

The modular locus of the Person Case Constraint

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1. Introduction

- There is a venerable tradition of viewing the Person Case Constraint (PCC) as a **morphological** effect
 - see Bonet (1991) (and, arguably, Perlmutter 1968, 1971)¹
 - the main evidence in favor of this view comes from the distribution of PCC effects
 - which tracks, to an overwhelming degree, the presence vs. absence of overt φ -agreement with internal arguments
- Recently, some have argued that the PCC involves the syntactic encoding of a semantic property (perspective), and thus, is a **syntax-semantics** interface effect
 - see Charnavel & Mateu (2015) and Pancheva & Zubizarreta (2018)
 - the main evidence in favor of this view is that PCC effects seem to discriminate between perspective-holding 3rd-person DPs and other 3rd-person DPs
- Chronologically and conceptually in between these two views is some lesser-known work showing that the PCC must be **syntactic** in nature
 - see Albizu (1997) and Rezac (2008)
 - the main evidence in favor of this view is that the PCC is sensitive to fine-grained structural relations within the verb phrase
- **Today:** an argument that the PCC is a quintessentially **syntactic** phenomenon
 - i.e., that Albizu (1997) and Rezac (2008) were right

¹Perlmutter (1968, 1971) was operating within a model of grammar in which the syntax-morphology interface was considerably less worked out than it is now. That said, a filter applying at Surface Structure (as he proposed for the PCC), understood in contemporary terms, arguably amounts to a PF filter.

- **Preview:**
 - a **syntax-semantics** effect should not have access to the particular forms of the syntactic terminals involved
 - yet an empirically-adequate account of the PCC requires exactly that
 - a **morphological** effect should not have access to fine-grained syntactic relations like c-command, nor to unboundedly large structural domains
 - yet an empirically-adequate account of the PCC requires exactly that
- ⇒ the only viable account of the PCC is a **strictly syntactic** one
- A **methodological** take-home message:
 - an effect E occurring in module M_1 may have side-effects in some other module M_2 ;
 - crucially, that does not yet mean E is a “ M_2 effect”

2. Getting Started

- Example:² (*Stay tuned for another example, involving the English passive!*)
- (1) a. **ar** tʃa-e-xut'-o **ara**-vi-s (Georgian)
 NEG PVB-APPL-hug-OPT NC-who-OBJ
 ‘Don’t hug_{OPTATIVE} anyone.’
- b. **nu** tʃa-e-xut'-eb-i **nura**-vi-s
 NEG.IMP PVB-APPL-hug-NONPAST-1/2 NC.IMP-who-OBJ
 ‘Don’t hug_{IMPERATIVE} anyone’ [Annemarie van Dooren, p.c.]
- in Georgian, negative-concord items change their form when they are in the scope of the dedicated imperative negator, nu
 - e.g. **aravis** → **nuravis**
- but it would be specious to conclude from this that negative concord is a “morphological effect”

²Abbreviations: 1/2/3: first/second/third person; A(BS): absolutive; A(CC): accusative; APPL: applicative; ART: article; AUX: auxiliary; CL: clitic; D(AT): dative; E(RG): ergative; F: feminine; HAB: habitual; IMP: imperative; IMPF: imperfective; INF: infinitive; LOC: locative; M: masculine; NC: negative concord; NEG: negation; NMZ: nominalization; N(OM): nominative; OBJ: objective case; OPT: optative; PL/pl: plural; PRT: participle; PVB: pre-verb; SBJV: subjunctive; SG/sg: singular; ∅: a phonologically-empty morphological slot; √: lexical root.

- By the same token:
 - the use of ditransitives (or perhaps all applicatives) turns out to have certain perspectival side-effects
 - this is what Charnavel & Mateu (2015) and Pancheva & Zubizarreta (2018) have shown
 - but that is not sufficient grounds on which to conclude that, e.g., the PCC is a “perspectival effect”
- Nothing said so far rules out these putative modular affiliations, of course (neg-concord ∈ morphology, or PCC ∈ syn-sem interface)
- However, **in the neg-concord case**: we have independent reasons to think that the effect must involve syntax and/or semantics³
 - and so, given that the morphological facts do not, by themselves, license the claim that neg-concord is morphological —
 - we can attend to these independent reasons;
 - and safely conclude that neg-concord lives in syntax and/or in semantics and/or at their interface;
 - and that the morphological facts in (1a–b) are a side effect of neg-concord, not constitutive of it.
- Similarly, **in the PCC case**: we have independent reasons to think that the effect is morphosyntactic (see above; to be expanded in §4–§5)
 - and so, given that the perspectival facts do not, by themselves, license the claim that the PCC lives at the syn-sem interface —
 - we can attend to these independent reasons;
 - and safely conclude that the PCC lives squarely in morphosyntax;
 - and that the perspectival facts mentioned earlier are a side effect of the PCC, not constitutive of it.

