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The Semantics of 'Cases'

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1. Constructions with *case*

Nominal *case*-constructions:

(1) a. the case of the stolen statue

   b. a case of flu

   c. the case of a defeat

Clausal *case*-constructions:

(2) a. the case in which it might rain

   b. the case in which someone fails the exam.

   c. It is the case that S.

Conditionals:

   d. In case it rains, we won't go. In that case we will stay home.

Familiar 'cases':

-   Medical cases: consist in symptoms and underlying conditions

-   Legal cases

-   Case distinctions in mathematics:

'Suppose x is a natural number, first case: x is prime; second case: is not prime'

Case-constructions in other European languages:

German: *der Fall , dass* S   'the case that S'

French: *le cas ou* S   'the case in which S'

Goal:

-   Sketch a unified semantics of *case*-constructions

- Assign unified lexical meaning to the noun *case* in English

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2. Nominal case-constructions

2.1. Situation-related *case*-constructions

2.1.1. *The case in which* S

(3) a. We discussed the case in which John might not return.

   b. We discussed the case in which John won't return.

   c. ?? We discussed the case that John returned yesterday.

<u>Modal Requirement (MR)</u>

Modal indicates nonfactive, possible future situation

Absence of modal indicates reference to factual situation

2.1.2. Conditional *case*-constructions

(4) a. In case it rains, we won't go.

   b. * In the case it rains

   c. * In the case that it rains

   d. In a case in which it rains, we won't go.

Note: no MR

German

(5) a. Im Fall, dass es regnet, werden wir nicht gehen.

     'In the case in which it rains we won't go.'

French:

   b. Dans le cas ou il pleut, nous n'allons pas.

English: ordinary *case*-referring NPs used anaphorically:

(6) a. In case it rains, we won't go.

   b. In that case / In such a case, we will stay home.

   c. Let's better not even think about that case.

2.1.3. Characteristics of situation-related cases special existence predicates

In English *occur, present itself*, not *exist, take place, happen*

(7) a. The case in which John will not return could occur / present itself.

    b. The case that John will not return might exist / might take place / might happen.

In other languages:

(8) a. Der Fall, dass Hans nicht zurueckommt, koennte eintreten.

     'The case that John might not return could enter'.

    b. Le cas ou Jean retourne ne s'est pas produit.

     'The case that John returns did not produce itself'

Conclusions:

Cases are not facts:

Cases can be merely possible.

Cases do not 'obtain', unlike facts, but rather 'occur', 'present themselves', 'enter', or 'produce themselves'.

Cases are not 'possibilities':

Possibilities as 'mere' possibilities 'exist', cases do not 'exist'.

Cases are not events:

Events can 'happen' or 'take place'; cases cannot.

Moreover: events can 'last', be 'sudden' or 'visible', cases in general cannot:

(9) a. ??? The case in which it rains lasted several hours.

    b. ??? The case that it might snow could be very sudden.

    c. ??? The case in which it snows was hardly visible.

2.2. Object-related case-constructions

2.2.1. Cases as instances of universals

Medical and legal cases:

(10) a. a case of cancer

    b. a case of fraud

(11) a. This is a case of insanity.

    b. What John has is a case of schizophrenia.

    c. This building is an unusual case of art deco.

    d. The incident is a case of fraud.

Not any instances of universals are cases:

(12) a. an instance of whiteness / darkness

    b. ?? a case of whiteness / darkness

(13) a. an instance of wisdom

    b. a case of wisdom

Conclusion: Cases are entities not obviously identical to their symptoms.

2.2.2. Attributive *case*-construction:

(14) a. the case of that incident

    b. the case of the man that has suffered from this illness for more than 20 years

2.2.3. Properties of cases and properties of correlated objects

<u>As objects of mental attitudes:</u>

(15) a. We studied the case of the disabled student. (as a medical / legal case , ..)

    b. We studied the disabled student.

    c. We studied the disability of the student.

(16) a. We discussed the case of the book.

    b. We discussed the book.

<u>As objects of evaluation:</u>

(17) a. The case of the stolen statue is interesting.

    b. The stolen statue is interesting.

    c. The theft of the statue is interesting.

(18) a. John compared the case of the first student to the case of the second students.

    b. John compared the first student to the second student.

<u>Parts of cases vs parts of the correlated objects</u>

(19) a. Part of the case of the stolen statue is familiar.

    b. Part of the stolen statue is familiar.

    c. Part of the theft of the stolen statue is familiar.

<u>Other properties of object-correlated cases</u>

Not generally spatial location:

(20) a. ??? The case of the stolen statue is on the table.

b. The statue is on the table.

Not generally objects of perception:

(21) a. ??? I saw / noticed the case of the broken vase.

　 b. I noticed the broken vase.

But:

(21) c. This case of musical experimentation sounds horrible.

Not generally causally efficacious (except as objects of attitudes)

(22) a. An overweight baby caused the cradle to break apart.

　 b. ?? The case of an overweight baby caused the cradle to break apart.

