



# What Latvian tells us about PCC effects

Antonio Fábregas

Olga Urek

Ilze Auziņa

## Abstract

The nature of Person Case Constraints (PCC) in natural languages is among the most debated issues in current linguistic research. In this article we consider an instance of strong PCC attested in the Latvian debitive construction, whereby a 1st or 2nd person internal argument cannot appear in the nominative in the presence of a dative debtor. We argue that the Latvian facts support a syntactic analysis of strong PCC effects, in contrast to morphological approaches. We argue that the Latvian facts, moreover, seem to be easily amenable to analysis of the PCC effects as involving a dative-intervention effect, assuming an architecture where person and number agreement are dealt with by two distinct heads.

**Keywords:** debitive, Person Case Constraint, agreement, case assignment, Latvian, dative, mood

## 1 The nature of PCC effects<sup>1</sup>

In linguistic research, description and theory are tightly intertwined. Hypotheses are formulated to account in a principled way for data, and are revised or confirmed only to the extent that they are shown to be able to account in an equally principled way to other patterns of data different from those over which they were originally formulated. This article has as its main goal to test against Latvian a number of hypotheses that have been formulated to account for so-called Person Case Constraints. We will argue that Latvian argues for a syntactic—not morphological—account of PCC effects, and more specifically that it provides initial evidence in favour of an intervention account of PCC effects.

Person Case Constraints (henceforth, PCC) are widely documented cross-linguistically, and refer to the impossibility of realising one argument (A) in a particular case (C) in the context of another argument (B) realised in another case (C'),

---

<sup>1</sup>The research leading to the results presented in this article has received funding from the Norwegian Financial Mechanism 2009–2014 under Project Contract no. NFI/R/2014/053.

typically dative. (1) illustrates a typical example from French:

- (1) \*Jean me        lui        présent.  
      Jean me.ACC him.DAT introduce  
      Intended: ‘Jean introduced me to him.’

Descriptively, some authors have treated them using so-called Silverstein Hierarchies (Silverstein 1976) where each case realisation is prototypically associated to a certain degree in an animacy / force dynamics scale. PCC effects, intuitively, reflect misalignments between a thematic scale of roles / cases and an animacy scale. (2) represents a standard scale for animacy and another one for semantic roles (Haspelmath 2004: 21; see also Silverstein 1976, Croft 1990, Aissen 1999, among others). PCC effects generally involve cases where a higher-ranked element in one of the two hierarchies is associated to a lower-ranked element in the other one, particularly when more animate pronouns are associated to lower-ranked theta roles. In (1), there would be misalignment because the recipient is third person, while the patient is first person. These observations treat PCC effects as tendencies (see Haspelmath’s 2004 usage-based explanation based on frequency) rather than as the result of more strict principles of well-formedness at any level of the grammar.

- (2) a. 1st person / 2nd person > 3rd person  
      b. Agent > Recipient > Patient

However, PCC effects involving nominative and dative arguments (of which Latvian, as we will see, is an example) have also been reported. In such languages, a 1st or 2nd person participant in the nominative is banned in the presence of a dative. This kind of effect cannot be easily accounted for through a supposed misalignment between two scales like those in (2). To the extent that in non-ergative languages nominative tends (by the same kind of scale) to be associated to subjecthood, and subjects are prototypically agents, nothing in principle should be misaligned—note, if we treat PCC effects as tendencies—in having a 1st or 2nd person nominative in the context of a dative.

In this article, we want introduce in the discussion of PCC effects the case of the Latvian debitive, whose properties, although described in detail in the literature, have not been (to the best of our knowledge) previously explored from the perspective of what they have to add to the PCC debate.

The article is structured as follows. In §2 we present the main facts about the Latvian debitive and present the pattern of data that suggests that it, indeed, shows a kind of PCC, specifically a so-called strong PCC effect. This PCC effect involves

a nominative-dative interaction, which is more rare than the standard accusative-dative constraint. §3 is devoted to presenting our assumptions about the syntactic structure of the debitive, following closely Holvoet & Grzybowska (2014). With this background in mind, §4 considers three families of theories that have treated the PCC effect in different ways, and evaluates which one of them fares better in accounting for the Latvian data with a minimum of additional assumptions and modifications. In this section we will argue that Sigurðsson’s (1991, 2000, 2002, 2004) intervention account where the dative pronoun blocks an agreement relation between the nominative and a functional head is more adequate for Latvian than approaches based on morphological filters or the competition between two constituents for the same probe. Finally, in §5 we present our conclusions.

## 2 The Latvian debitive

Latvian is a nominative-accusative, pro-drop, morphologically rich language where the verb overtly agrees with the subject in person and number:

- (3) a. (Es) las-u grāmat-u.  
 I.NOM read-1SG book-acc  
 b. (Tu) las-i grāmat-u.  
 you.NOM read-2SG book-acc  
 c. (Viņš) las-a grāmat-u.  
 he.NOM read-3SG book-ACC  
 d. (Me:s) las-ām grāmat-u  
 we.NOM read-1PL book-acc
- ‘I / you / he / we read(s) the book.’

This pattern, with nominative in the subject and full number and person agreement, extends thorough the paradigm with one crucial exception, which we will focus on: the debitive form.

The debitive is a deontic modal form of the verb that is used to express obligation or duty. Its use, morphosyntactic properties and historical evolution have been described in some detail in the literature (Endzelīns 1981, Holvoet 1998a, 1998b, 2001, 2007, 2013, Fennell 1995a, 1995b, Andronovs 1998, Lokmane 2002, Berg-Olsen 2004, Kalnača 2012, Lokmane & Kalnača 2014, Holvoet & Grzybowska 2014, Seržant & Taperte forthcoming, among others). The debitive has four properties that contrast it with a non-debitive form of the same verb. Consider (4):



(4) (Man) (ir) jā-las-a grāmat-a.  
I.DAT be.PRS DEB-read-A book-NOM  
‘I have to read the book.’

(i) The first property is that the prefix *jā-* marks the verbal form. Descriptively, this prefix encodes the modal information.

(ii) The second property is that an auxiliary verb, *būt* ‘be’, can be used in combination with the lexical verb. This form inflects for tense and aspect (5), but it is normally omitted if tense is unmarked (present imperfective), while the prefix is compulsory (2, 3a).

(5) a. Man (ir) jā-dar-a darb-s.  
I.DAT be.PRS DEB-do-A work-NOM  
‘I have (now) to do the work.’

b. Tev bija jā-rakst-a vēstule.  
YOU.DAT be.PAST DEB-write-A letter.NOM  
‘You had to write a letter.’

c. Kaimiņ-iem pēc nedēļas būs jā-ņļauj mauriņš.  
neighbour-DAT.PL after week be.FUT DEB-cut grass-NOM  
‘After one week the neighbours will have to cut the grass.’

(examples apud Lokmane & Kalnača 2014: 171)

(iii) The third property is that both the lexical verb and the auxiliary, when present, are frozen in the third person. Note (6) that third person inflection in Latvian is morphologically unmarked both in singular and plural.

(6) *ņļaut* ‘to mow’

	1	2	3
sg	ņļāju	ņļauj	<b>ņļauj</b>
pl	ņļaujām	ņļaujāt	<b>ņļauj</b>

It is for this reason difficult to know whether Latvian debitives are frozen in third person or simply uninflected. What can be said, however, is that debitives lack any overt agreement marking.

(iv) The final property is that, in the debitive, the nominative argument of the non-modal version corresponds to a dative, and the accusative argument of the non-modal version, to a nominative. However, in colloquial Latvian this second argument can or must stay in accusative. Third person arguments can stay in

accusative, while 1st and 2nd person arguments must stay in accusative. The following sentence illustrates the alternation with third person arguments:<sup>2</sup>

- (7) a. Man jā-las-a grāmat-u.  
 I.DAT DEB-read-A book-ACC  
 b. Man jā-las-a grāmat-a.  
 I.DAT DEB-read-A book-NOM  
 ‘I have to read the book.’

With respect to 1st and 2nd person arguments, these must appear in accusative in all varieties (Holvoet 2001, Holvoet 2013).

- (8) a. \*Man jā-satiek tu.  
 I.DAT DEB-meet you.NOM  
 ‘I have to meet you.’  
 b. Man jā-satiek tevi.  
 I.DAT DEB-meet you.ACC  
 ‘I have to meet you.’