That’s basically it.

3. A quick refresher on the Person Case Constraint

- The Person Case Constraint (PCC; a.k.a., the “**me-lui* Constraint”):
 - a family of restrictions limiting the PERSON features of different arguments in relation to one another
 - usually affecting combinations of multiple internal arguments of a single predicate
 - ⇒ most commonly illustrated using the DO and IO of a ditransitive verb
- Cross-linguistically, it has been claimed that there are (at least) six (!) varieties of the constraint: *Strong*, *Weak*, *Me-First*, *Total*, *Super-Strong*, and *Ultra-Strong*
 - varying in which combinations of arguments, exactly, are ruled in and ruled out
 - see Anagnostopoulou (2005), Doliana (2014), Graf (2012), Haspelmath (2004), Nevins (2007) and Sturgeon et al. (2012)
- Of course, calling all of these “PCC effects” is a terminological choice;
- The extent to which they are a unitary phenomenon is a matter of analysis
 - for example, the so-called *Total PCC* is just a prohibition on any combination of two weak pronominal objects
 - as such, it may be a purely prosodic effect
- For the remainder of this talk, I will assume that at least those variants that are sensitive to PERSON features —
(i.e., all but the *Total* variant)
— can be treated as a unitary phenomenon at a sufficient level of abstraction.

Example:

- (2) STRONG PCC IN BASQUE: (first approximation)
In finite clauses, the direct object of a ditransitive verb must be 3rd person.

³See De Swart & Sag (2002), Giannakidou (2000), Haegeman & Lohndal (2010), Haegeman & Zanuttini (1996), Herburger (2001), Zanuttini (1991), Zeijlstra (2004, 2008), among others.

- (3) a. Zuk niri liburu-a saldu d-i-Ø-da-zu (Basque)
you.E me.D book-ART_{sg(A)} sell 3.A-√-sg.A-1sg.D-2sg.E
'You have sold the book to me.'
- b. * Zuk harakin-ari ni saldu n-(a)i-Ø-o-zu
you.E butcher-ART_{sg.D} me(A) sell 1.A-√-sg.A-3sg.D-2sg.E
'You have sold me to the butcher.'

[Laka 1996]

- As you can see from (3a–b), the PCC is *asymmetric* —
 - (2) is restriction on the features of the DO in the presence of an IO;
 - but a converse restriction on the features of the IO in the presence of a DO does not generally exist⁴
- The PCC is also *person-specific* —
 - it is a restriction on the PERSON features of the DO in the presence of an IO;
 - but a corresponding restriction on the NUMBER features of the DO in the presence of an IO does not generally exist⁵

4. The crucial syntactic evidence (Albizu 1997, Rezac 2008)

- Albizu and Rezac show that the PCC is a fundamentally *syntactic* effect
- They focus on two-place unaccusatives —
(verbs that take an ABS DP and a DAT DP, but no ERG DP)
— which Rezac calls “applicative unaccusatives”
- It turns out that there are two classes of appl. unaccusatives in Basque:
 - **DAT** >> **ABS** verbs
 - **ABS** >> **DAT** verbs

(for reasons that I won't get into here, all true ditransitives, i.e., triadic verbs, are **ERG** >> **DAT** >> **ABS** in Basque; see Elordieta 2001, Rezac 2008 for independent evidence of this)

⁴See Stegovéc (2019) for a potential exception to this generalization, though one that crucially exists only if the language in question also exhibits the restriction described in the text.

⁵This is what Nevins (2011) calls the hypothetical *Number Case Constraint*, which would prohibit the occurrence of a plural DO in the presence of an IO. While it appears Nevins is right in that no such restriction on the internal arguments of a lexical verb has been documented, Coon et al. (2017) argue that German copular clauses do exhibit a PCC-like effect on NUMBER.

