Catalan intransitive verbs and argument realization

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Goal

To describe and analyze the behavior of the single core argument of intransitive verbs in Catalan:

- The mapping between arguments and grammatical functions;
- Verbal agreement;
- Case assignment;
- Expression by means of clitics.

Main claim

- The single core argument of a clause can be a nominative object.

Subsidiary claims

- In general, the core argument of an intransitive verb (whether unaccusative or unergative) alternates between subject and object;

- The grammatical function that the core argument maps onto is always nominative, which implies that objects can be either nominative or accusative (leaving aside dative objects);

- The verb agrees with a nominative argument, whether subject or object;

- Clauses may lack a subject (in violation of the Subject Condition).

Structure of the paper

- Facts to be analyzed

- Argument-to-GF mapping theory

- Restrictions on the SUBJ-OBJ alternation

- Verbal agreement

Facts to be analyzed

Object properties

- *En* cliticization

- Possible past participle agreement

- Bare NP

Subject properties

- Pro-drop with a definite interpretation

- The controlee in a control construction

Agreement

- What does the verb agree with?

En cliticization

With transitive verbs

The internal argument in Catalan transitive verbs can be partially or totally replaced by the clitic *en*[1]:

(1) a. Si vols   carpetes, en   tinc   tres de noves.

        if want.2p.sg *folder*.f. pl *en*.cl *have*.1p.sg *three of new*.f.pl

        'If you need folders, I have three new ones.'

      b. Si vols   carpetes de plàstic noves,   compra'n.

        if want.2p.sg *folder*.f.pl *of plastic new*.f.pl *buy*.2p.sg.imp-*en*.cl

        'If you need new plastic folders, buy them.'

                                      (from Alsina 1986:97-98)

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[1] We are only concerned with what we might call 'partitive' *en*, as opposed to 'genitive' *en*: the two uses of this clitic are different.

En cliticization

With intransitive verbs

Both unaccusative and unergative verbs allow their sole argument to be replaced by the *en* clitic:

(2) a. Cada dia surten   molts trens, però avui   només n'ha   sortit   un.

      every day leave.pl *many train*.pl *but   today only   en*.cl-*have*.sg *leave*.part *one*

      'Everyday many trains leave, but today only one has left.'

    b. En   ploraran sis quan sàpiguen   la   veritat.

      en-cl *cry*.pl.fut *six when know*.pl.sbjv *the*.f.sg *truth*.f.sg

      'Six of them will cry when they find out the truth.'

<div align="right">(from Cortés and Gavarró 1997:41)</div>

En cliticization

- It has sometimes been claimed that only unaccusative verbs allow *en* cliticization. We are describing the facts of speakers who accept *en* cliticization with unergatives as well as with unaccusatives, like Cortés and Gavarró (1997) (see Saccon (1995) for Italian).

- The possibility of *en* cliticization with unergative verbs in Catalan shows that it is not the 'deep object', i.e., the internal argument, that triggers *en* cliticization.

- We assume that the *en* clitic in Catalan corresponds to the OBJ (the 'surface object' in theories like Burzio (1986) and Cortés and Gavarró (1997), i.a.).

Corollary: the single core argument of an intransitive verb can be expressed by means of the clitic *en*, which requires assuming that the argument in question is an object.

Past participle agreement

The past participle in Catalan optionally agrees in gender and number with a third person object clitic, when cooccurring with the perfective auxiliary *haver* 'have'. PP agreement does not happen with a full NP object:

(3) a. La directora ha defensat/*defensada la proposta.

the.f.sg *director*.f.sg *have*.sg *defend*.pp.m/*f.sg *the*.f.sg *proposal*.f.sg

'The director has defended the proposal.'

b. La directora l'ha defensada.

the.f.sg *director*.f.sg *la*.cl.f.sg-*have*.sg *defend*.pp.f.sg

'The director has defended it.'

(from Alsina 1996:95)

Past participle agreement

PP agreement is not only possible with transitive verbs, like the one in (3b), but also with intransitives:

(4) a. Perquè aleshores hi haurà <u>una</u> <u>gran tribulació</u>,

because then hi.cl be.fut.sg one.f.sg great distress

com no <u>n'hi ha haguda</u> cap des de la creació del món…

like not en.cl-hi.cl be.pp none from the creation of-the world

'For then there will be great distress, as there has not been one since the creation of the world...'

(Bible [Mt 24:21])

(http://www.biblija.net/biblija.cgi?m=Mt+24%2C1-31&l=ca. Visit time: 18:19, 08/07/2018)

Past participle agreement

(4) b. N'han   <u>arribats</u>   <u>molts</u>.

     en.cl-*have*.pl *arrive*.part.pl *many*

     'Many have arrived'

                              (from Fabra 1912:160)

Corollary: the fact that the single core argument of an intransitive verb can trigger past participle agreement further confirms that the argument is an object.

