

[Participant] feature and case-marking of nominal expressions
Léa Nash, Université Paris Lumières-Paris 8-CNRS

An adequate account of person split [PS] must address the following questions: (i) is person split a syntactic phenomenon triggered by structural differences of clauses with 1/2person arguments [1/2PA] and 3person arguments [3PA]? (ii) is PS a morphological phenomenon whereby the nominative/ergative case syncretism arises when an argument is endowed with [person] feature? (iii) does PS receive a unitary explanation in languages where it is manifested?

While many studies answer positively to (i), Legate (2014) shows that PS is a morphological phenomenon and that 1/2PA and 3PA share the same syntax. Deal (2016), addressing (iii), argues that PS is not a uniform phenomenon: 1/2PA and 3PA in Nez Perce, unlike in Hindi, have different syntax in coordination and modification structures.

In the present study, I put forth a structural analysis of PS, based on the behaviour of 1/2PA and 3PA in Georgian. Unlike previous accounts (Jelinek 1993, Coon & Preminger 2012, Merchant 2006) that argue that differences in *clause* architecture of sentences with and without speech-act participants are responsible for person split, I contend that this phenomenon is not conditioned by *clause structure* asymmetries but by *nominal structure* asymmetries between 1/2PA and 3PA.

In Georgian, where 1/2P pronouns are caseless (1a), other types of 1/2PA share structural similarities with 3PA. Namely, Georgian instantiates 1/2PA that can overtly contain a nominal layer (cf. Postal-style *We doctors* in (1b)) which is marked as ergative. Moreover, 1/2PA can be pronounless constituents that allow partitive/quantificational readings (cf. Ackema & Neeleman 2013). The “standard” looking nominal in (1c) is marked with ergative but triggers person agreement on the verb, just like any 1/2PA. (cf. Höhn 2016).

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| (1) | a. | čven v-xat'e-t es
we 1-drawAOR-pl thisNOM
“We drew this” | <i>1/2 pronouns</i> |
| | b. | čven ekim-eb-ma v-xat'e-t es
we doctor-pl-ERG 1-drawAOR-pl thisNOM
“We doctors drew this” | <i>1/2 Postal-style pronominal DPs</i> |
| | c. | ekim-eb-ma v-xat'e-t es
doctor-pl-ERG 1-drawAOR-pl thisNOM
“ ^{We} doctors drew this” | <i>1/2P partitive NumPs</i> |

All (pro)nominal arguments are endowed with phi-features of person, number, gender/class, which, I argue, have structural sources (cf. Déchaine & Wiltschko 2002). Adopting the standard skeleton *D-Num-n-N*, I contend that 3PA are minimally endowed with [class] feature generated in the category n and with [number] feature inherent to the category Num(ber). Importantly, 1/2PA *must* contain a phi-feature [PART(icipant)] projected separately in the specifier position of the constituent’s head (cf. van Koppen 2012). While both 1/2PA and 3PA can be DPs and NumPs, the presence of [PART] has an interesting consequence for the structure of 1/2P *plural pronouns*. Namely, [PART] includes inherent number features in the case of 1/2 plural persons because their meaning (in languages that do not distinguish between inclusive and exclusive pronouns) constitutes a coordination of speaker/addressee and a contextually salient nominal expression endowed with number features: e.g. *we read Jackendoff* -> “*I&linguist(s) read Jackendoff*” (cf. Vassilieva & Larson 2005); hence, the presence of the category Number as the locus of the same phi-feature is not obligatory in this nominal type (2a). Conversely, the absence of [PART] in 3PA imposes the presence of Number and of n as these categories are the core loci for the phi-features of [number] and [class], (1b).

- (2) a. **1/2P pronouns** [DP [PART] D]] b. **3P pronouns** [D [Num_{<number>} [n_{<class>}]]]

I argue that the impossibility to case-mark the former, but not the latter, is due to their internal structure: only *nominal* arguments with *Num-n-N* layer can carry case morphology in Georgian. Hence, the absence of case marking is expected on those 1/2PA that lack nominal *structure* but not on 3PA, nor on 1/2PA as in (1b) and (1c), which are endowed with such a structure.

In many syntactic accounts of person split, the division between case-marked and unmarked arguments hinges on the feature *speech-act participant*. In the present account, the presence of this feature is a necessary condition for PS but not a sufficient one. When [PART] and *Num-n* co-occur, as in expressions of type *we doctors*, the 1/2PA will be marked with case.

To conclude, case licensing and morphological case-marking are not determined by semantic-pragmatic properties of an argument but by structure alone.

References

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