Feeding relations and their breakdowns: a theory of dative intervention

Omer Preminger∗
University of Maryland

1. Backdrop
I am going to assume the following previous results are already in place:

• There is no empirically adequate theory of syntax in which unvalued features induce ungrammaticality (or “crashes”)
• Instead, probing for feature values is obligatorily triggered upon the merger of any head that has placeholders for the relevant features
  ◦ these placeholders are what we used to refer to as “unvalued features” – though that makes little sense given the internal organization we now know these feature values to have
    • in the case of ϕ-features (and probably case features, too): they are privative, at least in the syntax; and they are geometrically organized
• Crucially:
  ◦ it’s not that feature-checking is redundant, or that we need something else (e.g. obligatory probing) alongside checking;
  ◦ checking is pernicious—adding checking to a(n otherwise adequate) theory of syntax means getting the facts wrong:
    • those derivations that we expect to be ruled out by unchecked features, but not by the obligatory-when-possible nature of valuation, are in fact well-formed (Preminger 2014:85–95)

NB: Any theory that employs Last Resort (=Default Valuation) is one in which checking plays no role whatsoever in evaluating well-formedness (Preminger 2014:89–94).

2. The Dative Paradox
2.1. The inability of datives to value features on a ϕ-probe
(1) Morgum
  many
  studentum
  liki/*lika
  verkið
  ‘Many students like the job.’

[Harley 1995]

• The effect in (1) has nothing to do with the presence of the nominative DP (verkið “job.the.nom”); as evidenced by:
(2) a. Strákunum
  leiddist/*leiddust
  boys.the.pl.dat
  be.bored
  ‘The boys were bored.’

b. Strákarnir
  leiddust/*leiddist
  boys.the.pl.nom
  walked.hand.in.hand
  ‘The boys walked hand in hand.’

[Sigurðsson 1996]

⇒ So far, this suggests:
  ◦ datives, when viewed from the outside, lack the kind of features that ϕ-probes seek

2.2. Intervention of datives in ϕ-probing
• All things being equal, this predicts that ϕ-probes would be able to ignore dative nominals —
  ◦ much like, e.g., a [wh]-seeking C0 probe is able to ignore XPs that lack [wh] en route to finding a [wh]-bearing XP
• As you all probably know, this prediction is false.
  ◦ While datives cannot themselves value the features on a ϕ-probe —
    • they are capable of disrupting the relationship between a ϕ-probe and what would otherwise be its target:1

∗Thanks to Rajesh Bhatt, Sabine Iatridou, David Pesetsky, Maria Polinsky, Milan Rezac, and Norvin Richards, for comments, discussions, and suggestions. All errors are my own.

1This is one half of the pattern commonly referred to as “defective intervention.” I will be using the more neutral term dative intervention, since—as we will see—the term “defective” is a vestige of a different (an inadequate) theory of the phenomenon.
Feeding relations and their breakdowns: a theory of dative intervention

Preminger

May 2016

This is a stark departure from what we would expect, if datives truly lacked \( \varphi \)-features (again, when viewed from the outside)

This sets up the essential ingredients of the Dative Paradox —

(i) Datives behave as relevant goals for the locality of \( \varphi \)-probing
   (cf. non-\( \text{wh} \) phrases, which are outright ignored for \( \text{wh} \)-probing)

(ii) Datives are not themselves viable targets for \( \varphi \)-probing

3. Existing accounts of the Dative Paradox

I am aware of two types of accounts of the Dative Paradox:

i. accounts based on diacritics
   (e.g. the Activity Condition; Chomsky 2000:127ff., 2001:6ff.)

ii. accounts based on projection
   (e.g. Rezac 2008)

3.1. The Activity Condition

- Leading idea:
  - arguments that have entered into full-fledged agreement relations —
    (relations involving the full set of \( \varphi \)-features)
    — are rendered inactive, and are thereupon unable to enter into subsequent \( \varphi \)-agreement relations

- For this to be a solution to the Dative Paradox:
  - having inactive \( \varphi \)-features must be syntactically distinguishable from having no \( \varphi \)-features at all
    (recall the distinction between dative intervention and the behavior of non-\( \text{wh} \) phrases vis-à-vis \( C^0 \))
  - \( \varphi \)-features begin the derivation with this diacritic set to ‘on’
    - the first (full) agreement relation they enter into sets it to ‘off’
  - all \( \varphi \)-features intervene, but only \( \varphi \)-features whose diacritic is set to ‘on’
    can participate in valuation

NB: On Chomsky’s (2000, 2001) original conception of the Activity Condition, he attempts to reduce activity to the “uninterpretable” case feature borne by the nominal

- but we now know that nominals can have case in configurations where they could not have possibly been targeted for agreement (see Preminger 2011b:929–930, among many others)
- and this is so even if we’re talking about abstract case, and even if we avail ourselves of non-overt agreement relations (idem)

⇒ activity therefore remains a diacritic.

