

*Feeding relations and their breakdowns:  
a theory of dative intervention*

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## 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  $\varphi$ -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).

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## 2. The Dative Paradox

### 2.1. The inability of datives to value features on a $\varphi$ -probe

- (1) Morgum studentum liki/\*lika verkið (Icelandic)  
many students.PL.DAT like<sub>[3sg/\*3pl]</sub>job.the.NOM  
‘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<sub>[3sg/\*3pl]</sub>  
‘The boys were bored.’  
b. Strákarnir leiddust/\*leiddist  
boys.the.PL.NOM walked.hand.in.hand<sub>[3pl/\*3sg]</sub>  
‘The boys walked hand in hand.’ [Sigurðsson 1996]

⇒ So far, this suggests:

- datives, *when viewed from the outside*, lack the kind of features that  $\varphi$ -probes seek

### 2.2. Intervention of datives in $\varphi$ -probing

- All things being equal, this predicts that  $\varphi$ -probes would be able to ignore dative nominals —
  - much like, e.g., a [*wh*]-seeking C<sup>0</sup> 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  $\varphi$ -probe —
    - they are capable of *disrupting* the relationship between a  $\varphi$ -probe and what would otherwise be its target:<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>This 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.

(3)  $\overline{\text{pa}\theta}$   $\overline{\text{finnst}}(/*\text{finnast})$   $[\text{einhverjum stúdent}]_{\text{DAT}}$   $\overline{\text{tölvurnar}}$   $\overline{\text{ljótar}}$   
EXPL find.SG/\*find.PL some student.SG.DAT computers.the.PL.NOM ugly  
'Some student finds the computers ugly.'

(4)  $[\text{Einhverjum stúdent}]_1$   $\overline{\text{finnast}}$   $t_1$   $\overline{\text{tölvurnar}}$   $\overline{\text{ljótar}}$   
some student.SG.DAT find.PL computers.the.PL.NOM ugly  
'Some student finds the computers ugly.'

[Holmberg & Hróarsdóttir 2003:999–1006]

✦ 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-*wh* phrases, which are outright ignored for *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-*wh* phrases vis-à-vis  $C^0$ )
- ⇒ *activity* is essentially a diacritic
  - $\varphi$ -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-ik**'i-s (Tsez)  
**cow.III(A) III-go-PAST.EVID**  
'The cow left.'
- b. eniy-ā **ziya** **b-išer-si**  
mother-E **cow.III(A) III-feed-PAST.EVID**  
'The mother fed the cow.'

- (6) a. eni-r [uži ∅-āy-ru-ŋi] ∅-iy-xo  
mother-D **boy.I(A)** I-arrive-PAST.PRT-NMZ I-know-PRES  
'The mother knows that as for the boy, he arrived.'
- b. eni-r [už-ā magalu b-āc'-ru-ŋi] b-iy-xo  
mother-D boy-E **bread.III(A)** III-eat-PAST.PRT-NMZ III-know-PRES  
'The mother knows that as for the bread, the boy ate it.'
- [Polinsky & Potsdam 2001:586, 606]

- o this is not agreement with the embedded clause in its entirety; that looks different:

- (7) a. eni-r [uži ∅-āy-ru-ŋi] r-iy-xo  
mother-D boy.I(A) I-arrive-PAST.PRT-NMZ(IV) IV-know-PRES  
'The mother knows that as for the boy, he arrived.'
- b. eni-r [už-ā magalu b-āc'-ru-ŋi] r-iy-xo  
mother-D boy-E bread.III(A) III-eat-PAST.PRT-NMZ(IV) IV-know-PRES  
'The mother knows that as for the bread, the boy ate it.'
- [Polinsky & Potsdam 2001:605]

- o 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  $\varphi$ -feature set

⇒ we could posit some 'unseen' member of the  $\varphi$ -set of, e.g., *magalu* ("bread.III(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:

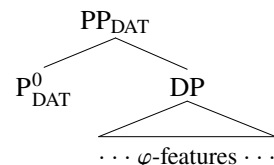
- i. circular
- ii. very hard for the child to acquire
- iii. run afoul of the argument against the existence of systematically-null  $\varphi$ -agreement (see Preminger 2011b:930–934, as well as my talk tomorrow @ ZAS)

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

### 3.2. A functional-shells approach

- Suppose that:
  - o 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
  - o see Rezac (2008) and Richards (2004), *a.o.*
- I'll assume, following Rezac (2008), that the functional structure in question is  $PP_{DAT}$ 
  - o 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



- Two scenarios to consider:
  - (i)  $PP_{DAT}$  constitutes a locality domain ('phase'):
    - o if  $P^0_{DAT}$  has no  $\varphi$ -features, the entire  $PP_{DAT}$  should be ignored by  $\varphi$ -probes  $\rightarrow \perp$
  - (ii)  $PP_{DAT}$  does not constitute a locality domain ('phase'):
    - o if  $P^0_{DAT}$  has no  $\varphi$ -features, the  $\varphi$ -features of DP should be visible from the outside, allowing valuation  $\rightarrow \perp$

⇒ Overall, the conclusion is that  $P^0_{DAT}$  must have  $\varphi$ -features.

- The next question is: what are the  $\varphi$ -features that  $PP_{DAT}$  has?
  - They could be *valued* or *unvalued* —
    - o 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
  - which is consistent with the dative bearing valued 3sg features
- However, in another class of languages (Dryer’s 1986 “primary-/secondary-object” languages):
  - 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** (Chol)

PRFV 2.ERG-see-**1.ABS**  
‘You saw me.’

b. tyi i-ch’äx-be-**yoñ** ja’ x-’ixik

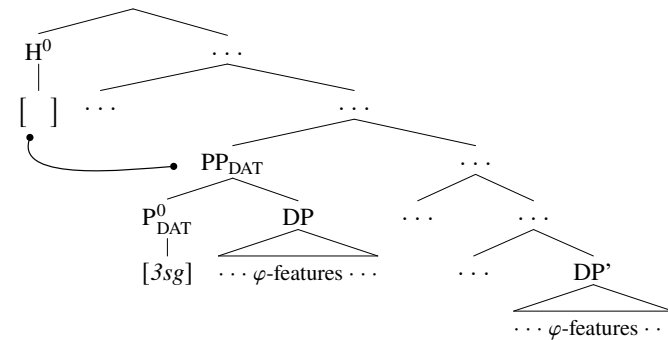
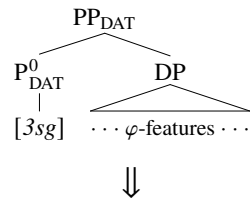
PRFV 3.ERG-boil-APPL-**1.ABS** water CLF-woman  
‘The woman boiled me water.’

[Coon 2010:34, 199; glosses simplified slightly]

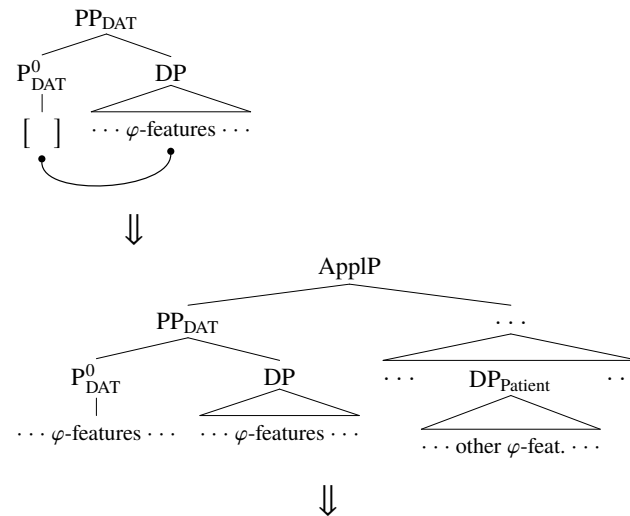
- this is consistent with P<sup>0</sup><sub>DAT</sub> in the relevant languages bearing *unvalued*  $\varphi$ -features
  - which then probe for and copy the  $\varphi$ -feature values found on the DP
- causing the entire PP<sub>DAT</sub> to act, for  $\varphi$ -agreement purposes, as a bearer of the  $\varphi$ -feature values of the enclosed DP