(4) **DAT** >> **ABS**:

- a. DAT binding ABS: ✓
Kepa-ri bere buru-a gusta-tzen zako
Kepa-D his head-ART_{sg(A)} like-HAB AUX
'Kepa likes himself.'
- b. ABS binding DAT: ✗
* Kepa bere buru-a-ri gusta-tzen zako
Kepa(A) his head-ART_{sg-D} like-HAB AUX
Intended: 'Kepa likes himself.'

(5) **ABS** >> **DAT**:

- a. DAT binding ABS: ✗
* Kepa-ri bere buru-a ji-ten zako ispilu-a-n
Kepa-D his head-ART_{sg(A)} come-PROG AUX mirror-ART_{sg(A)}-LOC
Intended: 'Kepa is approaching himself in the mirror.'
- b. ABS binding DAT: ✓
Miren bere buru-a-ri mintzatu zaio
Miren(A) his/her head-ART_{sg-D} talk-PRT AUX
'Miren talked to herself.'

[Rezac 2008:75]

NB: The order of ABS and DAT arguments in Basque is relatively free

- compare (4a) with (6):

- (6) Haiek Itxaso-ri gusta-tzen Ø-zai-zki-o
they(A) Itxaso-D like-HAB 3.A-√-pl.A-3sg.D
'Itxaso likes them.'

[Rezac 2008:63]

- the arguments in (4b, 5a) are simply in the order that would give the example the best chance at well-formedness
 - given a general dispreference for cataphora

➤ Now comes the crucial bit —

- only **DAT** » **ABS** verbs show the PCC;
- **ABS** » **DAT** ones don't.

(7) **DAT** » **ABS** verb:

a. Haiek Itxaso-ri gusta-tzen Ø-zai-zki-o
they(A) Itxaso-D like-IMPf 3.A-√-pl.A-3sg.D
'Itxaso likes them.'

b. */?? Ni Itxaso-ri gusta-tzen na-tzai-Ø-o
me(A) Itxaso-D like-IMPf 1.A-√-sg.A-3sg.D
'Itxaso likes me.'

(8) **ABS** » **DAT** verb:

Ni Peru-ri hurbildu na-tzai-Ø-o
me(A) Peru-D approach 1.A-√-sg.A-3sg.D
'I approached Peru.'

[Rezac 2008:63]

• Notice:

- the putative auxiliary form in (7b) is identical to the one in the (well-formed) (8)

- not only phonologically identical;
- but morphologically identical:

· expressing the same set of <case:φ> associations:
<ABS:1sg>, <DAT:3sg>

➤ the distinction between the two cases is only in the finer hierarchical organization of the **ABS** and **DAT** arguments

(as well as, potentially, the thematic and/or semantic interpretation of the relevant arguments; stay tuned)

This has significant consequences:

- **First**, it shows that the PCC in ditransitives (at least in Basque) is a subcase of a broader pattern:

(9) STRONG PCC IN BASQUE: (revised version)

In those finite clauses that have a **DAT** argument located higher than the **ABS** argument, the **ABS** argument must be 3rd person.

- ditransitives *always* show the PCC because—as noted earlier—they're always **ERG** » **DAT** » **ABS** (Elordieta 2001, Rezac 2008)

- since I'll be arguing later that certain phenomena (perspectival effects in ditrans./applicatives) should not be unified with the PCC —

- let me say a few words about why the unification of (7–8) with the previously-noted effect in ditransitives is warranted

- the claim here is that whatever will account for (7–8) will also account for the PCC in ditransitives (e.g. (3b))

- given Elordieta (2001) and Rezac's (2008) evidence for **ERG** » **DAT** » **ABS** in ditransitives

- as we will see, perspective-based approaches cannot hope to account for the entirety of what commonly falls under the "PCC" umbrella

- in particular, the sensitivity to whether the language happens to have overt morphological φ-agreement

- **Second**, these facts all but eliminate the possibility to account for the PCC in morphology proper

- there is no morphological difference between the **ABS** or **DAT** morphology in (8) and their counterparts in (7)

- neither in the *dependent-marking* morphology nor in the *head-marking* morphology

⇒ either:

- the forms in question are morphologically licit (in which case (7b)) should be good; *or*

- the forms in question are morphologically illicit (in which case (8) should be bad)

- Some other related comments, to head off various potential "rescue maneuvers" for a morphology-based account

- we could endow one of the **DAT** DPs in (7–8) with a diacritic that's absent on the other

- but this would arguably be a restatement of the problem, rather than a solution to it

- more damagingly, it would make the correlation with the binding facts in (4–5) accidental

- we could grant the morphological module access to the finer hierarchical organization of arguments relative to one another
 - but insofar as there is any meaningful distinction between the two modules —
 - finer hierarchical distinctions belong in *syntax*, not in *morphology*
- ⇒ the PCC is not “morphological” under any contentful definition of how morphology differs from syntax

5. Why it *looks* like a morphological matter: the distribution of PCC effects

- We just saw, in the previous section, that the PCC cannot be morphological in nature;
 - But that is exactly what was claimed in work like Bonet 1991, 1994 (and, arguably, in Perlmutter 1968, 1971; see fn. 1)
 - where the PCC was treated as a morphological (or “surface”) filter
- Importantly, this was not a baseless move on the part of Bonet et al. —
- there is a good *prima facie* reason for thinking the effect is a morphological one:

(10) THE DISTRIBUTION OF PCC EFFECTS: A DESCRIPTIVE GENERALIZATION
A construction *C* in language *L* will show PCC effects **iff** verbal elements in *C* show overt φ -feature agreement with at least one internal argument.

Let’s see some examples of (10) in action —

- First, cross-linguistically:
 - Hebrew *IO-before-DO*-ditransitives exhibit a IO ≫ DO hierarchy (Landau 1994, Preminger 2006)...

(11) ha-mehapnet-et ta-cig la-cofe et acmo
the-hypnotist-F FUT.3sg.F-introduce DAT.the-spectator.M ACC REFL.M
‘The (female) hypnotist will introduce the (male) spectator to himself.’
(*lit.* ‘The (female) hypnotist will introduce [to the (male) spectator] [himself].’)

- ... but no PCC:

(12) ha-menahel-et ta-cig la-hem oti
the-manager-F FUT.3sg.F-introduce DAT.the-them ACC.me
‘The (female) manager will introduce me to them.’
(*lit.* ‘The (female) manager will introduce [to them] [me].’)

- crucially: Hebrew lacks overt agreement with either of the internal arguments in ditransitives

NB: There is, of course, overt φ -agreement with the subject in Hebrew; but that is irrelevant to (10), by definition.

⇒ **comparing this state of affairs with, e.g., Basque, illustrates the effects of (10) across languages.**

- But the same is true intra-linguistically:

- recall (13), repeated from earlier:

(13) * Zuk harakin-ari ni saldu *n-(a)i-Ø-o-zu* [= (3b)]
you.E butcher-ART_{sg.D} me(A) sell 1.A-√-sg.A-3sg.D-2sg.E
‘You have sold me to the butcher.’ [Laka 1996]

- unlike finite clauses (e.g. (13)), non-finite clauses in Basque do not exhibit overt φ -agreement morphology;

➤ if we take the *very same verb* with the *very same argument combination* seen in (13) and embed it a non-finite environment —

(14) Gaizki irudi-tzen Ø-zai-Ø-t [zuk ni harakin-ari
wrong look-IMPV 3.A-√-sg.A-1sg.D you.E me(A) butcher-ART_{sg.D}
sal-tze-a]
sold-NMZ-ART_{sg(A)}
‘It seems wrong to me for you to sell me to the butcher.’ [Laka 1996]

— the PCC goes away!

