

ON THE FUNCTIONAL PROPERTIES OF AGR

Gemma Rigau

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

This paper is concerned with the properties of the Agreement node: Person and Number. We analyze the role that each of these elements plays in the sentence. It will be claimed that Person is the Nominative Case assigner, whereas Number marks the most prominent argument of the predicate. Consequently, number agreement between the verb and an argument does not necessarily mean that the argument receives Nominative Case. The data we will discuss belongs to two Catalan dialects Northwestern and Central. It will be proposed that number agreement is autonomous with respect to person agreement in Northwestern Catalan. In Central Catalan, however, lack of specification for Person entails lack of specification for Number.

0. Introduction

Functional elements have traditionally been considered the expression of the relation that holds between the subject and the predicate in a clausal structure. It has long been accepted that, in many languages, the functional category AGR_{SUBJECT} may contain two elements: PERSON and NUMBER. In this paper, I analyze the role that each of these elements plays in the sentence. It will be claimed that PERSON (PERS) is the Nominative Case assigner, whereas NUMBER (NUM) marks the most prominent argument of the predicate. In the Catalan examples (1 a,b) the prominent argument is the external *en Pere*:

- (1) a. En Pere menja pomes
'Pere eats apples'
b. En Pere plorava
'Pere cried'

V^o to I^o movement allows the element PERS to formally relate the verb and its external argument via Nominative Case assignment, while NUM agreement manifests the syntactic relation between the verbal element and the most prominent argument in the sentential structure. This relation is implemented by checking NUM specification with that argument. NUM agreement appears to be independent of PERS agreement in some Catalan dialects. In other dialects, however, NUM and PERS agreement interact with each other: lack of PERS specification results in lack of NUM specification. The data discussed in this paper belongs to two Catalan dialects: Northwestern and Central.

1. Case Restrictions on the Syntactic Nature of Verbal Arguments

My analysis will adopt a series of hypotheses. First, I assume that AGR [-PERS] is not a Case assigner. In this I will follow Kayne (1989:fn 1). This proposal is compatible with Raposo's (1987) suggestion that for AGR to assign Case, it must itself receive Case from Tense.

Second, Nominative and Accusative Case restrict the syntactic nature of the receptor argument, the same way that Partitive assignment does. Arguments that receive Partitive Case are NPs, whereas arguments that receive structural (Nominative and Accusative) Case are DPs (see Torrego (1983) and Belletti (1988)). I will claim that an argument can only receive one Case. As opposed to Belletti (1988), I argue that agreement between an unaccusative verb and its internal argument is not obtained by the conjoined assignment of inherent Partitive at D-structure and structural Nominative at S-structure. On the contrary, I will suggest that an argument receives either inherent or structural Case, but not both.

Third, AGR [+NUM] is not necessarily related to Nominative Case assignment. Thus, the NP *autobusos* 'buses' in (2 a) and the clitic *en* '(of) it/them' in (2 b) receive only Partitive Case:

- (2) a. Demà no circularan autobusos
tomorrow will not circulate buses
'Buses will not circulate tomorrow'
- b. Demà no en circularan
tomorrow will not (of) them_{CL} circulate

The internal argument *autobusos* in (2 a) is an NP. Therefore, it is not compatible with structural Case. However, in cases like (3) below, the only type of Case compatible with the internal argument of the unaccusative verb --i.e. *els autobusos* 'the buses'-- is structural (Nominative). This is so because it is a DP:

- (3) Demà no circularan els autobusos
tomorrow will not circulate the buses
'The buses will not circulate tomorrow'

1.1. Quantified Arguments

It has been proposed that a DP is incompatible with Partitive Case, whereas NP is incompatible with structural Case. Under this assumption, the grammaticality of (4) below, needs to be accounted for. Should the argument *tres autobusos* 'three buses' have an NP or a DP analysis?:

- (4) Demà circularan tres autobusos
tomorrow will circulate three buses
'Three buses will circulate tomorrow'

It should be noted that *tres autobusos* can have either a specific reading or a nonspecific reading. The specific interpretation can be paraphrased as in (5):

- (5) Demà circularan tres dels autobusos
 tomorrow will circulate three of the buses
 'Three of the buses will circulate tomorrow'

I will propose that *tres autobusos* in (4) may have two different analyses. In one, it is a quantified NP, with a structure roughly represented in (6):

- (6) [QUANT tres [NP autobusos]]
 three buses

This structure, which does not contain a DP is assigned Partitive Case, and receives a nonspecific interpretation ('some three buses or others').