This effect seems to be a version of the Person Case Constraint (henceforth, PCC; see Bonet 1991, Albizu 1999, Boeckx 2000, Ormazabal 2000, Anagnostopoulou 2003, Béjar & Rezac 2003, Adger & Harbour 2007, Ormazabal & Romero 2007, among many others). It is general to differentiate between two kinds of PCC (after Bonet 1991: 182), a Strong PCC effect (‘In a combination of a weak direct object and an indirect object, the direct object has to be third person’) and a Weak PCC (‘In a combination of a weak direct object and an indirect object, if there is a third

---

<sup>2</sup>As far as we can tell, with 3rd person internal arguments the alternation between accusative and nominative in the debitive is purely stylistic, and is associated to no semantic or syntactic effect. Seržant & Taperte (forthcoming) collected a sample of 3193 examples from Colloquial Latvian in Google, taking a number of measures to minimize the potential role of prescriptive grammar, and found out that 13% of the internal arguments in the debitive are marked in accusative, while 87% of them are marked in nominative. While debitive is a relatively recent phenomenon, in Old Latvian (16–19th centuries) only 4% of their internal arguments are marked as accusative, while in Early Modern Latvian (1850–1900), they document only 1.7% of such cases. Thus, in Modern Colloquial Latvian the accusative marking is more widespread than in both these historical periods. In their statistical study they note that among the factors that favour the accusative marking in colloquial speech we find the grammatical category of the object (reciprocal pronouns, wh-pronouns and demonstratives are more likely to appear in accusative, but are documented also in nominative) and animacy. Note, however, that these are just (statistically significant) tendencies: with an inanimate noun, is considered grammatical, but non-prescriptive, by native speakers.



person it has to be the direct object'). While in some languages it is unclear which one of these two version is operative (cf. Ormazabal & Romero 2007, Rezac 2011 for Spanish), the debitive in Latvian is a clear instance of a strong PCC involving dative and nominative:

(9) In the presence of dative, the nominative argument has to be third person.

This case of PCC involving a dative and a nominative is not unknown in the literature. Rivero (2008) identifies it for Spanish, where she notes that several constructions involving two clitics, one of them dative, block a [participant] pronoun in the nominative.

(10) a. A Ana se le pasaron / pasó por la cabeza ellos  
to Ana SE.REF her.DAT passed.3PL / passed.3SG by the head they.NOM  
/ él.  
/ he.NOM

'They went through Anna's mind (Anna thought of them).'

b. \*A Ana me le pasé por la cabeza yo.  
to Ana me.REF her.DAT passed by the head I.NOM

Intended: 'Anna thought of me.'

c. \*A Ana te le pasaste por la cabeza tú.  
to Ana YOU.REF her.DAT passed.2SG by the head you.NOM

Intended: 'Anna thought of you.'

d. \*A Ana nos le pasamos por la cabeza nosotros.  
to Ana us.REF her.DAT passed.1PL by the head we.NOM

A second case reminiscent of this one is quirky agreement in Icelandic (Sigurðsson 1991, 1996, 2002, 2004, Taraldsen 1995, Boeckx 2000, Stepanov 2003, Anagnostopoulou 2003, among many others). Consider the following pattern of data, taken from Sigurðsson (2000: 87): agreement in a dative-nominative configuration, with is produced with a certain class of predicates, is confined to third person: [participant] pronouns are blocked.

(11) a. \*Henni líkuð-um við.  
her.DAT like-1PL we.NOM

'She likes us.'



- b. \*Henni líkuð-uð þið.  
her.DAT like-2PL you.NOM  
‘She likes you.’
- c. Henni líkuð-u þeir.  
her.DAT like-3PL they.NOM  
‘She likes us.’

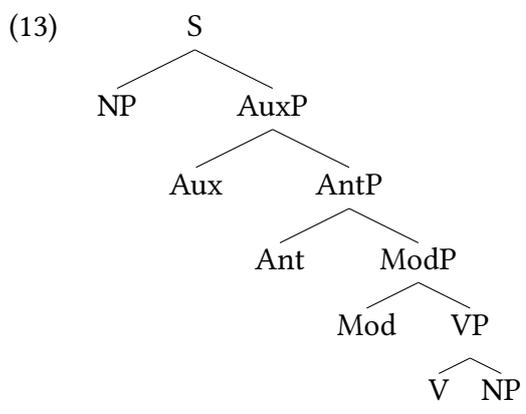
Unlike Latvian and Spanish, however, [participant] pronouns are not excluded in the nominative in this configuration: what seems to be at stake here is the pattern of agreement. When the agreement form is identical to third person, the configurations are accepted by many speakers (cf. Sigurðsson 2000: 88):

- (12) a. Henni leidd-ist ég.  
her.DAT bore-3SG I.NOM  
‘She found me boring.’
- b. Henni líkað-i ég.  
her.DAT like-1SG/3SG I.NOM  
‘She likes me.’

Examples like (12) suggest, then, that what is blocked in Icelandic is the agreement in the verb, more than the possibility of having a [participant] pronoun emerge in the nominative.

### 3 The Latvian debitive structure

We start from Holvoet & Grzybowska’s (2014: 104) structure for the monoclausal debitive, reproduced in (13):





Tev ir bijis jālas-a šī grāmat-a.  
you.DAT be.3.PRS be.PP DEB-read-A this book-NOM

‘You have had to read this book.’

In their view, the debitive is headed by a modal, spelled out as the prefix *jā-*, which bundles with the lexical verb. This modal head is introduced, in the monoclausal debitive, below the area where temporoaspectual heads are projected; in (22), Ant(erior)P is one such head. Remember that the auxiliaries are not compulsorily spelled out when they express unmarked temporoaspectual information, that is, [present]. Crucially, the dative is treated as a quirky subject hosted in the structural subject position. The treatment of the dative in the debitive as a quirky subject has been proposed since Fennell (1973), where it was noted that such datives can control reflexives:

(14) Viņ-š mums<sub>i</sub> jā-uzlūko par sev<sub>i</sub> līdzīg-u.  
he.NOM we.DAT DEB-regard as REFL equal-ACC

‘We<sub>i</sub> have to regard him<sub>j</sub> as equal to us<sub>i/\*j</sub>.’  
(adapted from Holvoet & Grzybowska 2014: ex. 43)

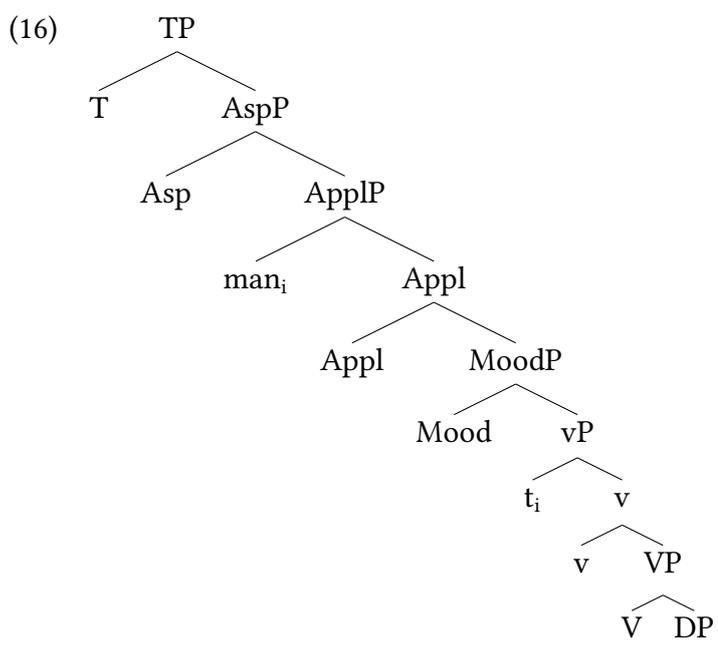
Holvoet & Grzybowska (2014: 113–114) add the observation that, if there is no topicalisation of the nominative argument, the dative argument is able to control reflexive possessive pronouns:

(15) ... vecāk-iem<sub>i</sub> jā-redz sav-i<sub>i</sub> bēr-n-i aizej-am.  
parents-DAT DEB-see own-NOM children-NOM go.away-CVB

‘... parents<sub>i</sub> have to see their<sub>i</sub> own children go away.’

