

Privativity in Syntax

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Introduction

Central thesis

- There are several classes of expressions that are traditionally thought of as *one member in a set of “possible feature values”* —
 - *3rd person* (the presumed set: {1st, 2nd, 3rd})
 - *singular* (the presumed set: {sg., pl.})
 - *nominative* (the presumed set: {NOM, ACC, DAT, ...})
 - etc.

- but actually correspond to *the outright absence of valued features* of the relevant class
 - at the level of syntactic computation.

Central thesis (*cont.*)

- Privativity has been argued to exist in other modules of grammar, of course
 - most famously, perhaps, in phonology (see, e.g., Clements 1985, Archangeli 1988)
 - but also in morphology (see Forchheimer 1953 on **person** features; Harley & Ritter 2002 on **nearly all φ -features**)
- What I want to argue today is that this kind of privativity —
where certain things we're used to thinking of as “possible values”
for a given feature are actually the absence of values
— is common in **syntax** as well.

Super-Duper-Important Reminder...!

- In a **realizational** model of morphology (e.g. Distributed Morphology), the absence of a feature can still be associated with an **overt exponent**
 - this would just reflect the most underspecified insertion rule applicable to given node
 - which kicks in in the absence of more specified feature values
 - cf. English /-z/
 - [NON-PAST, FINITE, 3rd person, singular(, non-auxiliary?)]

⇒ *The claims in this talk are not about nullness!*

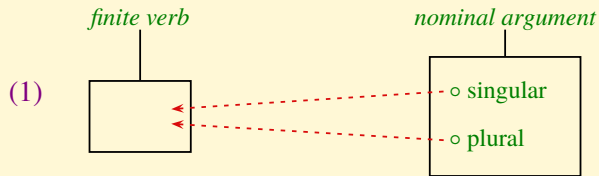
This talk is not about “defaults”

- The argument here is not that *3rd person / singular / nominative / etc.* are “defaults”
- Default values are still extant values;
- Whereas I will defend the thesis that these categories represent *the absence of any feature values whatsoever*
- I hope to show you that this distinction is not some notational nicety;
- It has testable empirical consequences.

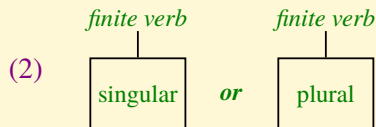
The traditional model

“Multiple-choice”

- In number-agreement:



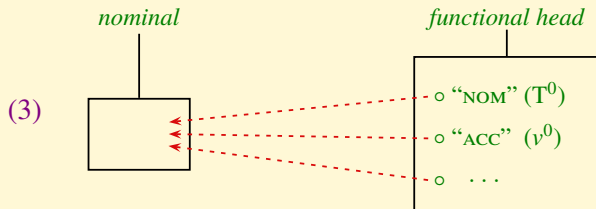
⇒ leading to:



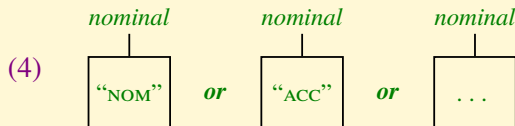
- depending on which feature value the *nominal argument*, above, actually carried

“Multiple-choice” (cont.)

- In case-assignment:



⇒ leading to:



- depending on which feature value the *functional head*, above, actually carried

Valuation ≠ “multiple-choice”: case study #1

The K'ichean languages

- Part of the Mayan language family
- Spoken in Guatemala
- Narrowly construed, the K'ichean group consists of:
Kaqchikel, K'iche', Tz'utujil, and Achi
- Approx. 3 million speakers in total

- I cannot possibly do justice to the substantial (and still evolving) knowledge we have about the grammar of these languages
- ➔ Instead, I'm going to zoom in on a particular corner of the grammar of these languages

The K'ichean languages: the *Agent-Focus* construction

- These languages have a construction known as *Agent-Focus*(=AF)
(Aissen 1999, 2011, Campbell 2000, Coon et al. 2014, Craig 1979, Davies & Sam-Colop 1990, Dayley 1978, 1985, López Ixcoy 1997, Mondloch 1981, Norman & Campbell 1978, Preminger 2014, Pye 1989, Sam-Colop 1988, Stiebels 2006)
- As a rough approximation, AF serves to circumvent the ban on extracting transitive subjects in K'ichean
- However, neither the “purpose” of AF nor its precise distribution are our primary interest here;
- ➔ Instead, I will treat the existence of AF as a given, and concentrate on the behavior of agreement *in those clauses where AF arises*.

The K'ichean languages: the *Agent-Focus* construction (cont.)

(5) OMNIVOROUS AGREEMENT

[Nevins 2011]

A descriptive term, referring to agreement patterns where a given verbal marker reflects the presence of a particular feature [F] on the SUBJECT *or* on the OBJECT (or both).

- K'ichean AF exhibits omnivorous agreement

(6) a. ja **yïn** x-**in**-ax-an ri achin

(Kaqchikel)

FOC **me** COM-**1sg**-hear-AF the man

‘It was me that heard the man.’

b. ja ri achin x-**in**-ax-an **yïn**

FOC the man COM-**1sg**-hear-AF **me**

‘It was the man that heard me.’

NB: While clefts are used in translations of AF, the construction itself is decidedly *monoclausal* (see, e.g., Aissen 2011, Preminger 2014).

The K'ichean languages: the *Agent-Focus* construction (cont.)