Bare NP

- Bare indefinite NPs in Catalan have a non-specific interpretation. They cannot be the subject of the verb, and usually cannot appear in the preverbal position, unless focused. Examples in (5) illustrate the situation with transitive verbs:

(5) a. *Mecànics   arreglen el teu   cotxe.

    mecanics.pl *fix*.pl   *the your car*

  b. *Arreglen mecànics   el teu cotxe.

    fix.pl   *mecanics*.pl *the your car*

  c. *Arreglen el teu   cotxe mecànics.

    fix.pl   *the your car   mecanics*.pl

    'Mechanics fix your car.'

(from Alsina 1996:104)

Bare NP

- By contrast, bare NPs have no problem appearing in immediately postverbal positions in an intransitive clause:

(6) a. *Aigua   cau   de   la   teulada.   b. Cau   aigua   de   la   teulada.

        water.sg *fall*.sg *from the roof*   *fall*.sg *water*.sg *from the roof*

        'Water is falling from the roof.'   'Water is falling from he roof.'

                                               (From Alsina 1995:13)

(7) a. *Nens   treballen en aquesta fàbrica.   b. Treballen nens   en aquesta fàbrica.

        child.pl *work*.pl   *in that*   *factory*   *work*.pl   *child*.pl *in that*   *factory*

        'Children work in that factory.'   'Children work in that factory.'

                                               (From Cortés 1995:64)

Corollary: the contrast between examples (6a)/(6b) and (7a)/(7b) indicates that both 'aigua' (water) in (6b) and 'nens' (children) (7b) are objects and not subjects.

Subject pro-drop

- Catalan is known to be a subject pro-drop language: a subject in Catalan can be null and be interpreted as having a definite referent:

(8) a. Els   estudiants solen   sortir   puntualment, però avui surten ∅ tard.

       the.pl *student*.pl *are-used-to*.pl *leave*.inf *punctually*   *but* *today leave*.pl *late*

       'Students usually leave on time, but today they are leaving late.'

    b. Els   estudiants no volen estudiar habitualment, però avui   estudien ∅ molt.

       the.pl *student*.pl *not want*.pl *study*.inf *usually*   *but* *today study*.pl   *a-lot*

       'Students usually do not want to study, but today they are studying a lot.'

  The possibility of omitting the argument of *sortir* in (8a) or of *estudiar* in (8b) with a definite interpretation is evidence that this argument is the subject of the verb.

Object omission

- An object in Catalan **cannot** be null with a definite referent:

(9) a. Joan ha   llegit   els   llibres.

  John have.3p.sg *read*.pp.m.sg *the*.m.pl *book*.m.pl

  'John has read the books.'

  b. Joan ha   llegit.

  John have.3p.sg *read*.pp.m.sg

  'John has read something.'

  NOT: 'John has read the book(s).'

Corollary: only the subject in Catalan can be null and have a definite reading. Therefore the single core argument of an intransitive verb in Catalan can be a subject.

Controlee in the control construction

(10) a. *N'he   obligat   molts a quedar-se'n.

     en.cl-*have*.1p.sg *obligate*.pp *many to stay*.inf-*se*.cl-*en*.cl

     'I have obligated many to stay.'

    b. N'he   obligat   molts a quedar-se.

     en.cl-*have*.1p.sg *obligate*.pp *many* to *stay*.inf-*se*.cl

     'I have obligated many to stay.'

(11) a. *N'he   obligat   molts a estudiar-ne.

     en.cl-*have*.1p.sg *obligate*.pp *many to study*.inf-*en*.cl

     'I have obligated many to study.'

    b. N'he   obligat   molts a estudiar.

     en.cl-*have*.1p.sg *obligate*.inf *many* to *study*.inf

     'I have obligated many to study.'

Controlee in the control construction

- Only the subject of the embedded clause can be controlled by the subject or object of the matrix clause.

- The presence of *en* in the embedded clause in (10a) and (11a) indicates that the single core argument is an object, and therefore cannot be controlled.

- The absence of *en* in the embedded clause in (10b) and (11b) indicates that the single core argument is a subject, and therefore can be controlled.

Corollary: the fact that the single core argument of an intransitive verb in the embedded clause can be controlled indicates that it is the subject.

Verbal agreement

Verbs usually agree with the subject:

(12) Joan ha/*han   llegit   els   llibres.

   John have.3.sg/pl *read*.pp.m.sg *the*.m.pl *book*.m.pl

   'John has read the books.'

What happens with intransitive verbs?

(13) a. Avui en   surten molts.   b. *Avui en   surt   molts.

   today en.cl *leave*.pl *many*   *today en*.cl *leave*.sg *many*

   'Today many are leaving.'   'Today many are leaving'

- The grammatical function the verb agrees with in (13) is object, given the presence of the *en* clitic.

Verbal agreement

- The verbal agreement facts of languages like Icelandic or Hindi indicate that in such languages the verb can agree with a GF other than the subject, provided that it is in nominative case.

- The same assumption will allow us to account for the verbal agreement facts in Catalan: the verb agrees with a nominative argument (regardless of its status as a subject or an object).

Verbal agreement with a nominative argument

- Independent evidence for the claim that the argument that the verb agrees with is nominative comes from the pronominal form of this argument:

Transitive verbs: nominative subject and accusative object

(14) a. Jo/*a mi   veig   els nens.

