The Complexity of Pronouns

Little Words, Big Issues
SOURCES


Adger, David and Daniel Harbour. 2007. Syntax and syncretisms of the person case constraint. Syntax 10:2-37


OUR ROADMAP

- Optional agreement with pronouns in Buckie English
- The Person Case Constraint (PCC)
- The Person Restriction in Icelandic
- A unified approach
Agreement with Pronouns in Buckie English

Scottish English dialect spoken in Buckie, Scotland

Was/were variability: With some Nominative pronouns – the 1st plural and the 2nd singular and plural – agreement of the past tense copula is optional.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nominative Pronoun</th>
<th>Verb form allowed</th>
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<th>Verb form allowed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st singular</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>was</td>
<td>2nd plural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st plural</td>
<td>we</td>
<td>was/were</td>
<td>3rd singular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd singular</td>
<td>you</td>
<td>was/were</td>
<td>3rd plural</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

a. Mandatory agreement with 1st singular

“So, when I was/*were cleaning at Christmas...”

b. Optional agreement with 1st plural

“There was one nicht we were lying at anchor.”
‘There was one night we were lying at anchor.’

b’. “We played on ‘at beach til we was tired, sailin boaties, bilin whelks.”

‘We played on that beach until we were tired, sailing boats, boiling whelks.’ (Adger 2006:512)
Feature Composition of Pronouns

3rd person pronouns don't have an author specification at all.

Optional agreement can only arise if there's an [author] specification.
The Basic Idea

- [was] can express all features or a subset of features
- Corpus data reveals that, when there's optionality, the form that expresses the most features is preferred "roughly" 2 to 1
- "was" is used two-thirds of the time with we and singular you

The Main Point: The features on pronouns are important!
The Person Case Constraint
an intriguing phenomenon
Ditransitivities in Catalan

GOOD

Direct object clitic (accusative):
- 3rd person l'

Indirect object clitic (dative):
- 1st person me

GOOD

- Just one object clitic: 1st person accusative m'
- No indirect object clitic required in (3) because 'al director' hasn't been topicalized

(2) El director, me l’ ha recomanat la Mireia
the director, 1Sg 3Sg.Acc has recommended the Mireia
‘As for the director, Mireia has recommended him to me’

(3) La Mireia m’ ha recomanat al director
the Mireia 1Sg has recommended to-the director
‘Mireia has recommended me to the director’
BAD = (1)  
Direct object clitic (accusative):  
- 1\textsuperscript{st} person me  

Indirect object clitic (dative):  
- 3\textsuperscript{rd} person li  

ALSO BAD = (4)  
- Combination of 1\textsuperscript{st} and 2\textsuperscript{nd} person object clitics.  

BUT...there's a lot of speaker variation.  
- Strong Version: (4) is bad  
  - Most of the literature focuses on this version  
- Weak Version: (4a) or (4b) or both are good  

\textbf{The PCC in Catalan}
Repair Strategies in Catalan

- The indirect object clitic changes its shape
- *hi* is used instead of *li*
  - And *hi* is interpreted as a goal

Catalan has a locative clitic *hi*...
...but Bonet argues that it’s not the same clitic

- **hi** is also an inanimate dative clitic = (10b)
  - **li** is used for the animate object in (9b)
  - **hi** has a goal and location interpretation

- **li** can also be used for inanimate datives = (11a)
  - **li** has an affected goal interpretation here

- But **hi** cannot be used with animates = (11b)

- **li** = inanimate or animate
- **hi** = inanimate
But... *hi* with inanimates doesn't always have a locative interpretation...

(12) a. *A la meva filla, li dedico molt de temps* to the my daughter, 3Sg.Dat devote lot of time 'As for my daughter, I devote lots of time to her'

b. *A això, hi dedico molt de temps* to this, *hi* devote lot of time 'As for this, I devote lots of time to it'
...and inanimate indirect objects aren't real locatives

- When 'give blows' is replaced with 'strike,' the indirect object becomes a direct object (accusative clitic), regardless of animacy.
- Real locatives aren't replaced by an accusative clitic.
  - *hi* is used in (16/17b)
And...