- The previous examples showed omnivorous agreement for PERSON;
- But it is also attested for NUMBER:

(7) a. ja **rje'** x-e-tz'et-ö rja'
 FOC **them** COM-3pl-see-AF him
 'It was them who saw him.'

b. ja rja' x-e-tz'et-ö **rje'**
 FOC him COM-3pl-see-AF **them**
 'It was him who saw them.'

A brief note on “salience hierarchies” *et al.*

- These omnivorous agreement effects in K’ichean AF have often been described in terms of a “salience hierarchy” — along the lines of (8):
- (8) 1st/2nd person \gg 3rd person plural \gg 3rd person singular
- see, e.g., Dayley 1978, Mondloch 1981, Norman & Campbell 1978, Smith-Stark 1978
- The idea is that the grammar consults (8) to determine which argument will be the target of agreement in a given AF clause

A brief note on “salience hierarchies” *et al.* (cont.)

- These omnivorous agreement effects in K’ichean AF have often been described in terms of a “salience hierarchy” — along the lines of (8):

(8) 1st/2nd person \gg 3rd person plural \gg 3rd person singular

- While (8) might be a useful shorthand for thinking about these effects, it is quite clear that this is not actually how the grammar works
 - there are quite a few arguments against treating (8) as the mechanism behind omnivorous agreement in K’ichean AF
 - see Preminger (2014:123–128) for five such arguments

⇒ In what follows, I’m going to take it for granted that omnivorous agreement is a syntactic phenomenon that has nothing to do with “salience” (at least not synchronically).

And now back to our regularly scheduled programming...

Viable and non-viable agreement targets in AF

- CLAIM:

- (9) *3rd person singular* noun phrases are not viable targets for agreement in K'ichean AF.
 - to be precise, (9) actually follows from two slightly stronger claims, (10a–10b):
 - (10) a. *3rd person* noun phrases are not viable targets for PERSON agreement in K'ichean AF.
 - b. *singular* noun phrases are not viable targets for NUMBER agreement in K'ichean AF.
 - but for the sake of simplicity, we'll stick to *3rd person singular* ones

Viable and non-viable agreement targets in AF *(cont.)*

- CLAIM:
- (9) *3rd person singular* noun phrases are not viable targets for agreement in K’ichean AF.
- Suppose (9) were wrong —
 - let H^0 be the probe in a given AF agreement relation;
 - since K’ichean exhibits the usual subject-object asymmetries (e.g. with respect to reflexives), it follows that:
 - either the subject will be unambiguously closer to H^0 than the object is, or vice-versa
 - depending on where H^0 is relative to the subject

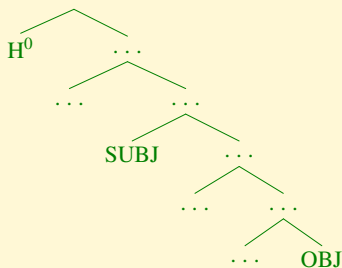
Viable and non-viable agreement targets in AF *(cont.)*

- CLAIM:

(9) *3rd person singular* noun phrases are not viable targets for agreement in K'ichean AF.

- for expository purposes, let's assume that H^0 is above both the subject and the object, and so the subject is closer

(11)



(this is likely the correct structure anyway; see Aissen 1992, *a.o.*)

Viable and non-viable agreement targets in AF *(cont.)*

- CLAIM:

(9) *3rd person singular* noun phrases are not viable targets for agreement in K’ichean AF.

- consider now an AF clause with a *3sg* subject —
 - H⁰ would encounter the subject prior to encountering the object
 - ➔ if (9) were wrong, and *3sg* nominals were viable targets, *3sg* agreement would be possible in such a case — but it is not:

(12) a. *ja ri achin x-Ø-ax-an yin
 FOC the man COM-3sg-hear-AF me
 ‘It was the man that heard me.’

b. *ja rja’ x-Ø-tz’et-ö rje’
 FOC him COM-3sg-see-AF them
 ‘It was him who saw them.’

Excursus: *Multiple Agree?*

- Suppose that 3sg nominals are somehow “viable-but-insufficient” agreement targets —
 - they carry feature values, but those values are not enough to completely satisfy the needs of the probe
 - the probe then proceeds to search past the initial 3sg target
 - entering into a second agreement relation with a different, more specified target
 - i.e., one bearing a value like *1sg* or *3pl*

➡ OBSERVE:

- (i) this would already be a departure from the “multiple-choice” model
 - since different features values are no longer equivalent to one another, in the syntactic behavior they induce
 - e.g. 3sg is fundamentally different from *1sg* or *3pl* in the syntactic behavior it induces

Excursus: *Multiple Agree?* (cont.)

- (ii) this predicts something should go wrong (an “undervalued” probe?) if both the subject and object are of the ‘insufficient’ kind (i.e., 3sg) ...
... but nothing does:

(13) ja ri xoq x-Ø-tz’et-ö ri achin
 FOC **the woman** COM-3sg-see-AF **the man**
 ‘It was the woman who saw the man.’

- And just to remind you: if we relax the assumption that 3sg targets are themselves ‘insufficient’, we falsely rule in 3sg agreement in exx. like:

(12) a. * ja ri achin x-Ø-ax-an yin
 FOC **the man** COM-3sg-hear-AF me
 ‘It was the man that heard me.’

b. * ja rja’ x-Ø-tz’et-ö rje’
 FOC **him** COM-3sg-see-AF them
 ‘It was him who saw them.’