    I.nom/**to me*.acc *see*.1p.sg *the children*

    'I have see the children .'

  b. Els nens em veuen a mi/*jo.

    the children me see.3p.pl *to me*.acc/**I*.nom

    'The children have seen me.'

Intransitive verbs: nominative subject/object

(15) a. Jo/*a mi   surto.   b. Surto jo/*a mi.

    I.nom/**to me*.acc *leave*.1p.sg   *leave*.1p.sg *I*.nom/**to me*.acc

    'I leave.'   'I leave.'

The core argument of an intransitive verb in Catalan is always nominative.

What the facts tell us

Object properties

- *En* cliticization

- Optional past participle agreement

- Bare NP

Subject properties

- Pro-drop with a definite interpretation

- The controlee in a control construction

Agreement and case

Conclusion: The facts presented can be explained by assuming that the single core argument of an intransitive verb alternates between subject and object and is always nominative.

Argument-to-function mapping theory

- Argument structure

- Case assignment

- Mapping to GF

- Constraints on f-structure

Argument structure

- Argument classification relevant at argument structure

  - Core arguments

    - External (E)

    - Internal (I)

  - Non-core arguments

- The external argument E, if there is one, is the most prominent argument in a-structure.

- Arguments are ordered by prominence at a-structure, according to a thematic hierarchy.

Case assignment to core arguments

- All core arguments must have a value for the feature 'case'.

- Three case values for core arguments: dative, accusative, nominative.

Case assignment principles, ordered by priority:

i) Assign dative case to the more prominent of two internal arguments.

ii) Assign accusative case to the less prominent of two core arguments that lack case.

iii) Elsewhere, assign nominative case to a core argument.

Mapping arguments to GFs

Rules licensing the correspondence between arguments and GFs:

(16) **Core argument rule:** a core argument (C) maps onto a direct grammatical function (DGF), the class of GFs that consists of SUBJ and OBJ:

C
|
DGF

This allows the external argument to be either SUBJ or OBJ, which is prohibited by the LMT accounts (like Bresnan and Kanerva (1989) and Kibort (2001), i.a.) by assuming that external argument is intrinsically classified as [-o] and can never map onto an OBJ.

Mapping arguments to GFs

(17) **External argument rule:** an external argument is required to be the subject if there is another core argument:

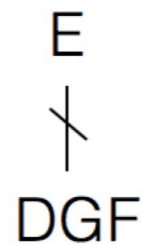$$< \; E \; ... \; C \; ... >$$
$$| \qquad |$$
$$SUBJ \quad GF$$
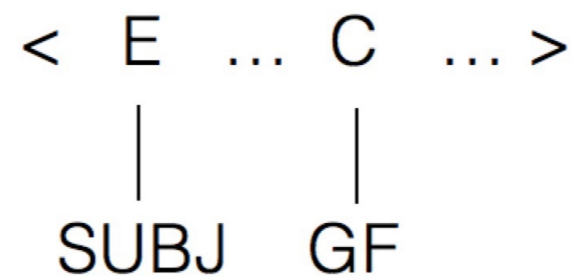
This ensures that with transitive verbs, the external argument is the subject: if there is no second core argument expressed, the external argument is free to map either onto OBJ or onto SUBJ.

Mapping arguments to GFs

(18) **Passivization rule:** passivization blocks the linkage of the external argument to DGF:

$$E$$
$$\nmid$$
$$DGF$$

(19) **Elsewhere mapping rule:** link an argument to oblique (optionally).

$$A$$
$$\mid$$
$$OBL$$

The **optionality** of this mapping principle may be overridden lexically by having a lexical entry specify that an argument is obligatorily mapped onto an oblique. Since this rule is an elsewhere rule, it applies after the other mapping principles: it applies to non-core arguments as well as to arguments that have their linkage to DGF blocked by passive, antipassive, or possibly other morpholexical operations.

Constraints on f-structure

(20) Nominative subject constraint (specific to Catalan):

* SUBJ [CASE ¬NOM]

- This does not mean that all nominatives are subjects:

- The [CASE NOM] is possible for SUBJ and OBJ. On the other hand, [CASE ACC] or [CASE DAT] are only possible for OBJ.

- OBJ can either be nominative, accusative, or dative, whereas SUBJ can only be nominative.

Constraints on f-structure

- We are assuming that a clause:

  i) May contain at most one SUBJ;

  ii) Need not contain a SUBJ; and

  iii) May contain more than one OBJ.

- The Subject Condition (SC), which requires every clause to have a subject, appears to have no effect in Catalan. That is because in OT terms (*cf.* Kuhn (2003)), it is ranked below other constraints in Catalan, as we shall see.

- Given the proposal about case assignment, a structure with two objects will always include at least one dative and probably an object that is either nominative or accusative.

Constraints on f-structure

The **uniqueness of the subject** and the **multiplicity of objects** can be handled in a variety of ways (see e.g. Alsina 1996 and Patejuk and Przepiórkowski 2016). This proposal can be implemented within the standard LFG formalism by assuming the SUBJ is single-valued and OBJ is set-valued.

