Unique S Case

Morphological case on nouns often expresses the syntactic and semantic relationships between clausal constituents. In this study, we investigated to what extent a unique case marker was used in the past (or perfective) for the subject argument of an intransitive clause (S), vis-à-vis the subject of a transitive clause (A), the direct object of a transitive clause (P), and a recipient (R). This is the case in Hindko, as seen in ‎(1), in which the subject of an intransitive clause is zero marked, whereas the subject of a transitive subject is marked with an ergative case clitic *=suɳ* and the (definite) object is marked with a dative case clitic *=koː*.

1. Hindko [hno] (Indo-Aryan)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| a. | sap | mər | ɡijaː |
|  | snake | die.cvb | go.pfv.msg |
|  | ‘The snake died.’ (HNO-Val-RH:061) | | |

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| b. | dʑandak | ɖuːɡiː=bətɕ | saːməɳĩː | aː-jaː |
|  | boy | field=loc | appearing | come.pfv-msg |
|  | ‘The boy appeared on the field.’ (HNO-Val-RH:081) | | | |

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| c. | dʑandk-aː=suɳ | suːʈiː=naːl | sap=koː | ʈoː-jaː |  |
|  | boy-obl=erg | stick=ins | snake=dat | beat.pfv-msg |  |
|  | ‘The boy beat the snake with a stick.’ (HNO-Val-RH:027) | | | | |

Unique case-marking of the S argument is present in less than a quarter of the sample languages. In the other languages its case marking is the same as that for one or more of the other arguments, A, P or R.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Feature value | # of varieties displaying it | % |
| Present | 13 | 22 |
| Absent | 46 | 78 |
| Indeterminate | 0 | 0 |