⇒ **comparing (13) with (14) illustrates the effects of (10) within one and the same language.**

- importantly, this is a fact about overt φ -agreement morphology, not about finiteness —
 - Spanish, for example, also exhibits overt agreement morphology reflecting the φ -features of internal arguments
 - or more precisely: it has internal argument clitics
 - but unlike Basque, Spanish retains this agreement morphology in (some) non-finite environments
 - accordingly, the PCC persists in Spanish even in infinitives:
- (15) a. * Juan me los recomendó (Spanish; *Rodrigo Ranero, p.c.*)
Juan CL_{1sg} CL_{3pl} recommend.PAST
'Juan recommended me to them.'
(okay as: 'Juan recommended them to me.')
- b. * Recomendar-me-los es una sorpresa
recommend.INF-CL_{1sg}-CL_{3pl} COP DET_{Fsg} surprise
'Recommending me to them is a surprise.'
(okay as: 'Recommending them to me is a surprise.')
- ⇒ this shows that the language-internal comings & goings of the PCC are not about finiteness —
- rather, they are indeed about the presence/absence of overt φ -agreement morphology
 - the presence/absence of overt φ -agreement morphology is, in turn, a language-specific (and, in fact, marker-specific) matter:
 - Basque ABS agreement disappears in non-finite contexts
 - while Spanish ACC clitics remain⁶
- This raises the immediate (and rather pressing) question:
- **How can the PCC, which is crucially a syntactic phenomenon (as shown in the previous section), be sensitive to the presence of overt φ -agreement morphology (as shown in this section; see (10))?**

⁶This leaves open the question of why a clitic (in the Spanish case) and a marker of pure φ -agreement (in the Basque case) would have, when present, the same effect vis-à-vis the PCC. If the PCC were indeed morphological, this would perhaps be less worrisome; but since that cannot be (§4), the question stands. I will not have time in this talk to discuss the matter in any detail, but the reasoning is as follows: what the PCC is really sensitive to is intervention in a particular kind of agreement relation; the relevant agreement relation is trivially present when the marker in question is a marker of pure φ -agreement; but, as it turns out, agreement of this sort is also a prerequisite to clitic doubling, due to the latter being an instance of long head movement. See Preminger 2019 for detailed discussion.

- The answer, in a nutshell, is this:
- (16) THE NO-NULL-AGREEMENT GENERALIZATION
There is no such thing as morpho-phonologically undetectable φ -feature agreement. [Preminger 2019]
- if the PCC arises due to particular kinds of (syntactic) φ -agreement intervention relations —
 - ⇒ then it will not arise where there is no (syntactic) φ -agreement
 - and if (16) holds —
 - ⇒ then there is no syntactic φ -agreement where there is no overt φ -agreement morphology
- There is of course lots more to say, including:
 - why (16) is agnostic regarding the distinction between “pure” φ -agreement and clitic doubling
(HINT: because clitic doubling, *qua* long head-movement, requires a prior φ -agreement relation anyway)
 - what is the formal status of (16)
(HINT: it's not a principle of grammar, but the result of a particular acquisition strategy)
 - whether (16) causes any trouble for theories of case & agreement
(HINT: only for those that are known to be wrong anyway, e.g. Chomsky 2000, 2001)
 - but we have no time for all that ...
... see the paper for further details.

6. Why the PCC cannot be a “syn-sem interface effect”

6.1. A non-argument for *X* being a “syn-sem interface effect”

- In §2, I gave a sketch of *How not to argue that an effect belongs in module M_2 and not in M_1*
 - based on the demonstration (from Georgian) that negative concord has morphological consequences
 - despite belonging, quite obviously, somewhere in {syntax, syn-sem, semantics}
 - notice that it would even be a mistake to characterize negative concord as a “*syntax-morphology interface effect*”
 - again, despite the fact that it has consequences in morphology
- The conclusion from this is the following:
 - showing that ditransitive/applicative structures have consequences in semantics —
 - e.g. a limitation on the co-occurrence of perspective-takers
 - does not license the inference that the PCC is a “semantic effect”
 - or even that it involves the syntactic encoding of a semantic property (perspective)
 - i.e., that it is a “syn-sem interface effect”
 - just like the negative concord results do not license the inference that negative concord is about the “syntactic encoding of the morphological *ar/nu* alternation”
- Perhaps, though, you think that there is a deep ontological asymmetry between semantics and morphology —
 - (there isn’t; but let’s suspend disbelief for a moment)
 - such that what is good for the goose is not, in fact, good for the gander
- I.e., showing that phenomenon *X* has semantic consequences really does show that *X* is a “semantic effect” —
 - or at least a “syn-sem interface effect” (in the sense outlined above)
- whereas showing that *X* has morphological effects shows nothing about *X*’s modular affiliations
 - it’s just something for morphologists to worry about