Non-valuation as a possible grammatical outcome

Overall, our interim conclusion is this:

- *valuation*, in the sense used to describe e.g. (14a) or (14b) —

(14) a. ja **yin** x-in-ax-an ri achin [=(6a)]
 FOC **me** COM-1sg-hear-AF the man
 ‘It was me that heard the man.’

b. ja rja’ x-e-tz’et-ö **rje’** [=(7b)]
 FOC him COM-3pl-see-AF **them**
 ‘It was him who saw them.’

— could not have taken place in an example like (13), repeated here:

(13) ja **ri** xoq x-Ø-tz’et-ö **ri** achin
 FOC **the woman** COM-3sg-see-AF **the man**
 ‘It was the woman who saw the man.’

Non-valuation as a possible grammatical outcome *(cont.)*

- Before moving on, let’s compare the state of affairs we’ve just seen with probe-goal relations involving *wh*-phrases

(15) a. $[C^0 \text{ [who]}_{<+wh>} \text{ gave [this dish] to [Bob]}]$
 $\rightarrow [C^0 \text{ [who]}_{<+wh>} \text{ gave [this dish] to [Bob]}]$

\rightarrow Who gave this dish to Bob?

b. $[C^0 \text{ [John] gave [what]}_{<+wh>} \text{ to [Bob]}]$
 $\rightarrow [C^0 \text{ [John] gave [what]}_{<+wh>} \text{ to [Bob]}]$

\rightarrow What did John give to Bob?

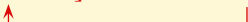

c. $[C^0 \text{ [John] gave [this dish] to [who]}_{<+wh>}]$
 $\rightarrow [C^0 \text{ [John] gave [this dish] to [who]}_{<+wh>}]$

\rightarrow Who did John give this dish to?

Non-valuation as a possible grammatical outcome (*cont.*)

- (15) a. Who gave this dish to Bob?
 b. What did John give to Bob?
 c. Who did John give this dish to?

- In contrast to (15a–15c), there really don’t seem to be probe-goal relations in natural language that target exclusively non-*wh*-phrases
- there are probes that just don’t care about *wh*-features —

- (16) a. This reporter thinks that [this promise]₁ was broken *t*₁.

 b. Which reporter thinks that [which promise]₁ was broken *t*₁?


— but there really don’t seem to be any probes that can be satisfied *only* by non-*wh*-phrases.

Non-valuation as a possible grammatical outcome (*cont.*)

- A reasonable approach to these facts would be to say that there really aren't such things as “+*wh*” and “-*wh*”
 - there's just [*wh*], vs. the absence thereof
- Assume you can't probe for the *absence* of something
 - ⇒ you can probe for [*wh*], or you can probe for something else —
 - but there's no way to probe exclusively for non-*wh*-phrases
- That is an added assumption, of course —
 - but it's hard to see how to derive the non-*wh*-phrases probing gap without it

Non-valuation as a possible grammatical outcome *(cont.)*

- If you find this treatment of *wh*-probing reasonable — *and I hope that you do!* — then consider:

(17) *omnivorous*
probing for...

	✓	✗
<i>wh</i>	<i>wh</i> -phrases	non- <i>wh</i> -phrases
NUMBER	plural	singular
PERSON	1st/2nd	3rd

⇒ So, by the same logic, we can conclude:

- there is no such thing as “singular” (in syntax)
 - just [plural] vs. the absence thereof
- there is no such thing as “3rd person” (in syntax)
 - just [participant] vs. the absence thereof

Non-valuation as a possible grammatical outcome *(cont.)*

- If you find this treatment of *wh*-probing reasonable — *and I hope that you do!* — then consider:

(17) *omnivorous probing for...*

	✓	✗
<i>wh</i>	<i>wh</i> -phrases	non- <i>wh</i> -phrases
NUMBER	plural	singular
PERSON	1st/2nd	3rd

- At the very least:
 - anyone who wishes to *deny* these conclusions concerning the representations of NUMBER and PERSON in syntax (as well as *wh*) —
 - is on the hook to provide an alternative explanation for (17).

Non-valuation as a possible grammatical outcome (*cont.*)

- On the view proposed here:

- in a sentence like (13), there really hasn't been *valuation* at all:

(13) ja ri xoq x-Ø-tz'et-ö ri achin
 FOC **the woman** COM-3sg-see-AF **the man**

‘It was the woman who saw the man.’

- the relevant probe (call it H^0) has scanned the structure for constituents bearing [plural] and/or [participant]
 - and has found no such constituents.
- consequently, at the end of the derivation, H^0 still does not bear any [plural] or [participant] values of its own
 - ⇒ the characteristic exponent associated with this *elsewhere* condition arises
 - (which, in this language family, happens to be null)

A privative representation for φ -features in syntax

- These results suggest a syntactic representation of φ -features along the same lines proposed by Harley & Ritter (2002) for morphology
 - examples:
 - “3rd person singular” = \emptyset
 - “3rd person plural” = {plural}
 - “1st person singular” = {participant, author}
 - “1st person plural” = {participant, author, plural}
 - ...

A privative representation for φ -features in syntax (*cont.*)

- These results suggest a syntactic representation of φ -features along the same lines proposed by Harley & Ritter (2002) for morphology

NB: Since Harley & Ritter’s (2002) paper, there has been work showing that the privative treatment of PERSON features may not be correct *for the morphological component* (Nevins 2007).