The phrase can alternatively be analyzed as a quantified DP, possibly with an empty head, and a numeral in a specifier position. This analysis is informally represented in (7), and corresponds to the specific interpretation. The argument will be assigned structural Case:

- (7) [QUANT tres [DP *e* [NP autobusos]]]
 three buses

We will now discuss some data in support of our claim that the argument in (4) can receive two alternative analyses, and two types of Case (structural and inherent). Consider the following:

- (8) a. Tres autobusos semblaven espatllats
 three (of the) buses seemed damaged
 b. Dues pomes són d'aquell pomer
 two (of the) apples are from that apple tree

The derived subjects receive structural (Nominative) Case. According to our proposal, they must be analyzed as DPs, and their structural representation should correspond to (7). Note that the derived subjects in (8) can only receive a specific interpretation, i.e. 'three of the buses', 'two of the apples' respectively.

We should also note that the arguments that receive Accusative from a ECM verb are always DPs. For that reason, the argument *una aquarel.la* 'a watercolor' in a sentence like (9) below has always a specific interpretation, a reading that makes possible to paraphrase *una aquarel.la* by 'a particular watercolor', 'a certain watercolor', or 'one of the watercolors':

- (9) Considero molt impressionant una aquarel.la
(I) consider very impressive a watercolor

Turkish, which expresses Case morphologically, offers us an interesting proof of the relation that exists between the nature of the verbal argument and the type of Case that it is able to receive. According to Enç (1991), internal arguments showing a morphological mark for Accusative are obligatorily interpreted as specific in Turkish. Internal arguments without an explicit morphological mark for Case --i.e. the ones receiving Partitive--, are interpreted as nonspecific. The following examples are from Enç (1991):

- (10) a. Ali bir kitab-ı aldı
Ali one book-Acc bought
'A book is such that Ali bought it'
- b. Ali bir kitap aldı
Ali one book bought
'Ali bought some book or other'

1.2. The Clitic EN/NE

At this point, it is necessary to briefly discuss the clitic *en /ne* 'of it/them'. If we argue that Accusative and Nominative Case are only assigned to DPs, while claiming that Partitive is assigned to NPs, we must clarify which type of Case the clitic *en /ne* may or must receive. We will distinguish between a Partitive *en /ne* and a Genitive *en /ne*.

According to Belletti (1988), *en /ne* receives Partitive. This is so in the example (2 b) above, where the clitic pronominalizes the NP *autobusos* 'buses'. However, not all cases of *en /ne* cliticization instantiate the Partitive Case assigned by a verb, because *en /ne* doesn't necessarily receive Case from a verb. Consider the following examples:

- (11) a. Tots en recordem algun, dels seus poemes
all us (of)them remember some, of his/her poems
'We all remember some, of his/her poems'
- b. Vaig trobar els teus amics i només en vaig reconèixer dos: en Pere i en Pau
(I) have met your friends and only (of)them have recognized two: Pere and Pau
'I have met your friends and I have only recognized two (of them): Pere and Pau'

Here, the clitic pronominalizes a part of the direct object. This object is semantically partitive in each case (see Enç (1991)). The object *en..algun /en..dos* 'CL..some/CL..two' denotes a part of a definite specific set (his/her poems/your friends). The verb in (11) assigns Accusative to the direct object, a quantified DP. Thus, the clitic *en /ne* does not receive Case from the verb, but from the quantifier. It is the same Case that the clitic *en /ne* receives from an N. Consider the following examples from Bartra (1987):

- (12) a. Se me n' escapen els detalls
CL (to)me (of)it escape the details
'The details of it escape me'

- (12) b. N' han cremat totes les proves
 (of)it have burned all the evidence
 'They have burned all the evidence'

These examples show that the presence of *en /ne* does not imply that the verb has assigned Partitive to its internal argument. The clitic can express Genitive Case assigned by a quantifier or a Noun.

2. The Properties of PERS and NUM in Northwestern Catalan

We will now turn to discussing the properties of PERS and NUM. Consider the sentences exemplified in (13) from Northwestern Catalan (see Solà (1973), (1987)), and compare them with the ungrammatical (14) from the same dialect:

- (13) a. Falta més braços
 is needed more arms
 'More arms are needed'
- b. Arriba parents
 arrives relatives
 '(some) relatives arrive'
- c. Ha vingut més turistes
 has come more tourists
 'More tourists have come'
- d. Passa molts cotxes
 is passing many cars
 'Many cars are passing by'
- (14) a. *Falten més braços
 are needed more arms

