

When nominatives fail more than to agree¹

What is a Nominative (NOM)?

- a Syntax 101: abstract case assigned to DPs in the spec,TP (feature checking)
- morphological case theories (and ‘hybrid’ theories): preserve a licensing component;² the least marked form/DP without a K(ase) layer (Marantz, 1991; Rezac, 2008; Richards, 2008, among others)
- (at least) the licensing component cannot be right:
 - NOMs appear in environments where they cannot be licensed by finite T (for instance, because there is no finite T or T at all, as in Icelandic infinitival complements)
 - a local structure may contain more than one NOM per one finite T (as in NP-NP copular clauses, Japanese/Korean focus structures etc.)
 - yet, if a DP is morphologically NOM, it triggers agreement, interacts with other DPs in PCC constructions, and shows restrictions on person in general – irrespective of its licensing environment (Bobaljik, 2008; Bartošová and Kučerová, 2015; Kučerová, 2016, and references cited there)³

The goal:

- to look away from the question of licensing and investigate the internal structure of NOM DPs
- to argue that NOM has a structural signature, i.e., there are structural properties internal to a DP that are necessary for the DP to be NOM
- being ‘small’/lack of a K-layer is not sufficient
- structural NOM = nominal structure labeled by a PERSON feature associated with the D head (Chomsky, 2013)
- ⇒ only a structure labeled by PERSON may become a goal of syntactic ϕ -feature Agree
- labeling by PERSON feature (\sim [+D]; Sudo 2012; Longobardi 2008; Landau 2010) formally corresponds to CI licensing of the PERSON feature ⇒ an interaction with an (referential?) index
- empirical motivation: microvariation in numeral constructions in Slavic

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²For instance, in Marantz’s original system the licensing part requires a V+I structure etc. in the relevant domain.

³I put aside the notion of NOM as a morphological default. See for instance, Legate (2008) for some relevant data.

1 The puzzle

Russian paucals and 5&UP⁴ numerals:

- heterogenous case properties
- structurally lower parts = GEN
- structurally higher parts = NOM

- (1) èti posledn-ie || dv-a || krasiv-ych stol-a
these-NOM.PL last-NOM.PL **two**-M.NOM beautiful-GEN.PL table-GEN.SG
'these last two beautiful tables' RUSSIAN PAUCAL
- (2) èt-i posledn-ie || pjat' || krasiv-ych stol-ov
these-NOM.PL last-NOM.PL **five**-NOM beautiful-GEN.PL table-GEN.PL
'these last five beautiful tables' RUSSIAN 5&UP

Pesetsky (2013)

- basic assumption: case stacking is real
- Russian nouns are born GEN
- GEN can get phonologically rewritten by a structural higher case assignment
- Feature Assignment \approx locality restricted feature spreading
- special type of D: DNOM \Rightarrow assigns NOM
- normally, NOM spreads through the whole DP
- numerals are different because the nature of the number feature on the numeral enforces head movement to D⁵
- head movement blocks Feature Assignment
- consequently, the structurally lower part remains in GEN
- \Rightarrow heterogenous case pattern

The take-home message

- all DNOM DPs are by default NOM
- under exceptional circumstances the lower part (NP) may phonologically preserve the underlying GEN but the D domain is still in NOM

⁴The 5&UP terminology for numerals 5 and higher is from Marušič et al. (2015) and the work cited there.

⁵According to Pesetsky (2013) the syntax of paucal and 5&UP constructions is not identical: They differ in their base generated position, and in turn in number of movement steps, a fact relevant for the number morphology of the head noun, but not for the facts discussed here.