- That in itself is not a death-blow to an Activity Condition-based account of the Dative Paradox
  - as we will see, any account will have to resort to some stipulation or other to explain it

⇒ The question is merely whether this is the correct diacritic/stipulation

⇒ and the answer is that it is not:

(5) a. ziya b-i`k`i-s
cow III \( (A) \) III-go-past.evid
‘The cow left.’
b. eniy-ä ziya b-išer-si
mother\(-\text{E} \) cow \( (A) \) III-feed–past.evid
‘The mother fed the cow.’
Feeding relations and their breakdowns: a theory of dative intervention

May 2016

Preminger

(6) a. eni-r [už-ā magalu] r-iy-xo
   mother-D boy-i(A) iii-eat-PAST,PRT-NMZ iv-know-PRES
   ‘The mother knows that as for the bread, the boy ate it.’
   [Polinsky & Potsdam 2001:586, 606]
   ◦ this is not agreement with the embedded clause in its entirety; that looks different:

   (7) a. eni-r [už-ā boy-] r-iy-xo
   mother-D boy-i(A) i-arrive-PAST,PRT-NMZ iv-know-PRES
   ‘The mother knows that as for the boy, he arrived.’
   [Polinsky & Potsdam 2001:605]

   ◦ data like (6a–b) (the long-distance agreement data) aren’t technically irreconcilable with the Activity Condition
     – recall that to render a noun phrase inactive, agreement must target its full ϕ-feature set

   ⇒ we could posit some ‘unseen’ member of the ϕ-set of, e.g., magalu (“bread.i(A)”) . . .
     – which doesn’t participate in agreement in the embedded clause in (6b),
     but does participate in agreement in the matrix clause

   ⇒ . . . but this would be:
   i. circular
   ii. very hard for the child to acquire
   iii. run afoul of the argument against the existence of systematically-null ϕ-agreement (see Preminger 2011b:930–934, as well as my talk tomorrow @ ZAS)

   ⇒ We should wave bye-bye to the Activity Condition.
   (See also Nevins 2004.)

3.2. A functional-shells approach

   • Suppose that:
     ◦ dative nominals come enclosed in additional functional structure — (e.g. a KP or PP shell)
       — which in other cases, e.g. nom or acc, is either absent, or at least has different properties than it does when datives are involved
     ◦ see Rezac (2008) and Richards (2004), a.o.

   • I’ll assume, following Rezac (2008), that the functional structure in question is PP_DAT
     ◦ but nothing really changes if you prefer that it be KP_DAT
       – on “KP”: see Bayer et al. (2001) and Bittner & Hale (1996), a.o.

   (8) FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE DATIVE NOUN PHRASE

   PP_DAT
     P0_DAT DP
     · · · ϕ-features · · ·

   ⇒ Two scenarios to consider:
     (i) PP_DAT constitutes a locality domain (‘phase’):
       ◦ if P0_DAT has no ϕ-features, the entire PP_DAT should be ignored by ϕ-probes → ⊥
     (ii) PP_DAT does not constitute a locality domain (‘phase’):
       ◦ if P0_DAT has no ϕ-features, the ϕ-features of DP should be visible from
         the outside, allowing valuation → ⊥

   ⇒ Overall, the conclusion is that P0_DAT must have ϕ-features.

   ⇒ The next question is: what are the ϕ-features that PP_DAT has?
   • They could be valued or unvalued —
     ◦ and there seems to be support for both options being instantiated . . .
• In the Icelandic data discussed earlier, an intervening dative gives rise to 3sg agreement morphology on the verb
  o which is consistent with the dative bearing valued 3sg features

• However, in another class of languages (Dryer's 1986 “primary-/secondary-object” languages):
  o intervening arguments in applicative constructions control the agreement morphology that, in a monotransitive, would be controlled by the Patient:

(9) AGREEMENT WITH APPLICATIVE ARGUMENT IN LIEU OF PATIENT
a. tyi aw-ilä-yoñ
   PRFV 2.ERG-see-1.ABS
   'You saw me.'

b. tyi i-ch'äx-be-yoñ ja’ x’ixik
   PRFV 3.ERG-boil-APPL-1.ABS water CLF-WOMAN
   'The woman boiled me water.'
   [Coon 2010:34, 199; glosses simplified slightly]
  o this is consistent with P₀DAT in the relevant languages bearing unvalued ϕ-features
    – which then probe for and copy the ϕ-feature values found on the DP
  o causing the entire PP_DAT to act, for ϕ-agreement purposes, as a bearer of the ϕ-feature values of the enclosed DP

(10) FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE DATIVE NOUN PHRASE: ICELANDIC-TYPE  
[VERNACULIZED]

(11) FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE DATIVE NOUN PHRASE: CHOL-TYPE  [VERNACULIZED]
Alas, attractive as it is, this approach suffers several problems:

- **first**, why is the valued version of \( \varphi \)-features on \( PP_{\text{DAT}} \) (a.k.a. “Icelandic-type”) always 3sg, rather than something else? [maybe markedness will save us, here?]