Examples

(21) Transitive verbs

```
                    (ag)   (th)
                     |      |
  llegir ('read')  < E      I >
                     |      |
                    nom   acc    (Case assignment rule ii) and iii))
                     |      |
                   SUBJ   OBJ   (Core argument rule & External argument rule)
```
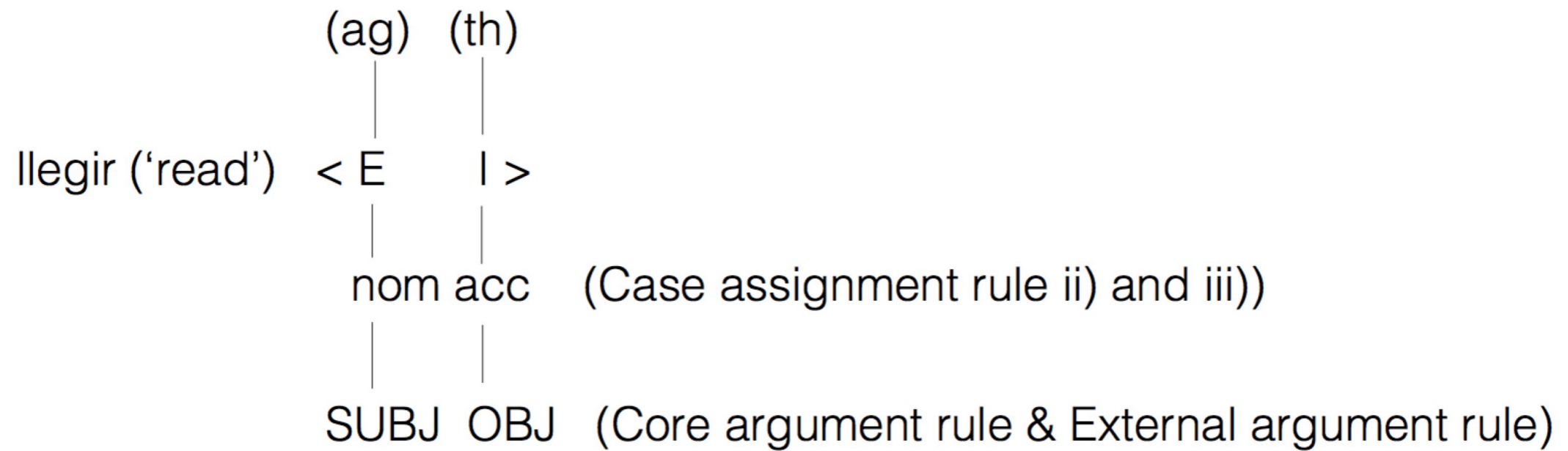
Examples

(22) Transitives in passive

```
                (ag)      (th)
                 |         |
                 |         |
llegit ('read'-PASS) < E        I >
                      /|        |
                     / |       nom      (Passivization & Case assignment rule iii))
                    /  |        |
                   / —+—        |
              (OBL)  DGF SUBJ/OBJ  (Core argument rule)
```
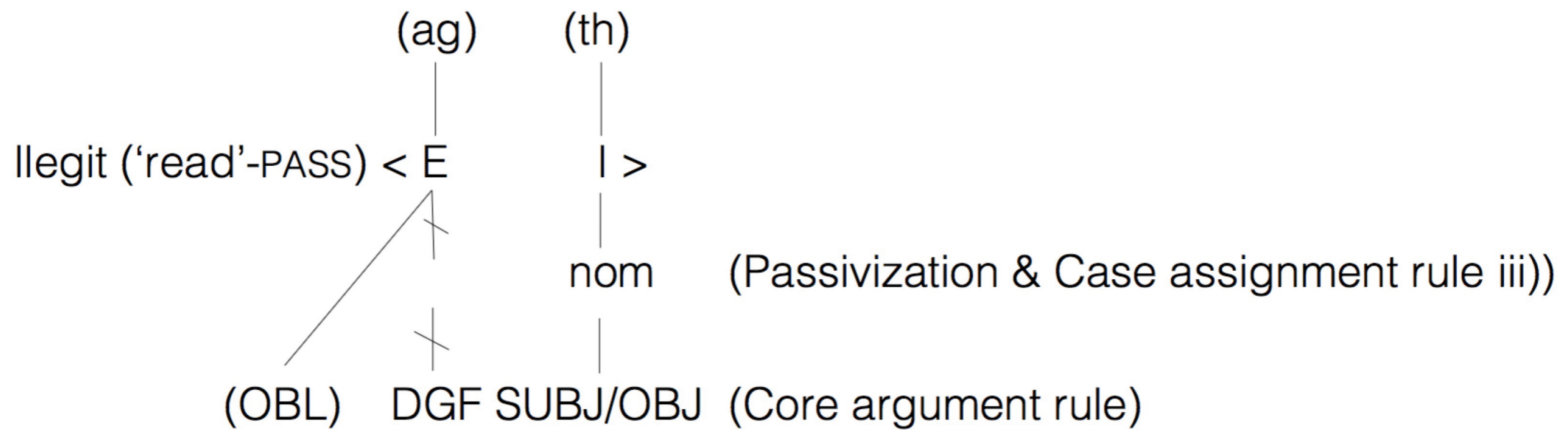
Examples