...li is inflected for number, but hi isn't inflected at all.

Bonet's proposal: hi is dative, but doesn't express any other features.

The Big Picture: Catalan avoids a PCC violation by changing the indirect object to a form that doesn't conflict with the direct object. (19) = (3)
PREVIOUS ANALYSES of the PCC

Ormazábal and Romero (2007): Object animacy
Adger and Harbour (2007): [participant]
Anagnastopoulou (2003/2005): Competition and blocking
Ormazábal and Romero (2007)

- Some dialects allow a 1st/2nd person inanimate object = (22a)
- But don’t allow a 1st/2nd person animate object = (22b)
  - (But, maybe (22b) is just pragmatically odd…)

- 1st and 2nd person is inherently animate
- Only 3rd person can distinguish between animate and inanimate and some dialects of Spanish use different clitics = (21)
Proposal

- The PCC should be split into an Object Animacy Generalization and an Object Agreement Constraint
- There’s agreement with the direct object only if the d.o. is animate

(1) Is bad because there’s an animate d.o., so there has to be agreement with the d.o. By (24), the indirect object clitic can’t be licensed.

(2) Is good because the direct object is 3rd person – and not specified for animacy. There is no agreement with the d.o and the i.o. can be licensed.
Bonet’s Critique of Ormazábal & Romero

- Their Proposal:
  - (27b): bad because it violates the Object Agreement Constraint
  - (27a): only one clitic, so OK

- But, this doesn’t apply to colloquial Spanish
- Clitics can be dropped as a PCC repair = (29b)
- But (27b) is still bad = (30)
- But adding “leg” makes it better = (31)

- Ø Suggests that the indirect object is also sensitive to animacy in Spanish
Adger & Harbour (2007) ~ The PCC in Kiowa
Spoken in Oklahoma by 100 – 400 people

- A verbal prefix shows agreement with the subject, indirect object, and direct object = (6)

- If the direct object is 1st/2nd person, the indirect object has to occur in a non-agreeing postpositional phrase = (8)

- If the direct object is 3rd person, the prefix encodes agreement with all arguments: (9) = (6)
Adger & Harbour’s Assumptions About Features

- [participant] entails semantic animacy but the absence of [participant] doesn’t entail anything
  - Something that’s animate could not have a participant feature
- Indirect objects always have [participant]
- In Kiowa, the i.o. is always animate...
- ...and, inanimate indirect objects are odd in English
Review of Structure for Ditransitives

**English**
The students gave their professor a necklace.

**Icelandic**
Ég sendi Hildi fiskinn
‘I sent Hildur the fish.’
Adger & Harbour’s Proposal

• The Appl head is “defective.” It has only a number feature
  • The other heads have a complete set of phi features

• The DP in Spec, ApplP has to have a [participant] feature
  • Indirect objects are animate

• The direct object and the Appl head are in a relationship
  ➢ The d.o. can’t have a [participant] feature because the Appl head wouldn’t be able to check it
  ➢ D.o.’s have to be 3rd person

• Indirect objects are in a relationship with v, which has all phi features, so i.o.’s can have a [participant] feature
  ➢ I.o.’s can be 1st/2nd person
Bonet’s Critique of Adger & Harbour

- In Catalan, the i.o. can be inanimate
  - But we could assume that an i.o. doesn’t have to have [participant]
- Bigger Problem: For A&H, a d.o. can never have [participant]
- Can’t account for Catalan repair strategy
  - The i.o. changes to hi, but the d.o. remains 1\textsuperscript{st}/2\textsuperscript{nd} person
PCC in Greek

- (c/d) are bad because the direct object, the Accusative, is 1st/2nd person

- Anagnostopoulou argues for a parallel between the PCC and...

a. Θα μου το στίλουν 'They will send it to me.'

b. Θα σου το στίλουν 'They will send him to you.'

c. *Θα σου με στίζουν 'They will introduce me to you.'