- ⇒ Let me show you, then, why this way of thinking (besides being based on a false ontological asymmetry) also doesn’t work
- The demonstration comes from Pullum’s (2014) observations
 - concerning the interaction of the English verbal passive with information structure
 - Pullum shows that in the English passive, the grammatical subject must be at least as old, information-structurally, as the complement of *by* is:
- (17) a. Have you heard the news about YouTube? It was bought by Google.
b. Have you heard the news about Google? *YouTube was bought by it/them. [Pullum 2014:64]
- But no reasonable syntactician would ever take this to indicate that the English passive is a “syn-sem interface phenomenon”
- or that it involves the syntactic encoding of some information-structural feature like [\pm newinfo] or [\pm given] or whatever
- No, what data like (17a–b) show is simply that when syntax makes a given structure available —
 - semantics can overlay additional conditions on the use of that structure
 - in this case, conditions having to do with givenness
- ⇒ Suppose, now, that you had evidence that in ditransitives/applicatives, there could not be more than one perspective-holder
- see Charnavel & Mateu (2015), Ormazabal & Romero (2007), Pancheva & Zubizarreta (2018) and Roca (1992)
- (18) a. Mateo_i piensa que se lo_j/*_i entregaste a la policía.
Mateo thinks that CL.D CL3sg.A handed.2sg to the police
‘Mateo thinks that you handed him over to the police.’
b. El paquete_i especifica que se lo_i entregues al
the package specifies that CL.D CL3sg.A hand-SBJV.2sg to the
portero.
doorman
‘The package specifies that you should hand it over to the doorman.’
[Spanish; Ormazabal & Romero 2007:328]

- this could be evidence that the PCC is a “syn-sem interface effect”
 - and that it is tied to the *syntactic encoding of perspective*
 - cf. a theory of the English passive involving agreement in [\pm newinfo] or [\pm given]
- or (as is actually the case in the passive), it could be evidence that ditransitives/applicatives involve an extra usage condition
 - overlaid in the semantics
 - involving, in this case, a limit on the number of distinct perspective-holders in the verb phrase

6.2. What the PCC is, and where the PCC is

- As we have seen, the existence of perspectival effects associated with ditransitives/applicatives does not —
 - (in and of itself)
 - show that there is such a thing as syntactic encoding of perspective.
- That could still be the case; but it cannot be argued for on semantic grounds (cf. Pullum’s 2014 observations on the passive)
 - it would have to be argued for on syntactic grounds
- Demonstrating that the crosslinguistic typology of PCC effects derives from the hypothetical syntactic encoding of perspective *could* serve as precisely such an argument
 - i.e., a proper, syntactic argument in favor of the syntactic encoding of perspective
- So let me show you that, given the results of §4–§5, a perspective-based derivation of PCC effects is not, in fact, possible.

Premises:

- P1:** Distinctions that are exclusively about *meaning* are inaccessible at the PF(=morphology) interface or beyond(=in morphophonology).
- P2:** Distinctions that are exclusively about *sound/sign* are inaccessible at the LF(=syn-sem) interface or beyond(=in semantics).

NOTE: P1 and P2 are not assumptions in their own right —

- rather, they follow from the assumption that anything that has effects on both meaning and sound/sign is (definitionally) part of narrow syntax
 - and so, is not situated at the interface(s)
 - and certainly not beyond them

Claims:

C1: If the PCC arises via the syntactic encoding of perspective, then to capture generalization (10) (repeated below) —

(10) THE DISTRIBUTION OF PCC EFFECTS: A DESCRIPTIVE GENERALIZATION
A construction *C* in language *L* will show PCC effects **iff** verbal elements in *C* show overt φ -feature agreement with at least one internal argument.

— it must be the case that:

(19) Perspective is not syntactically encoded (or at least, not encoded in the same fashion) when overt φ -agreement morphology is absent.

C2: $P1 \wedge P2$ entails that (19) cannot be represented by the grammar

⇒ And hence, (19) cannot be innate, nor can it be learned by the little language-acquirer.

Potential Objection:

O1: “Surely, what you have just shown is a reductio ad absurdum of $P1 \wedge P2$.”