(23) Intransitives


```
                        (ag)
                         |
   treballar ('work')  < E >
                         |
                        nom      (Case assignment rule iii))
                         |
                     SUBJ/OBJ   (Core argument rule)
```
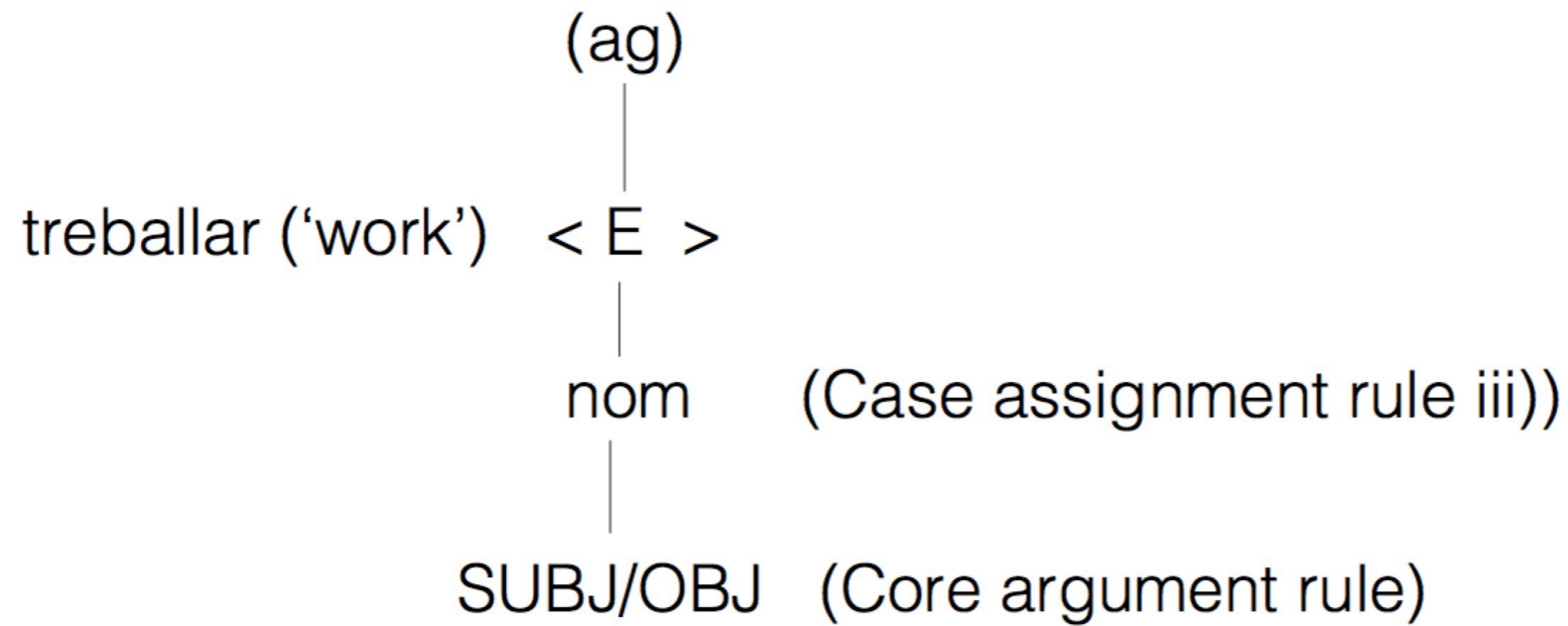
Examples

(24) Ditransitives

```
                (ag)    (go)    (th)
                 |       |       |
donar ('give')  < E      |       |  >
                 |       |       |
                nom     dat     acc    (Case assignment rule i), ii), & iii))
                 |       |       |
                SUBJ   OBJ    OBJ    (Core argument rule & External argument rule)
```
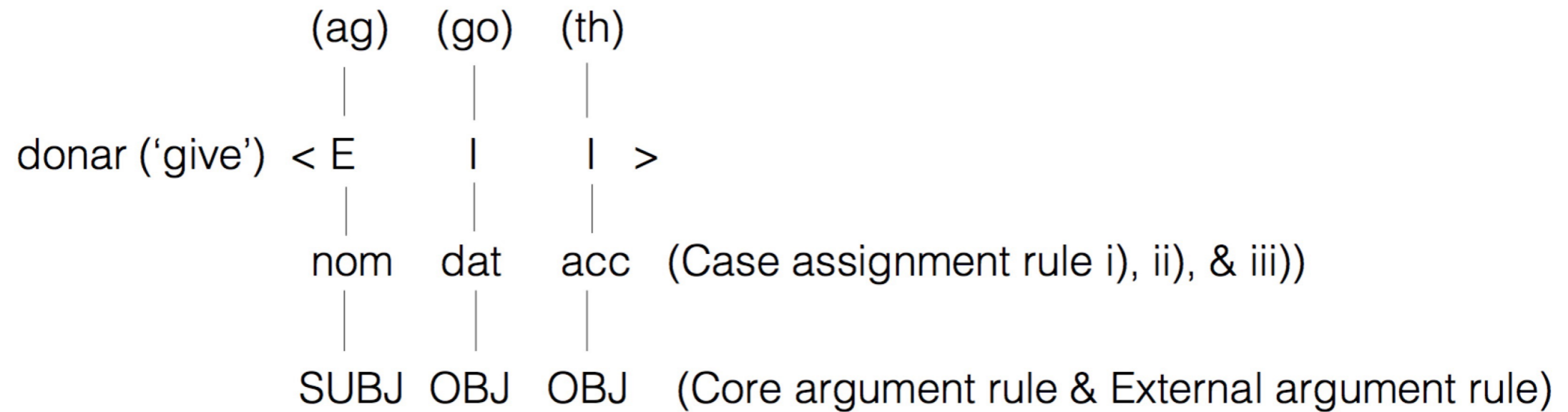
Examples