- **second**, this approach makes exactly the wrong morphological predictions
  - by hypothesis, “primary-/secondary-object” (a.k.a. “Chol-type”) languages are the ones in which \( P_{\text{DAT}}^0 \) enters into a full-fledged \( \varphi \)-agreement relation with the enclosed DPs
  - but those languages are typically the ones that lack anything identifiable as “dative morphology” (cf. (9b))
      - while the languages where no such agreement should take place (e.g. Icelandic) are the ones that tend to have overt dative morphology

- **third**, and most important, it predicts that there should be exactly two types of interactions with datives: transparency (Chol), or a morphological default (3sg in Icelandic) . . .
  - but in reality, there is a third type: ungrammaticality

(12) a. Il semble à Marie [ que Jean a du talent ]. (French)
   "It seems (to Marie) that Jean has talent"
   Intended: 'It seems to Marie that Jean has talent'.

b. Jean semble (?à Marie) [ t1 avoir du talent ].
   "Jean seems to Marie have.INF of talent"
   'Jean seems (to Marie) to have talent.' [McGinnis 1998:90–91]

- **of course**, (12b) involves a movement relation, which our previous examples didn’t; but crucially, if datives are interveners by virtue of their featural content, then either:
  - (i) they lack the kind of features that the movement probe seeks (in which case they will be ignored; not what happens in French); or
  - (ii) they carry the kind of features that the movement probe seeks (in which case they will be successfully targeted; not what happens in French, either)

- **Note**: this option predicts that French would be a quirky-subject language, which it of course is not —

(13) a. * [À Marie]1 semble t1 [ Jean avoir du talent ]
   to Marie seem Jean have.INF of talent
   Intended: ‘It seems to Marie that Jean has talent.’

b. * [À Marie]1 semble t1 [ que Jean a du talent ].
   to Marie seem that Jean has of talent
   Intended: ‘It seems to Marie that Jean has talent.’

⇒ (12b) remains unexplained; we are thus forced to posit a second kind of dative intervention:
  - one that results not in default morphology but in the complete breakdown of the probing process

- **the obvious question, then:**

  Is there a way to subsume the first kind of dative intervention (default) under the second kind (complete breakdown)?

### 4. Case discrimination and the Dative Paradox

- The recent theoretical backdrop surveyed in §1 offers precisely the possibility sought at the end of the previous section
- Preminger (2011a, 2014): “3sg agreement morphology” is arguably just a name—invended by linguists—to describe the morphology found on a probe that has failed to find an accessible DP target bearing [participant] or [plural]
  - either because the probe has successfully found an accessible DP, but that DP happens to be 3rd person & singular;
  - or because the probe has failed to find an accessible DP altogether.
⇒ Cases like the Icelandic (3) (repeated below) might not represent successful agreement with anything:

(3) það/e.sc/x.sc/p.sc/l.sc finnst/*finnast) find.
  e.sc/g.sc/*find.
  p.sc/l.sc computers.the.pl.
  n.sc/o.sc/m.sc ljótar
  [einhverjum some student.
  d.sc/a.sc/t.sc student.
  d.sc/a.sc/t.sc tölvurnar computers.the.pl.
  n.sc/o.sc/m.sc ljótarugly
  n.sc/o.sc/m.sc ljótarugly

‘Some student finds the computers ugly.’

• In other words:
  ◦ the canonical account of things like (3) is that the probe has agreed with (the outer shell of) the DP, in lieu of the
  ◦ but given the privative (and geometric) nature of ϕ-features:
    – it’s equally possible that (3), despite being perfectly grammatical, represents the complete breakdown of syntactic probing by the finite verb

• To pursue such an account, we must answer a pair of questions:
  (i) What is it about the intervening DAT DP that causes the breakdown of probing?
  (ii) If breakdown of probing results in non-valuation (a.k.a. “3sg agreement morphology”), how does ungrammaticality arise in cases like the French (12b)?

Let us begin with a recent proposal that pertains to (i) . . .