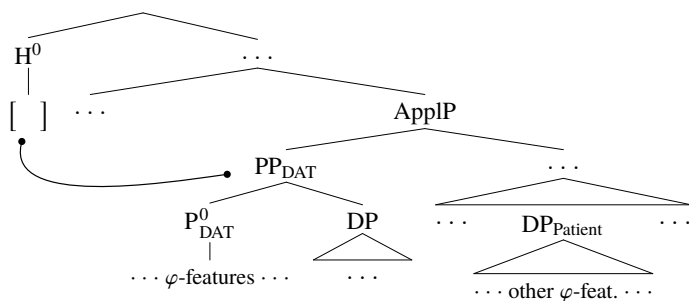
(10) FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE DATIVE NOUN PHRASE: ICELANDIC-TYPE

[≈(3)]



(11) FUNCTIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE DATIVE NOUN PHRASE: CHOL-TYPE [≈(9b)]





- Alas, attractive as it is, this approach suffers several problems:
  - **first**, why is the valued version of  $\varphi$ -features on  $PP_{DAT}$  (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  $P^0_{DAT}$  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 of talent  
‘It seems (to Marie) that Jean has talent.’
- b.  $Jean_{t_1}$  semble (?\*à Marie) [  $t_1$  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)

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

- (13) a. \* [À Marie]<sub>1</sub> semble  $t_1$  [ Jean avoir du talent ]  
to Marie seem Jean have.INF of talent  
Intended: ‘It seems to Marie that Jean has talent.’
- b. \* [À Marie]<sub>1</sub> semble  $t_1$  [ 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—invented 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 finnst [einhverjum stúdent]<sub>DAT</sub> tölvurnar ljótar  
EXPL find.SG/\*find.PL some student.SG.DAT computers.the.PL.NOM ugly  
 ‘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 DAT phrase, in lieu of the NOM
  - but given the privative (and geometric) nature of  $\varphi$ -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  $\varphi$ -agreement is *case-discriminating*<sup>2</sup>
  - 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

<sup>2</sup>The term *case discrimination* is mine—but other than that, everything I present in this subsection is due to Bobaljik.

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 líki/\*líka verkið. [= (1)]  
 many students.PL.DAT like.3sg/\*3pl job.the.NOM  
 ‘Many students like the job.’ [Harley 1995]

b. Jóni líkuðu [þessir sokkar].  
 Jon.DAT liked.PL [these socks ].NOM  
 ‘Jon liked these socks.’ [Jónsson 1996:149]

- see Andrews 1976, Sigurðsson 1989, Thráinsson 1979, Zaenen et al. 1985 (among many others) for evidence that the DAT DPs in (14a–b) are indeed subjects
- and see Harley 1995, Jónsson 1996 (among many others) for evidence that the NOM DPs in (14a–b) are indeed direct objects

- another illustration is any language with an ergative alignment in its agreement system; we have already seen such examples:

(15) a. **ziya** **b-ik**’i-s (Tsez)  
 cow.III(A) III-go-PAST.EVID  
 ‘The cow left.’

b. eniy-ā **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

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

(16) A TYPOLOGICAL GAP IN CASE VS. AGREEMENT ALIGNMENTS

		agreement alignment	
		NOM-ACC	ERG-ABS
case alignment	NOM-ACC	✓ (English, Icelandic)	✗
	ERG-ABS	✓ (Warlpiri, Chukchi)	✓ (Basque, Tsez)

[Anderson 1977, Comrie 1978, Dixon 1979/1994, a.o.]