The problem:

- the Russian heterogeneous case pattern cross-linguistically rare (even within Slavic; Russian, Ukrainian, eastern Polish dialects)
- Czech, Polish and Slovenian: homogeneous GEN case marking throughout⁶

(3) tě-ch/*t-y posledn-ích/*posledn-í pět krásných
 those-GEN.PL/*NOM.PL last-GEN.PL/*NOM.PL **five**-NOM beautiful-GEN.PL
 stolů
 table-GEN.PL
 ‘those last five beautiful tables’

CZECH 5&UP

Non-Russian languages:

- the pre-numeral elements: GEN
- the numeral: NOM

Pesetsky (2013, 144, fn. 3):

- Polish structurally identical to Russian; the distinction is purely morphological

The argument to be developed here:

- the difference is structural
- Czech GEN numeral constructions systematically differ from their Russian counterpart:
 - do not trigger agreement on finite predicates
 - cannot form a boolean conjunction
 - cannot license (or only marginally) secondary predicates
- in turn, the variation sheds light on the nature of structural NOM

2 Genitive throughout

- no paucals in Czech
- Czech equivalents to Russian paucals are formally adjectives and appear in a homogeneous nominative pattern

(4) t-y-to posledn-í dv-a krásn-é stol-y
 DEF-M.PL-this. NOM last-NOM.PL **two**-M.NOM beautiful-NOM.PL table-NOM.PL
 ‘these last two beautiful tables’

CZECH <5: ✓NOM

⁶Note that these languages do not have paucals. For reasons of space, the data here are only from Russian and Czech. The Polish situation is empirically more diverse as the eastern dialects partially pattern with Ukrainian/Russian (Adam Szczegielniak, p.c.).

- 5&UP: a strictly homogeneous case pattern⁷

(5) t-ěch posledn-ích pět krásn-ých stol-ů
these-GEN.PL last-GEN.PL five-NOM beautiful-GEN.PL table-GEN.PL
'these last five beautiful tables' CZECH 5&UP: ✓ GEN

2.1 Scrambling?

- could the heterogeneous pattern be a result of scrambling of structurally lower GEN?
- demonstratives, (5), and possessive determiners obligatorily in GEN:

(6) našich pět studentů
our.GEN.PL five.NOM students.GEN.PL
'our five students'

- D-dependent quantifiers are NOM in Russian but GEN in Czech:⁸

(7) každye/ vse pjat' krasivych stolov
each.NOM.PL / all.NOM.PL five.NOM beautiful.GEN.PL tables.GEN.PL
'each/all five beautiful tables' RUSSIAN: NOM

(8) každých/ všech pět krásných stolů
each.GEN.PL / all.GEN.PL five.NOM beautiful.GEN.PL tables.GEN.PL
'each/all five beautiful tables' CZECH: GEN

2.2 Are Czech 5&UP numerals DPs?

- that these numerals may contain definiteness markers and that they can be specific in and of itself does not guarantee they are of type *e* (Endriss, 2009; Rothstein, 2012)⁹

Additional suggestive evidence:

- 5&UP numerals can be coordinated with DPs of type *e*:

(9) Já/ Marie/ tyto studentky a pět chlapců
I.NOM/ Marie.NOM/ these students.F.PL and five.NOM boys.GEN.PL
'I/ Marie/ these students and five boys'

⁷Following Pesetsky (2013) I gloss the numeral as nominative. This is not an obvious choice as this type of numeral has an unusually syncretic morphological paradigm. The system distinguishes only two forms: nominative/accusative and oblique. If the analysis put forward here is on the right track, the distinction might be better captured as [\pm CASE].

⁸The genitive pattern is rather stable. Jiranová (2008), an extensive corpus-based study of Contemporary Czech, argues that the homogeneous genitive pattern increasingly spreads even to numerals and quantificational expressions that in Standard Czech have a distinct case and agreement pattern.

⁹To determine the NP/DP distinction in a language like Czech is far from trivial, and I am not aware of any definitive test. I follow here the logic of Winter (2001) who argues that even though type-shifting is available, it is structurally restricted.

- can appear in argument positions:

(10) Pět chlapců poslalo dopis.
 five.NOM boys.GEN.PL sent letter.ACC
 ‘Five boys sent a/the letter.’