4.1. Case discrimination (Bobaljik 2008)

• Bobaljik (2008) argues that overt ϕ-agreement is case-discriminating and he argues this on independent grounds, having nothing to do with dative intervention

• What I mean by case-discriminating is that agreement operates on a landscape where case assignment to DPs has already happened
  ◦ and it selects its target based on (among other things) the results of this already-completed case assignment

The evidence Bobaljik provides is twofold:

• First, in instances where grammatical function (subject, object, ind. object, etc.) diverges from case (nominative, accusative, dative, etc.) —
  ◦ agreement tracks case, more or less ignoring grammatical function
  ◦ one example of this comes from quirky-subject constructions in Icelandic, wherein:
    – the non-nom subject is not targeted for agreement; and
    – the NOM non-subject is targeted for agreement

(14) a. Morgum studentum liki/*likalike.3sg/*3pl verkið.job.the.
    d.sc/a.sc/t.sc /p.sc/l.sc liki/*likalike.3sg/*3pl
    p.sc/l.sc /n.sc/o.sc/m.sc verkið.job.the.
    n.sc/o.sc/m.sc [=(1)]
    ‘Many students like the job.’
    [Harley 1995]

b. Jóni líkuðu [þessir sokkar ].
    Jon.dat liked.pl [these socks ]
    n.sc/o.sc/m.sc [=(2)]
    ‘Jon liked these socks.’
    [Jónsson 1996:149]

• Second, adopting this view (that agreement operates on a post-case-assignment landscape of DPs) derives an important typological gap:

(15) a. ziya b-ik’i-s
    cow.iii(a) iii-go-past.evid
    ‘The cow left.’

b. eniy-á ziya b-išer-si
    mother-e cow.iii(a) iii-feed–past.evid
    ‘The mother fed the cow.’
    [=(5a–b)]

– here, again, grammatical function (subject/object) is disregarded in favor of case
(16) **A TYPOLOGICAL GAP IN CASE VS. AGREEMENT ALIGNMENTS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>agreement alignment</th>
<th>NOM-ACC</th>
<th>ERG-ABS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NOM-ACC</td>
<td>✓ (English, Icelandic)</td>
<td>✗</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ERG-ABS</td>
<td>✓ (Warlpiri, Chukchi)</td>
<td>✓ (Basque, Tsez)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


- as Bobaljik shows, we can account for this gap by adopting a case-discrimination approach to agreement, as follows:
  - assume, as noted above, that agreement cannot make reference to grammatical function, but can make reference to case
  - in instances where multiple DPs qualify for agreement (as far as their case is concerned) —
    - it is the **structurally highest** among qualifying DPs that will be targeted for \( \varphi \)-agreement.

- predictions:
  - if a language has an **ERG-ABS** case alignment, and only unmarked(=**ABS**) DPs can be targeted for agreement —
    - the result is (trivially) an **ERG-ABS** agreement alignment
  - if a language has an **ERG-ABS** case alignment, and either unmarked(=**ABS**) DPs or dependent-case marked(=**ERG**) DPs can be targeted for agreement —
    - it will always be the subject of the clause that is targeted for agreement, i.e., a **NOM-ACC** agreement alignment
  - if a language has a **NOM-ACC** case alignment, and only unmarked(=**NOM**) DPs can be targeted for agreement —
    - the result is (trivially) a **NOM-ACC** agreement alignment
  - if a language has a **NOM-ACC** case alignment, and either unmarked(=**NOM**) DPs or dependent-case marked(=**ACC**) DPs can be targeted for agreement —
    - it will always be the subject of the clause that is targeted for agreement, i.e., still a **NOM-ACC** agreement alignment

\[ \Rightarrow \] the untested combination of an **ERG-ABS** agreement alignment with a **NOM-ACC** case alignment cannot be derived (on these assumptions)

- that’s because there is no criterion based on lowest that can be applied to the set of available noun phrases in a clause.

4.2. Back to the Dative Paradox

- The **case-discrimination** property of \( \varphi \)-agreement can explain half of the Dative Paradox —
  - namely, why **DAT** DPs cannot transfer their \( \varphi \)-feature values to probes
  - because \( \varphi \)-agreement requires either:
    - targets marked with unmarked(=**NOM/ABS**) case; or
    - targets marked with unmarked(=**NOM/ABS**) or dependent(=**ACC/ERG**) case

\[ \Rightarrow \] But it does not explain how and why **DAT** DPs end up interacting with \( \varphi \)-probes at all —

  - after all, there are plenty of other expressions (adverbs, other adjuncts) that cannot value \( \varphi \)-features on a probe
    - on a par with non-\( \text{wh} \) phrases vis-à-vis an interrogative \( \text{C} \)\(^3\)

\[^3\]This is not an assumption put in place to derive (16) alone; it is independently necessary to account for the behavior of \( \varphi \)-agreement in Nepali. See the **APPENDIX** for details.