- o 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<sup>3</sup>
- o 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

<sup>3</sup>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.

- 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

⇒ the unattested 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<sup>4</sup>

#### 4.2. Back to the Dative Paradox

- The *case-discrimination* property of  $\varphi$ -agreement can explain half of the Dative Paradox —
  - o 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
- But it does not explain how and why DAT DPs end up interacting with  $\varphi$ -probes at all —
  - o after all, there are plenty of other expressions (adverbs, other adjuncts) that cannot value  $\varphi$ -features on a probe
    - and these simply do not interact with the probe
      - on a par with non-*wh* phrases vis-à-vis an interrogative C<sup>0</sup>

<sup>4</sup>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 afoul 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
- and 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)  $\overbrace{\text{það} \text{ finnst} \text{ [/*finnst]} \text{ [einhverjum stúdent]}_{\text{DAT}} \text{ tölvurnar} \text{ ljótar}}^{\text{X}}$   
EXPL find.SG/\*find.PL some student.SG.DAT computers.the.PL.NOM ugly  
 ‘Some student finds the computers ugly.’  
*(Icelandic, [= (3)])*

(18)  $\overbrace{\text{Jean}_1 \text{ semble} \text{ (?*à Marie)} \text{ [ } t_1 \text{ avoir du talent ]}}^{\text{X}}$   
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:

(19) \* (II)  $\text{semble à Marie [ Jean avoir du talent ]}$ .  
(EXPL) seems to Marie Jean have.INF of talent  
*Intended: ‘Jean seems (to Marie) to have talent.’*

(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 multiclausal environments;
- in monoclausal 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) \*  $\text{það} \text{ hafið} \text{ einhverjum alltaf líkað þið}$   
EXPL have.2pl some.DAT always liked you.NOM.PL  
*Intended: ‘Someone has always liked y’all.’*  
*[Sigurðsson & Holmberg 2008:257]*

- **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:



(21) [Einhverjum stúdent]<sub>1</sub> finnast t<sub>1</sub> [sc tölvurnar ljótar ].  
 some student.SG.DAT find.PL computers.the.PL.NOMugly  
 ‘Some student finds the computers ugly.’ [= (4)]

(22) Hverjum<sub>1</sub> hafa strákanir<sub>2</sub> virst t<sub>1</sub> [ t<sub>2</sub> vera gáfaðir ] ?  
 who.DAT have.PL boys.the.NOM seemed be intelligent  
 ‘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.

↔ **Overall**, we have seen that:

- Bobaljik’s (2008) attempts at explaining the second half of the Dative Paradox—why datives interact with  $\varphi$ -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. Dative intervention as probing failure**

- 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)?

- 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

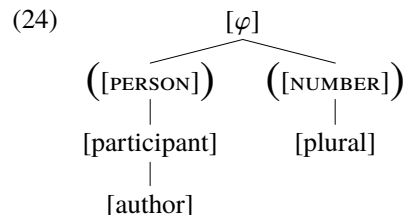
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**Proposal:**

- (23) A  $\varphi$ -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  $\varphi$ -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  $\varphi$ -probe, do they interact with  $\varphi$ -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  $\varphi$ -probe because they trigger the cessation of probing;
        - and this cessation of probing is precisely the effect they do have on the  $\varphi$ -probe.
    - **second**, we will see that it derives the possibility and distribution of dative intervention causing ungrammaticality

### 5.1. The cessation of probing, and the morphological footprint of non-valuation

- The internal organization of  $\varphi$ -features: (*highly simplified*)



- [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<sup>5</sup>
- Béjar & Rezac (2003, 2009) and Preminger (2014) (*a.o.*) demonstrate the correctness of (24) for the way syntax represents  $\varphi$ -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  $\varphi$ -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  $\varphi$ -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:

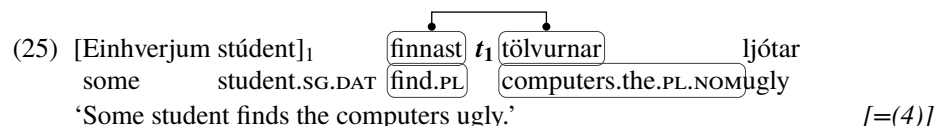
- How do we account for the cases where dative intervention gives rise to outright ungrammaticality (in examples like the French (12b))?

### 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  $\varphi$ -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:



- 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

<sup>5</sup>Though see Nevins (2007) for dissent concerning the representation of 3rd person, in particular.

- ➔ 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 DPs 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)

.....

- 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)

a. Icelandic:	candidates for MtoCSP: {NOM, ACC, DAT, ...}	$\supseteq$	candidates for finite $\varphi$ -agreement: {NOM}
b. Hebrew:	candidates for MtoCSP: {NOM}	=	candidates for finite $\varphi$ -agreement: {NOM}
c. *unattested:	<b>candidates for MtoCSP: {NOM}</b>	$\not\subseteq$	<b>candidates for finite <math>\varphi</math>-agreement: {NOM, ACC}</b>

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.  $MtoCSP_{QSL} = Move(DP)^6$  [e.g. Icelandic]
- b.  $MtoCSP_{NQL} = Move(XP \text{ successfully targeted for } \varphi\text{-agreement})$  [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*

<sup>6</sup>Obviously, 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(/\*finnst) [einhverjum stúdent]<sub>DAT</sub> tölvurnar ljótar  
EXPL find.SG/\*find.PL some student.SG.DAT computers.the.PL.NOMugly  
'Some student finds the computers ugly.'  
[=(3)]

- Here, the finite verb (or rather,  $T^0/I^0/Infl^0$ ) probes downward in search of a  $\varphi$ -feature-bearing nominal target
- It encounters the <sub>DAT</sub> 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  $\varphi$ -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<sub>1</sub> semble à Marie [ t<sub>1</sub> avoir du talent ].  
Jean seems to Marie have.INF of talent  
'Jean seems to Marie to have talent.'  
[≈(12b)]

- By parity of reasoning, the same thing should happen—namely, the <sub>DAT</sub> 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  $\varphi$ -agreement

(30) MtoCSP<sub>NQSL</sub> = *Move* (XP successfully targeted for  $\varphi$ -agreement)  
[=(27b)]

- ✦ 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  $\varphi$ -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  $\varphi$ -agreement

(31) MtoCSP<sub>QSL</sub> = *Move* (DP) [=(27a)]

- MtoCSP in such a language doesn't operate on the DP successfully targeted for  $\varphi$ -agreement  
⇒ which is why sentences like (32), impossible in French, are possible in Icelandic:

(32) [Einhverjum stúdent]<sub>1</sub> finnst t<sub>1</sub> tölvurnar ljótar  
some student.SG.DAT find.PL computers.the.PL.NOM ugly  
'Some student finds the computers ugly.'  
[=(4)]



## 6. Conclusion

In this talk, I have:

- Presented the two components of the *Dative Paradox* —
  - the inability of datives to value  $\varphi$ -features on a probe
  - the fact that datives nonetheless have an effect on  $\varphi$ -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  $\varphi$ -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: $\varphi$ -agreement, case and structural height in Nepali

- (33) a. **ma** [ yas pasāl-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 pasāl-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 & Yādava 2000:348, via Bobaljik 2008]

- (34) AGREEMENT ACCESSIBILITY: NEPALI  
 unmarked case  $\gg$  dependent case  $\gg$  lexical/oblique case
- accessible for*  
 *$\varphi$ -agreement*

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