(25) *Like*-type verbs

```
                    (exp)  (int)
                      |      |
                      |      |
agradar ('like')  <   |      |  >
                      |      |
                     dat    nom     (Case assignment rule i) & iii))
                      |      |
                      |      |
                     OBJ  SUBJ/OBJ (Core argument rule & Nominative subject constraint)
```
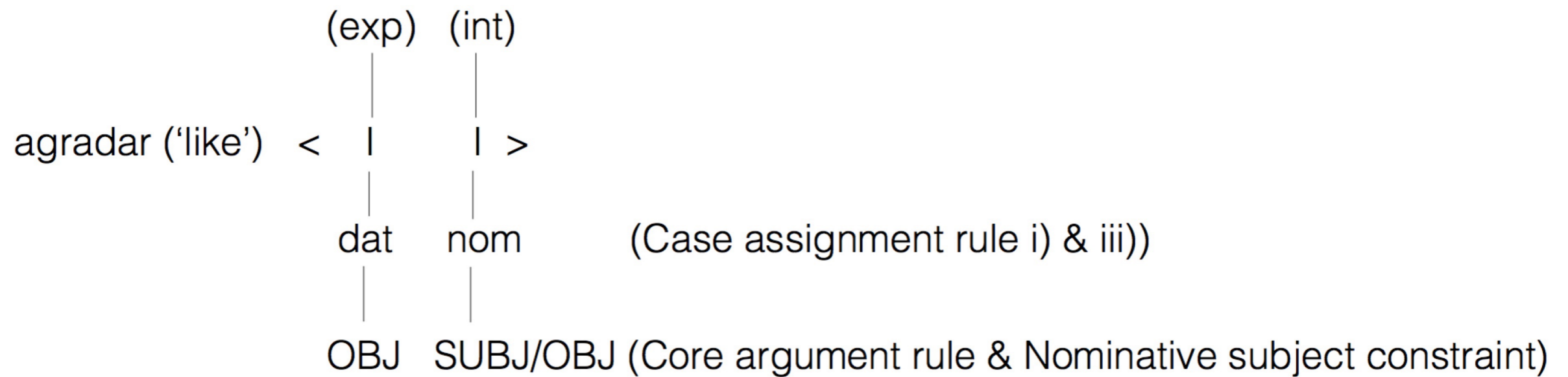
Restrictions on the SUBJ-OBJ alternation

- From the previous part we have already seen that the single argument of an intransitive verb can alternate between a subject and an object.

  If the subject-object alternation were a free option, nothing would require the presence of the clitic *en* in (26a), but in fact, (26b) is ungrammatical:

(26) a. Avui en surten molts.

   today en.cl *leave*.pl *many*

   'Today many are leaving.'

b. *Avui surten molts.

   today leave.pl *many*

   'Today many are leaving.'

Restrictions on the SUBJ-OBJ alternation

(27) **F-structure information of the clitic *en***

The *en* clitic corresponds to an GF that is:

i) Object

ii) Pronominal

iii) Indefinite

iv) Non-dative (either nominative or accusative)

$$
En: \quad \begin{bmatrix} \text{OBJ} & \begin{bmatrix} \text{PRED} & \text{‘PRO’} \\ \text{DEF} & - \\ \text{CASE} & \neg\text{DAT} \end{bmatrix} \end{bmatrix}
$$

Restrictions on the SUBJ-OBJ alternation

We assume an additional constraint that disfavors an indefinite subject:

(28) Indefinite subject ban

    *SUBJ [DEF -]

Though the single core argument of an intransitive verb can be either SUBJ or OBJ, the constraint in (28) penalizes the subject realization and favors the object realization if the argument is indefinite. This explains the obligatoriness of *en* in (26).

The constraint (28) has no effect on transitive verbs, within an OT conception: since the subject of a transitive verb cannot alternate with an object, the subject realization is the only candidate and the optimal one.

Restrictions on the SUBJ-OBJ alternation

- The *en* clitic cannot be licensed by a preverbal NP (even if indefinite)

(29) a. Ja   n'han   sortit   quatre de   l'ou.
already en.cl-*have*.pl *leave*.part *four   from the-egg*

b. Quatre ja   (*n')   han   sortit   de l'ou.
Four   already en.cl *have*.pl *leave*.part *of   the-egg*
'Four of them have already come out of the egg.'

