SUBJECT-OBJECT ASYMMETRIES AND VERB CLASSES

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ABSTRACT

In this paper the division between patterns of data with unaccusative and unergative verb classes is examined. It is shown that in Catalan patterns of data often assumed to belong to the Romance unaccusative side of the division, such as cliticization of NE and postverbal bare plurals, may also fall under the unergative side of the division. Although the main goal of the paper is descriptive, some possible solutions for the apparent paradox are proposed.

1. INTRODUCTION

The fact that the clitic *ne* can be extracted from the underlying object of an unaccusative verb, first established by Perlmutter (1977) and later discussed by Rizzi (1982) and Burzio (1986), has frequently been used as the basis for a diagnostic of verbal unaccusativity in the Romance languages.[1] The data in (1), however, show that in Catalan *ne* can be extracted from the external argument of verbs which are apparently intransitive.[2]

(1) a. En dormen tres a la sala. [3]
         of-them sleep three in the living room
         'Three of them sleep in the living room.'

     b. En mengen quatre en aquella taula.
         of-them eat four at that table
         'Four of them eat at that table.'

Furthermore, as opposed to the facts shown in Belletti (1988) for Italian where a bare plural may appear directly postverbally with an unaccusative verb but not with an intransitive verb, in Catalan a bare plural may appear

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directly postverbally with intransitive verbs, as illustrated by the data in (2).[4]

(2)   a.   Treballen nens en aquesta fàbrica.
          work children in this factory
          'Children work in this factory.'

      b.   Viuen gats en aquest descampat
          live cats in this empty lot
          'Cats live in this empty lot.'

Although I will suggest some possible directions for a theoretical solution at the end of the article, the main objective is to describe these structures and their properties. The article is organized as follows. In the next section I show that the solutions proposed so far for these and related data can not account for all the facts. Section 3 discusses significant properties of the structures. Section 4 proposes a possible interpretation and theoretical analysis of the data, and in section 5 I suggest a parametric variation between Italian and Catalan which may account for the fact that these structures are ungrammatical in Italian. The article's major points are briefly summarized in section 6 .

2. POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

In this section I discuss three possible solutions to account for the data in (1) and (2) and conclude that none of the solutions successfully accounts for all the facts.

2.1.   Unaccusative verbs

A simple and straightforward solution to the problem would be immediately forthcoming if it could be established that the verbs of examples (1) and (2) were in fact members of the unaccusative class of verbs instead of the intransitive class. That these verbs are not intrinsically unaccusative, however, can be shown by the contrasting patterns of data in (3-5) in which WH-questions, participle agreement and the absolute participle structure are illustrated.

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4   Belletti, who cites Burzio (personal communication) as the source of the observation, provides the example below:

i.   Alla manifestazione parleranno extremisti.
     to the demonstration will speak extremists
Spanish, like Catalan, allows this construction (Torrego 1989).

(3)   a.   Quants en van venir a la platja?
            how many of-them PAST come at the beach
            'How many of them came to the beach?'

      b. * Quants en viuen aquí?
            how many of-them PAST-live here
            'How many of them live here?'

(4)   a.   N'han arribat(s) cinc a la fàbrica.[5]
            of-them have arrived five at the factory
            'Five of them have arrived at the factory.'

      b. * N'han menjats*(s) cinc en aquella taula.
            of-them have eaten five at that table
            'Five of them have eaten at that table.'

(5)   a.   Un cop arribats els nostres amics, vàrem marxar.
            one time arrived the our friends, (we) PAST leave
            'Once our friends had arrived, we left.'

      b. * Un cop dormits els nens, vàrem marxar.
            one time slept the children, (we) PAST leave
            'Once the children had fallen asleep, we left.'

The examples in (3) illustrate the fact that WH-extraction from the logi-
cal subject and the clitic *ne* are incompatible when the verb is intransitive
but compatible when the verb is unaccusative. The examples in (4) show
that agreement between the clitic *ne* and the past participle is ruled out
when the verb is intransitive but optional when the verb is unaccusative.
Finally, the contrast in (5) demonstrates that in the absolute participial
construction a subject is allowed only when the verb is unaccusative, as in
(5a), but not when the verb is intransitive, as in (5b). In conclusion, these
apparently intransitive verbs in Catalan, while allowing their external ar-
gument to participate in *ne* extraction and to appear as a postverbal bare
plural, do not consistently follow the expected pattern of data for unac-
cusative verbs.