This makes debitive datives quasi-subjects, but they do not display full subjecthood properties, if we take as those the ones singled out in Zaenen et al. (1985). For instance, dative arguments in the debitive cannot act as pivots controlled by nominative arguments, while topicalised nominatives can. The possibility of controlling a reflexive in the nominative argument, in fact, might just tell us that the dative c-commands the nominative, or even (assuming, as Holvoet & Grzybowska 2014 do, a multifactorial approach to binding along the lines of Culicover & Jackendoff 2005) an interplay of linear ordering, hierarchical precedence and thematic interpretation.

With these factors as background, we will assume the following structure for the monoclausal debitive:

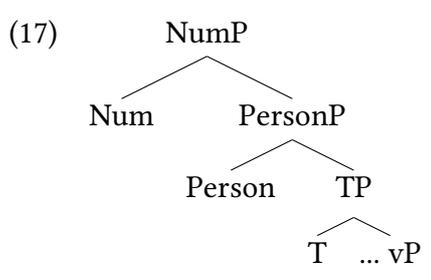


Our main difference with respect to Holvoet & Grzybowska (2014) is to posit an Applicative Phrase associated to the deontic modal in order to explain case assignment. This head, taken from Cuervo (2003) and others, is a verb-external relational head responsible for dative case assignment. In a transitive verb, which we assume to be composed of two verbal layers (Larson 1988), the closest argument is the external argument that gets interpreted as the agent of the event; that is the head that becomes attracted by App, and therefore the head that gets its case assigned as dative. The internal argument, hosted inside VP, being hierarchically lower, does not get dative.

The semantics of the construction is captured with this structure. The verb-external applicative establishes a relation between the modal construction and the dative, which becomes interpreted as ‘X<sup>dat</sup> has the obligation of performing event Y’, where Y corresponds to the verbal structure. Notice that this structure, in itself, can account for reflexivisation. The dative argument is higher than the second argument, precedes it linearly (in the absence of topicalisation movement) and with respect to the thematic-hierarchy it is also higher than the internal argument.

An independent question is whether the dative will rise to spec, TP and become the prototypical subject of the clause. The tests applied by Holvoet in the cited works suggest that it cannot, but recent years have witnessed a progressive structural deconstruction of what a subject is. Vangsnes (2002) proposed that there are multiple subject positions associated to different notions that prove relevant for the contrasts noticed in Holvoet & Grzybowska (2014), such as topicality and referentiality; Sigurðsson (2000, 2002), an approach which will be crucial in our

analysis, has proposed a multiheaded view where in addition to a T head, there are at least two separate agreement heads, one for number and one for person, above them (2000: 89, example 60), with nominative being assigned inside vP as a lexical property of the verb:



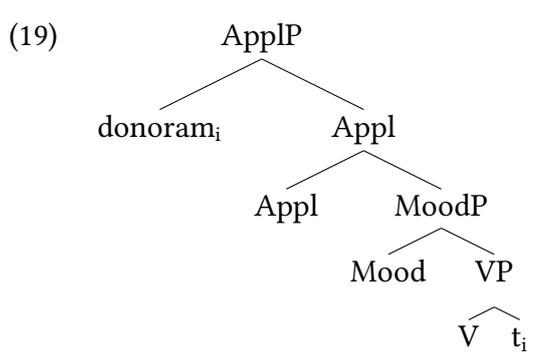
Prototypical subjecthood could be viewed as a situation where one and the same argument interacts with T, Person and Number, while the non-prototypical cases which only display parts of the properties of subjects involve situations where two or more arguments interact with these three heads, distributing the subject properties among them.

The proposal that we adopt here correctly predicts that in the absence of an overt external argument, the internal argument will receive dative. The following example is taken from Berg-Olsen (2004: 72), and it involves an intransitive verb.

(18) Donor-am pirms asin-s nodošan-as ir jā-atpūšas.  
 donor-DAT before blood-GEN giving.GEN be.PRS DEB-rest

‘The donor must rest before giving blood.’

(18) would have the structure in (19); the applicative head attracts the only possible argument, and not having any competitor this is the internal argument.



What the dative marking seems to imply, if we only concentrate on the previous examples, is that the dative-marked argument is the debtor, that is, the entity responsible for the obligation in whose personal sphere the obligation is assigned.

Now that we have motivated our proposal for the basic structure of the monoclausal debitive, in the next section we will see which one of the available treatments of the PCC fares better in integrating this pattern with the rest of the attested PCC effects.

#### 4 Integrating Latvian among the PCC effects

The literature on PCC effects is extremely wide, and impossible to cover in detail in a single article. For purposes of this article, we will group the analyses of PCC in three classes:

- (i) PCC as a morphological filter (Bonet 1991, Rivero (2008));
- (ii) PCC as a syntactic intervention effect (Sigurðsson 1991, 2000, 2002, 2004, Stepanov 2003);
- (iii) PCC as an effect of the competition of two constituents for syntactically agreeing with the same probe (Anagnostopoulou 2003, Adger & Harbour 2007, Ormazabal & Romero 2007).

The first family of approaches clearly cannot extend PCC effects to Latvian, simply because in Latvian the banned sequence does not involve a morphological unit—a word or a clitic cluster. In both Bonet (1991) and Rivero (2008)) the PCC effect emerges at the morphological level, as a filter that bans a sequence of identical or too similar features inside the same morphological domain—specifically, inside a clitic cluster. However, the Latvian facts apply in the absence of a clitic cluster, which means that a morphological approach cannot be the right way to look at these facts from a cross-linguistic perspective.

Clitic cluster sequences show many of the properties of morphological object, generally summarised through the Lexical Integrity Hypothesis (see Lieber & Scalise 2006) that states that morphological objects cannot act as syntactic constituents. For instance, clitic clusters cannot be interrupted by syntactic constituents (20) and one clitic inside the cluster cannot move to another position without the rest (21).

- (20) Se (\*rápidamente) me cayó.  
 SE.REF quickly me.DAT fell  
 ‘I accidentally dropped it (quickly).’

- (21) a. Parece caér-se-le            todo.  
 seems fall-SE.REF-him.DAT all  
 ‘He seems to accidentally drop everything.’
- b. \*Le            parece caer-se    todo.  
 him.DAT seems fall-SE.REF all  
 ‘He seems to accidentally drop everything.’

It is not difficult to show that the sequence of nominative-dative in Latvian, which does not involve any clitic, acts as a syntactic and not a morphological object.

- (22) a. Man   (tagad) jā-las-a    grāmat-a.  
 me.DAT now    DEB-read-A book-NOM  
 ‘Now I have to read the book.’
- b. Man   jā-las-a    viņ-am   grāmat-a.  
 me.DAT DEB-read-A him-DAT book-NOM  
 ‘I have to read him the book.’

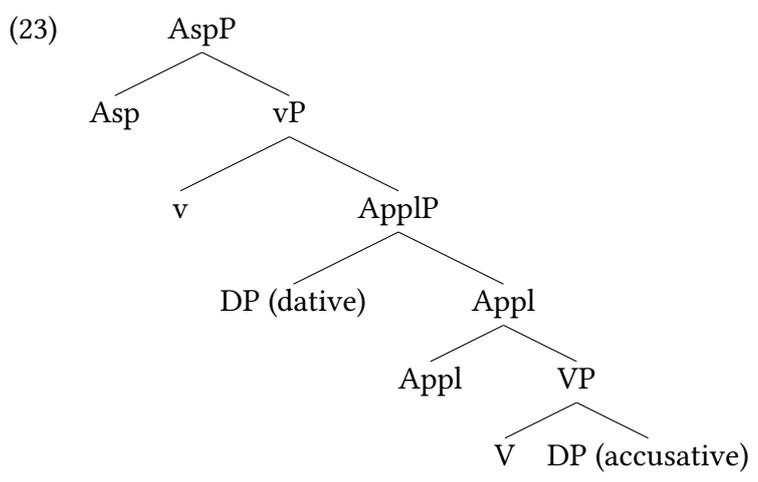
In a nutshell, the combination is clearly syntactic, so a syntactic analysis is necessary. In what follows we will first present two competing analyses of PCC effects, and then discuss which one of them fits better with the Latvian facts. We will see that, even though it is difficult to decide between the two approaches given the possibility of making alternative technical decisions, the multi-headed approach seems to require less modifications to fit the Latvian facts.

