PHASE HEADS ASSIGN ACC CASE | WOMP 2024

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Introduction

- This research investigates ACC case marking on subjects in Standard Arabic and Irish
- Drawing from matrix clause data, I show that ACC case is licensed on subjects under the operation Agree with certain complementizers
  - I demonstrate that dependent case theory (Marantz 1991; Baker & Vinokurova 2010; Baker 2015), default case valuation (Schütze 2001), and inherent/lexical case assignment cannot account for these ACC case marking patterns
- I propose that phase heads (Chomsky 1995, 2000, 2001) invariably have the ability to assign ACC case under Agree
  - A novel phasehood diagnostic follows from this claim
    * If a functional head F^0 assigns ACC case under Agree, then FP is a phase
      · Note that this does **not** require that a phase head assign ACC case

Data

- In both Arabic and Irish, subjects may surface with ACC case marking after certain complementizers

(1) **Arabic**

a. ʔinna l-ʔaamaal-a taħawwal-at ʔilaa
   COMP DEF-hope.PL-ACC turn.PFV-3rd.F.SG to
   ʔawhaam-in
   delusion.PL-GEN.INDEF
   '(indeed), the hopes have turned into delusions' (Ryding 2005: MSA)

b. wa-laakinna l-ħaasˤil-a ʕaks-u ðaalika
   and-but DEF-actuality-ACC opposite-NOM that
   'but the actuality is the reverse of that' (Ryding 2005: MSA)

c. wa-laakinna l-bint-a ta-ðhab-u ʔilaa
   and-but DEF-girl-ACC 3rd.F.SG-go-PRES.IND to
   bayt-i-haa
   house-GEN-3rd.F.SG.GEN
   'but the girl goes to her house'

- Notice that in (1a) and (1c) the ACC marked subject controls T^0 agreement (non-human plurals trigger F.SG agreement)

(2) **Irish**

a. is é an fear a chonaic mé
   COMP.COP 3rd.M.SG.ACC DEF man REL see.PAST 1st.SG.NOM
   'he is the man I saw'

b. ba bhreoite iad
   COMP.COP.PAST broken 3rd.PL.ACC
   'they were sick (lit. broken)'

c. is $é_i$ a_i dhochtúir $féin_i$ $é_i$
   COMP.COP 3rd.M.SG.ACC_i 3rd.M.SG.GEN_i doctor self$_i$ AGR
   'he is his own doctor'

- Note that the subject appears with the ACC case regardless of whether it precedes the predicate or follows it

Puzzle

- In both Arabic and Irish, ACC can show up on subject DPs in a matrix clause
- In Arabic, the ACC marked subject controls T^0 agreement
- In Irish, ACC case marking appears on the subject regardless of word order (Subj-Predicate/Predicate-Subj)

Research Questions:
(3) How do we account for ACC case marking on matrix clause subjects?
(4) Why does this occur regardless of word order in Irish?
(5) What is the relationship between agreement and case assignment? And what is the nature of the Agree operation?

Against Alternative Analyses

Dependent Case

- Can these patterns be captured by dependent case, as per Baker 2015?
  - "If there are two distinct NPs in the same spell out domain such that NP1 c-commands NP2, then value the case feature on NP2 as accusative unless NP1 has already been marked for case." (Baker 2015: (36) pgs. 48-49)
- I argue this conception of dependent case cannot capture the Arabic and Irish data without additional assumptions based on data like:

(6) **Arabic**

ʔinna l-walad-a ya-squt-u
COMP DEF-boy-ACC 3rd.M-fall-IND

'(indeed,) the boy falls'

- The single argument of an unergative/unaccusative verb can surface with ACC, something not predicted by Baker's dependent case algorithm

(7) **Irish**

agus é in-a fheirmeoir
and 3rd.M.SG.ACC in-3rd.M.SG.AGR farmer

'while he is/was a farmer'

- The c-commanding DP is marked ACC, the opposite of what is predicted by Baker's dependent case algorithm

Default Case

- Schütze 2001 defines default case as follows:
  - "The default case forms of a language are those that are used to spell out nominal expressions (e.g., DPs) that are not associated with any case feature assigned or otherwise determined by syntactic mechanisms." (Schütze 2001: pg. 206)
- Default case is expected to appear in the following situations:
  - a. Left Dislocation and Apposition
  - b. Ellipsis
  - c. Gapping
  - d. Coordination
  - e. Modification of Pronouns
- Arabic has default NOM and Irish has default ACC
  - If this is true ACC subjects in Arabic are not instances of default case
  - Irish copular clauses have ACC marked subjects but are not in a construction identified as a potential default case configuration

