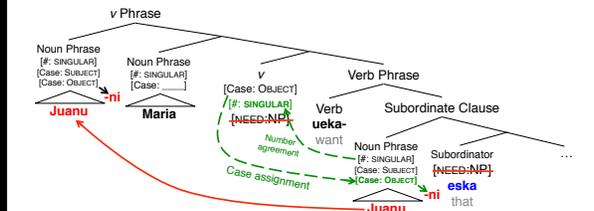


## Conclusion

In **hyperraising to object** in Janitzio P'urhepecha, the subject of a subordinate clause gets (Subject) Case right where it is, but nonetheless undergoes **core movement** into the main clause, becoming its object (with Object Case and everything).

This strongly suggests, contra the Case Hypothesis (cf. Nevins 2004), that even when a Noun Phrase already has Case, it can still enter into new core relations, such as agreement, (further) Case assignment, and **core movement**.

**Upshot:** It is possible, in principle, for a Noun Phrase that has already gotten Case to undergo (more) **core movement** (contra Chomsky 2000, 2001).

**More broadly:** this result underscores the contributions that less-studied languages have to make to our understanding of what is and is not possible in the grammars of human languages.

**Selected references: Cable, S.** 2012. "The optionality of movement and EPP in Dholuo." *NLLT* 30: 651-97. **Carstens, V. and M. Diercks.** 2013. "Parameterizing Case and Activity: Hyper-raising in Bantu." *Proceedings of NELS 40*. 99-118. **Chomsky, N.** 2000. "Minimalist inquiries: the framework." In *Step by Step: Essays on Minimalist Syntax in Honor of Howard Lasnik*, 89-155. **Chomsky, N.** 2001. "Derivation by Phase." In *Ken Hale: A Life in Language*, 1-52. **Halpert, C. and J. Zeller.** 2015. "Right dislocation and raising-to-object in Zulu." *The Linguistic Review* 32:3: 475-513. **Kayne, R.S.** 2016. " More Languages Than We Might Have Thought. Fewer Languages Than There Might Have Been." Ms., NYU. **Nevins, A.** 2004. "Derivations without the Activity Condition." *MITWPL* 49, 287-310. **Petersen, C. and A. Terzi.** To appear. "Hyperraising and locality: a view from Brazilian Portuguese and Greek." *Proceedings of CLS 50*.