#### 4.1 PCC as a syntactic effect 1: PCC effects as two constituents competing for the same probe

Given that PCC effects always imply a ban on a participant argument marked in a particular case, there is a long list of analysis that treat them as the effect of two constituents marked with a feature related to animacy or participanthood competing with each other for licensing by the same probe. Anagnostopoulou’s (2003) and Adger & Harbour’s (2007) analyses share the intuition that a (strong) PCC effect is due to the combination of two factors:

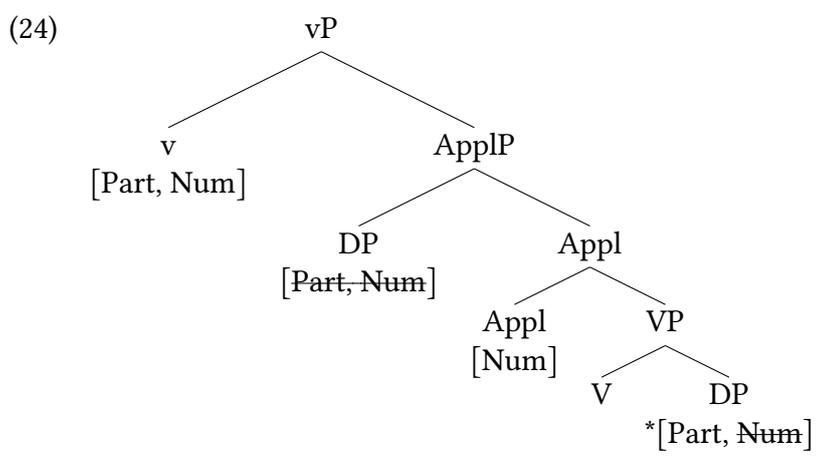
- (i) Applicatives impose the condition that the dative has to be marked as a [participant], but do not license that feature.
- (ii) The dative, then, has to check the [participant] feature against a head, which prevents the non-dative argument from licensing its [participant] feature.

Let us see now in detail Adger & Harbour’s proposal, and then let us evaluate to what extent it could be extended to the Latvian examples. Adger & Harbour (2007: 22) propose the following structure, where crucially the arguments are introduced with unlicensed person and number features.

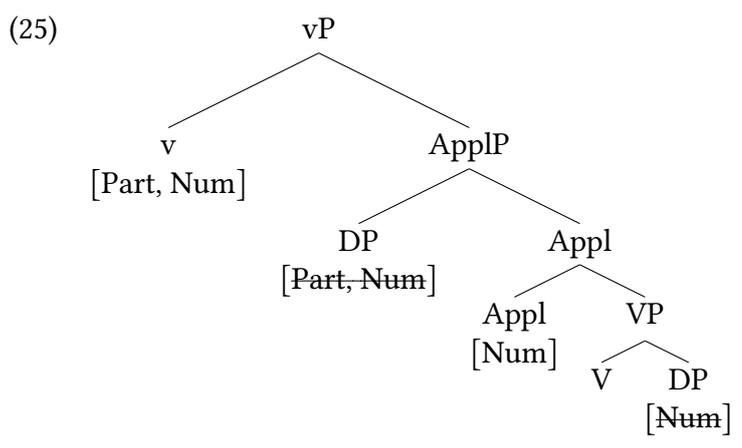


Their proposal is that in this configuration, the internal argument in VP is licensed by Appl; this head is defective in the sense that it never checks participant (2007: 26). As for the indirect object, it must be introduced as a participant, as a requisite of the head Appl, that forces its specifier to contain that feature. As Appl is checking the referential features of the internal argument, the indirect object must be licensed by v, a head that, by hypothesis, checks both participant and number. The external argument of vP is licensed by AspP, which in their proposal can also license participant and number.

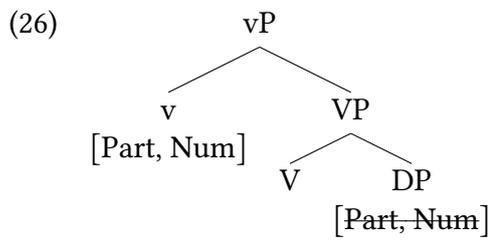
The PCC effect between dative and accusative is, then, explained in the following way: given that the dative introduced by Appl must always be assigned the feature [participant], and that Appl lacks it, in the presence of a dative an accusative that contains the feature [participant] would be unlicensed.



The accusative, then, has to be third person, on the assumption that only 1st and 2nd person pronouns are endowed with a [participant] feature.

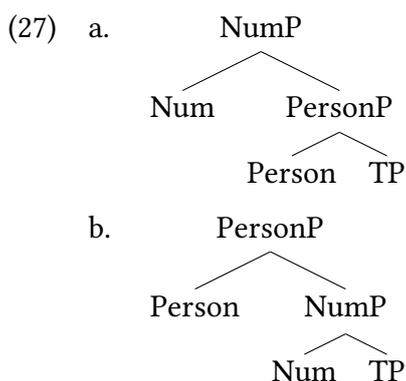


When the ApplP is missing, there is no problem in licensing the [participant] feature of the accusative: in such context, there is no extra dative argument that can enter in an agreement relation with vP, and the accusative DP gets both participant and number checked.



#### 4.2 PCC as a syntactic effect 2: Intervention effects and Sigurðsson’s multiheaded approach

In a line of research that spans several years, Sigurðsson (1991, 2000, 2002, 2003, 2004) has analysed the Icelandic PCC agreement effect as an intervention effect that is caused by a dative that is placed higher than the internal argument. His proposal is that agreement is distributed across a series of heads (one-feature-per-head, cf. also Cardinaletti 2003), as in (27a) or (27b).



(27a) is argued for in Sigurðsson (2000), while later work argues for (27b), among other things, given the morpheme ordering facts that show that, verb internally, one attests the ordering V-T-Num-Person, which can be derived by pure Mirror Principle (Baker 1985) from (27b), but not from (27a).

(28) lær-ð-u-m  
 learn-PAST-PL-1PL  
 ‘we learnt’

(Sigurðsson 2006: 228)

Here we will present the version of the analysis presented in Holmberg & Sigurðsson (2008). Their proposal for Icelandic is that the dative-marked argument starts as the highest argument in the verbal constituent, as represented in (29).

(29) PersonP      NumberP TP [Dat V Nom]

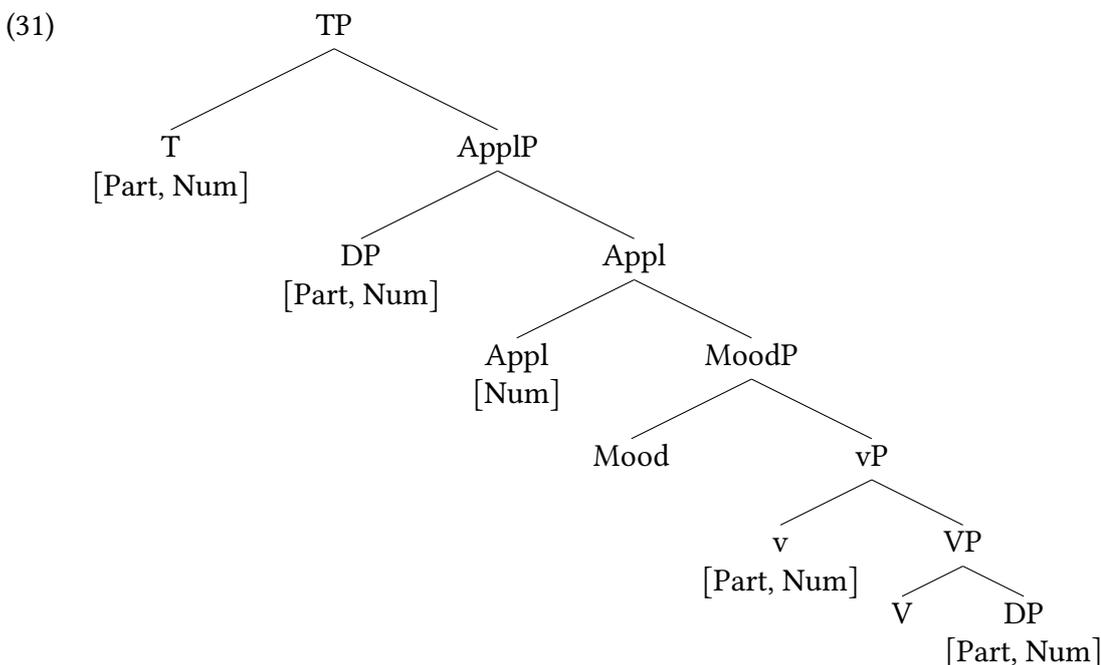
In this position, Dative intervenes between the nominative-marked argument and any of the two higher agreement projections Number and Person; the result would be absence of agreement in number or person in the verb. However, in the variety of Icelandic that accepts third person agreement with variation in number, Dative moves up to spec, NumberP, as represented in (30).