- but are excluded from predicative positions

- if they appear as NP₂ in a copular clause, the clause must be specificational, not predicational:

(11) a. Ti vrazi byli tři cizinci.
 those.PL murderers were.PL **three**.NOM foreigners.NOM.PL
 ‘The murderers were three foreigners.’ ✓3
 b. *Ti vrazi byli/bylo pět cizinců.
 those.PL murderers were.PL/was.N.SG **five**.NOM foreigners.GEN.PL
 ‘The murderers were five foreigners.’ *5

(12) My jsme šest vyvolených.
 we.NOM are six.NOM chosen.GEN.PL
 ‘We are the six chosen ones.’
 #‘There are six of us and we are chosen.’

2.3 Licensing of secondary predicates

- if 5&UP numerals are underlyingly in NOM, we expect them to license secondary predicates
- at first sight this seems to be marginally possible:

(13) %Pět chlapců tancovalo *unavení/ ?unavených.
 five.NOM boys.GEN.PL danced tired.NOM.PL/ tired.GEN.PL
 intended: ‘Five boys danced tired.’

- speaker variation (about 10 speakers): some speakers accept secondary predicates in genitive, others find them degraded or entirely impossible¹⁰
- marginal acceptability results from a post-syntactic copying of the morphological GEN onto the secondary predicate, by a mechanism similar to that found with closest conjunct agreement (Bhatt and Walkow, 2013)
- adding an additional DP material disrupts morphological copying (Lída Veselovská, p.c.):

(14) Pět chlapců sledovalo čtyři děvčata *unavených/ *unavení.
 five boys.GEN.PL watched.N.SG four.ACC girls.ACC.PL tired.GEN.PL/ tired.NOM.PL
 ‘Five boys_i watched four girls tired_i.’

¹⁰One of the problems with testing this type of construction is that the secondary predication can be misplaced for a split DP, a non-trivial confound.

- if morphological copying is responsible for (13) being better than (14), we predict that (14) improves if the word order is OVS (scrambling):

(15) Čtyři děvčata sledovalo pět chlapců ?unavených/ *unavení.
 four girls.ACC.PL watched.N.SG five.NOM boys.GEN.PL tired.GEN.PL/ tired.NOM.PL
 ‘Five boys_i watched four girls tired_j.’

- if 5&UPS were underlyingly NOM, they should always license nominative secondary predicates
- however, they do so only under particular morpho-phonological adjacency conditions

2.4 Failed Agree

- Pesetsky (2013): paucals and 5&UP numerals are numberless
- technically: no valued number feature from the lexicon
- this is confirmed by the fact that the agreement with these numerals can be 3N.SG:

(16) pjat' malčikov prišlo
 five.NOM boys.GEN.PL came.N.SG
 ‘(the) five boys came’ RUSSIAN: ✓ SG

- however, Russian paucals and 5&UPS trigger plural agreement on the predicate as well:

(17) pjat' malčikov prišli
 five.NOM boys.GEN.PL came.PL
 ‘(the) five boys came’ RUSSIAN: ✓ PL

- this is surprising if there is no valued number feature and semantic agreement is restricted to non-local Agree
- Czech more in line with Pesetsky’s analysis: 5&UP ⇒ failed agreement
- failed agreement: default values attested in the absence of a valued probe (neuter singular)¹¹

¹¹Semantic agreement within a clause might be possible under rather specific circumstances. Jiranová (2008, 98) cites an attested example of semantic agreement within a clause. Note that there are two instances of semantic agreement: within an adjunct clause and on the agreeing predicate of the matrix clause. Crucially, the adjunct clause linearly intervenes between the numeral subject and the agreeing predicate. It is plausible that the semantic agreement on the matrix predicate arises via a morphological linear effect:

(i) Pět jejích prvních absolventů, poté, co získali inženýrské tituly, založili v roce 1956 továrnu na petrolejová kamna.
 five.NOM their.GEN.PL first.GEN.PL graduates.GEN.PL after what gained.M.PL engineer titles founded in year 1956 factory on kerosene stoves
 ‘Five of their first graduates, after they received their engineering degrees, founded a kerosene stove factory in 1956.’