(8) is í an múinteoir
   COMP.COP 3rd.F.SG.ACC DEF teacher
   'she is the teacher'

Case Under Agree

- Chomsky (1995, 2000, 2001) claims that Agree between T^0 and a DP yields NOM and Agree with v^0 yields ACC
  - The Arabic data (1) shows that ACC subjects can control T^0 agreement, which is not predicted in this theory of case assignment without additional assumptions
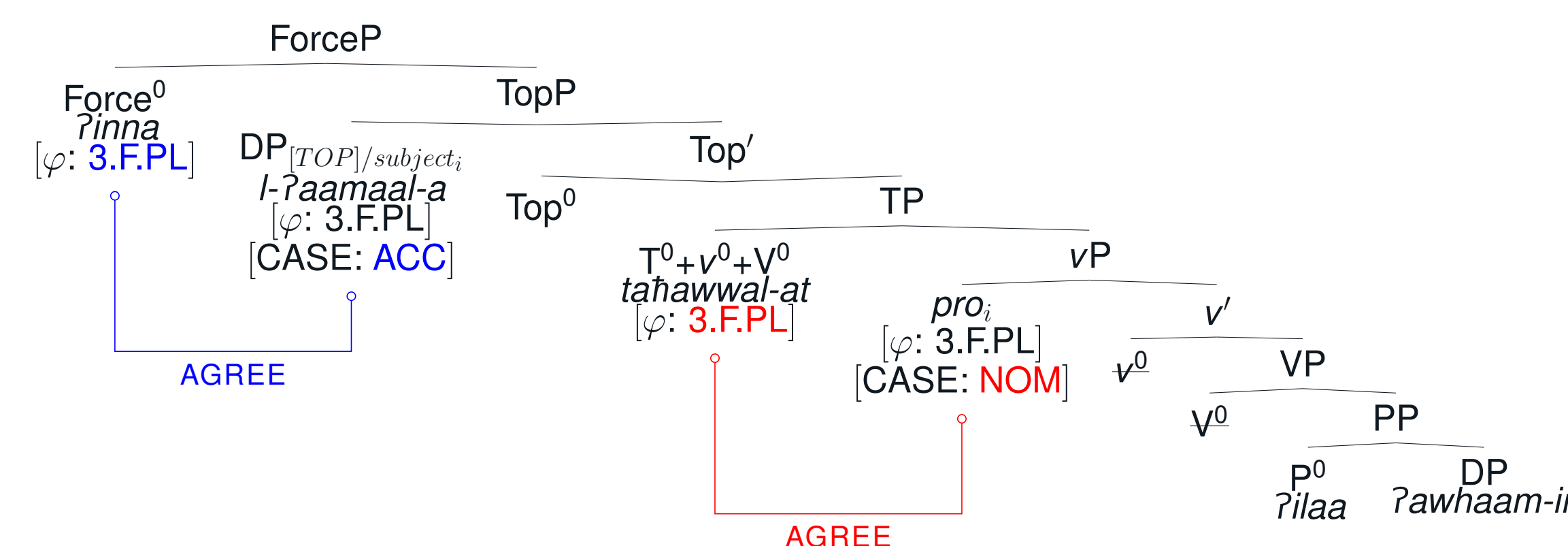
Proposal

- I propose that like v^0, C^0 is able to assign ACC case under Agree
  - I argue this is a property of being a phase head

