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Two case studies in morphological person restrictions
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1. Introduction. This paper offers case studies from Caquinte (Arawakan) and Kipsigis (Kalenjin)—two unrelated, understudied languages—which show the need for a morphological account of certain ditransitive person restrictions. Much recent literature on person restrictions in ditransitives (e.g. Person-Case Constraint, PCC) assumes that the core problem is syntactic; a single probe either Agrees with too few goals (Anagnostopoulou 2003; Béjar & Rezac 2003; Stegovec 2019; a.o.) or with too many goals (Coon & Keine 2018). However, we argue that a full account of ditransitive person restrictions must also include purely morphological restrictions. The analysis implemented here differs from other hybrid analyses (Coon & Keine 2018; Walkow 2013) in that morphological and syntactic restrictions can operate independently. The typology that this predicts can be extended to account for Strong vs. Weak PCC patterns.

2. Case studies. We provide two case studies of a novel ditransitive person restriction based on original fieldwork: in Caquinte and Kipsigis (both basic VSO), only local>local is ungrammatical.

2.1. Caquinte. In Caquinte ditransitives, both objects are indexed by suffixes on the verb, which follow a morphological template: local object suffixes always occur before non-local suffixes, and only one of each may appear on the verb. Unlike the PCC, combinations of local and non-local suffixes can be freely used in local>3 (1a) and 3>local (1b) constructions:

(1) a. Pamenagetenari nogepigairikitite. b. yojokabokenari Joanka.
pi-amen-ge-e-na-ri no-kepigairikiti-te i-ojok-bako-k-i-na-ri Joanka
2-look.for-DSTR-IRR-1-3M I-louse-POSS 3M-give-hand-PFV-AR-1-3M Juan
‘Look for my lice for me.’ (1>3) ‘...he gave me to Juan.’ (3>1)

When two local suffixes compete for exponence in the same morphological slot, that competition results in ungrammaticality (2a). 3>3 slot competition, however, is tolerated; the IO suffix wins out over the DO suffix and the local suffix slot is filled by the applicative suffix -nV (2b):

(2) a. *Yojokakenampi.
   i-ojok-k-i-na-mpi 3M-give-PFV-AR-1-2
   ‘He gave you to me / me to you.’ (1>3)
   b. nojokakotajeneri aapani kishikiro
   no-ojok-ako-aj-e-nV-ri aapani kishikiro
   1-give-CL-REG-IRR-APPL-3M father.M manioc.F
   ‘...I’ll give father cooked manioc...’ (3M>3F)

2.2. Kipsigis. Ditransitive verbs with non-pronominal DP objects bear the suffix -i, which disappears when the IO is omitted; this realizes Appl between VP and vP. When the ditransitive sentence contains one local person object, verbal object agreement is always with this argument, be it the IO (3a) or the DO (3b) (“promiscuous agreement” as in Béjar 2003):

(3) a. Koo-i-mut-waan Nancy ineendet.
   PST-3.S-bring-1SG.IO Nancy 3SG
   ‘Nancy brought him/her to me.’ (1>3)
   b. Koo-i-mut-jaan Nancy ineendet.
   PST-3.S-bring-1SG.DO Nancy 3SG
   ‘Nancy brought me to him/her.’ (3>1)

(3) shows that local>3 and 3>local configurations are grammatical, indicating that a traditional PCC is not active in Kipsigis. However, overtly realized local>local is ungrammatical:

(4) a. *Koo-i-mut-waan Kibeet inye.
   PST-3.S-bring-1SG.IO Kibeet 2SG
   ‘Kibeet brought you (sg) to me.’ (*1>2)
   b. *Koo-i-mut-jiin Kibeet ane.
   PST-3.S-bring-2SG.DO Kibeet 1SG
   ‘Kibeet brought you (sg) to me.’ (*1>2)
3. A morphological “repair”. To repair *local>local in both Caquinte (5) and Kipsigis (6), one of the objects can be fronted for focus, in which case the verb only agrees with the in-situ object. These data show that IOs and DOs are both viable targets of agreement, since either object can be agreed with in extraction contexts; *local > local cannot be due to inaccessibility of either object. We propose that (5) and (6) are derived via movement followed by morphological anti-agreement, formalized as the deletion of φ-features in the context of ¯A-features (Baier 2018): φ → ∅ / [__, X0, A]. Crucially, because anti-agreement is morphological and can obviate *local>local, the source of this ungrammaticality cannot be syntactic. We propose a single, inviolable morphological constraint to derive *local>local (see also Drummond & O’Hagan to appear and Bossi 2020):

(7) REALIZEPARTICIPANT: Local person φ-features within the complex V must be exponed.

In standard local>local configurations, only one suffix can be inserted, either into the local person slot (Caquinte) or for Appl (Kipsigis); this leaves local person φ-features un-exponed and violates REALIZEPARTICIPANT, which applies at Vocabulary Insertion (assuming DM). In ¯A-extraction contexts, this paradox goes away, since the φ-features of the extracted element are deleted.

4. A predictive typology. Data from Caquinte and Kipsigis support a morphological analysis of the *local>local restriction in ditransitives. While syntactic explanations are well-equipped to handle certain ditransitive person restrictions, these facts show that post-syntactic mechanisms must also play a role. Under our analysis, morphological and syntactic person restrictions are fully modular; each functions independently of the other. We predict that languages might only show one of these types of restrictions, which have distinct hallmarks. Morphological restrictions block the co-occurrence of similar elements competing for exponence, while syntactic restrictions reference syntactic locality. In this way, a modular system predicts a typology of person restrictions where certain ungrammatical combinations appear to “toggle” on and off. For instance, the only difference between Strong and Weak PCC patterns is the acceptability of local>local in the Weak PCC; furthermore, 3>3 restrictions are attested in combination with many PCC varieties. If these restrictions on similarity (*local>local, *3>3) can instead be attributed to the morphology, a division of labor between syntax and morphology could simplify the analyses in both modules.