(based on GLC 2016:699)

Reasoning:

- The preverbal position is a topic position in Catalan (see Vallduví 2002).
- A topic is the antecedent of an anaphoric pronoun (possibly null, as with null subjects) and anaphoric pronouns must be definite.
- The *en* clitic as an indefinite pronoun (see (27)) cannot be used as an anaphoric pronoun.

Restrictions on the SUBJ-OBJ alternation

- Possibly a definite object clitic?

- No! The definite object clitic (*els* in (30)) is incompatible with intransitive verbs:

> (30) *Avui   **els**   surt/surten   a les sis.
>   today them leave.sg/leave.pl at the six
>   'Today they are leaving at six.'

Given that clitics like *el, la, els*, and *les* are (definite) object pronouns, they cannot correspond to the SUBJ.

Restrictions on the SUBJ-OBJ alternation

(31) Avui   surten els   estudiants   a les sis.

today leave.pl the.m.pl *student*.m.pl *at the six*

'The students, today they are leaving at six.'

- The NP *els estudiants* in (31) is the subject.

- Why?

- We assume that the Subject Condition is a low ranking OT constraint; in particular, it is lower than the **Indefinite Subject Ban (28)**. When the sole argument of an intransitive verb is definite and can be either SUBJ or OBJ, the SC will penalize the candidate that lacks a subject, and select the one with a subject.

Corollary: the subject-object alternation is not free but mediated by the definiteness of the single core argument of the intransitive verb.

Agreement

(32) AGRSHARE: the AGR features of the clause unify with those of a
dependent DGF.

$$\text{AGRSHARE:} \quad \begin{bmatrix} \text{AGR} & \boxed{1} \\ \text{DGF} & [\text{AGR} \ \boxed{1}] \end{bmatrix} f$$

For f-structure f that maps to a constituent of category V.

(33) *AGRCASE: do not unify the AGR of the verb with the AGR of a
dependent DGF that is not nominative.

$$\text{*AGRCASE:} \quad * \begin{bmatrix} \text{AGR} & \boxed{1} \\ \text{DGF} & \begin{bmatrix} \text{AGR} & \boxed{1} \\ \text{CASE} & \neg\text{NOM} \end{bmatrix} \end{bmatrix} f$$

For f-structure f that maps to a constituent of category V

See Alsina and Vigo (2014) and Vigo (2016), i.a.

Agreement

Subject agreement

(34) a. Avui   surten   els estudiants tard.
    today leave.pl *the student*.pl *late*
    'Today the students are leaving late.'

$$
\left[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{PRED} & \textit{'leave} <\text{Arg}_1>\text{'} \\
\text{AGR} \quad \boxed{1} & \left[\begin{array}{ll} \text{PERS} & 3 \\ \text{NUM} & \text{PL} \end{array}\right] \\
\text{SUBJ} & \left[\begin{array}{ll} \text{PRED} & \text{'student'} \\ \text{DEF} & + \\ \text{AGR} & \boxed{1} \\ \text{CASE} & \text{NOM} \end{array}\right]_1
\end{array}
\right]
$$

Object agreement

b. Avui en   surten   molts.
   today en.cl *leave*.pl *many*
   'Today many are leaving.'

$$
\left[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{PRED} & \textit{'leave} <\text{Arg}_1>\text{'} \\
\text{AGR} \quad \boxed{1} & \left[\begin{array}{ll} \text{PERS} & 3 \\ \text{NUM} & \text{PL} \end{array}\right] \\
\text{OBJ} & \left[\begin{array}{ll} \text{PRED} & \text{'PRO'} \\ \text{DEF} & - \\ \text{AGR} & \boxed{1} \\ \text{QUANT} & \text{'many'} \\ \text{CASE} & \text{NOM} \end{array}\right]_1
\end{array}
\right]
$$

Long-distance agreement

- In Catalan, a raising verb like *semblar* 'seem' agrees with the nominative object of the embedded clause:

  (35) Semblen   arribar-ne   molts.
       seem.3p.pl *arrive*.inf-*en*.cl *many*
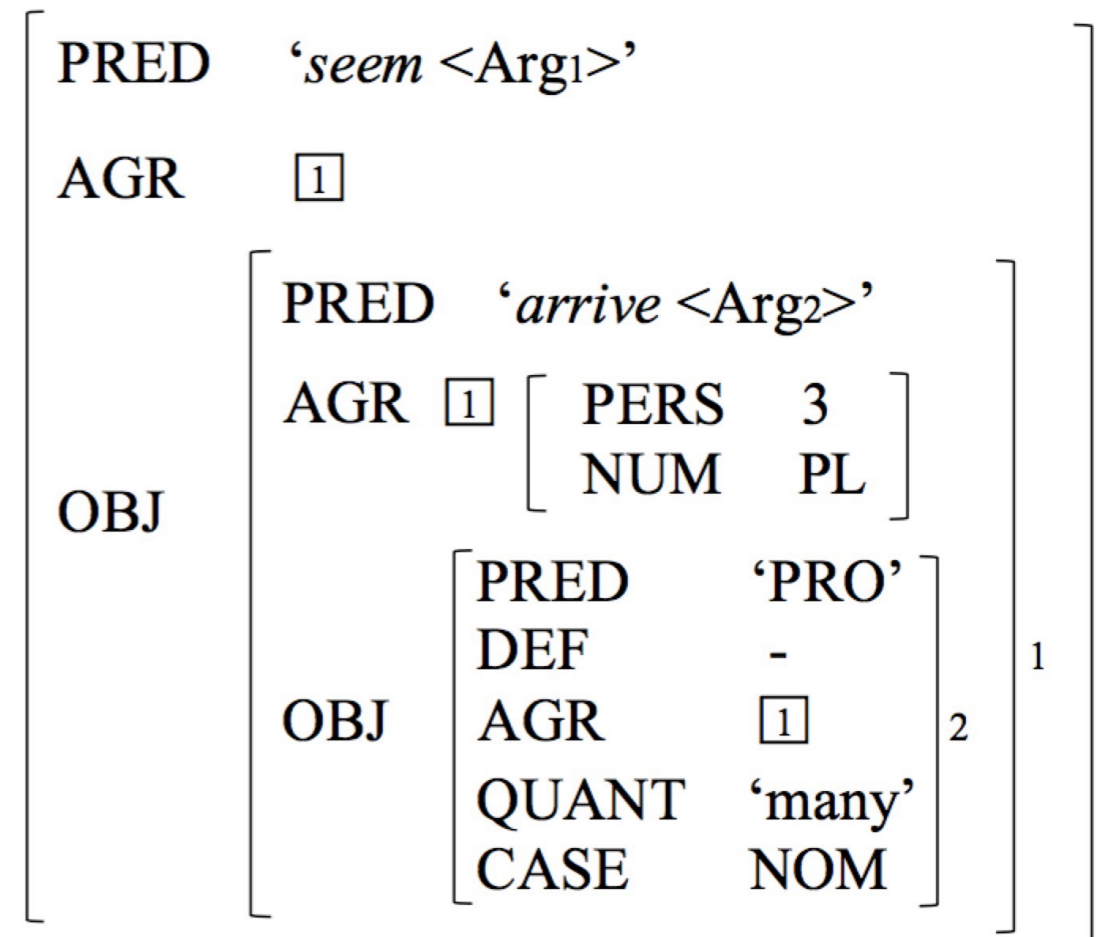   'Many seem to be arriving.'

- The apparent long distance agreement is a combination of two local agreement relations: the sharing of the AGR of the raising clause with the AGR of its infinitival complement and the sharing of this AGR with that of the object of the infinitive.

- The agreement of the raising verb with the nominative object of the embedded clause is possible because the raising verb shares its AGR with that of the embedded clause (see Alsina and Vigo (2017)).

Long-distance agreement

- AGR sharing across clauses is blocked except if the lower of the clauses involved is the complement of a raising verb.

- We assume a constraint, Clausal Opacity, which blocks the sharing of either AGR or GF in a given clause with either the AGR or GF of its embedded clause.

- Raising verbs include a lexical specification overriding clausal opacity.

- This lexical specification ranks higher than Clausal Opacity in the OT ranking, so raising verbs systematically violate Clausal Opacity.

Long-distance agreement

(36) Semblen   arribar-ne   molts.
     seem.3p.pl *arrive*.inf-*en*.cl *many*
     ' Many seem to be arriving.'
                                  (Repeating (35))

$$
\begin{bmatrix}
\text{PRED} & \text{`}seem<\text{Arg}_1>\text{'} \\
\text{AGR} & \boxed{1} \\
\text{OBJ} & \begin{bmatrix}
\text{PRED} & \text{`}arrive<\text{Arg}_2>\text{'} \\
\text{AGR} & \boxed{1}\begin{bmatrix}\text{PERS} & 3 \\ \text{NUM} & \text{PL}\end{bmatrix} \\
\text{OBJ} & \begin{bmatrix}\text{PRED} & \text{`PRO'} \\ \text{DEF} & \text{-} \\ \text{AGR} & \boxed{1} \\ \text{QUANT} & \text{`many'} \\ \text{CASE} & \text{NOM}\end{bmatrix}_2
\end{bmatrix}
\end{bmatrix}_1
$$

(37) Semblen   [tendir [a arribar-ne   molts]]
     seem.3p.pl *tend*.inf *to arrive*.inf-*en*.cl *many*
     ' Many seem to tend to arrive.'

Conclusions

- The single core argument of intransitive verbs maps onto either SUBJ or OBJ, regardless of its status as an external or internal argument.

- The Subject Condition is a low ranking constraint in Catalan, which does not require the presence of a subject in all clauses.

- Case assignment plays an important role in the mapping between argument and GFs.

- The verb agrees with a nominative GF, whether SUBJ or OBJ. Agreement is represented by the sharing of the AGR feature of the clause with the AGR feature of one of its dependent GFs.

- AGR sharing across clauses is possible provided that there is a chain of local sharing relations.

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