- but note that, unless the syntactic representation of PERSON is indeed privative, as proposed here —
 - we lose our account for the typology of omnivorous probing:

(17)	<i>omnivorous probing for...</i>	✓	✗
	<i>wh</i>	<i>wh</i> -phrases	non- <i>wh</i> -phrases
	NUMBER	plural	singular
	PERSON	1st/2nd	3rd

Valuation ≠ “multiple-choice”: case study #2

Case & finite agreement in Sakha

- Sakha (Turkic), like many other NOM-ACC languages, generally allows finite agreement with NOM noun phrases only

- (18) a. oloppos-tor aldjat-ylyn-ny-**lar** [Sakha; B&V:637]
 chair-PL break-PASV-PST-**3pl.SUBJ**
 ‘Chairs were broken.’
- b. oloppos-tor-**u** aldjat-ylyn-na
 chair-PL-**ACC** break-PASV-PST(**3sg.SUBJ**)
 ‘Chairs were broken.’
- (19) a. *oloppos-tor-**u** aldjat-ylyn-ny-**lar**
 chair-PL-**ACC** break-PASV-PST-**3pl.SUBJ**
- b. *oloppos-tor aldjat-ylyn-na
 chair-PL break-PASV-PST(**3sg.SUBJ**)

Case & finite agreement in Sakha (*cont.*)

- There is, however, one class of exceptions to this **NOM** ⇔ **finite agr** correlation —

(20) a. min ehigi₁-ni [бүгүн *t*₁ kyaj-yax-xyt] dien erem-mit-im
 I you-ACC today win-FUT-2pl.SUBJ that hope-PST-1sg.SUBJ
 ‘I hoped you would win today.’

b. ehigi bihigi₁-ni [*t*₁ kyajtar-dy-byt] dien xomoj-du-gut
 you we-ACC lose-PST-1pl.SUBJ that become.sad-PST-2pl.SUBJ
 ‘Y’all were disappointed that we lost.’ [V05:369, annotations added]

- Importantly, (20a–20b) are instances of *raising*
 - i.e., the relation between the embedded subject position and the overtly ACC-marked nominal in the matrix clause is one of movement

Case & finite agreement in Sakha (*cont.*)

- Evidence for movement (B&V:616–617):
 - the Sakha NPI *kim daqany* (“who PCL”) is only licensed by clausemate-or-higher negation;
- ⇒ an example like (21), where the ACC nominal is base-generated outside the clause that contains negation, is ungrammatical:

(21) * **min kim-ŋe daqany** [*pro* **kel-bet**] **dien**
 I **who-DAT PCL** **come-NEG.AOR(3sg.SUBJ)** **that**
 et-ti-m
 tell-PST-1sg.SUBJ
Intended: ‘I told no one that he should come.’

Case & finite agreement in Sakha (*cont.*)

- But a similar example involving one of the matrix predicates in (20), *eren* (“hope”), is grammatical:

(22) min **kim-i** **daqany₁** [*t₁* kyaj-**ba**-ta] dien
 I **who-ACC** **PCL** win-**NEG-PST**(3sg.SUBJ) that
 eren-e-bin
 hope-AOR-1sg.SUBJ
 ‘I hope that nobody won.’

⇒ *raising*.

Case & finite agreement in Sakha (*cont.*)

- Let’s get back, then, to the raising-based exception to **NOM** ⇔ **finite agr**:

(20) a. min ehigi₁-ni [бүгүн t₁ kyaj-yax-xyt] dien erem-mit-im
 I you-ACC today win-FUT-2pl.SUBJ that hope-PST-1sg.SUBJ
 ‘I hoped you would win today.’

b. ehigi bihigi₁-ni [t₁ kyajtar-dy-byt] dien xomoj-du-gut
 you we-ACC lose-PST-1pl.SUBJ that become.sad-PST-2pl.SUBJ
 ‘Y’all were disappointed that we lost.’ [V05:369, annotations added]

- An appealing way to reconcile (20a–20b) with the **NOM** ⇔ **finite agr** generalization that holds throughout the rest of the language:

(23) The raised subject *was* nominative at the point in the derivation when it was targeted for agreement.

How do you change your case?

⇒ If we accept this, it leads to the following question:

Q: How can a noun phrase go from nominative to accusative in the course of the derivation?

- Note that this is not about structural vs. inherent cases;
 - both NOM and ACC are structural.

An attempt: case-stacking (B&V:603)

- The idea is that case can be assigned to a single nominal multiple times
 - each case “stacking” outside of the previously assigned one
 - e.g.:
- (24) [[[DP]-NOM]-ACC]
- this is inspired by a particular analysis of suffixation patterns in Korean (Yoon 1996, 2004, Levin 2016 *a.o.*)

Case-stacking in Sakha?

- Kornfilt & Preminger (2015):
This case-stacking approach won't work for Sakha.
- To see why, we have to first acknowledge that ACC in Sakha cannot be assigned by a functional head like v^0 (cf. Chomsky 2000, 2001)
 - evidence (B&V:617–619):
 - (i) ACC can be assigned to raised subjects even if the raised-to clause is anchored by an unaccusative verb

(25) Masha Misha₁-ny [*t*₁ yaldj-ya] dien tönün-ne
 Masha Misha-ACC fall.sick-FUT.3sg.SUBJ that return-PAST.3sg.SUBJ
 ‘Masha returned (for fear) that Misha would fall sick.’ [B&V:618]

- note: the matrix verb in (25) is the intrans. member of a classic transitivity alternation (*tönün* “return” ~ *tönnör* “make return”)

Case-stacking in Sakha? (cont.)