(9) If a functional head F^0 is able to assign ACC case under Agree, then F^0 is a phase head
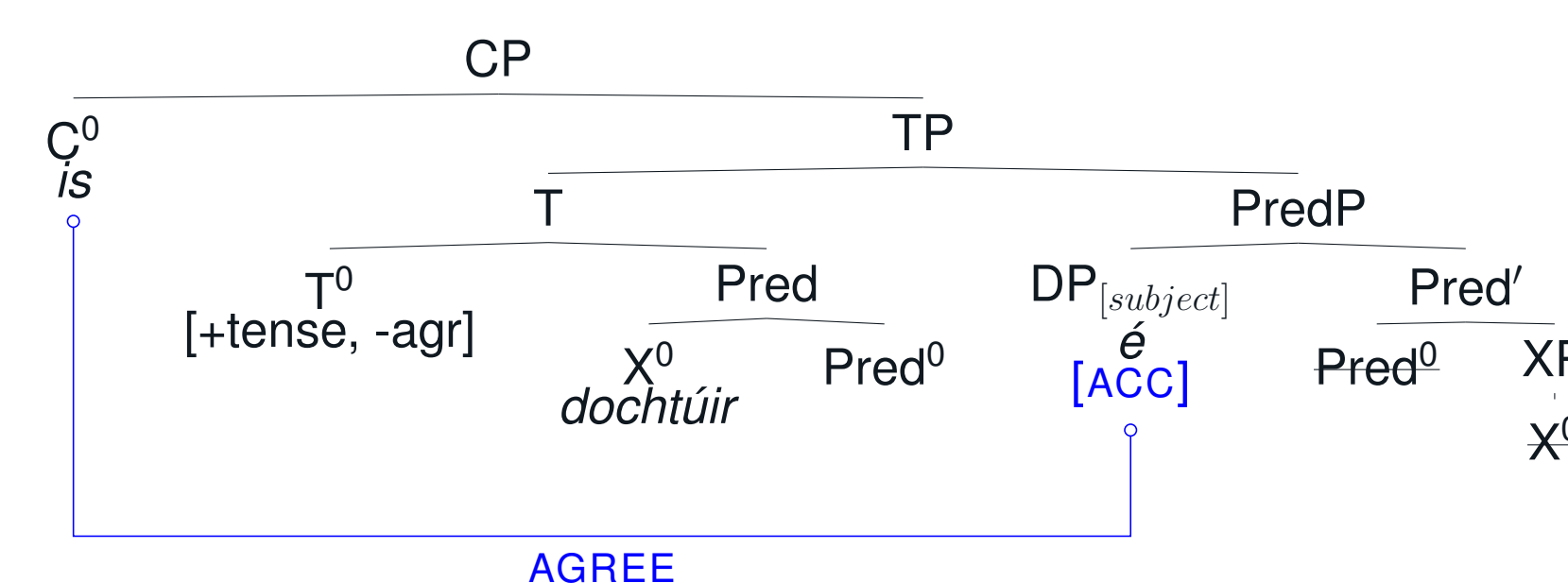
Arabic

- Previous work has argued that pre-verbal subjects in Standard Arabic are topics (Ouhalla & Shlonsky 2002; Holes 2004; Soltan 2007)
- Using a split-CP (Rizzi 1997), then the surface subject is located in Spec-TopP

- Topics are base generated in the left periphery (Shlonsky 2000; Haegeman 2001; Harbour & Bahloul 2002; Alexiadou 2017) and bind a silent *pro* in the lower A-position
  - ForceP is located above TopP
  - ForceP is a phase (Totsuka 2013, 2015; Alsager 2017; Alsager & Mahzari 2021)
  - Also compatible with analyses that claim the highest maximal projection of a domain is a phase (Bobaljik & Wurmbrand 2005; Bošković 2013, 2014)
    * ʔinna is located in $Force^0$ (Shlonsky 2000; Fakih 2015; Alazzawie 2018; Alotaibi 2019)
  - ʔinna agrees and assigns ACC case to the DP in Spec-TopP

(10)

Irish

- Copular clauses in Celtic languages are assumed to be a PredP dominated by a TP dominated by a CP (Chung & McCloskey 1987; Carnie 1995; Doherty 1996; Legate 1996; Ramchand 1996; Adger & Ramchand 2003, 2006; Adger 2007, 2021)
- Copular constructions can either be COMP-XP-Subject or COMP-Subject-XP
  - COMP-XP-Subject word order is thought to be derived from head movement (McCloskey 2005)
- Like in Arabic, C^0 agrees and assigns ACC case to the subject of the PredP

(11)

- Possible evidence for the incorporation analysis comes from data like the following:

(12) is dochtúir é Colm
   COMP.COP doctor PRED/AGR Colm
   'Colm is a doctor'

Conclusion

- This research argues that C^0, like transitive v^0, can assign ACC case under Agree
- I argue this is a property of being a phase head
- This addition to the theory of case assignment under Agree captures the ACC case patterns in Arabic and Irish better than theories like default or dependent case
- This research has implications outside of the data discussed (e.g., *for* complementizer in English, ECM constructions, complementizer agreement, topicalization, case assignment in the left periphery, etc.)

(13) *for complementizer*
   for them to leave without paying is surprising to me

(14) *topicalization*
   him, Paul likes cats

(15) *ECM*
   I want him to go to the store