- (18) Pět chlapců přišlo / *přišli.
five.nom boys-gen.pl came.n.sg / *came.m.pl
'Five boys came.' CZECH 5&UP: ✓SG/ *PL

- numerals 2–4: homogeneous NOM case pattern ⇒ regular plural agreement:

- (19) Dva/ tři/ čtyři chlapci *přišl-o/ přišl-i.
two.NOM/ three.NOM/ four.NOM boys.NOM came.N.SG/ came.M.PL
'Two/three/four boys came.' CZECH <5: *SG/ ✓PL

Additional evidence for failed agreement:

- if ϕ -features on a DP are valued as N.SG but the semantic values of such a DP are distinct (e.g., neuter nouns denoting females), intra-sentential anaphors may agree either with the semantic value, or the grammatical value:

- (20) Děvče přišlo. Ono/ ona...
girl.N.SG came.N.SG it.N.SG/ she.F.SG
'A/the girl came. She [=the girl]...' ✓N/ ✓F

- however, intra-sentential anaphors to 5&UP DPs must agree with the semantic plural:

- (21) Pět chlapců přišlo. *Ono/ oni...
five.NOM boys-GEN.PL came.N.SG it.N.SG/ they.M.PL
'Five boys came. They [=the five boys] ...' *N.SG/ ✓M.PL

- ⇒ N.SG a default morphological realization for failed Agree, not a reflex of valued ϕ -features on the numeral
- ⇒ no ϕ -features visible on the 5&UP numeral

2.5 Number in coordination

- Czech: the agreement on a postverbal predicate in number determined by the boolean conjunction of the coordinated DPs (Munn, 1993)
- if the conjuncts are heterogeneous in person and/or gender, the ϕ -features of the agreeing predicate match the ϕ -features of a pronoun that would be anaphoric to the coordination (Farkas and Zec, 1995):

- (22) Marie a Pavel přišl-i / *přišl-a / *přišel. Oni...
Marie.NOM and Pavel.NOM came.M.PL / *came.F.SG / *came.M.SG they.M.PL
'Marie and Petr came. They [=Marie and Petr] ...'

- holds for numerals with homogeneous NOM pattern as well:

- (23) Dva chlapci a tři děvčata přišli. Oni...
two.NOM boys.NOM and three.NOM girls.NOM came.M.PL they.M.PL
'Two boys and three girls came. They [=two boys and three girls] ...'

- however, coordination of 5&UP numerals still yields failed agree:

(24) Pět chlapců a pět dívek se sešlo/ *sešli v klubu.
five boys.GEN and five girls.GEN REFL get-together. N.SG / *M.PL in club
'Five boys and five girls met in the club.'

- in the light of previous facts, it is not surprising that the agreement should not be able to access the ϕ -features
- however, that the coordination agreement cannot access the semantic plurality is unexpected
- this pattern shows that not only 5&UP numerals are ϕ -feature deficient but also they lack whatever structure is needed for the computation of semantic plurality

2.6 Interim summary

- Czech 5&UP numerals are DPs
- but if they appear in a syntactic position associated with NOM they do not behave like their morphologically NOM counterparts
- their label is ϕ -feature deficient, they cannot license secondary predication and they even cannot form a boolean coordination in coordinated DPs
- whatever they are, they are not structural NOM in the Russian sense

3 Wanted persons

- the key to the difference between Czech and Russian lies in the fact that Russian 5&UPS may trigger plural agreement even if morpho-syntactically they are singular
- I argue that Russian 5&UPS trigger semantic agreement because their DP is labeled for PERSON
- in contrast, PERSON in Czech 5&UPS is too deeply embedded to be minimally searchable and to label (Chomsky, 2013)
- independent evidence that PERSON is not part of the label in Czech comes from DP coordinations, and from differences in binding

3.1 Person in a DP coordination

- features of a coordinated DP are computed as a combination of semantic and morpho-syntactic features (Farkas and Zec, 1995; King and Dalrymple, 2004; Heycock and Zamparelli, 2005, among others)¹²

¹²Strictly morpho-syntactic (e.g., Marušič et al. 2015) and semantic approaches have been proposed as well (e.g., Lasnik 2013). As far as I can tell, none of the existing approaches fully predicts the morpho-syntactic pattern that interests us here.