\[^4\]On an **upward valuation** approach to \( \varphi \)-agreement (Preminger 2013, Preminger & Polinsky 2015), highest arises naturally; it is a consequence of minimal iterative search by the probe looking downwards for its goal. Correspondingly, on a **downward valuation** approach to agreement (Abels 2012, Adger 2003, Baker 2008, Bjorkman & Zeijlstra 2014, 2015, Carstens 2016, Merchant 2006, 2011, Wurmbrand 2011, 2012, Zeijlstra 2012), lowest arises naturally, as a consequence of a probe looking upwards for its goal. The observations in the text therefore constitute yet another argument against downward valuation—as any framework that makes lowest a naturally available criterion for agreement relations runs afoot of these facts.
Bobaljik entertains two possible answers to this question:

(i) **“interface-vacuous” movement & order-preservation**
- Suppose that what we descriptively call ‘long-distance agreement’ in Icelandic is actually syntactic movement, in which both PF and LF “interpret” the lower copy
- Suppose that, in line with some of the work on Holmberg’s (1986) Generalization, A-movement in a language like Icelandic must be order-preserving

⇒ to agree with a nom DP across an intervening dat DP, the nom DP would have to undergo interface-vacuous movement to [Spec,TP]; but such movement, having crossed the dat DP, would fail to be order-preserving.

NB: The information that this movement ends up being linearized (at PF) in the low position must not be available at the point when order-preservation is evaluated.

- This amounts to the claim that the Icelandic and French examples repeated here both involve attempted phrasal movement of the nom DP, differing only in where that chain ends up being pronounced / linearized at PF:

(17) það finnst [einverjum stúdent]₇nom ljótar [tólvunar]₇nom
expl find.ispl find.pl some student.sg.dat computers.the.pl nom ugly
‘Some student finds the computers ugly.’ (Icelandic, [=(3)])

(18) Jean₁ semble (??à Marie) [t₁ avoir du talent ]
Jean seems to Marie have.inf of talent
‘Jean seems (to Marie) to have talent.’ (French, [=(12b)])

- In other words, the two derivations ((17) and (18)) have **identical** narrow syntax

⇒ why does this result in a default agreement (“3sg”) in (17), but in ungrammaticality in (18)?

- This approach offers no answer to this question
  - Also relevant here is that linearizing the Jean-chain in its low position (with or without an expletive in [Spec,TP]) does no good:

(ii) **a domains-based approach**
- Suppose that (contrary to appearances), agreement cannot cross **any** clausal boundaries

⇒ things that look like ‘long-distance agreement’ must be an instance of restructuring/clause-union
  - Noting that a single verb might alternate between restructuring and non-restructuring without overt morphological marking of the alternation (Wurmbrand 2001)
  - On this view, the reason datives intervene in examples like (18) is because the restructuring version of a verb like *sembler* (“seem”) is incompatible with an experiencer argument
  - Once an experiencer argument is present, restructuring is impossible, and hence agreement into the embedded domain becomes impossible

⇒ the problems with such an account are twofold —
  - First, it is simply not the case that intervention is restricted to multicausal environments;
  - In monocausal configurations in which a dat DP is located higher than a nom co-argument, the dat intervenes for person agreement
    - Rendering a 1st/2nd person nom argument impossible (see Preminger 2011b, Sigurðsson & Holmberg 2008):

(20) * það hafið einverjum alltaf líkað þið
expl have.2pl some.dat always liked you.nom.pl
Intended: ‘Someone has always liked y’all.’

- Second, the granularity of the domains-based approach is simply too coarse to handle the data
  - Recall that on this approach, datives intervene because a verb that takes an experiencer cannot be a restructuring verb

⇒ resulting in a clause boundary, and the failure of ‘long-distance agreement’
  - Crucially, it is not the case that selecting an experiencer invariably blocks agreement:
Feeding relations and their breakdowns:
a theory of dative intervention

May 2016
Preminger

5. Dative intervention as probing failure

- We then spent some time acquainting ourselves with a recent proposal that, I asserted, pertains to (i):
  - case-discrimination (Bobaljik 2008)

- But Bobaljik’s analysis as it stands says nothing about failed probing —
  - it is about which argument is targeted in instances of successful agreement
    - in particular, about the fact that in all instances where agreement is successful, the DP that has been targeted belongs to a particular subset of the DPs in the clause
      - and that subset is best defined case-theoretically (viz. case-discrimination)
  - there is no explicit discussion of why/how case-discrimination arises

Proposal:

(23) A \(\phi\)-probe, upon encountering a case-incompatible target, will cease probing altogether.