- and, as you might expect, the intransitive member of a transitivity alternation in Sakha does not allow its sole argument to bear ACC:

- (26) a. min oloppoh-**u** aldjat-ty-m b. caakky(*-**ny**) aldjan-na
 I(NOM) chair-**ACC** break-PAST-1sg.SUBJ cup(*-**ACC**) break-PAST.3sg.SUBJ
 ‘I broke the chair.’ ‘The cup broke.’ [B&V:608]


⇒ the source of ACC in an example like (25) cannot be the verb or v^0

- (25) Masha Misha₁-**ny** [*t*₁ yaldj-ya] dien tönün-ne
 Masha Misha-**ACC** fall.sick-FUT.3sg.SUBJ that return-PAST.3sg.SUBJ
 ‘Masha returned (for fear) that Misha would fall sick.’ [B&V:618]

- ACC can, however, be *dependent case* (Bittner & Hale 1996, Marantz 1991, Yip et al. 1987)
 - assigned by virtue of structural proximity to the other noun phrase (*Masha*)

Case-stacking in Sakha? (cont.)

- ➡ Conclusion: ACC in Sakha *dependent case*.
- ⇒ Next question: Do already-case-marked noun phrases count for the calculation of *dependent case*?
- K&P: If we allow already-case-marked noun phrases to participate in *dependent case* relations —
 - we predict that any noun phrase scrambled past the subject would result in ACC marking *on the subject*;
 - this does not happen:

(28)  deriebine-ni₁ orospuonnjuk-tar t₁ xalaa-byt-tar [B&V:604]
 village-ACC robber-PL(NOM) raid-PRT-3pl.SUBJ
 ‘Some robbers raided the village.’

REMEMBER: We cannot say NOM on the subject is what blocks it from later getting ACC; how NOM noun phrases turn into ACC ones is our very explanandum!

In search of an alternative

- ↪ We can conclude that Sakha does not have case-stacking, at least not of ACC over NOM.
- ⇒ Consequently, that cannot be the account of our central explanandum, repeated here:

- (20) a. min ehigi₁-ni [бүгүн t₁ kyaj-yax-xyt] dien erem-mit-im
 I you-ACC today win-FUT-2pl.SUBJ that hope-PST-1sg.SUBJ
 ‘I hoped you would win today.’
- b. ehigi bihigi₁-ni [t₁ kyajtar-dy-byt] dien xomoj-du-gut
 you we-ACC lose-PST-1pl.SUBJ that become.sad-PST-2pl.SUBJ
 ‘Y’all were disappointed that we lost.’ [V05:369, annotations added]

In search of an alternative (*cont.*)

- Let’s review where we are:

- (i) ACC in Sakha is *dependent case*
- (ii) already-case-marked noun phrases do not count for subsequent *dependent case* relations

⇒ It follows that the raised subjects in (20a–20b) were caseless, prior to receiving ACC case under case competition with the matrix subject.

(20) a. min ehigi₁-ni [бүгүн *t*₁ kyaj-yax-xyt] dien erem-mit-im
 I you-ACC today win-FUT-2pl.SUBJ that hope-PST-1sg.SUBJ
 ‘I hoped you would win today.’

b. ehigi bihigi₁-ni [*t*₁ kyajtar-dy-byt] dien xomoj-du-gut
 you we-ACC lose-PST-1pl.SUBJ that become.sad-PST-2pl.SUBJ
 ‘Y’all were disappointed that we lost.’ [V05:369, annotations added]

In search of an alternative *(cont.)*

- ⇒ Consequently, we can categorically rule out the idea that agreement results in the assignment of case
- that’s because the noun phrases in question were agreed with in the embedded clause (before raising)
 - and yet, they were subsequently candidates for the assignment of *dependent case*
 - which, we already know, cannot be assigned when the noun phrases entering into the relation are already case marked

NOM as caselessness

- Interim summary:

- (i) prior to raising-to-ACC, the raised noun was caseless
 - (ii) agreement does not result in the assignment of case

⇒ The **NOM** ⇔ **finite agr** generalization cannot have anything to do with case *assignment*

- since at least some of the noun phrases involved *have not been assigned case at all*

- How can the **NOM** ⇔ **finite agr** generalization be captured, then?

- PROPOSAL:

(29) **only caseless noun phrases can be targeted for agreement (in Sakha)**

NOM as caselessness (*cont.*)

◆ PROPOSAL:

(29) only caseless noun phrases can be targeted for agreement (in Sakha)

- If true, this entails that even in a simple example like (30) —

(30) *Masha tūrgennik salamaat sie-te.*

Masha quickly porridge eat-PST.3sg.SUBJ

‘Masha ate porridge quickly.’

[B&V:625]

- the “nominative” (and agreed with) phrase *Masha* is actually ...
 ... **caseless**.