(30) PersonP Dat NumberP TP [Dat V Nom]

Here, dative does no longer intervene between NumberP and the nominative argument; number agreement with the nominative is, then, possible. However, note that the dative is still intervening between PersonP and the nominative argument. This has the effect of blocking person agreement: following the long tradition of treating third person as the non-person, PersonP would license [participant] features, which are only carried by 1st and 2nd person pronouns. Consequently, inflection in person is banned from this construction.

### 4.3 Discussion: which approach fits Latvian better?

One initial appealing property of the Adger & Harbour (2007) approach is that it in fact predicts that the position at which the dative is introduced could produce PCC effects involving dative and nominative arguments (see also Rezac 2008). A higher applicative should produce a similar PCC effect, but involving instead of an accusative, a nominative: however, we will see that there are significant problems in extending this analysis. Let us see how this theory could work, starting from our structure of the dative, and assuming that T is in Latvian the head that licenses the high dative.



(31) would imply two checking operations: assuming that T and vP have complete sets of features, the low argument could be checked, even including a

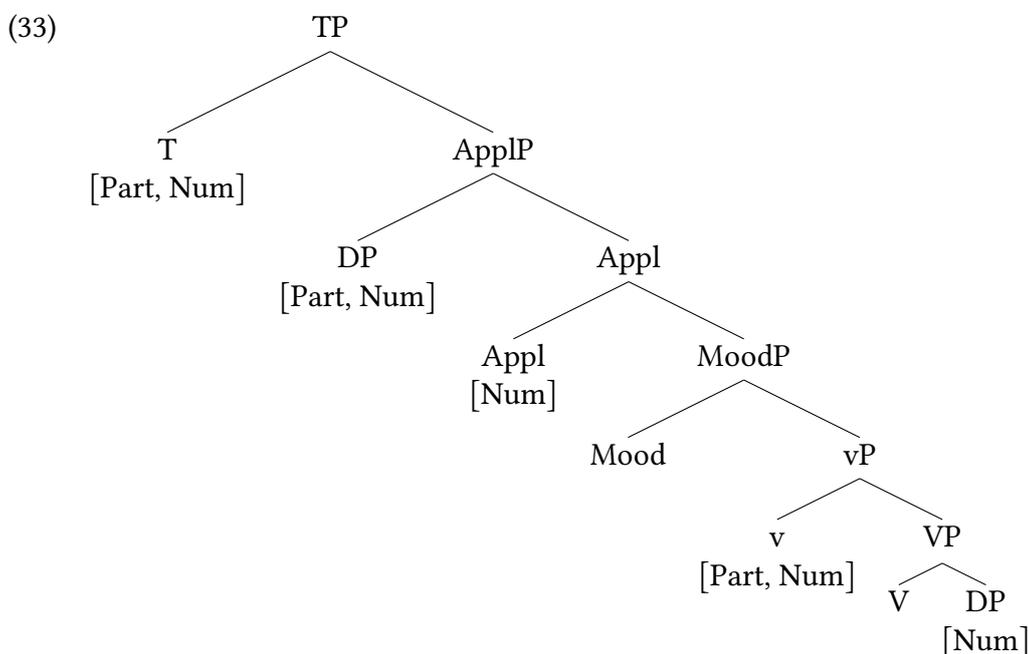
participant feature, by the vP head. This feature checking would translate, correctly, into accusative case marking.

The applicative argument, assuming again with Adger & Harbour (2007) that it must be defined as Participant, would enter in a checking relation with T, satisfying again both its features. Appl would contain an unused Number feature that does not license any element, but assuming that feature is interpretable in Appl, this would not trigger obvious problems.

This configuration, then, would predict, correctly (32), with compulsory accusative marking in any 1st or 2nd person pronoun.

- (32) Man ja:-satiek tevi / \*tu.  
 I.DAT DEB-meet you.ACC / you.NOM  
 ‘I have to meet you.’

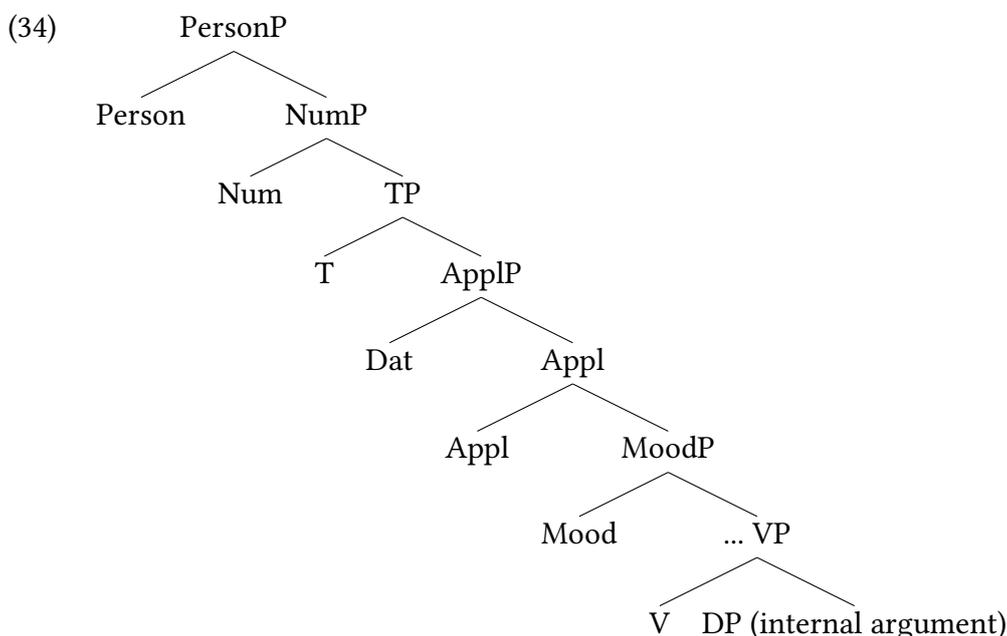
However, things get more challenging when explaining why nominative can appear in an internal argument that lacks [participant]. The problem is that here the absence of a feature allows nominative case marking to emerge, but on the assumption that nominative marking is associated to TP, this is unexplained, because T is checking the dative. Let us start from the same configuration, but with a third person internal argument, to show the problem step by step:



The problem is that in this configuration we should also expect compulsory accusative assignment in the internal argument: v would value its number

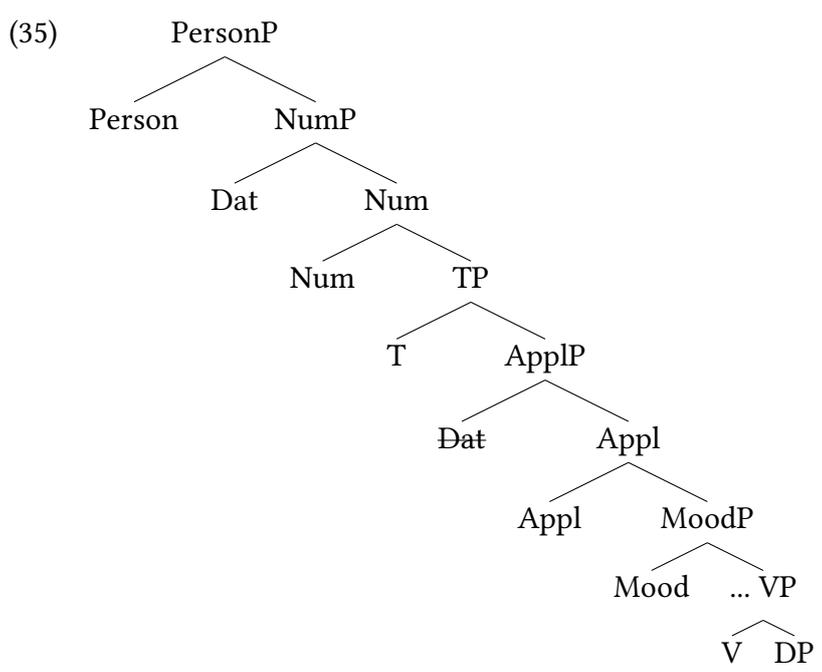
specification, and Part would be unused (a situation that does not trigger any ungrammaticality in Adger & Harbour 2007: 27). TP should not be available to assign nominative, if there is real competition between arguments for the same probe, because TP has been used to license the dative argument.