- This will obviously derive (in a rather uninteresting way) the effects of case-discrimination
  - and, in particular, the inability of datives to transfer their feature values to \(\phi\)-probes

- Perhaps of more interest, though, is that this also derives two of our other desiderata:
  - first, it derives the second half of the Dative Paradox:
    - why, if datives are unable to transfer their feature values to the \(\phi\)-probe, do they interact with \(\phi\)-probing at all
      - on the proposal in (23), both sides of the Dative Paradox arise via the same mechanism:
        - datives cannot value features on a \(\phi\)-probe because they trigger the cessation of probing;
        - and this cessation of probing is precisely the effect they do have on the \(\phi\)-probe.
  - second, we will see that it derives the possibility and distribution of dative intervention causing ungrammaticality

- Overall, we have seen that:
  - Bobaljik’s (2008) attempts at explaining the second half of the Dative Paradox—why datives interact with \(\phi\)-probing at all—fall short
- In the next section, I will make use of case-discrimination to furnish an account of both sides of the Dative Paradox

- In the next section, I will make use of case-discrimination to furnish an account of both sides of the Dative Paradox

At the end of §3, we asked whether there was a way to subsume the first, default-generating type of intervention (as in, e.g., Icelandic) under the second, ungrammaticality-generating type of intervention (as in, e.g., French)

We noted that there is indeed a way to view default(="3sg") agreement morphology as the result of the outright failure of probing

This left us with two questions:

(i) What is it about the intervening DAT DP that causes the breakdown of probing?
(ii) If breakdown of probing results in non-valuation (a.k.a. “3sg agreement morphology”), how does ungrammaticality arise in cases like the French (12b)?

Some student finds the computers ugly.

To whom have the boys seemed (to be) intelligent?

[Holmberg & Hróarsdóttir 2003:1010, attributed to Halldór Ármann Sigurðsson, p.c.]

- and it’s not even that the caveat involves movement of the DAT DP to subject position, since this has not taken place in (22);
- it’s just about the DAT DP moving out of the way, be it by A-movement or A-bar movement.

- and it’s not even that the caveat involves movement of the DAT DP to subject position, since this has not taken place in (22);
- it’s just about the DAT DP moving out of the way, be it by A-movement or A-bar movement.

Overall, we have seen that:

- Bobaljik’s (2008) attempts at explaining the second half of the Dative Paradox—why datives interact with \(\phi\)-probing at all—fall short
- In the next section, I will make use of case-discrimination to furnish an account of both sides of the Dative Paradox

- Bobaljik’s (2008) attempts at explaining the second half of the Dative Paradox—why datives interact with \(\phi\)-probing at all—fall short
- In the next section, I will make use of case-discrimination to furnish an account of both sides of the Dative Paradox

- Bobaljik’s (2008) attempts at explaining the second half of the Dative Paradox—why datives interact with \(\phi\)-probing at all—fall short
- In the next section, I will make use of case-discrimination to furnish an account of both sides of the Dative Paradox

- Bobaljik’s (2008) attempts at explaining the second half of the Dative Paradox—why datives interact with \(\phi\)-probing at all—fall short
- In the next section, I will make use of case-discrimination to furnish an account of both sides of the Dative Paradox
5.1. The cessation of probing, and the morphological footprint of non-valuation

- The internal organization of ϕ-features: (highly simplified)

(24) \[ \varphi \]

\[ \begin{array}{c}
\text{[participant]} \\
\text{[plural]} \\
\text{[author]} \\
\text{[highly simplified]} \\
\end{array} \]

◦ [participant] distinguishes all non-3rd person expressions from 3rd person ones; [author] further distinguishes 1st person from 2nd person
◦ [plural] distinguishes plural expressions from singular ones

- Harley & Ritter (2002) and McGinnis (2005) demonstrate the correctness of (24) for deriving the typology of pronominal inventories, and their morphology, across the world’s languages\(^5\)

- Béjar & Rezac (2003, 2009) and Preminger (2014) (a.o.) demonstrate the correctness of (24) for the way syntax represents ϕ-features, as well

⇒ “3rd person singular” is not a featurally represented category —
◦ it reflects the absence of features ([participant] and [plural], to be specific)

Thus, “3rd person singular” can in principle arise in one of two ways:
◦ via successful agreement with a nominal target that just happens to lack both [participant] and [plural]; or
◦ via a failure to successfully target any nominal whatsoever

- Both options will result in a probe that has not been valued with [participant] and/or [plural].

