Cross-linguistic variations in word order flexibility are often explained in terms of (non-)configurationality. A language is considered to be configurational if it follows a strict word order, fixed by the syntactic functions of core arguments, or discourse/non-configurational if it has a relatively free word order, governed by discourse (Hale 1983, E. Kiss 1995, Baker 1996, Nordlinger 1998, Austin & Bresnan 2001).

Present a fraction of our current research on the syntax of the nominal state alternation — Construct/annexed vs. Free States — in Taqbaylit, a Berber (Afro-Asiatic) language spoken (primarily) in the Kabylie region of Northern Algeria. After König (2007) and Akadiev (2015), we analyse the state alternation as a case alternation following a marked nominative pattern. Marked nominative is quite rare typologically and seems to be found only in a few African languages in East Africa (König 2007). Languages with marked nominative case share some properties; e.g. V first and do not mark case in pre-verbal positions.

1- Aims of the presentation:

Nouns surface in a marked or unmarked/ neutral form (respectively form A and form B) depending on their position vis-à-vis a head, their grammatical function and the nature/category of their head.

E.g. Post-verbal Subjects are marked (form A) but pre-verbal Subjects are unmarked (form B).

Objects of some prepositions are marked (form A), but others are unmarked (form B).

Marked nominative (i.e. construct state) in Taqbaylit occurs across different domains of sentence structure (NP, PP, verbal clauses, copula clauses) and is affected by word order, clitic-doubling, agreement and, information structure, something which has been neglected in the literature.

The aims of our research is three-fold: (i) contribute to a better understanding of case marking patterns and information structure in Berber, (ii) a better understanding of marked nominative case systems in general and (iii) add to the growing research on the role of information structure on a number of morphosyntactic phenomena (such as agreement, differential case marking, valence, switch reference..)

Today we will focus on case marking in the core clausal domain and its periphery (i.e. domain where Verb arguments are realised). We will discuss the role of topic marking
and topicality on case marking, focusing on two types of constructions/phenomena in particular:
- Pre-verbal topic constructions.
- Object clitic doubling construction.

2- Language background

Taqbaylit, like all Berber languages, is a head-first language, i.e. canonically VSO (e.g. 1), but order of arguments after V seems relatively free (e.g. 2).

(1) yǝ-fka=(y)i

3SGM.SUBJ-give.PRF=1SG.DAT

appi inǝxdavǝn

god.NOM fiancé.PL.ACC

‘God gave me a fiancé.’

(2) t-sǝp

3SGF.SUBJ-cook.PFV

imensi w-utmas n leεris.

meal.ACC NOM-sister of groom

‘The sister of the groom cooked the meal.’

In Berber, Verbs are obligatorily marked for subject agreement, by suffixes, prefixes or both, depending on the person.
Agreement is in person, number and gender, except for first person and second person singular:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>AGREEMENT MARKERS</th>
<th>SINGULAR</th>
<th>PLURAL</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MASC</td>
<td>FEM</td>
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<td>1st Pers</td>
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<td>3rd Pers</td>
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Subject NPs are not overtly realised if recoverable from the context. In such cases, subject agreement markers function as incorporated pronouns (Bresnan & Mchombo 1987) and act as the subjects.

(4) a yǝ-ssǝfd tifirasin s u-mendir
IMPR F 3SGM.SUBJ-polish.IMPR pears.ACC with NOM-scarf

‘He polished the pears with (his) scarf.’

Direct objects and dative objects are replaced by clitics, if recoverable from the context. Clitics agree in gender, number and person (no gender agreement for first person) with the noun they replace. Attach to the verb or a preceding TAM particle, negation or a complementizer.

(5) a. yǝ-flka=(y)I appi inǝxdavǝn
3SGM.SUBJ-give.PRF=1SG.DAT god.NOM fiancé.PL.ACC
‘God gave me a fiancé.’

b. ur=ten yǝ-vγa ara
NEG=3PLM.OBJ 3SGM.SUBJ-want.PRF NEG

w-ulı=w
NOM-heart=1SG.POSS
‘My heart didn’t want them’

3- Case marking in Berber

Nouns are marked following a marked nominative pattern (König 2008, Arkadiev 2015). S and A are in the nominative and contrast with direct objects in the accusative. The nominative is the marked form derived from the form of O, which is unmarked (Achab 2005, Bendjaballah & Haiden 2005, Mettouchi & Frajzyngier 2013, Lahrouchi 2010 amongst others)

(6) a. tura d ǝyǝn, i-lul w-qcie!
now COP over, 3SGM.SUBJ-be.born.PRF =VEN NOM-boy

‘Now it’s over, the boy is born!’
b. t-sap imensi

3SGF.SUBJ-cook.PFV meal.ACC NOM-sister of groom

‘The sister of the groom cooked the meal.’