In general, and beyond the specific technical decisions taken by Adger & Harbour, we find it difficult to see how an approach with two elements competing for the same probe can account for the nominative marking associated to first person: while the height at which the applicative argument can be introduced (rightly) predicts different sets of competitors, the core of the problem is that if the presence of the high argument makes the derivation crash because it uses one probe, that probe should not be available for another argument under any circumstances. But in the Latvian case, the assignor of nominative has to be available for another argument at least under some conditions. We find it difficult to see through which non-stipulative way this kind of analysis can explain that there is an alternation with some arguments. Contrast this with the split-subject proposal made by Sigurðsson. We believe that this analysis is directly translatable to Latvian, and can account for a property that it was unclear whether the previous alternatives could capture: agreement is frozen in 3rd person (remember that in Latvian, third person agreement is identical in singular and plural). We start with the simplified representation in (34) to show why:



Assuming that, as in this variety of Icelandic, Dative moves to spec, NumP, we would account for why verb agreement would get frozen: number could es-

establish a (morphologically silent) relation with the internal argument, but person would never enter into a checking relation with that argument; hence, the default form for third person, signaling absence of [participant] agreement, is introduced at that point. Consequently, in the debitive agreement in first or second person would be automatically excluded.



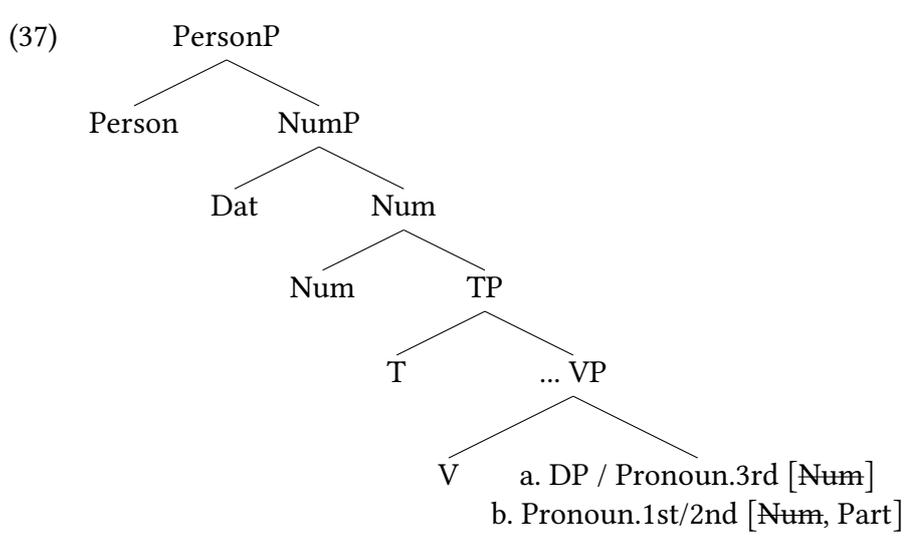
A second property that this analysis gets for free is to present a plausible account of why the dative behaves as a quasi-subject, controlling reflexivisation, but does not display all properties of a prototypical subject, as Holvoet (2013) and Holvoet & Grzybowska (2014) have shown in detail. The explanation is that neither the dative nor the nominative enter into a full relation with the three heads Person, Number and T that, jointly, characterise a prototypical subject: given the dative intervention, neither of them enters into a relation with Person and both have some relation with Number, which explains why the subject properties are distributed across both constituents.

The question at this point is how Sigurðsson’s general proposal can account for the case that the internal argument receives: why are internal arguments allowed always in the accusative, but only in the nominative if they lack [participant]? The option that this author embraces is to accept that morphological case is independent from syntactic case, but we believe that this is not necessary to account for the Latvian facts. Assume the following principle, that restricts case assignment in its relation to agreement:



(36) An argument can receive the case associated to a head only if all its properties have been checked by that head and its associated agreement projections, if any.

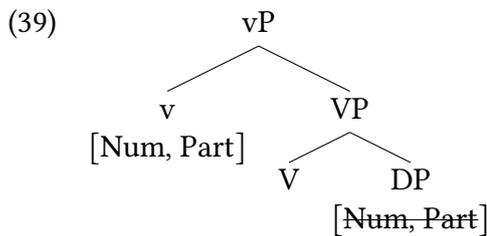
Assuming, standardly, that structural nominative is assigned by T, this translates into the proposal that nominative is assigned to a DP or a pronoun when all properties of that constituent (number and, if relevant, participant) have been checked by the agreement projections of T. Let us see now how this works in order to prevent nominative on a [participant] pronoun.



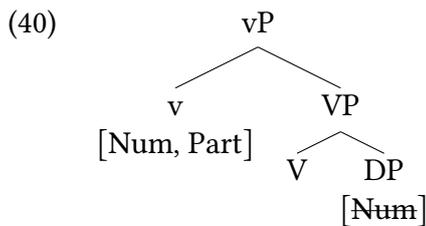
Given that the dative will always intervene between Person and the pronoun, Participant will never be checked. As the agreement positions associated to T have not fully satisfied the [participant] pronoun properties, following (36), the personal pronoun will never be able to get nominative. A nominal constituent lacking [participant], but endowed with number, will be able to enter into a full relation with the agreement positions, given that the dative does not block the relation between NumP and the argument. This accounts for the contrast between (38a) and (38b).

- (38) a. Man jā-las-a grāmat-a.  
I.DAT DEB-read-3SG book-NOM  
'I have to read the book.'
- b. \*Man jā-satiek tu.  
I.DAT DEB-meet you.NOM  
'I have to meet you.'

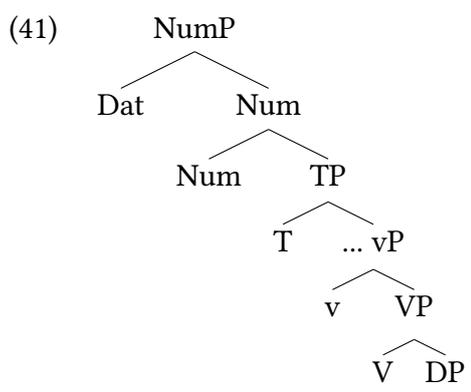
How is accusative assigned to the internal argument? Let us take the two cases separately, starting with a pronoun endowed with a [participant] feature. Here we propose that accusative case is, standardly, assigned by a phi-complete v head. In other words, we propose that in Latvian there is an asymmetry between T and v: T is dominated by associated agreement projections, but v lacks such projections. Preliminary evidence in favour of this proposal is that Latvian, a language with rich subject agreement, lacks any signs of object agreement, or object clitics. We take this fact as a sign that in the vP domain there are no comparable Num or Person agreement projections. If this proposal is on the right track, then accusative is assigned to the Participant pronoun by interaction with vP.



Now let us explain why DPs and 3rd person pronouns, in the colloquial language, can appear both in the nominative and in the accusative. Following the logic of our argument, nominative would be assigned to these pronouns when they enter into an agree relation with TP's NumP, and accusative would be the case they get assigned if that relation is not established. (40) represents the first stages of the derivation:



At this stage, v can enter into a checking relation with DP, which would imply materializing the DP in the accusative, a possibility that we know is possible. Skipping the intermediate projections, at a later stage of the derivation T and its agreement projections will be introduced (41).