- the primary semantic feature is PERSON
- PERSON modeled as [\pm PARTICIPANT] (Nevins, 2007) allows for a direct CI association with an index
- the association is obligatory for [+PERSON]/[+PARTICIPANT]
- semantic coordination is based on indices associated with individual conjuncts:

(25) *The algorithm for calculating semantic plurality:*

- a. matching indices \Rightarrow SG
- b. non-matching indices \Rightarrow PL

(26) a. his best friend_{*i*} and editor_{*i*} **is** by his bedside *i* + *i* \rightarrow SG
b. his best friend_{*i*} and editor_{*j*} **are** by his bedside *i* + *j* \rightarrow PL

The crucial insight:

- indices are tracked only for [+PARTICIPANT], that is, for [+PERSON]
- the logic: if there is no participant, there is nothing to track¹³
- \Rightarrow semantic plurality can be computed only if at least one of the conjuncts is [+PERSON]
- compare Heim's rule for calculating person features on split-antecedent pronouns:¹⁴

(27) Heim (2008, (53))

- (i) If *i* or *j* is unspecified for person, then leave *i* + *j* unspecified.
- (ii) Otherwise, if *i* or *j* is 1st person, then specify *i* + *j* as 1st person.
- (iii) Otherwise, if *i* or *j* is 2nd person, then specify *i* + *j* as 2nd person.
- (iv) Otherwise, specify *i* + *j* as 3rd person.

- note that this implementation is faithful to the original insight of Farkas and Zec (1995)

Prediction I:

- 5&UPS lack a PERSON feature but if they combine with [+PERSON], agreement should still be PL

¹³Under this view, tracking definite and indefinite DPs with respect to some sort of a file-card system must be done differently, for example, by indices being part of definite articles, as proposed for instance in Schwarz (2009).

¹⁴The same formal insight can be rephrased in terms of sum-formation and inclusion:

(i) Let s_c and h_c be atoms. Then:

If x or y includes s_c , $x \oplus y$ includes s_c .

If neither x nor y includes s_c , but x or y includes h_c , then $x \oplus y$ doesn't include s_c but includes h_c .

If neither x nor y includes s_c or h_c , $x \oplus y$ doesn't include either s_c or h_c .

(Heim, 2008, (55))

The formulation in (27) is slightly more transparent for our morpho-syntactic purposes.

- reason: the [+PERSON] conjunct provides an index, and there is no matching index on the 5&UP conjunct (by (25-b))

(28) Já/ty a pět chlapců jsme/jste šli/ *šlo do ZOO.
 I.NOM/you.NOM and five boys.GEN.PL AUX.1/2.PL gone.M.PL/ gone.N.SG to ZOO
 ‘I/you and five boys went to the ZOO.’ *SG/ ✓PL

Prediction II:

- if the coordination consists solely of 5&UPS, there is no PERSON feature to compute semantic agreement
- in addition, since 5&UPS are numberless, the system cannot calculate the number from morpho-syntactic features either
- ⇒ failed agree: N.SG

(29) Pět chlapců a pět dívek se sešlo/ *sešli v klubu.
 five boys.GEN and five girls.GEN REFL get-together.N.SG/ *M.PL in club
 ‘Five boys and five girls got together in the club.’ ✓ SG/ *PL

Prediction III:

- if one conjunct is [−PERSON], we expect agreement optionality
- either (a) the system tracks the PERSON feature ⇒ PL,
- or (b) the system tracks morpho-syntactic features ⇒ two options:
 - if the closer conjunct is 5&UP ⇒ failed agree; (30-a)
 - if the closer conjunct labeled for ϕ -features ⇒ closest conjunct agreement; (30-b) (cf. Marušič et al. (2015))

(30) a. Děvčata a **pět chlapců** šli/ šlo/ *šla do ZOO.
 girls.N.PL and five boys gone. M.PL / N.SG / N.PL to ZOO
 ‘Girls and five boys went to the ZOO.’ PL/ FAILED AGREE

b. Pět chlapců a **děvčata** šli/ *šlo/ šla do ZOO.
 five boys and girls.N.PL gone. M.PL / N.SG / N.PL to ZOO
 ‘Five boys and girls went to the ZOO.’ PL/ CCA