No other case distinctions for full NPs. They occur either in the marked nominative form or in the accusative form. NP governed by most prepositions are in the marked nominative form (except prepositions borrowed from Arabic and the Berber har ‘until’).

‘Dative objects’ are in the nominative because they are governed by the dative preposition.

(7) tǝ-gzǝm=as i w-qcic timit.

3SGF-cut.PFV=DAT:3SG to.DAT NOM-boy navel.string.ACC

‘She cut the boy’s navel string.’

As far as verb arguments are concerned there are two contexts in which canonical case marking does not apply. Pre-verbal nouns are all unmarked, regardless of their grammatical function.

Nouns corresponding to clausal arguments occur in the pre-verbal position:
When they are in focus, as in (8)

(8) d u-tmas n læris i g-spǝ-n

COP ACC-sister of groomCOMP 3SGM.SUBJ-cook.PFV-PTCP

‘It is the sister of the groom who cooked’


(9) tanut =iw, t-tǝf =iyi

sister.in.law.ACC =POSS.1SG 3SGF.SUBJ-touch.PVF =1SG.DAT

‘My sister-in-law, she touched me’
The second context in which canonical case marking does not apply is in constructions in which a direct object is doubled by a clitic. In such contexts, the direct object is marked with nominative case (11), rather than its regular

\[(10) \quad \text{a n-ruh a nǝ-jǝd a-saγur} \quad \text{IRR 1PL-go.AOR IRR 1PL-harvest ACC- lamb.lettuce} \]

‘We used to go harvest lamb’s lettuce.

\[(11) \quad \text{y-fka =T’ tḥraT’} \quad \text{3SGM-give.PRF=ACC:3SGF letter.NOM} \]

‘He gave this letter (we are talking about).’

(Chaker 1983)

4- Case vs. nominal states

In the Berber literature, the case alternation is analysed as a nominal state alternation governed by the position of a noun with respect to some other preceding element in the clause → so-called Construct State vs. Free State.

Nouns are in the Construct State, which we refer to as marked nominative, when they follow or are c-commanded by a preposition, an agreement marker on the verb, or a pronominal (Bendjaballah & Haiden 2005, 2008, Mettouchi 2013, El Hankari 2014, Galand 1964).

These studies strongly reject because of the mismatches in case marking discussed previously. In the rest of this presentation we will focus on pre-verbal topics and clitic doubled objects and show that mismatches in case marking in these two contexts can be clearly explained by looking at information structure.

5- Pre-verbal topics and case

First, we will show that the syntactic strategy used in Taqbaylit (and other Berber languages) to mark pre-verbal topic notions, rather than a simple change in word order, triggers unmarked case in these pre-verbal orders.
Pre-verbal topics, in addition to occurring in the unmarked accusative form, have a number of properties. First, they are external to the core clause:
→ They are separated from the core clause by a prosodic break (Mettouchi 2011)
→ They precede frame setting topics, which are adverbial and cross-linguistically tend to occur clause externally, as in (12).

(12) ṭayat

song.ACC this

n̲ni [seg mi n-ruḥ]

from when 1PL.SUBJ-go.PFV

t-cɛal

3SGF.SUBJ-be.switched.on.PFV

‘That song, from the moment we got there, it was playing.’

Second, pre-verbal topics corresponding to non-subject arguments are obligatorily cross-referenced by pronominal clitics inside the core clause, while clause internal non subject NPs are only optionally doubled by an a clitic.

(13) a-qcic

ACC-boy this

nni, pi-γ =t/*Ø dg fus =iw

take.PVF-1SG.SUBJ =3SGM.OBJ in hand=1SG.POSS

‘This boy, I carried him in my hands.’

(14) tamṬut,

woman.ACC NEG =3SG.DAT give.IMPRF-3PLM.SUBJ NEG land

ur =as/Ø T’ak-n ara akal

‘The woman, they do not give land to her.’

Finally, topics corresponding to dative objects are not (necessarily) governed by prepositions. Whether they are or not depend on the variety (cf. Bendjaballah et al. 2015).

Pre-verbal topics do not have any argument functions in the core clause. Agreement markers (which can function as incorporated pronouns) and the clitics anaphorically linked to the pre-verbal topics fill grammatical functions inside the clause. Since they are not in a dependency relation with any case marking head in the core clause, pre-verbal topics are not marked for case and occur in the unmarked form.