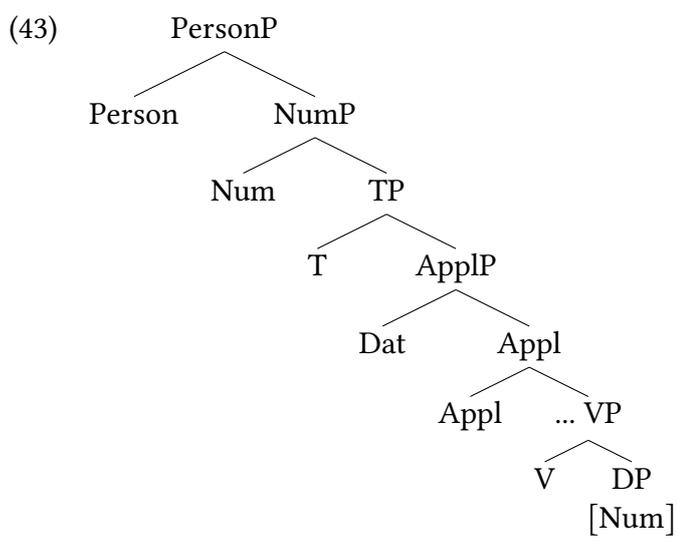


If Dative is in spec, NumP, Num will establish a relation with DP, which now would be in a multiple relation with v and T. Given that T has now also entered into a relation with DP, and that this relation has affected all the DP's features, we propose that at this stage case becomes overwritten and accusative is replaced by nominative. In other words, here we have just a case of multiple agree, where the same set of features is licensed by two or more probes, something that should be expected if agreement is a blind, structurally-motivated operation. The proposal just sketched implies that Sigurðsson is right in claiming that abstract case has to be distinguished from morphological case at some level: while vP is able to check the DP's features, satisfying its syntactic licensing conditions, NumP establishes a second relation with that DP that, even if it is redundant from the perspective of licensing, is interpreted by the spell out component as a sign that the DP will be spelled out in nominative.

What happens in the version of Latvian where these [participant]-less constituents also appear in the accusative? Sigurðsson (2000) notes that there is a variety of Icelandic which rejects both agreement in person and number. This variety is illustrated with (42):

- (42) Það {þótti / \*þóttu} einum málfraeðingi þessi rök sterk.  
 EXPL thought.3SG / 3PL one linguist.DAT these arguments strong  
 'One linguist found these arguments strong.'

Holmberg & Sigurðsson's (2008) proposal is that in this variety movement of T to Num happens before the dative rises to spec, NumP, blocking agreement. We part ways with this explanation, and suggest that in the colloquial variety where [participant]-less pronouns appear in the accusative the minimal difference is that the dative does not rise to spec, NumP.



The effect is that NumP cannot establish any relation with DP, given intervention of the dative, so accusative case never gets overwritten. Given that 3rd person inflection in Latvian is always syncretic in singular and plural, there is no noticeable morphological effect in the verb.

Some speakers seem to be able to produce both nominative and accusative [participant]-less nominals; we propose that in their grammar, movement of the dative argument to spec, NumP is optional, perhaps dictated in part by information structure. When that movement takes place, the argument is expressed as nominative; when it does not take place, accusative is preserved.

**4.4 A similar construction in Icelandic**

The surface difference between Latvian and Icelandic is that the [participant]-pronouns are manifested in nominative in the varieties that Sigurðsson reports, and in our account this does not have any obvious explanation. However, Pfaff (2012) reports that among the (young) speakers that he elicited judgements from, a restricted subset noted that a sentence like (44a), with a nominative [participant] pronoun, was degraded, and instead found it more natural to produce it with an accusative pronoun (44b) (see also Árnadóttir & Sigurðsson 2012, although the number of speakers found by these authors that accepted the accusative marking is very reduced). In fact, all pronouns in the accusative were deemed more grammatical by this small set of speakers.

- (44) a. \*Ēer līkaði eg.  
 you.DAT like.3SG I.NOM  
 b. Ēer līkaði mig.  
 you.DAT like.3SG I.ACC  
 ‘You like me.’

At least for this set of speakers of Icelandic, an explanation along the lines of Latvian can be established: the [participant] feature of the lower argument is checked inside vP, and accusative is assigned to it. For those Icelandic speakers that do accept nominative in the lower object, even for [participant] pronouns, where dative prevents checking of the full set of DP-features by T’s associated projections, it seems that the only available explanation is that nominative in that variety is a manifestation of inherent lexical case assigned by the v head as a lexical quirk. From this perspective, the difference between the variety reported in Pfaff (2012) and Sigurðsson’s variety is minimally that the morphological manifestation of v-case with a number of verbs has moved from (default) morphological nominative to morphological accusative.<sup>3</sup>

## 5 Conclusion

In this paper we have presented a PCC effect involving dative-nominative in a particular construction of Latvian. We have argued that the pattern of data attested in Latvian argues against purely morphological treatments of PCC effects, and in favour of syntactic approaches. Among syntactic approaches, secondarily, we have showed that Latvian seems more easily amenable to an analysis where the dative intervenes between a person head and the argument that needs to be licensed than to a proposal where the dative and the second argument compete with a single probe, in this case TP. The reason is that in the second family of approaches the TP layer would have to be licensing both a dative and a nominative argument, something that in principle seems to be impossible. However, as an anonymous reviewer rightly points out, this is largely related to the specific technical choices made in each proposal, and there are conceivable ways in which the second family of approaches could accommodate the Latvian facts. For instance,

<sup>3</sup>In this article we do not discuss the Fennic pattern, which imposes genitive case to the notional subject in the modal construction known as the ‘necessive’. Holvoet (2013) has related the Latvian debitive to the Fennic necessive: at least the historical preservation of the Latvian pattern seems to have been influenced by the existence of this pattern in its geographically close area. The biggest difference between Fennic and Latvian in this respect is that, while the latter allows third person pronouns in nominative, the former forces all pronouns, irrespectively of person, to appear in accusative. Although we will not elaborate the analysis here, we believe that Finnish is analysable like Latvian if the intervention affects to a checking of a property of ‘referentiality’ or ‘topicality’ that all pronouns have to carry in their feature endowment.

for speakers that use the nominative in the Latvian debitive with third person pronouns, the dative argument could be fully licensed internally to the applicative head if the right features are posited, or nominative could be a manifestation of unmarked case. In any instance we believe that Sigurdsson’s approach has at the very least that advantage—for Latvian—that it allows a standard view of case marking while successfully explaining why the alternation only takes place in the non [participant] arguments.

A potential second advantage of the intervention account is that it allows a uniform treatment of PCC effects and other independent cases where datives block a relation between T and an argument that should receive nominative, as in the following contrast from Spanish, where the overt presence of a dative clitic prevents the subject of the infinitival clause from moving to TP.

- (45) Juan (\*me) parece estar enfermo.  
 Juan (me.DAT) seems to.be sick  
 ‘Juan seems (to me) to be sick.’

We take as the main conclusion of this article that a morphological approach cannot account for PCC effects, while the choice among the available options in syntactic approaches is not a clear consequence of the Latvian facts. While an intervention effect seems to be *prima facie* supported by the Latvian facts, time will tell if ‘two goals for the same probe’ approaches can successfully incorporate this pattern of data into the analysis. In any instance, we hope to at least have been able to convincingly argue that Latvian PCC effects motivate a syntactic treatment of these facts, and suggest a non-accidental connection between PCC and dative intervention effects.

### References

- Adger, David & Daniel Harbour. 2007. Syntax and syncretism of the Person Case Constraint. *Syntax* 10(2), 2–37.
- Aissen, Judith. 1999. Markedness and subject choice in Optimality Theory. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 17(4), 673–711.
- Albizu, Pablo. 1999. *The syntax of person agreement*: USC Los Angeles dissertation.
- Anagnostopoulou, Elena. 2003. *The syntax of ditransitives: evidence from clitics*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Andronovs, Aleksejs. 1998. Vajadzības izteiksme’ latviešu valodas gramatiskajā tradīcijā (the description of the debitive in Latvian the grammatical tradition of Latvian). *Baltu Filoloģija* 8, 154–177.