But:

(23) This one case of cholera was the cause of a great epidemic.

2.2.4. An account of object-related cases

The nature of cases:

Cases are driven by

[1]　a universal or general condition

[2]　a correlated object: particular object (or more specific condition)

The cases exhaust the general condition: constitute a case-space

Cases as <u>filtered entities</u>: entities reduced to their relevant aspects and relations

Cases as entities reduced to their 'symptoms' and 'underlying conditions'

Cases are 'generated' by a universal / a general condition and a particular

The universal acts as a filter of the particular object, as an 'Ontological Case Filter'

<u>The lexical meaning of *case*</u>:

Case as expressing a three-place relation:

-　takes general condition and a particular as an explicit or implicit arguments;

-　presupposes that the general condition divides into a case space;

-　filters objects through the general condition as cases

functional use of *case*:

(24) [*The case of the stolen statue*] = case (L, s)

2.2.5. Cases of events

Events reduced to their 'mere occurrence':

(25) a. Napoleon imagined a defeat.

    b. Napoleon imagined the case of a defeat.

(26) a. He described a possible defeat.

    b. ?? He described the case of a possible defeat.

'Cases' of events are 'descriptively closed'.

(27) a. He is prepared for a (possible) defeat.

    b. He prepared for the case of a possible defeat.

Selection or prepositions:

(28) a. In the case of a defeat, we should retreat.

    b. ?? In a defeat, we should retreat.

Filter for events: 'occurrence'

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3. Clausal *case*-constructions

3.1. Reference to kinds of situation-related cases

Der Fall, dass S 'the case that S', 'the case in which S' as a generic term referring to a kind of case:

(29) a. Der Fall, dass jemand die Pruefung nicht besteht, ist selten.

    'The case that someone passes the exam is rare /unusual

  b. Der Fall, dass jemand die Pruefung nicht besteht, kommt nicht sehr oft vor.

    'The case that someone passes the exam does not occur often.

  c. Der Fall, dass jemand die Pruefung nicht besteht, ist noch nie eingetreten.

    'The case that someone passes the exam has never occurred.'

Situation-related cases: pluralities of things reduced to certain properties and relations.

Filter for situation-related cases , 'cases in which S': the condition expressed by *S*

[*the case in which* S] = the kind of situations filtered by S

[*case in which* S] = the set of situations filtered by S

Equivalences:

(30) a. Im Fall dass es regnet, warden wir gehen.

   b. Im Fall von Regen warden wir nicht gehen.

   d. ? In einem Fall von Regen, warden wir nicht gehen.

(31) a. In case it rains, we won't go.

   b. In a case in which it rains, we won't go.

   c. In a case of rain, we won't o.

   d. In any sufficiently close world w in which there is a case in which it rains, we won't go

3.2. The *is the case*-construction

3.2.1. Differences between *is true* and *is the case*

A common view: the following sentences are equivalent

(32) a. That it is raining is true.

   b. That it is raining is the case.

Extraposition:

(33) a. It is true that S.

   b. It is the case that S.

(Apparent) subject clauses:

(34) a. That S is true.

   b. That S is the case.

A common view:

- *That* S is in (11a) stands for a proposition, *true* is predicated of the proposition
  Or: *true* acts as an operator applying to a sentence (captures (10a))
- *That* S in (10b) and (10b) stands for a wordly fact if the sentence is true (Identity Theory of truth)

Syntactic differences:

[1] *The case* does not have the status of a predicate, *true* does.

Standard linguistic criterion for predicatehood:

being able to act as the predicate in small-clause constructions

Small clause: NP + adjective phrase or noun phrase

(35) a. I consider Bill Joe.

    b. I consider Bill wise.

    c. I consider Bill a good player.

The case does not enter small-clause construction, unlike *true*

(36) a. I consider it true that John is a genius.

    b. ?? I consider it the case that John is a genius.

[2] Difference in the choice of copula verb

The case is restricted to *be*, *true* accepts *become, remain, seem*

(37) a. That John is the best player will always ?? remain / ok be the case.

    b. ?? That John is happy has finally become the case.

(38) a. John's threat / speculation became true.

    b. The generalization remained true despite the changing circumstances.

Semantic differences:

[1] Possibility of past and future tense:

(39) a. It will often be the case that Mary forgets something.

    b. ?? It will often be true that Mary forgets something.

(40) a. It was once the case that no one knew of Michael Jackson. Today it is no longer the case.

    b. ?? It was once true that no one knew of Michael Jackson. Today it is no longer true.

 [2] Location restrictions:

(41) a. In many European countries, it is still the case that women can wear a burka.

    b. ?? In many European countries it is still true that women can wear a burka.

(42) a. In our firm it is never the case that someone gets fired without explanation.

    b. ??? In our firm it is never true that someone gets fired without explanation.

[3] Adverbs of quantification:

(43) a. It is sometimes the case that someone is absent.

    b. ?? It is sometimes true that someone is absent.