- One could make an analogous argument, starting from $P1 \wedge P2$, for the claim that the child could not possibly acquire, e.g., (20):
- (20) ‘*a*’ has an indefinite interpretation and ‘*the*’ has a definite interpretation
- and since (20) is clearly both true and successfully acquired, the premise(s) must be flawed

Retort:

R1: Not only are (20) and its ilk not true; they cannot even be grammatically represented.

(20) ‘*a*’ has an indefinite interpretation and ‘*the*’ has a definite interpretation

- Close examination of how syntax interacts with morphology reveals that claims such as —
 - there are ‘words’/‘morphemes’ sitting at the bottom of the syntactic tree;
 - and each of these ‘words’/‘morphemes’ has an interpretation — are simplistic and untenable (Halle & Marantz 1993, Harley & Noyer 1999, Marantz 1997, 2001, Noyer 1997, *i.m.a.*)⁷

- A ‘morpheme’ is a piece of morphophonology that gets inserted in a particular syntactic context
- A ‘meaning’ is a piece of semantics that gets inserted in a particular syntactic context

➤ **Crucially:**

- these insertion contexts get assembled by syntax;
- and the bit of syntax that PF “bites off” need not (and often, does not) align with the bit of syntax that LF “bites off”
 - cf.: geese; went; in cahoots

⇒ morphemes don’t “have meanings,” and meanings don’t “have forms,” in any direct sense

- It may be the case that in something like ‘*a*’, the syntactic contexts for PF insertion and LF insertion happen to align —
 - though as a matter of fact, they probably do not;
 - the single morpheme ‘*a*’ probably corresponds to at least two meaning components (indefiniteness and atomicity; cf. ‘*the*’)— but even if that were so, it would necessarily be an accident of this particular example; it cannot be the design of the system

⇒ (20) is indeed false, and therefore, cannot support an argument against P1 and/or P2 (repeated below).

P1: Distinctions that are exclusively about *meaning* are inaccessible at the PF(=morphology) interface or beyond(=in morphophonology).

P2: Distinctions that are exclusively about *sound/sign* are inaccessible at the LF(=syn-sem) interface or beyond(=in semantics).

- What the child acquires when it comes to, e.g., ‘*a*’ and INDEFINITENESS, is:
 - that there is a particular syntax S_1 that will (under the right circumstances) get spelled out as ‘*a*’;
 - that there is a particular syntax S_2 that will (under the right circumstances) get interpreted as INDEFINITENESS;
 - and that S_1 and S_2 bear some interesting relation to each other
 - possibly identity; but more likely, overlap or containment



➤ Given all of this, it would be impossible for the child to learn that perspective co-varies with overt φ -agreement morphology

- since that would violate $P1 \wedge P2$

• And in any event:

- I’m fairly certain that speakers of, e.g., Hebrew have a semantico-pragmatic notion of ‘perspective’, too;
- but they have no PCC.

⇒ What we have, then, is a dissociation between overt φ -morphology and perspective —

- and what the PCC tracks with is overt φ -morphology
 - not perspective.

- Finally, insofar as what we mean by ‘perspective’ *is* a syntactic feature —
 - it is one that must track more or less perfectly with overt φ -agreement morphology;
 - furthermore, the relation between this feature and the semantico-pragmatic entity of the same name is variable and inconsistent (cf. Hebrew)

⇒ it’s fairly misleading, then, to refer to the relevant syntactic features using the term ‘perspective’!

⁷See Kučerová (2018a,b) for recent discussion of related ideas.

7. Conclusion

- The PCC is a syntactic effect proper
 - not a PF interface effect or an LF interface effect
 - i.e., it is not morphological, nor is it perspective-based
 - insofar as what we mean by ‘perspective’ is something semantico-pragmatic
 - rather than a syntactic feature, whose relation to the semantico-pragmatic entity is contingent and cross-linguistically variable (in which case, calling it ‘perspective’ would be quite misleading)

⇒ What to make of the perspectival effects uncovered by Charnavel & Mateu (2015), Ormazabal & Romero (2007), Pancheva & Zubizarreta (2018), Roca (1992), and others?

- ANSWER: something analogous to whatever we want to make of Pullum’s information-structural effects in the passive —
 - namely: when syntax makes a construction (passive, ditransitive, applicative, etc.) available, semantics can overlay additional usage-conditions on it
 - e.g. “don’t have more than one perspective-holder within the verbal phase / within the set of non-Agents / ...”



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