

Applicatives and the Person-Case Constraint

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I argue that the Person-Case Constraint arises from cross-linguistic variation in the ability of an applicative head (Appl) to license person features via Agree. I assume that phi-features are represented as a privative feature geometry (Harley and Ritter 2002, McGinnis 2005). In a three-way person system, 3rd-person DPs have a bare Person node, while 1st and 2nd-person DPs have a dependent [Participant] feature; 1st-person DPs also have [Author]:

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|-----------------|-----------------------------------|--|
| (1) 3rd: Person | 2nd: Person

[Participant] | 1st: Person

[Participant]

[Author] |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|--|

I propose that the person features of the closest accessible DP c-commanded by Appl—such as the direct object (DO) in a double object construction (DOC)—are licensed by Appl via Agree. In some cases, Appl cannot license specified person features at all, so the DO of a DOC can only be 3rd person (simplifying slightly; see Hanson 2003). This is the “strong” PCC, found *inter alia* in Spanish, Greek, Basque, and Southern Tiwa (Bonet 1991, Laka 1990, Rosen 1990):

- (2) Me lo/*le recomendaron. *Spanish*
 1sg 3sg.ACC/*DAT recommended.3pl
 ‘They recommended him/her to me.’/*‘They recommended me to him/her.’

In some cases, Appl can license [Participant] only when it theta-licenses a [Participant] specifier, so that 1st- and 2nd-person object combinations are possible in the DOC (3). This is the “weak” PCC, identified for some speakers of Spanish, Catalan and Italian (Bonet 1991).

- (3) Te me presentaron. *Spanish*
 2sg 1sg introduced.3pl
 a. ‘They introduced you.ACC to me.DAT.’
 b. ‘They introduced me.ACC to you.DAT.’

In other cases, Appl can license [Participant] only when it theta-licenses an [Author] specifier; thus, some speakers allow only the reading in (3a) (Fernandez Soriano 1999:1267).

The proposed connection between theta- and Agree-licensing by Appl echoes the connection between theta- and Agree-licensing by v/Voice—that is, Burzio’s Generalization. However, PCC effects are exclusively associated with applicative environments (e.g. see Hanson 2003), suggesting that v/Voice universally licenses person features on a lower DP. In some languages (see Haspelmath 2001), Appl too can always license person features on a lower DP.

Unlike many existing analyses, the analysis proposed here accounts for both the strong and weak PCC. However, it does not predict an apparent restriction on person combinations found in Kichean Agent-Focus (AF) clauses in the absence of Appl, which Preminger 2014 attributes to the PCC. Preminger states that participant (1st- and 2nd-person) subjects and objects cannot cooccur in a Kichean AF clause, which usually shows only absolutive agreement. I argue that, in fact, participant arguments can cooccur in AF clauses (4). The apparent restriction arises because ergative agreement depends on the presence of two arguments in non-AF clauses, but specifically on the presence of two [Participant] arguments in AF clauses. This environment also blocks the insertion of the AF detransitivizing suffix *-an/-ö*. Thus, while examples like (4) are syntactically AF clauses, they have the verbal morphology of non-AF clauses. The evidence from Kichean therefore supports the prediction that Appl is the locus of PCC effects.

- (4) ja röj x-ix-qa-tz’et
 FOC us COM-2PL.ABS-1PL.ERG-see
 ‘It was us who saw y’all.’

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