(44) a. It was twice the case that someone was absent.

b. ??? It was twice true that someone was absent.

(45) a. It is repeatedly / more and more / always the case that John drinks coffee in the morning.

b. ??? It is repeatedly / always true that John drinks coffee in the morning.

Some quantificational adverbs act as degree quantifiers with *true*, but as situation quantifiers with *the case*:

(46) a. It is hardly (ever) the case that John is late.

b. It is hardly true that John is late.

(47) a. It is more and more the case that John drinks coffee in the morning.

b. It is more and more true that John drinks coffee in the morning.

[4] 'Propositional completion':

Conclusion from the use of adverbs of quantification:

That S in *That* S *is true* is understood as complete regarding context-dependent elements (quantifier restrictions, tense interpretation, location etc.), though the proposition expressed may involve 'unarticulated constituents'.

That S not propositionally complete.

Against an identity theoretic account of *the is the* case construction:

That-clause can be true relative to different situations:

(48) It was once the case that S. Today *that* is the case again.

Other predicates like *is the case*:

occur

(49) It has never occurred that John did not return.

Difference between *it is the case that* S and *it occurs that* S:

Restrictions on *it occurs* to eventive *that*-clauses

(50) a. ?? In European countries it occurs that woman can still wear the burka.

b. Sometimes it occurs that Mary forgets something.

3.3. An analysis of *is the case* based on the truth-making relation

The idea:

The *is the case* construction involves reference to an actual 'situation' – a situation-related case, which is said to make the *that*-clause true.

The situation referred to acts as the *truth maker* of the *that*-clause.

Views about truth-making:

A common view:

It is left open what actually a truth maker is, perhaps 'state of affairs', 'facts' in some sense, in any case, an entity whose features imply the truth of the relevant sentences.

Mulligan / Simons / Smith (2004):

Fully individuated entities are truth makers, entities whose ontological role is established independently.

Events, tropes, individuals as truth makers

Independent role as objects of perception and relata of causal relation

Choice of truth makers:

(51) a. John is happy.

Truth maker: John's happiness (a trope)

  b. John is walking.

Truth maker: John's walk (an event)

  c. John exists.

Truth maker: John (an individual)

  d. John is a man.

Truth maker: John or a trope ('John's humanity

Proposed alternative:

Truthmakers are always 'cases'.

Explaining the semantic behavior of the *is the case*-construction

Locational and temporal restrictions in the *is the case*-construction act as restrictions on the situation referred to.

Adverbs of quantification quantify over situations said to make the *that*-clause true.

Exact truth-making:

The truth-making relation involved is the relation of *exact truth-making*.

Counting with adverbs of quantification:

(52) a. It was exactly twice the case that John made a mistake.

     b. It was only once the case that John lost the game.

Comparison with Austin's notion of truth:

Austin: With a sentence a speaker refers to an actual situation, and asserts the sentence relative to that situation.

Austin's motivation:

The situation referred to is responsible for contextual restrictions, on quantification domains, temporal and spatial interpretation etc.

Facts (situations) as worldly things making sentences true.

The present view:

The truth-making relation meant to hold between a situation and a sentence uttered is not necessarily responsible for contextual restrictions (different situations may be needed for different parts of the sentence, problems with attributively used definite descriptions)

The truth-making relation is just involved in the constructional meaning of *the is the case*.

Roughly:

(53) a. For a location modifier PP,

       PP *is the case that* S is true iff for the maximal situation s such that PP(s), $s \models S$.

    b. Adverbs of quantification:

       PP *it is* QP *the case that* S is true iff for Q-many s such that PP(s), $s \models S$.

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4. A compositional analysis of *is the case*?

4.1. *The case* as a referential NP referring itself to the truth-making situation?

This cannot be:

The case in *it is the case that* S is not a referential NP anymore, but a quasi-referential residue in a grammaticalized construction.

Evidence:

[1] No other determiners than *the* possible:

(54) a. * That S is that case.

    b. * That S is a case / some case.

(55) a. * It is that case that S.

    b. * It is a case / some case that S.

[2] No modifiers possible:

(56) a. * It is the unfortunate case that it is raining.

    b. * That it is raining is the case that I did not expect.

[3] *The case* cannot act as antecedent for nominal *the case*-constructions:

(57) That the workers went on strike was recently the case. ?? We did not like that case / the case.

4.2. A potentially related construction

(58) a. That John is innocent is the truth.

    b. That we would all go is the idea.

    c. That one can walk home is the advantage.

    d. That John is incompetent is the problem.

But major differences:

No extraposition possible:

(59) a. * It is the truth that John is innocent.

    b. * It is the idea that we would all go.

Inversion possible:

(60) a. The truth is that S

    b. The idea is that S.

    c. * The case is that S.

Higgins (1979): (58a-d) are specificational sentences.

(Higgins, F. R. (1973): *The Pseudo-Cleft Construction in English*. Indiana University Linguistics Club)

Conclusion:

Compositional analysis of *it is the case that* S-construction unlikely.