- (14) b. *Arriben parents
arrive relatives
- c. *Han vingut més turistes
have come more tourists
- d. *Passen molts cotxes
are passing many cars

The grammatical examples in (13) show that there is no agreement between the argument and the verb. In these examples the verbs are unaccusative and able to assign Partitive to their internal argument, an NP, which is a receptor of Partitive Case. These are impersonal sentences, in the sense that AGR is not specified for PERS or NUM. The Northwestern Catalan sentences in (15) below are also impersonal (see Solà (1973), (1987)):

- (15) a. Hi ha molts hòmens
there is many men
'There are many men'
- b. Enguany es plantarà molts arbres
this year CL(=people) will-plant_{3rd/sing} many trees
'People will plant many trees this year'
- c. Plou
rains
'It rains'

The examples in (13) and (15) show a defective verbal morphology. The verb is inflected for 3rd/sing., which is the morphological expression of absence of Person and Number in Catalan.

Our analysis predicts that a sentence can not be impersonal if the internal argument of an unaccusative verb is a DP. This prediction is borne out:

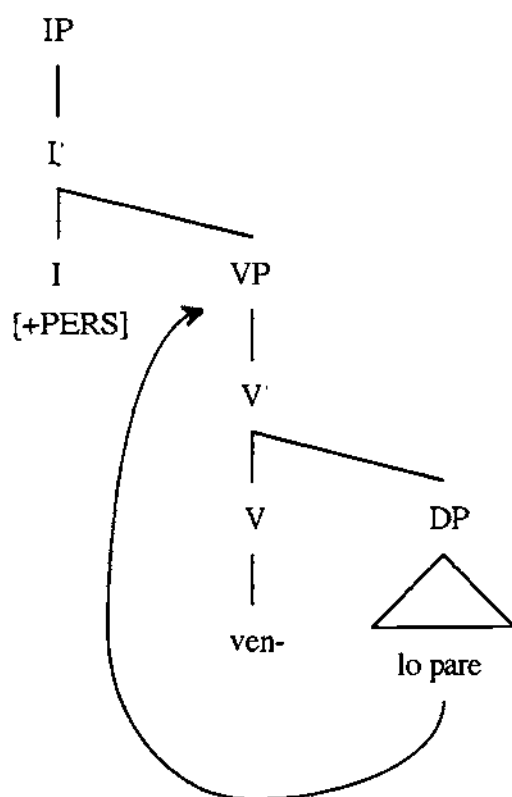
- (16) Vindrà lo pare
 will-come the father
 'The father will come'

The internal argument, a DP, is incompatible with Partitive Case. The only available Case for this DP is Nominative, given that the verb is unaccusative. AGR must then contain [+PERS]. The Northwestern Catalan examples (17) show that the most prominent argument (i.e. the internal DP) must agree with the verb:

- (17) a. Vindran els parents
 will-come_{3rd/plur} the relatives
 'The relatives will come'
- b. Els parents vindran aviat
 the relatives will-come_{3rd/plur} soon
- c. *Vindrà els parents
 will-come_{3rd/sing} the relatives
- d. Nosaltres arribarem aviat
 we will-come_{1rst/plur} soon

The ungrammatical sentence (17 c) shows that the internal DP requires Number agreement also, when it is the most prominent argument. Nominative Case is assigned to the internal DP subject in the grammatical examples above when the DP undergoes movement to a position where it can be governed by AGR [+PERS]. Let us assume that this position is [Spec,VP]. The following represents the abstract configuration of example (16), where details irrelevant to the present discussion have been omitted:

(18)



Thus, there exists a crucial difference in Northwestern Catalan between sentences of the types (19 a), and those of the types (19 b), with respect to the properties of the AGR node:

- (19) a. Vindrà lo pare/ Vindran els pares
will-come_{3rd/sing} the father/ will-come_{3rd/plur} the fathers'
[+Tns,+Pers,+Num]
- b. Vindrà pluja/ Vindrà pluges
will-come_{3rd/sing} rain/ will-come_{3rd/sing} rains
[+Tns,-Pers,-Num]

3. The Properties of PERS and NUM in Central Catalan

Let us now see some data from Central Catalan. We will first center the discussion to cases where the verb is unaccusative and the internal subject is an NP. Grammaticality judgements

appear reversed when we compare Central Catalan unaccusative sentences with their corresponding constructions in the Northwestern variety. The examples in (13) are ungrammatical in Central Catalan, whereas those in (14) are grammatical:

- (20) a. Falten més braços / *Falta més braços
 are-needed more arms/ is-needed more arms
- b. Arriben parents / *Arriba parents
 arrive relatives / arrives relatives
- c. Han vingut més turistes / *Ha vingut més turistes
 have come more tourists / has come more tourists
- d. Passen molts cotxes / *Passa molts cotxes
 are passing many cars / is passing many cars

These sentences are also impersonal, like their Northwestern equivalents in (13). Verbal morphology is defective. It is unspecified for PERS features, although it is specified for NUM. Besides (21 a), Central Catalan can have (21 b):

- (21) a. Vindrà pluja
 will-come_{3rd/sing} rain
 [+Tns,-Pers,+Num]
- b. Vindran pluges/ *Vindrà pluges
 will-come_{3rd/plur} rains/ will-come_{3rd/sing} rains

AGR must be [+PERS] to be able to assign Nominative to an internal DP subject in Central as well as in Northwestern Catalan. The sentences (17 a, b, and d), which are grammatical in the Northwestern variety, are also grammatical in Central Catalan, given that NUM agreement is necessary.

Comparing all the data, we can provisionally conclude the following: when PERS is specified, NUM is also specified in both dialects. However, when PERS is not specified, judgements will vary in each dialect:

- (22) [+PERS] = {[+/-1], [+/-2]}
 [-PERS] = unspecified (where 'unspecified' surfaces as 3rd p.)
 [+NUM] = [+/-plur]
 [-NUM] = unspecified (where 'unspecified' surfaces as sing.)

- (23) a. [+PERS] selects [+NUM]
 b. [-PERS] selects [-NUM] in Northwestern Catalan
 c. [-PERS] does not necessarily select [-NUM] in Central Cat. (see § 6 below)

The difference between these two dialects manifests the possible relations that may exist between these two functional elements. In other words, the relation between PERS and NUM is similar to the relation between COMP and INFL (or, more precisely, between COMP and TENSE). A *Que-Comp* 'That-Comp' selects a Tensed INFL, as shown in (24); whereas a *Si-Comp* 'If-Comp' does not necessarily select [+Tense]:

- (24) a. En Pere promet que vindrà
 Pere promises that (he) will come
 b. *En Pere promet que venir
 Pere promises that to come
 c. En Pere no sap si ho farà
 Pere doesn't know if (he) will do it
 d. En Pere no sap si fer-ho
 Pere doesn't know if to do it

Summarizing, we propose that in some languages (or dialects) specification for NUM may obtain without specification for PERS. Actually we will propose in § 6. that NUM agreement depends on a thematic condition holding at LF.

4. SE/ES Constructions

Our proposal is coherent with other facts that show the existing divergence between Northwestern and Central Catalan. Let us now examine constructions with arbitrary *se /es* 'one/people in general'. Consider the following examples, inspired in Solà (1987), which are grammatical in Northwestern, but ungrammatical in Central Catalan:

- (25) a. Enguany es plantarà molts arbres
this year SE will-plant_{3rd/sing} many trees
'This year people will plant many trees'
- b. En aquest poble es cull moltes pomes
in this town SE picks many apples
'In this town, people pick many apples'
- c. Es renta plats
SE does dishes
'People do dishes'
- d. Cada dia es veu més obrers sense feina
each day SE sees more jobless workers
'Each day more jobless workers are seen'

It is generally assumed that the clitic *es /se* absorbs a thematic role and Case. I will argue that the Case that *es /se* blocks (i.e. absorbs) is Nominative. In fact, *se* blocks Nominative Case assignment because *se* blocks the expression of PERS. In this sense we can say that *se* turns the sentence into an impersonal construction. Blocking PERS implies blocking NUM in

Northwestern Catalan. This is not so in Central Catalan, according to the assumptions of (23).

The following sentences are ungrammatical in Northwestern and grammatical in Central:

- (26) a. Aquest any es plantaran molts arbres
this year SE will-plant_{3rd/plur} many trees
- b. En aquest poble es cullen moltes pomes
in this town SE pick_{3rd/plur} many apples
- c. Es renten plats
se do_{3rd/plur} dishes
- d. Cada dia es veuen més obrers sense feina
each day SE see_{3rd/plur} more jobless workers

If it is the case that *es /se* always blocks Nominative Case assignment, as we claim, both (25) and (26) will be impersonal sentences. The internal argument is assigned Partitive Case: it is an NP and, therefore a receptor of Partitive. The difference between (25) and (26) is that Central Catalan allows NUM agreement between the verb and the prominent argument. In these types of constructions, the prominent argument is the internal argument. An external argument is not licensed due to the presence of SE.