A privative representation for case in syntax

- Here, we don't have the precise counterpart of Harley & Ritter 2002 as a model for our syntactic representations
- ➔ However, recent work by Zompí (2016) and others may provide exactly what we're looking for
 - Zompí takes, as his target of explanation, Caha's (2009) results concerning attested and unattested patterns of case syncretism
 - and their account in terms of containment relations among different kinds of case
 - he shows that Caha's results can be recouped using a simpler containment schema
 - based on Marantz's (1991) categories of case

(31) [[[UNMARKED] DEPENDENT] LEXICAL]

[Zompí 2016]

A privative representation for case in syntax (*cont.*)

(31) [[[UNMARKED] DEPENDENT] LEXICAL]

[Zompí 2016]

- If you are unfamiliar with how Marantz’s (1991) case system works, here are the basics
 - **LEXICAL**: case assigned to a noun phrase by virtue of the lexical identity of the head that selects it
(exx.: *instrumental*, *locative*)
 - **DEPENDENT**: case assigned to a noun phrase by virtue of structural proximity to another, as-of-yet caseless noun phrase
(exx.: *accusative*, *ergative*)
 - **UNMARKED**: *elsewhere* (exx.: *nominative*, *absolutive*)
- And note: once again, “UNMARKED” ≠ phonologically null

A privative representation for case in syntax (*cont.*)

(31) [[[UNMARKED] DEPENDENT] LEXICAL]

[Zompí 2016]

- the same containment relations have been argued for by:
 - Bobaljik (2015) and Smith et al. (2016)
 - looking at attested and unattested patterns of suppletion in pronouns, in the vein of Bobaljik’s 2012 work on comparatives & superlatives
 - Demirok (2013)
 - reinterpreting Bobaljik’s (2008) observations regarding the agreement accessibility hierarchy (itself a refinement of Moravcsik 1978) in terms of containment

A privative representation for case in syntax (*cont.*)

(31) [[[UNMARKED] DEPENDENT] LEXICAL]

[Zompí 2016]

- ♦ Importantly, this proposal for containment relations is fully compatible with nominative (*viz.* UNMARKED case) being the complete absence of case values
 - set-theoretically, the empty set (\emptyset) is in a containment relation with any other set
- ⇒ the containment statements UNMARKED \in DEPENDENT and UNMARKED \in LEXICAL are trivially derived

Parallels between PERSON and case

- If we accept the results so far, a potentially interesting parallel arises between the structure of PERSON features and case features
- In both cases, we have:
 - a category of expressions traditionally considered a “possible value” of the relevant class of features (*3rd person*, *nominative*);
 - but which is in fact represented—at least in syntax—as the complete absence of feature values of the relevant class;
 - and which is part of a(n at least) 3-way containment structure

(32) [[[\emptyset]^{“3rd person”} participant]^{“2nd person”} speaker]^{“1st person”}

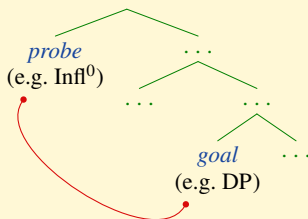
(33) [[[\emptyset]^{“nominative”} DEPENDENT]^{“accusative”} LEXICAL]^{“<various>”}

Probe-goal relations in a privative syntax

What needs fixing

- The *probe-goal* approach to syntactic relations (Chomsky 2000, 2001) is designed around the “multiple-choice” model of feature values

(34)



- features on the *probe* come into the derivation unvalued (or unchecked, or uninterpretable, or ...)
- they can then be valued (or checked, or made interpretable, or ...) by whatever is found on the *goal*
 - incl., for example, “3rd person” / “nominative” / etc.

What needs fixing (*cont.*)

- Given the conclusions of the last two sections, this cannot possibly be how things work
 - recall, in particular, the argument that in K'ichean AF clauses with two 3sg nominals, there can't have been *valuation* at all —

(13) ja ri xoq x-Ø-tz'et-ö ri achin
 FOC **the woman** COM-3sg-see-AF **the man**
 'It was the woman who saw the man.'

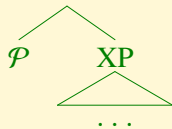
— because the relevant probes are looking for goals bearing [plural] and [participant] in particular (rather than just any nominal goal)

- ⇒ What we need is a framework for *probe-goal* relations where probes in syntax can (and quite often do) fail to find the features they seek —
- resulting in what we have come to call “3rd person”; “singular”; “nominative”; and so forth

Assumptions & definitions: syntax

- *probe*: a syntactic element that carries a syncategorematic instruction to search for a valued instance of (at least one) feature $[f]$
 - the search may yield an actual instance of $[f]$, or not;
 - what is obligatory is the **search**.

- Syntax is strictly cyclic (\equiv *impatient*)
 - \Rightarrow as soon as a probe \mathcal{P} is merged, any syncategorematic instructions associated with it are immediately carried out
 - this means that what \mathcal{P} can scan is all and only the material that was already present in the derivation when it was merged
 - \Rightarrow giving rise to the c-command condition on valuation:
(cf. Béjar & Rezac 2009)



Assumptions & definitions: syntax *(cont.)*

- The scanning implicated in the previous definitions refers to an iterative, top-to-bottom search algorithm
 - which meets (at least) the following adequacy conditions:

(35) *adequacy conditions on Iterative Downward Search (IDS) algorithm*

- a. If y asymmetrically c-commands x , then IDS algorithm will encounter y before it encounters x .
- b. If y asymmetrically dominates x , then IDS algorithm will encounter y before it encounters x .