Interim summary:

- the key property is that 5&UP numerals are not labeled for PERSON

4 Why is Russian different? The case for index raising

- I argue that in both language groups, NUM raises to D (Pesetsky, 2013) \Rightarrow criterial freezing (Rizzi, 2006, 2007, and subsequent work)
- criterial freezing makes D and its features invisible for labeling
- Russian is special in that in the Russian-type languages D (or at least its PERSON/index feature) raises farther \Rightarrow D becomes accessible for minimal search/labeling

Evidence from binding:

- in the Czech-type languages binding only arises under c-command
- in Russian possessive pronouns in spec,DP bind outside of their c-command domain

- (31) a. *Eë_i učitel'nica poxvalila Mašu_i.
her teacher.NOM praised Maša.ACC
'Her_i teacher praised Maša_i.' RUSSIAN
- b. Její_i učitelka pochválila Mášu_i.
her teacher.NOM praised Maša.ACC
'Her_i teacher praised Maša_i.' CZECH

- Nikolaeva (2014): Russian allows for index raising, i.e., an index can raise out of a criterial freezing domain and in turn may label the immediately dominating projection
- here modeled as PERSON (Sudo, 2012; Longobardi, 2008; Landau, 2010) \sim an (referential?) index formally corresponds to CI licensing of [+PERSON] feature
- the correlation between binding and NOM licensing further supports the hypothesis that PERSON is the feature that provides a formal connection to a referential index at the CI interface, and it is in the very core of being NOM

5 Conclusions

- Czech 5&UP constructions thus truly nominative-less because there is no PERSON feature associated with such a DP \Rightarrow NOM corresponds to a DP being labeled by a PERSON feature
- only DP labeled by PERSON can become a goal for Agree, license secondary predicates etc.
- new empirical evidence for a formal connection between Case and PERSON, and PERSON and referential index (Schütze 1997; Martin 1999; Chomsky 2000; Béjar and Rezac 2003; Rezac 2004; Richards 2008, among others)
- open question: does labeling by PERSON arise via Agree (\sim necessity of a licensing component), or is it a prerequisite of Agree?

A Abstract vs oblique case?

- as in Russian, if the numeral DP is assigned an oblique case, for example, dative, then the case pattern becomes homogeneous (as expected under Feature Assignment of Pesetsky 2013)

(32) těm pěti hodným chlapcům
those.DAT.PL nice.DAT.PL boys.DAT.PL
'to those nice five boys'

- but if the 5&UP receives ACC, the structure retains the heterogeneous case pattern

(33) Petr napsal pět dlouhých románů.
Petr.NOM wrote.PERF five.ACC long.GEN.PL novels.GEN.PL
'Petr wrote five long novels.'

- numeral \Rightarrow ACC, everything else \Rightarrow GEN

Syncretism?

- I gloss the numeral in (33) as ACC but the form is identical to NOM
- unusual syncretism of 5&UP numerals: NOM/ACC vs OBLIQUE
- the heterogeneous pattern holds for all ACC, including ACC assigned to temporal adjuncts and ACC assigned by a preposition:

(34) Petr psal román pět dlouhých let.
Petr.NOM wrote.IMPERF novel.ACC five.ACC long.GEN.PL years.GEN.PL
'Petr wrote a/the novel for five long years.'

(35) Petr napsal román za pět dlouhých let.
Petr.NOM wrote.PERF novel.ACC in five.ACC long.GEN.PL years.GEN.PL
'Petr wrote a/the novel in five long years.'

- van Riemsdijk (1990); Maling and Kim (2001): certain classes of temporal adjuncts can receive a structural case and certain prepositions can assign a structural case

Case generalization:

- abstract case = heterogeneous case pattern
- oblique case = homogeneous case pattern
- alternatively: $[\pm\text{CASE}]$

\Rightarrow

- what does the proposed theory of NOM mean for ACC?

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