What happens when the internal argument is a DP and unable to receive Partitive Case?. We have said that Nominative is blocked by *es /se*, therefore, the only available Case is Accusative. Consider the following Northwestern examples, inspired in Solà (1987):

- (27) a. Ja es pot obrir les finestres
already SE may_{3rd/sing} open the windows
- b. Es collirà les taronges
SE will-pick_{3rd/sing} the oranges
- c. S' ha construït totes aquelles granges
SE has built all those farms

In each of these examples, the DP internal argument receives Accusative Case. Accusative is also assigned to the internal arguments of the examples in (28), the Central counterpart of the Northwestern (27). In the former, the internal argument agrees with the verb in NUM:

- (28) a. Ja es poden obrir les finestres
 already SE may_{3rd/plur} open the windows
- b. Es colliran les taronges
 SE will-pick_{3rd/plur} the oranges'
- c. S' han construït totes aquelles granges
 SE have built all these farms

The proof that the internal DP argument in (28) does not receive Nominative Case is given in (29):

- (29) a. Es premiaran els millors escriptors
 SE will-reward the best writers
- b. *Es premiaran ells_{NOM}
 SE will-reward they

The clitic *es/se* blocks PERS in Central Catalan. [-PERS] does not block, however, specification for NUM. Therefore, NUM agreement may obtain between the verb and the most prominent argument --i.e. the direct object in this case-- independently of whether this DP receives Accusative or Partitive.

We must note that our claim that the DP in (28 a) receives Accusative, leads us to assume that this DP must be in a peripheral (dislocated) position when it appears preverbally. The argument position should then be occupied by a resumptive pronoun. Nothing will prevent us from assuming that the resumptive pronoun is a *pro* if we adopt the *pro*-hypothesis proposed in Picallo (1991) (this volume). According to Picallo, *pro* is a pronominal lacking inherent

referential content. *Pro* is allowed in a given structure if it agrees with a functional category able to assign features to *pro*. In (30), NUM agreement with the verb via AGR will be enough to recover and identify Accusative *pro*:

- (30) a. Les finestres ja es poden obrir
the windows already SE may open
'The windows may already be opened'
- b. [[Les finestres]_i [ja es poden_{plur} obrir *pro*_i]]

There are other facts showing that the Case assigned to the internal argument in (27) and (28) is not Nominative. The evidence can be found in sentences similar to those showing SE_{ARB}: those with unaccusative pronominal verbs. Solà (1987) notes that there is a contrast in grammaticality between (31 a) and (31 b) in Northwestern Catalan:

- (31) a. Amb aquelles nevades es van enfonsar totes les teulades del poble
with these snows SE collapsed_{3rd/plur} all the roofs of the town
'That snow caused all the roofs of town to collapse'
- b. *Amb aquelles nevades es va enfonsar totes les teulades del poble
with these snows SE collapsed_{3rd/sing} all the roofs of the town

The pronominal verb *enfonsar-se* 'to collapse' is unaccusative, therefore it is unable to assign Accusative Case. The only (structural) Case available to the DP is Nominative. Therefore, these types of sentences are personal, like the grammatical *Jo m'enfonso, tu t'enfones*, etc. 'I collapse, you collapse', etc.

We will now discuss an interesting fact in Central Catalan. There is no NUM agreement when the internal argument of a sentence with SE_{ARB} is a definite clitic, as in (32 a) and (33 a) below. NUM agreement is, however, possible in (34), where the clitic is Partitive (i.e. non definite):

- (32) a. No se us aprecia gaire
 not SE you_{PLUR} appreciate_{3rd/sing} very much
 'You are not appreciated very much'
- b. *No se us aprecien gaire
 not SE you_{PLUR} appreciate_{3rd/plur} very much
- (33) a. No se'ls ha tractat bé
 not SE them have_{3rd/sing} treated well
 'They have not been well treated'
- b. *No se'ls han tractat bé
 not SE them have_{3rd/plur} treated well
- (34) a. No se'n veu, de fum
 not SE EN(=of it) sees, of smoke
 'Smoke, it is not seen'
- b. No se'n veuen, de miracles
 not SE EN(=of them) see, of miracles
 'Miracles, they are not seen'

The behavior of definite and non definite clitics can be explained if we accept the hypothesis that definite clitics are themselves AGR_{OBJECT} (see Fernández-Soriano (1989), Cordin (1990)). Hence, they may not establish a new agreement relation. That is, the clitics *us /els* 'you/them' in (32) and (33) respectively may not express AGR_{SUBJECT} and AGR_{OBJECT} agreement at the same time.