Assumptions & definitions: syntax *(cont.)*

- Here's an example of an algorithm that meets these adequacy criteria:

- (36) a. Let \mathcal{P} be a syntactic probe, and let XP be \mathcal{P} 's sister
- b. QUERY: Is XP a viable goal? If so, **halt**, with “ XP ” as the search result
- c. For every specifier ZP of XP :
 QUERY: Is ZP a viable goal? If so, **halt**, with “ ZP ” as the search result
- d. QUERY: Is XP a phase? If so, **halt**, with no goal
- e. QUERY: Does X^0 have a complement? If not, **halt**, with no goal
- f. Return to step (b), using the constituent in $[Compl, X]$ as the new “ XP ”

Assumptions & definitions: morphology

- The spellout rules that apply to \mathcal{P} may include an ‘elsewhere’ rule
 - i.e., a spellout rule whose only specification is that it applies to \mathcal{P} nodes
 - such a rule will be preempted by spellout rules that are both applicable to \mathcal{P} and specify at least one $[f]$ in the insertion environment
 - for example: a particular language could have —
 - a non-null exponent y for number probes bearing a $[\text{plural}]$ value
 - and another non-null exponent x for number probes generally
- ⇒ resulting in what we would descriptively characterize as a “plural morpheme” (y) and a “singular morpheme” (x)

Case study #1 revisited: agreement in K'ichean AF

- I will focus here on number agreement in K'ichean AF
 - (the state of affairs w.r.t. person is similar, with some complications that ultimately prove innocuous; see Preminger 2014 for details)
- RECALL: It cannot be the case that K'ichean AF clauses with “3rd person singular agreement” involve *valuation* of φ -features
- Let #⁰ be the head relevant to NUMBER agreement in K'ichean AF
 - suppose that #⁰ bears an instruction to search for [plural]
 - and that it enters the derivation *after* both the subject and object have been introduced
- On the assumptions just stated:
 - the fate of non-[plural]-bearers (a.k.a. singular phrases) should be identical to the fate of, e.g., non-[wh]-bearers w.r.t. probing for [wh]
 - namely, they should be skipped

Case study #1 revisited: agreement in K'ichean AF (*cont.*)

⇒ This derives the *omnivorous agreement* behavior exemplified in (7a–7b) (repeated from earlier)

(7) a. ja **rje'** x-e-tz'et-ö rja'
 FOC **them** COM-3pl-see-AF him
 'It was them who saw him.'

b. ja rja' x-e-tz'et-ö **rje'**
 FOC him COM-3pl-see-AF **them**
 'It was him who saw them.'

NB: Assume that the Agent in (7a–7b) moves to a focus position (and out of the c-command domain of #⁰) only after agreement has already taken place.

Case study #1 revisited: agreement in K'ichean AF (*cont.*)

- On the other hand, when neither the subject nor object are plural:
 - there is no accessible bearer of [plural] that #⁰ could find

⇒ Trivially, then, valuation could not have taken place:

(13) ja **ri xoq** x-Ø-tz'et-ö **ri achin**
 FOC **the woman** COM-3sg-see-AF **the man**
 'It was the woman who saw the man.'

- This is what “singular agreement” is —
 - it is the absence of valued [plural] features on a probe.
- “3rd person agreement” in K'ichean arises in essentially the same way
 - as a failure to find an accessible bearer of valued [participant]

Case study #2 revisited: case in Sakha

- RECALL: It cannot be that NOM noun phrases in Sakha have been *assigned case* in any meaningful sense
 - we need an account of case assignment that delivers this

Proposal: (following Levin & Preminger 2015, Preminger 2014, but modified)

- There are two kinds of case assignment (cf. Baker 2015, Baker & Vinokurova 2010, Bittner & Hale 1996, Marantz 1991, Yip et al. 1987) —
 - **LEXICAL**: for a designated head H^0 , assign case $c(H^0)$ to the noun phrase that is closest-under-c-command and caseless
(exx.: “*INSTR*”, “*P_{COMP}*”, “*NOM*”(!) in English)
 - **DEPENDENT**: for a pair of noun phrases $P = \langle \alpha, \beta \rangle$ that stand in a sufficiently local c-command relation, pick $dir \in \{\text{HIGHER}, \text{LOWER}\}$, and assign case $c(dir)$ to the *dir* member of P
(exx.: “*ACC*”, “*ERG*”)

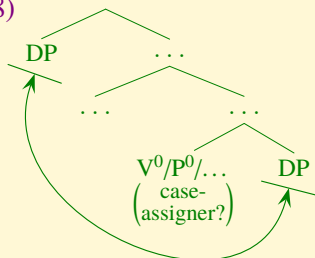
Case study #2 revisited: case in Sakha *(cont.)*

- There is no such thing as “**UNMARKED** case” (incl. “nominative”)
 - except in the same sense as there’s such a thing as “3rd person” and “singular”
 - i.e., it is simply the outright absence of valued case features
 - Instead, noun phrases that have failed to receive **LEXICAL** or **DEPENDENT** case receive the morphology associated with the *elsewhere* case
 - ⇒ This derives the ordering (stipulated in accounts like Marantz 1991) placing **UNMARKED** case after the two other types of case:
- (37) **UNMARKED** >> **DEPENDENT** >> ...