- Baker, Mark C. 1985. The Mirror Principle and morphosyntactic explanation. *Linguistic Inquiry* 16(3), 373–416.
- Berg-Olsen, Sturla. 2004. *The Latvian dative and genitive: a Cognitive Grammar account*: University of Oslo dissertation.
- Béjar, Susana & Milan Rezac. 2003. Person licensing and the derivation of PCC effects. In Ana T. Pérez-Leroux & Yves Roberge (eds.), *Romance linguistics*, 49–62. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Boeckx, Cedric. 2000. Quirky agreement. *Studia Linguistica* 54(3), 354–380.
- Bonet, Eulàlia. 1991. *Morphology after syntax: Pronominal clitics in romance*: Massachusetts Institute of Technology dissertation.
- Cardinaletti, Anna. 2003. Stylistic fronting in Italian. In Lars-Olof Delsing, Cecilia Falk, Gunlög Josefsson & Halldór Ármann Sigurðsson (eds.), *Grammatik i fokus / grammar in focus: Festschrift for Christer Platzack 18 November 2003*, vol. 2, 47–55. Lund: Department of Scandinavian Languages.
- Croft, William. 1990. *Typology and universals*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Cuervo, María Cristina. 2003. *Datives at large*: Massachusetts Institute of Technology dissertation.
- Culicover, Peter & Ray Jackendoff. 2005. *Simpler syntax*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Endzelīns, Jānis. 1981. Latviešu valodas skaņas un formas. *Darbu izlase* 4, 303–325.
- Fennell, Trevors G. 1973. The subject of Latvian verbs in the debitive mood. In Arvids Ziedonis, Jaan Puhvel, Rimvydas Silbajoris & Mardi Valgemaie (eds.), *Baltic literature and linguistics*, 213–221. Ohio: Association for the Advancement of Baltic Studies.
- Fennell, Trevors G. 1995a. Teikuma priekšmets latviešu valodas teikumos ar verbu vajadzības izteiksmē. *Lingua Lettica* 1, 39–46.
- Fennell, Trevors G. 1995b. Verbu konjugācija pirmajās latviešu gramatikās. *Lingua Lettica* 1, 95–109.
- Haspelmath, Martin. 2004. Explaining the ditransitive Person-Role Constraint: a usage-based approach. *Constructions* 2, 1–71.

- Holmberg, Anders & Halldór Ármann Sigurðsson. 2008. Icelandic dative intervention. In Roberta D'Alessandro, Susann Fischer & Gunnar Hrafn Hrafnbjargarson (eds.), *Agreement restrictions*, 251–279. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Holvoet, Axel. 1998a. Complex (bi-clausal) passives in Latvian and Lithuanian and their connection with the nominative object. *Baltistica* 33(2), 233–242.
- Holvoet, Axel. 1998b. Notes on the rise and grammaticalisation of the Latvian debitive. *Linguistica Baltica* 7, 101–118.
- Holvoet, Axel. 2001. *Studies in the Latvian verb*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego.
- Holvoet, Axel. 2007. *Mood and modality in Baltic*. Kraków: Wydawnictwo uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego.
- Holvoet, Axel. 2013. Obliqueness, quasi-subjects and transitivity in Baltic and Slavonic. In Ilza Seržants & Leonid Kulikov (eds.), *The diachronic typology of non-prototypical subjects*, 257–282. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Holvoet, Axel & Marta Grzybowska. 2014. Non-canonical grammatical relations in a modal construction: The Latvian debitive. In Axel Holvoet & Nicole Nau (eds.), *Grammatical relations and their non-canonical encoding in Baltic*, 97–137. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Kalnača, Andra. 2012. Darbības vārda izteiksmes un modalitāte. *Vārds un tā pētīšanas aspekti* 11(3), 166–173.
- Larson, Richard K. 1988. On the double object construction. *Linguistic Inquiry* 19(3), 335–391.
- Lieber, Rochelle & Sergio Scalise. 2006. The lexical integrity hypothesis in a new theoretical universe. *Lingue e Linguaggio* 1, 7–32.
- Lokmane, Ilze. 2002. Datīvs latviešu valodas sintaktiskajā sistēmā. *Linguistica Lettica* 10, 151–161.
- Lokmane, Ilze & Andra Kalnača. 2014. Modal semantics and morphosyntax of the Latvian DEBITIVE. In Elisabeth Leiss & Werner Abraham (eds.), *Modes of modality*, 167–193. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Ormazabal, Javier. 2000. A conspiracy theory of case and agreement. In Juan Uriagereka Roger Martin, David Michaels & Samuel J. Keyser (eds.), *Step by step*, 235–260. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

- Ormazabal, Javier & Juan Romero. 2007. The object agreement constraint. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 25(2), 315–347.
- Pfaff, Alexander. 2012. (non-)agreement and case: Dat-Nom verbs in Icelandic.
- Rezac, Milan. 2008. The syntax of eccentric agreement: The Person Case Constraint and absolutive displacement in Basque. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 26(1), 61–106.
- Rezac, Milan. 2011. *Phi-features and the modular architecture of language* Studies in Natural Language and Linguistic Theory 81. Dordrecht: Springer.
- Rivero, María Luisa. 2008. Oblique subjects and person restrictions in Spanish: a morphological analysis. In Roberta D’Alessandro, Susann Fischer & Gunnar Hrafn Hrafnbjargarson (eds.), *Agreement restrictions*, 215–251. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Árnadóttir, Hlíf & Einar Sigurðsson. 2012. Case in disguise. In Beatriz Fernández & Ricardo Etxepare (eds.), *Variation in datives*, 96–143. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- Seržant, Ilja A. & Jana Taperte. forthcoming. Differential argument marking in the Latvian debitive: a diachronic and synchronic multi-variate analysis.
- Sigurðsson, Halldór Áрман. 1996. Icelandic finite verb agreement. *Working Papers in Scandinavian Syntax* 57, 1–47.
- Sigurðsson, Halldór Áрман. 2000. The locus of case and agreement. *Working Papers in Scandinavian Syntax* 65, 65–108.
- Sigurðsson, Halldór Áрман. 2003. Case: abstract vs. morphological. In Ellen Brandner & Heike Zinsmeister (eds.), *New perspectives on case theory*, 223–267. Stanford: CSLI.
- Sigurðsson, Halldór Áрман. 2006. The nominative puzzle and the low nominative hypothesis. *Linguistic Inquiry* 37(2), 289–308.
- Sigurðsson, Halldór Áрман. 1991. Icelandic case-marked PRO and the licensing of lexical arguments. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 9(2), 327–363.
- Sigurðsson, Halldór Áрман. 2002. To be an oblique subject: Russian vs. Icelandic. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 20(4), 691–724.



Sigurðsson, Halldór Ármann. 2004. Icelandic non-nominative subjects: facts and implications. In Peri Bhaskararao & Karumuri Venkata Subbarao (eds.), *Non-nominative subjects*, 137–159. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Silverstein, Michael. 1976. Hierarchy of features and ergativity. In R. M. W. Dixon (ed.), *Grammatical categories in Australian languages*, 112–171. Canberra: Australian National University.

Stepanov, Arthur. 2003. On the ‘quirky’ difference Icelandic vs. German: a note of doubt. *Working Papers in Scandinavian Syntax* 71, 1–32.

Taraldsen, Knut Tarald. 1995. On agreement and nominative objects in Icelandic. In Hubert Haider, Susan Olsen & Sten Vikner (eds.), *Studies in comparative Germanic syntax*, 307–327. Dordrecht: Kluwer.

Vangsnes, Øystein. 2002. Icelandic expletive constructions and the distribution of subject types. In Peter Svenonius (ed.), *Subjects, expletives and the EPP*, 43–70. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Zaenen, Annie, Joan Maling & Höskuldur Thráinsson. 1985. Case and grammatical functions: The Icelandic passive. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 3(4), 441–483.

Received: 2016/07/03  
 Revised: 2016/09/19  
 Accepted: 2016/11/01

Antonio Fábregas  
 UiT-Norways Arctic University  
 antonio.fabregas@uit.no

Olga Urek  
 UiT-Norway’s Arctic University  
 olga.urek@uit.no

Ilze Auziņa  
 Institute of Mathematics and Computer Science, University of Latvia  
 ilze.au@lu.lv