Consider now the data in (35), which belongs to a subdialect of Central Catalan, and where the definite clitic expresses AGR_{OBJECT}. The Past participle agrees with the clitic in Number and Gender:

- (35) a. No se les ha tractades bé
 not SE them_{FEM} has treated_{FEM,PLUR} well
 'They_{FEM} have not been well treated'
- b. No se l' ha tractada bé
 not SE her has treated_{FEM,SING} well
 'She has not been well treated'

*Se les*_{ARB} constructions in Central Catalan show a strong preference for *pro* over a definite clitic when a [-human] DP is pronominalized. *Pro*, as opposed to the clitic *la* 'her' establishes NUM agreement, because *pro* needs to agree in order to be identified:

- (36) a. Aquestes copes, no es poden rentar *pro* amb aigua calenta
 these cups ,not SE can_{3rd/plur} clean *pro* with hot water
 'These cups cannot be cleaned with hot water'
- b. ???Aquestes copes, no se les pot rentar amb aigua calenta
 these cups not SE them_{CL} can_{3rd/sing} clean with hot water

5. The Predicate HAVER-HI

Impersonal sentences with the verb *haver-hi* (lit.: 'to have-there_{CL}'; 'there be') show a behavior similar to those with *SE*_{ARB}:

- (37) a. No hi ha pa
 not there_{CL} has bread
 'There is no bread'
- b. Hi havia un home
 there_{CL} had a man
 'There was a man'

The clitic *hi* 'there' seems to have been incorporated to the verb *haver* 'to have' in the lexicon, to form the predicate *haver-hi*. Formerly, *haver* 'to have' expressed possession in Catalan. The possessive meaning of *haver* still remains in some cases:

- (38) a. Aquesta noia, no l' hauràs pas
 this girl, not her_{CL} will-have_{2nd,sing} NEG.
 'This girl, you won't have her'
- b. Això costa d'haver
 this is hard of to have
 'This is hard to have'

In sentences of the type (37), the clitic *hi* behaves like a locative subject (see Torrego (1989)). In other words, *hi* blocks the external argument of *haver* 'to have' when it incorporates into this verbal form in the lexicon. *Hi* also blocks Nominative Case assignment, preventing the realization of a subject. Evidence that *hi* is not a 'free' locative, but an incorporated clitic, is shown by the fact that the clitic may not be substituted by a real locative expression:

- (39) a. Hi havia un noi
 HI had a boy
 'There was a boy'
- b. *Allà havia un noi
 'there had a boy'
- c. *Un noi havia a Banyoles
 a boy had in Banyoles

The incorporated clitic *hi* impersonalizes the verb by blocking PERS, which is blocking Nominative assignment according to our proposal. Therefore, it is impossible to have NUM agreement between the verb and its only argument in Northwestern Catalan:

- (40) a. *Hi haurà pocs hòmens* (Northwestern)
 HI will-have_{3rd/sing} few men
 'There will be few men'
- b. **Hi hauran pocs hòmens*
 HĪ will-have_{3rd/plur} few men
- c. *Hi havia pastissos de xocolata*
 HĪ had_{3rd/sing} chocolate cakes
 'There were chocolate cakes'
- d. **Hi havien pastissos de xocolata*
 HI had_{3rd/plur} chocolate cakes

Our hypothesis predicts that sentences (40 b, d) will be well formed in Central Catalan, and this is the case. There is NUM agreement between the argument and the verb, even though the construction is an impersonal sentence. This is an interesting fact, given that the clitic *hi* blocks PERS and NUM in the majority of Catalan dialects. I will suggest that this phenomenon occurs because *hi* is incorporated into the verb at the lexical level, which is not the case with SE_{ARB}. This hypothesis appears to be confirmed when one considers Spanish equivalent constructions. The appearance of *y* (= *hi*) blocks PERS and NUM:

- (41) a. *Hay mosquitos*
 has-Y mosquitoes
 'There are mosquitoes'
- b. **Hany mosquitos*
 have-Y mosquitoes

If *y* is non overt, NUM may not be absorbed in Spanish. The following sentences are both grammatical:

- (42) a. *Había mosquitos*
 had_{3rd/sing} mosquitoes
- b. *Habían mosquitos*
 had_{3rd/plur} mosquitoes
 ‘There were mosquitoes’

6. NUM Agreement

I have shown that NUM agreement between the verb and an argument doesn’t necessarily mean that the argument receives Nominative Case. Nominative is assigned by PERS, not by NUM. However, when PERS is specified and assigns Nominative, it selects NUM obligatorily (i.e. (23 a)). NUM agreement obtains between the verb and its most prominent argument. Therefore, when there is a Nominative argument, it will also agree with the verb in NUM features. Hence, the ungrammaticality of (43) follows from the fact that the verb agrees in NUM with the object, but not with the subject:

- (43) **Els infants prefereix aquest joc*
 the children prefers this game

Now the question is the following: What causes the presence/absence of number agreement between the verb and its internal argument in Catalan dialects when the sentence is [-PERS]? We want to propose that number agreement with an internal argument depends on how predication is licenced at LF in each dialect. Consider again the following examples:

- (44) a. *Vindrà parents* (Northwestern)
 will-come_{3rd/sing} relatives
- b. *Vindran parents* (Central)
 will-come_{3rd/plur} relatives
 ‘Relatives will come’

These examples satisfy thematic requirements and the internal argument satisfies Visibility requirements in (45 a, b) because it is assigned Case. Central Catalan appears to still require another condition for the sentence to be interpreted as a predicative structure. We suggest that sentence (45 a) can not be interpreted in Central Catalan. When a predicate selects one or more arguments, one of them has to be overtly marked as prominent in this dialect. Prominence is expressed by NUM agreement between the tensed verb and the argument. As was said, NUM agreement depends on the hierarchical relations between PERS and NUM, but also on the hierarchical relations between arguments. The thematic hierarchy needs also to be 'visible' in Central Catalan.

At LF, the thematic condition in (45) excludes (44 a) in Central Catalan:

(45) *Prominence Condition*

When a predicate selects one or more arguments, one of the arguments has to be interpreted as the prominent argument of the predication. Prominence is expressed through number agreement between the verb and the argument. The thematic hierarchy is respected.

This condition is always active in Central Catalan, even in impersonal ([-PERS]) sentences. By contrast, the Northwestern variety does not require (45) in impersonal sentences. NUM agreement is only required when an argument is assigned Nominative Case in Northwestern. We must recall that [+PERS] always selects [+NUM] in Catalan dialects, and that [-PERS] selects [-NUM] in Northwestern.

Sentences with a 'self-sufficient' verb, that is, a verb that doesn't need an argument to express predication --like *ploure* 'to rain'--, will not manifest [+NUM]:

- (46) a. Plou
 [-PERS,-NUM]
 rains
- b. *Plou
 [-PERS,+NUM_{sing}]
- c. *Plouen
 [-PERS,+NUM_{plur}]

What excludes sentences (46 b, c)? Recall that positive specification for PERS and NUM must be checked with an argument and appear suffixed to the verb. A sentence will be ill-formed if [+NUM] is not checked, the same way that the sentence is ill-formed if [Tense] is not amalgamated to the verb. The function of [+PERS] and [+NUM] is that of marking agreement, hence, these elements need to be expressed in a verb as well as in an argument.

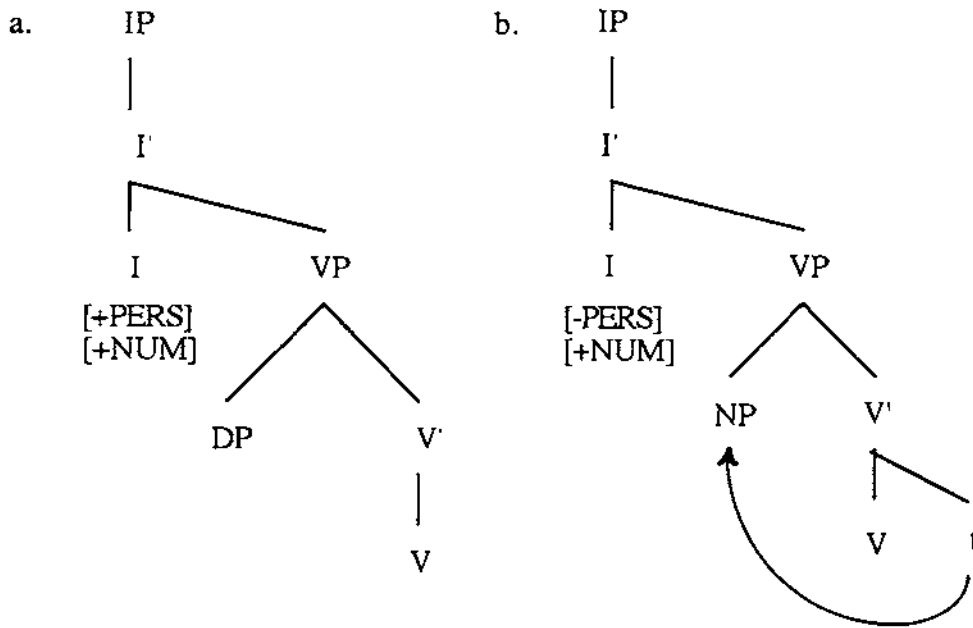
A sentence like (47) will be specified [+PERS,+NUM]. The fact that it may have an arbitrary interpretation does not follow from the functional elements in the sentence, but follows from other factors:

- (47) a. *pro* truquen[+PERS,+NUM] a la porta
 (they) are knocking on the door
- b. *pro* truquen[+PERS,+NUM] a la porta
 (they=someone) are knocking on the door

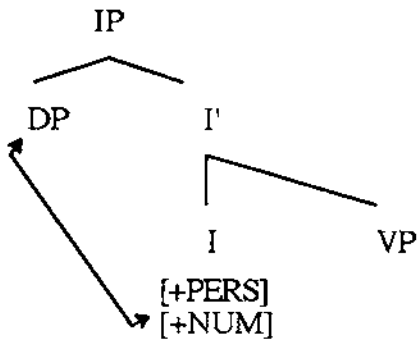
7. Conclusion

Suppose that there are two possible ways to assign [PERS] (or Nominative Case) and NUM to an argument: by government, if the argument is in [Spec,VP]; or by Spec-head agreement. The latter is possible for DPs, but not for NPs. Consider the schemata (48) and (49):

(48)



(49)



It has been claimed that the fact that a subject agrees with the verb does not imply that it must necessarily be assigned Nominative. It has been our contention that PERS and NUM trigger different types of relations between a subject and the verb. Evidence for this claim can be found in the two Catalan dialects we have discussed. It is possible, and tempting, to propose that these two functional elements project onto two separate syntactic categories. However, the question of whether PERS and NUM constitute separate X-bar projections or not is not crucial at this stage of our research. Here, our goal has simply been to acquire a better knowledge of the factors intervening in agreement relations.

This research has been supported by a DGICYT grant PB 89-0324, awarded to the UAB. Some versions of this paper were read at a Workshop on Central Romance Languages, Université de Genève, July 1990; at the Primer Coloquio de Gramática Generativa, UAM Madrid, March 1991; and at the Università di Venezia, May 1991. I would like to thank these audiences for their questions and comments. I am also indebted to Joan Solà and to my colleagues at the UAB Linguistics Seminar, to Carme Picallo in particular, for their suggestions to previous drafts of this manuscript.

References

- Bartra, A. (1987) 'Encara n'hi ha més. (Entorn de *en* i alguns SNs genitius', *Llengua i Literatura* 2, 377-427.
- Belletti, A. (1987) 'Los inacusativos como asignadores de caso', in *Sintaxis de las lenguas románicas V*. Demonte and M.F.Lagunilla (eds), El Arquero, Madrid, 167-230. See also *Linguistic Inquiry* 19.1, 1-34.
- Cordin, P. (1990) 'Dative Clitic Doubling and Visibility of Case in Trentino', unpublished ms. Univ. di Trento.
- Enç, M. (1991) 'The Semantics of Specificity', *Linguistic Inquiry* 22.1 1-26.
- Fernández Soriano, O. (1989) *Rección y Ligamiento en español: Aspectos del parámetro del sujeto nulo*, PhD dissertation, U.A.M., Madrid.
- Kayne, R. (1989) 'Facets of Romance Past Participle Agreement', in *Dialect Variation and the Theory of Grammar*, P. Benincà (ed), Foris, Dordrecht, 85-103.
- Picallo, C. (1991) 'El posesivo y el principio "Evítese el Pronombre"', paper read at the Primer Coloquio de Gramática Generativa, Miraflores de la Sierra, Madrid.
- Raposo, E. (1987) 'Case Theory and Infl-to-Comp: The Inflected Infinitive in European Portuguese', *Linguistic Inquiry* 18, 85-109.
- Solà, J. (1973) *Estudis de Sintaxi Catalana/2*, Edicions 62, Barcelona.
- Solà, J. (1987) *Qüestions Controvertides de Sintaxi Catalana*, Edicions 62, Barcelona.

Torrego, E. (1983) 'Sobre la asignación de caso en las construcciones ergativas' paper read at U.A.B.

Torrego, E. (1989) 'Unergative-unaccusative Alternations in Spanish', *MIT Working Papers in Linguistics* 10, M.I.T., Cambridge, Mass., 253-272.

Departament de Filologia Catalana

Edifici B

Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona

E-08193 Bellaterra (Barcelona)