⇒ On the proposal in (23), a ϕ-probe that encounters a DAT DP before any other DP will simply cease its probing — predicting:
✓ the failure of the dative to transfer its own ϕ-feature values to the probe;
✓ the failure of the probe to successfully target any other, structurally farther DP; and
✓ the appearance of “3rd person singular” morphology on the probe (in examples like the Icelandic (3))

The explanatory residue is now this:
- How do we account for the cases where dative intervention gives rise to outright ungrammaticality (in examples like the French (12b))?  

5.2. Agreement feeding movement: not always, but sometimes

- Since Chomsky 2000, it has been widely held that any movement operation (viz. Internal Merge) is prefigured by a corresponding Agree operation
◦ H\(^0\) enters into an Agree relation with XP, and subsequently/consequently, XP moves to (or undergoes Internal Merge in) [Spec,HP]

We know that this is wrong. Here’s why:

- Overt agreement in ϕ-features is double-dissociable from movement
◦ e.g. in Icelandic, there are sentences where agreement targets a nominative non-subject, while the subject (e.g. a DAT DP) is not agreed with:

(25) \[ \text{Einhverjum student}]_1 \quad \text{finnast} \quad t_1 [\text{tölvurnar}] \quad \text{ljótar} \quad \text{some student.SG.DAT} \quad \text{find.PL} \quad \text{computers.the.PL.NOMPLY} \]

‘Some student finds the computers ugly.’ \[=(4)\]

- The standard retort to this (glaring) empirical shortcoming what I’ll call the Abstractness Gambit:
◦ all movement is still prefigured by agreement, it’s just an abstract agreement that has no morpho-phonological expression
◦ so, e.g., in Icelandic, non-nominative (and hence, unagreed-with) subjects are still targeted for abstract agreement prior to their movement
But we just saw that this cannot be the case:
- non-nominative DPs in Icelandic cannot be targeted for agreement, ever
  (this is Bobaljik’s 2008 case-discrimination)
- and a \( \varphi \)-probe encountering a non-nominative DP ceases its probing
  – ipso facto, it will not successfully target the non-nominative DP
- and finally, agreement that systematically lacks any morpho-phonological
  expression is simply not something that natural language permits
  (Preminger 2011b:930–934, and my talk tomorrow @ ZAS)

But that doesn’t mean that movement is never prefigured by agreement . . .

What this all shows us is that movement is not prefigured by agreement in the general case
- in particular, movement to subject position in Icelandic is not prefigured by agreement

But that doesn’t mean that movement is never prefigured by agreement . . .

(26) PATTERNS OF CASE-DISCRIMINATION IN \( \varphi \)-AGREEMENT VS. MOVEMENT TO CANONICAL SUBJECT POSITION (MtoCSP)

- Icelandic: candidates for MtoCSP: \{NOM, ACC, DAT, . . . \} \supset \geq candidates for finite \( \varphi \)-agreement: \{NOM\}
- Hebrew: candidates for MtoCSP: \{NOM\} = candidates for finite \( \varphi \)-agreement: \{NOM\}
- *unattested: candidates for MtoCSP: \{NOM\} \subseteq \supset candidates for finite \( \varphi \)-agreement: \{NOM, ACC\}

In other words:
- Like \( \varphi \)-agreement, movement to canonical subject position (MtoCSP) can be case-discriminating
- But the case-discrimination of MtoCSP is necessarily derivative of the case-discrimination of \( \varphi \)-agreement —

- in no language is MtoCSP case-discriminating in a way independent of the case-discrimination of \( \varphi \)-agreement
- while the converse—\( \varphi \)-agreement being case-discriminating but MtoCSP not—is obviously attested
  – in Icelandic; also in Basque (see Preminger 2009)

We can account for this if quirky-subject languages and non-quirky-subject
languages are derived as follows:

(27) MOVEMENT TO CANONICAL SUBJECT POSITION: TWO TYPOLOGICAL VARIATIONS

- a. MtoCSP_{QSL} = \textit{Move}(DP)^6 \quad \text{[e.g. Icelandic]}
- b. MtoCSP_{NQSL} = \textit{Move}(XP successfully targeted for \( \varphi \)-agreement) \quad \text{[e.g. Hebrew]}

this derives the fact that MtoCSP can either ‘inherit’ the case-discrimination of \( \varphi \)-agreement (27b), or not be case-discriminating at all (27a)
  – which is exactly what we saw in (26)

5.3. The breakdown of feeding: ungrammaticality in dative intervention

- The analysis presented in the last subsection was motivated by considerations having nothing to do with dative intervention —
  – it was all about the relationship between case-discrimination in \( \varphi \)-agreement and case-discrimination in MtoCSP
- But coupled with the proposal in §5.1 (dative intervention as the cessation of probing) —
  – we now have an account for why it is that dative intervention sometimes results in ungrammaticality

---

6Obviously, movement to subject position in Icelandic is actually restricted to the closest DP;
but that is likely to be a product of iterative downward search, just as the closest component of
\( \varphi \)-agreement is.
Let us begin with the (by now) familiar Icelandic example, below:

(28) það finnst /*finnast*/ find. /s.sc/g.sc /*find.*/p.sc/l.sc
     [einhverjum some student.sg.dat] tölvurnar computers.the.pl.nom ugly
     'Some student finds the computers ugly.'