In pre-verbal topic contexts there is actually no mismatch in case marking. But the lack of case marking is triggered by the topicality of the ‘argument’ in pre-verbal position and the strategy used to mark this in Taqbaylit.
6- Nominative objects and topicality

The second kind of case mismatch (and argument against a case analysis of the morphological marking of nouns) occurs when direct objects are doubled by object clitics, in which case they are obligatorily marked for nominative case, rather than their usual accusative case.

The marked nominative on the direct object has the same function as the clitic-doubling, namely it is a form of Differential Object Marking (DOM) (Aissen 2003, Haspelmath 2007, Dalrymple & Nikolaeva 2011). If this is correct, then DOM in Taqbaylit is marked simultaneously on (or near) the verbal head and on the objectif itself.

DOM refers to cross-linguistic phenomena whereby an object with certain semantic properties is marked by agreement, clitic doubling or case, while other objects remain unmarked. Cross-linguistically, DOM can be triggered by a number of factors such as definiteness, animacy, person (Aissen 2003, Haspelmath 2007) and topicality (Nikolaeva 1999, Dalrymple & Nikolaeva 2011). DOM in Taqbaylit is related to definiteness/ specificity.

Indeed, nominative objects must be definite/ specific:

(15) i-čča =tt thľlawatt

3SGM-eat. PFV =3SGF.OBJ sweet.NOM

‘He ate the sweet/ *‘He ate a sweet.’ (Allaoua 1993: 116)

While a canonical object can be definite or indefinite

(16) i-čča taḥlawatt

3SGM-eat.PFV sweet-ACC

‘He ate a sweet/ the sweet.’ (Allaoua 1993: 116)

But it also seems to be related to topicality. First, while accusative objects and object clitics on their own can co-occur with pre-verbal topics (17-19), nominative objects can never occur in such constructions (20).

(17) a. y-swa wa-mciea a-yafk (nni)

3SGM.SUBJ-drink.PRF NOM-cat ACC-milk this

‘The cat drank the milk.’
b. a-mcic, y-swa a-yǝfk (nni)  
ACC-cat 3SGM.SUBJ-drink.PRF ACC-milk this  
‘The cat, he drank the milk.’

c. a-mcic, fki-ɣ=as a-yǝfk  
ACC-cat give.PRF-1SG.SUBJ=3SG.DAT ACC-milk  
‘The cat, I gave him milk.’

(18) nettat, tɔ-ra=yi taməttut  
PRO.3SGF 3SGF-consider.PRF=1SG.OBJ COP woman.ACC  
taməqrant  
grown-up  
‘She, she considered me as a grown-up.’

(19) sima, sidi appi, y-pi=t f zik lḥal  
then sir god 3SGM-take.PRF=3SG.OBJ on early time  
‘Then, God, he took him early.’

(20) a. yǝ-swa=t  
3sgm.subj-drink.PRF=3SGM.OBJ  
‘The cat drank the milk.’
b. *a-mcil, y-swa =t u-yefk (nni)
ACC-cat 3SGM.SUBJ-drink.PRF =3SGM.OBJ NOM-milk this

c. *a-mcil, fkiɣ=as=t
ACC-cat give.PRF.1SG.SUBJ=3SG.DAT=3SG.OBJ

‘The cat, I gave him the milk.’

Second, a nominative direct object cannot correspond to a focus argument, even if the latter is definite or activated (Lambrecht 1994).

(21) Q: dacu t-čča-mt? What did you eat?

*n-ča=tt cərba i t-əpə-d
1SG-eat.PRF=3SGF soup.NOM COMP 2SG-cook.PRF-2SG

‘We ate the soup that you cooked.’

Accusative object can correspond to the answer of a question, even if the NP is not definite/specific.

(22) Q: dacu t-yuɣ-əd? What did you buy?

yuɣə=d takəndurt
buy.PRF-1SG=VEN dress

‘I bought a dress.’

**Conclusion**

The two ‘case studies’ we presented have shown that case marking do interact with the information structure notion of topic, in different ways. The relation between a topic and a non-canonical case marking might be triggered by the syntax of particular constructions (e.g. pre-verbal orders). The relation might be more direct, as in the case of DOM and clitic doubling.

We have presented just a portion of the phenomenon of case marking, there is much more to say and investigate.
E.g. 1 relation between case and focus, relation between subject and clitic doubled object.
E.g. 2 similarities of clitic doubling/ DOM with another construction involving ‘direct objects’, right-dislocation → is clitic doubling grammaticalizing from right-dislocation? (...)