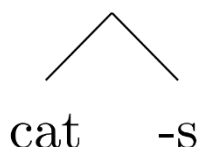




(3)

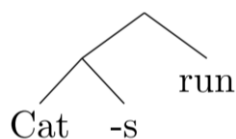


In (3), the Merger, *cat*, is expected to superimpose its conceptual content onto the division-expressing *-s* through MaS, just like in the compound cases in (2a/b), resulting in a *cat*-like set of divisions, and deriving the correct interpretation of a plurality of *cats*, entirely parallel to Borer (2005a). Likewise, irregular plurals like *oxen* are posited to differ only minimally in being inherently specified for both conceptual content *and* an infinite, non-

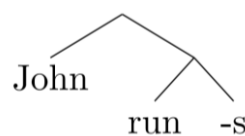
singleton set of entities, equally straightforwardly deriving the correct plural interpretation. Indeed, such a label-less approach not only does not need to assume multiple lexical storage areas, but can also be shown to require fewer lexical specifications compared with an account like Borer's (2005a).

**4. Label-less event semantics and the English present tense.** Similarly, 'verb phrases' like *Cats run* and *John runs* are posited to have the label-less structures shown in (4a) and (4b) respectively.

(4) a.



b.



In both cases, these involve the 'subject' (i.e. *cats/John*) Merging with (a complex syntactic object) containing the listeme *run*. Just like in (2a/b) and (3), MaS dictates that – as Mergers – these subjects should superimpose their lexical properties onto the Mergee, *run*. Further, as the bare plural 'subject' *cats* in (4a) is specified for both conceptual content and an infinite, non-singleton set of entities, it will superimpose both these properties onto *run*, resulting in a *cat*-like infinite, non-singleton set of *run* entities. This a desirable outcome given that 'verb phrases' are assumed to denote sets of entities. In addition, I posit that this set of entities is specifically interpreted as a set of *event* entities, given that MaS dictates that the Mergee *run* is primary in meaning (see also *park* in (2a) and *book* in (2b)), and under the assumption that an event is the only interpretation world knowledge makes possible based on such combinations. Moreover, following and extending on Paddock (1990), such a derivation correctly derives the primary, habitual aspectual interpretation of the English present tense, which expresses a "general states of affairs" (Carlson 2012: 828), or – more concretely, and crucially – a *plurality* of events

The next question arising is: Does the Merger of non-plural 'subjects' like *John* in (4b) return a parallel interpretation, and why is the so-called 'verbal' agreement suffix *-s* found only with such third-person singular subjects in English? Here, following and building on Kayne (1989, a. o.), it is proposed that not only bare plurals like *cats* but *all* non-third-person singular subjects in English are effectively 'plural', denoting an infinite, non-singleton set of entities. In contrast, third-person singular subjects like *John* are proposed to be 'singular', denoting a finite, singleton set of entities. Accordingly, if *John* were to Merge with *run* alone, the result determined by MaS would only be a *John*-like *finite, singleton set of run* entities, i.e. a single running event. Yet, if – albeit controversially – the 'verbal' agreement suffix *-s* is taken to be one-and-the-same as the 'plural' suffix *-s*, then when *John* instead Merges with *runs* in (4b), the result is correctly predicted to be a plurality of events, also yielding the required habitual aspectual interpretation. Indeed, numerous pieces of evidence will be presented for the identity of these two suffixes, a position which in fact follows Chomsky (1957; see also Paddock 1990). Moreover, possible suggested extensions to *do*-support, further interpretations of the English present tense, and languages with more complex plural and 'verbal' agreement markers will also be presented.

**Selected references:** • Borer, H. 2005a. *Structuring sense volume I: In name only*. Oxford University Press. • Borer, H. 2005b. *Structuring sense volume II: The normal course of events*. Oxford University Press. • Carlson, G. 2012. "Habitual and generic aspect." In: R. I. Binnick (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of tense and aspect* (pp. 828–851). Oxford University Press. • Chomsky, N. 1957. *Syntactic structures*. Mouton & Co. • Chomsky, N. 1995a. "Bare phrase structure." In: H. Campos, and P. Kempchinsky (Eds.), *Evolution and revolution in linguistic theory* (pp. 51–109). Georgetown University Press. • Chomsky, N. 1995b. *The minimalist program*. The MIT Press. • Grimshaw, J. 2000. "Locality and extended projection." In: P. Coopmans et al. (Eds.), *Lexical specification and insertion* (pp. 115–133). John Benjamins. • Harbour, D. 2014. "Paucity, abundance, and the theory of number." *Language* 90(1), 185–229. • Kayne, R. S. 1989. "Notes on English agreement." Reprinted in: Kayne, R. S. 2000. *Parameters and universals* (pp. 187–205). Oxford University Press. • Paddock, H. 1990. "On explaining macrovariation in the sibilant and nasal suffixes of English." *Folia Linguistica Historica* 9(1), 235–269.