d. *Θα του σε στίλουν 'They will send you to him.' (Bonet 1991:182)
The Person Restriction in Icelandic

- In transitive constructions with non-nominative subjects, the object can't be 1\textsuperscript{st}/2\textsuperscript{nd} person
- The verb can't agree or appear in the default.
- The sentence is just bad!

   her.dat bored.3sg we.nom.pl/you.nom.pl
   ‘She found us/you boring.’

b. Henni leiddist/leiddust þeir.
   her.dat bored.3sg/3pl they.nom.pl
   ‘She found them boring.’

c. *Henni vorum/voruð/var sýndir við/pið.
   her.dat was.1pl/2pl/3sg shown we.nom.pl/you.nom.pl
   ‘She was shown us/you.’

d. Henni voru sýndir þeir.
   her.dat was.3pl shown.nom.pl.masc they.nom.pl.masc
   ‘She was shown them.’
• T probes the Dative. The Dative has an EPP relationship with T.

• The Dative values the person feature on T to [default].
  • À la Adger&Harbour: Datives have odd and special powers!
  • Here: Non-structural case-marked DPs value person but not number.

• T keeps probing because it needs a value for Number.

• The Number feature on the object can be checked, but the Person feature on the object can't be checked.
  ➢ The Person feature on T has already been checked by the Dative.

• Anagnostopoulou adopts the idea that case-assignment is a consequence of phi-feature checking. (This is part of a longer line of research which attempts to minimize the importance of case in the syntactic derivation.)
  ➢ Since all of the object’s features can’t be checked, the object can’t get case, so the derivation crashes.

• There could also be a feature clash. [uPerson] gets a [default] value from the Dative, and then gets a [1]/[2] value from the object. BAD.
  ➢ Crucial Assumption: 3\textsuperscript{rd} person DPs do not have a Person value, so nothing goes wrong when T probes a 3\textsuperscript{rd} person object DP.

Anagnostopoulou’s Analysis for Icelandic
• T isn’t relevant here. T assigns nominative and inherits the features of the subject.

• On Anagnostopoulou’s analysis, structural case-assigning heads behave the same way.
  • \( v \) has phi features (person, number) that it needs to get a value for, just as T does.
  • \( v \) probes the Dative/Genitive because the Dative/Genitive is the closest DP that \( v \) c-commands.
  • Once again, the non-structural case-marked DP values Person to [default].
  • \( v \) keeps probing because it needs Number to be valued. \( v \) reaches the direct object and we get a crash for the same reasons we get a crash for 1\(^{st}/2\(^{nd}\) nominative objects in Icelandic.
Anagnostopoulou argues that the PCC—which is a cross-linguistic phenomenon—can be unified with the Person Restriction in Icelandic.

What links these two phenomena is that there’s a restriction on the person value of a direct object.

- In PCC languages, the restriction is on the Accusative argument.
- In Icelandic, the restriction is on the Nominative argument when the Nominative is an object.

The analysis for both types of construction is essentially the same.

- A non-structurally case-assigned argument intervenes between a structural case-assigning functional head and the direct object and disrupts the relationship.

In PCC languages, this DP intervenes between \( \text{v} \) and the Accusative and in Icelandic, this DP intervenes between \( T \) and the Nominative.
My Critique of Anagnostopoulou: Optional Agreement is Problematic

• On Anagnostopoulou’s account, things go sour when all of the features of a DP can’t be checked.
• This predicts that we always get number agreement with Nominative objects. **Not true.**
• It’s actually OK for the Number feature on the object to go unchecked and for the derivation to survive.

'Some old men like top hats.'

'Many students got congratulations.'

'Many exchange students found these exams to be unfair.'

'Some of the kids seemed to hear the cats sneak up the stairs.'
The PCC is a cross-linguistic phenomenon that restricts the combination of direct and indirect object pronouns/clitics.

Syntactic accounts of the PCC are based on proposals about how the features on dative and accusative pronouns behave differently.

Attempts to unify the PCC across languages often fall short and fail to account for language-particular patterns/facts.