Here, the finite verb (or rather, T°/I°/Infl°) probes downward in search of a ϕ-feature-bearing nominal target

It encounters the DAT DP first (due to iterative downward search), and following (23), this causes the cessation of probing

The result is the characteristic morphology associated with a ϕ-probe that has not been valued with [participant] or with [plural] —

◦ a.k.a. “3sg agreement morphology” (as in finnst “find.sg”)

Structurally speaking, the same exact configuration holds in the French (29):

(29) * Jean semble à Marie [ t° avoir du talent ].
     Jean seems to Marie have.inf of talent
     'Jean seems to Marie to have talent.'

By parity of reasoning, the same thing should happen—namely, the DAT DP will be encountered first, causing the cessation of probing

However, unlike Icelandic, French is not a quirky-subject language

⇒ by hypothesis, movement to canonical subject position in French takes, as its operand, the DP successfully targeted for ϕ-agreement

(30) MtoCSPQSL = Move(XP successfully targeted for ϕ-agreement)

⇒ But given the cessation of probing, there is no such DP in (29).

This means that:

◦ in (29), we are presented with a string in which MtoCSP has happened (viz. Jean occurs to the left of the finite verb);
◦ but the structure of (29) is such that ϕ-agreement could not have culminated successfully;
◦ and so MtoCSP could not have been supplied with a valid operand;

⇒ (29) is not a string that could have been generated by the grammar.

Icelandic, being a quirky-subject language, furnishes a different state of affairs:

◦ recall that in such a language, there is no intrinsic relationship between MtoCSP and whichever DP was targeted for ϕ-agreement

(31) MtoCSPQSL = Move(DP) [= (27a)]

◦ MtoCSP in such a language doesn’t operate on the DP successfully targeted for ϕ-agreement

⇒ which is why sentences like (32), impossible in French, are possible in Icelandic:

(32) [Einhverjum some student] finnst t° tölvurnar computers.the.pl.nom ugly
     'Some student finds the computers ugly.'

6. Conclusion

In this talk, I have:

• Presented the two components of the Dative Paradox —
  ◦ the inability of datives to value ϕ-features on a probe
  ◦ the fact that datives nonetheless have an effect on ϕ-probing

• Surveyed existing accounts of the Dative Paradox, and their inadequacies

• Put forth a novel approach, building on Bobaljik 2008
  ◦ but, departing from Bobaljik, arguing that case-discrimination is a product of case-incompatible targets causing the outright cessation of probing

• Building on previous work (Preminger 2011a, 2014), I showed that this predicts the appearance of ‘default’ agreement morphology (e.g. “3sg”) on the probe

• I then presented a typological argument that, in non-quirky-subject languages, movement to canonical subject position (MtoCSP) operates upon the DP successfully targeted for ϕ-agreement

• Finally, I showed that this assumption, coupled with the earlier results regarding the cessation of probing, furnishes an account of when dative intervention results in a ‘default’ and when it results in ungrammaticality.
Appendix: ϕ-agreement, case and structural height in Nepali

(33) a. ma [yas pasal-mā] patrikā kin-ch-u
1sg.nom dem.obl store-loc newspaper.nom buy-nonpast-1sg
‘I buy the newspaper in this store.’
b. maile [yas pasal-mā] patrikā kin-ē/*yo
1sg.erg dem.obl store-loc newspaper.nom buy.past-1sg/*3sg.m
‘I bought the newspaper in this store.’
c. malāi timī man par-ch-au/*u
1sg.dat 2sg.m.hon.nom liking occur-nonpast-2sg.m.hon/*1sg
‘I like you.’
[Bickel & Yadava 2000:348, via Bobaljik 2008]

(34) AGREEMENT ACCESSIBILITY: NEPALI
unmarked case ⇒ dependent case ⇒ lexical/oblique case
accessible for ϕ-agreement

References


Björkman, Bronwyn & Hedde Zeijlstra. 2014. Upward Agree is superior. Ms., Toronto, ON & Göttingen: University of Toronto & Georg-August-Universität Göttingen. url: https://ling.auf.net/lingbuzz/002350