Case study #2 revisited: case in Sakha *(cont.)*

- As noted in Preminger 2014, in the special case in which **LEXICAL** case is assigned under sisterhood (a.k.a. “inherent case”) —
 - it is predicted to preempt **DEPENDENT** case
- That’s because, on a bottom-up model of structure building —

(38)



- the sisterhood relation in question will obtain before the necessary configuration for **DEPENDENT** case assignment

Case study #2 revisited: case in Sakha *(cont.)*

- ⇒ This derives the ordering (again, stipulated in accounts like Marantz 1991) placing INHERENT/OBLIQUE case before DEPENDENT case
- and, by extension, before UNMARKED case as well

(39) UNMARKED ≫ DEPENDENT ≫ INHERENT/OBLIQUE

Case study #2 revisited: case in Sakha (*cont.*)

Overall, this provides a picture of what “nominative” in Sakha is, such that:

- (i) we still have a way of capturing the **NOM** \Leftrightarrow **finite agr** generalization
(29) only caseless noun phrases can be targeted for agreement (in Sakha)
- (ii) but we can also account for how noun phrases go from being “nominative” to being accusative —

- (20) a. min ehigi₁-ni [бүгүн t₁ kyaj-yax-xyt] dien erem-mit-im
 I you-ACC today win-FUT-2pl.SUBJ that hope-PST-1sg.SUBJ
 ‘I hoped you would win today.’
- b. ehigi bihigi₁-ni [t₁ kyajtar-dy-byt] dien xomoj-du-gut
 you we-ACC lose-PST-1pl.SUBJ that become.sad-PST-2pl.SUBJ
 ‘Y’all were disappointed that we lost.’ [V05:369, annotations added]

- namely, they are caseless nominals (“nominative”) that are subsequently assigned **DEPENDENT** case (accusative) by virtue of their structural proximity to the matrix subject

What (else) privativity can do for you

The lay of the land so far

- We've seen that adequate accounts of K'ichean AF and raising in Sakha require privative models of φ -features and case, respectively
- The way I see it, these are existence 'proofs' that such representations are necessary
- ➔ If this is correct, it means well-formed sentences in which some instance of *valuation* failed to occur could be lurking all over the place
- This, in turn, opens up analytical possibilities that were unavailable in the traditional, "multiple-choice" model of valuation
 - in particular: a kind of bleeding

Bleeding-like interactions in syntax

- Suppose that some operation \textcircled{O} depends on *valuation* culminating successfully, in order to furnish its input
- Then, if there is a sentence where *valuation* could not have possibly culminated successfully —
 - but the sentence only has a parse in which \textcircled{O} has applied —
 - ➔ we expect ungrammaticality to arise.
- *In light of this, consider...*

Bleeding-like interactions in syntax (*cont.*)(40) PATTERNS OF CASE-DISCRIMINATION IN φ -AGREEMENT VS. MOVEMENT TO CANONICAL SUBJECT POSITION (MtoCSP)

- a. Hebrew: candidates for MtoCSP: {NOM} = candidates for finite φ -agreement: {NOM}
- b. Icelandic: candidates for MtoCSP: {NOM, ACC, DAT, ...} \supsetneq candidates for finite φ -agreement: {NOM}
- c. *unattested: candidates for MtoCSP: {NOM} \subsetneq candidates for finite φ -agreement: {NOM, ACC}

⇒ movement to subject position can do only one of two things:

- grab the closest nominal regardless of case (40b)
- grab that nominal which was targeted for φ -agreement (40a)

Bleeding-like interactions in syntax (*cont.*)

- This, I have argued, provides an explanation for why intervention by dative nominals yields ungrammaticality in some languages (e.g. Icelandic) —
 - but a morphological ‘default’ in others (e.g. French)
- Icelandic:

(41) [Einhverjum stúdent]₁ finnast *t*₁ [_{SC} tölvurnar ljótar].
 some student.DAT find.PL computers.the.NOM ugly
 ‘Some student finds the computers ugly.’

(42) það finnst (/ *finnast) [einhverjum stúdent]_{DAT} [_{SC} tölvurnar ljótar].
 EXPL find.SG / *find.PL some student.DAT computers.the.NOM ugly
 ‘Some student finds the computers ugly.’ [H&H:999–1000]


Bleeding-like interactions in syntax (*cont.*)

- In Icelandic, no other operation depends on φ -feature valuation to furnish its input
- As argued earlier, failed valuation is a perfectly acceptable outcome for this particular operation
 - ⇒ dative intervention does nothing but interrupt what would otherwise be successful φ -feature valuation;
 - but other than that, everything else proceeds normally

Bleeding-like interactions in syntax (*cont.*)

- Cf. French(/Mod. Greek/...):

(43) * Jean₁ semble [à Marie]_{DAT} [t₁ avoir du talent].
 Jean seems to Marie have.INF of talent
 ‘Jean seems to Marie to have talent.’ [Anagnostopoulou 2003:38]



- French is a language in which movement to subject is set to:
grab the nominal that has been targeted for φ -agreement
- but (43) only has a parse in which movement to subject
has successfully applied;
- the grammar could never generate this string, since this input to
 movement to subject was not available
 ⇒ hence, ungrammaticality arises.

Bleeding-like interactions in syntax *(cont.)*

- I've shown you this not because it's necessarily the right analysis of dative intervention in particular —
 (though I think that it is)
— but because I think it's a model for the interaction of syntactic operations that is underutilized / underexplored.

Conclusion

Conclusion










- At least some of what are traditionally considered “feature values” actually represent the wholesale absence of values
 - at least as far as syntax is concerned
- This includes, at the very least:
 - “3rd person”
 - “singular”
 - “nominative”
- This is not the (familiar) claim that these values are *defaults*; rather, it is the claim that there is no value there in the syntactic computation
 - with attendant consequences that are unavailable on a simple *defaults*-based view
 - incl.: agreement in K’ichean AF, case in Sakha, dative intervention cross-linguistically

Thanks!!!









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