2.2.   Hoekstra & Mulder (1990)

Hoekstra & Mulder (1990) show that languages vary with respect to the
classes of verbs which may enter into existential constructions, pointing
out that in some languages unergative verbs, that is, intransitive verbs,
may appear in existential constructions but only in the presence of a loca-
tive expression. They analyze such structures as containing copular verbs
which take a small clause complement and do not assign an external the-

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5   The data in examples (4a-b) is based on data collected by Hopkins (1994).

matic role. Such an analysis may appear at first glance to handle the data under discussion. The differences in grammaticality judgments which speakers have, however, is varied with respect to the requirement of a locative PP. For some speakers, structures such as (6a) are grammatical without a locative phrase, but structures such as (6b) require some form of specification of the bare plural, i.e., *nens del veïnat* or *gats abandonats*. For other speakers, structures such as (6a) and (6b) both require either a postposed or preposed locative phrase. For other speakers, structures such as (6a) and (6b) require a left dislocated, and not a right dislocated, locative phrase. Finally, Gràcia (1989) suggests that the locative phrase is unnecessary in structures such as (6a), and cites (6c) as evidence.

(6)   a.   Sota d'aquest pont n'hi dormen tres.
             under this bridge of-them-there sleep three
             'Three of them sleep under that bridge.'

       b.   En aquella fàbrica hi treballen nens
             in that factory there-work children
             'Children work in that factory.'

       c.   Tants que havien de telefonar, i només n'han telefonat tres.
             so many that had to telephone, and only of-them have phoned three
             'So many people should have telephoned, and only three of them have.'

Clearly, such variations in grammaticality judgments should be accounted for in a serious analysis of these data. Here, however, I will limit myself first to pointing out that in many of these examples, the small clause analysis does not account for the full range of judgments, and second, to making the observation that speakers' interpretations of such structures as seen in (6) are not existential but do appear to involve assignment of an external thematic role. Thus, although the structures under question coincide with those discussed by Hoekstra & Mulder in that an intransitive verb appears in an apparently unaccusative structure, the two sets of structures appear not to fully coincide in their sets of properties.

2.3. Cortés & Gavarró (1994)

Cortés & Gavarró (1994), who limit themselves to discussing only data involving the clitic *ne*, rule out the possibility that these data are dependent on some form of thematic hierarchy. The examples below show that the argument which appears in the structurally lowest position may undergo *ne*-cliticization, and that therefore *ne*-cliticization is not dependent on theta role assignment.

(7)   a.   * En$_i$ temen [External Argument=Experiencer tres e$_i$] l'examen
             of-them fear three the exam
             'Three of them fear the exam.'

       b.   El Jordi en$_i$ tem [Internal Argument=Theme tres e$_i$]
             Jordi of-them fears three   .
             'Jordi fears three of them.'

(8)   a.   Aquesta pel·lícula n$_i$'ha espantat
             [Internal Arg=Experiencer tres e$_i$] (dels nens)
             this film of-them has frightened three (of the children)
             'This film has frightened three of the children.'
       b.   * D'aquestes pel·lícules, n$_i$'espanten
             [Internal Arg=Theme tres e$_i$] els nens.
             of these films, of-them frighten three the children
             'Three of these films frighten the children.'

Cortés and Gavarró (1994) claim that the crucial factor is whether or not the argument clitic *ne* is extracted from the specifier of VP which is in a specifier-head relation with the verb stem (Larson 1988). This analysis, however, does not account for the small clause data, which suggest instead that the clitic *ne* is extracted from the specifier of AGROP:

(9)   a.   En vam considerar tres ___ massa intelligents per aquella feina.
             of-them (we) PAST consider three too intelligent for that job
             'We considered three of them too intelligent for that job.'

       b.   En considero tres estar vivint fora de les seves possibilitats.
             of-them (I) consider three to be living beyond their means
             'I consider three of them to be living beyond their means.'

2.4.   Summary

This section has shown that none of the analyses proposed for these data can account for them in a logical and uniform fashion. In the next section I examine specific properties of these structures.

3. PROPERTIES OF THE STRUCTURES

The structure is characterized by four properties. First, the external argument may not appear in any other position except directly following the verb. Second, the noun phrase must always be indefinite. Third, the verb may not be modified in any way. Finally, no object is ever permitted. I illustrate these properties in sections 3.1-3.4.

3.1. Position of the External Argument

In both structures the surface position of the external argument is limited to the directly postverbal position.[6] The examples below show the grammatical configurations in which this restriction is respected:

(10) a. Mengen treballadors sota d'aquell arbre.
          eat workers under that tree
          'Workers eat under that tree.'

      b. En dinen cinc en aquell restaurant.
          of-them lunch five in that restaurant
          'Five of them eat lunch in that restaurant.'

If the element that represents the external argument appears preverbally, the structure is ungrammatical, as the examples below illustrate:

(11) a. * Treballadors mengen sota d'aquell arbre.
            workers eat under that tree
            'Workers eat under that tree.'

      b. * Cinc en dinen en aquell restaurant.
            five of-them lunch in that restaurant
            'Five of them eat lunch in that restaurant.'

Furthermore, if the element that represents the external argument appears following the locative complement, the structures become ungrammatical:

(12) a. * Mengen sota d'aquell arbre treballadors.
            eat under that tree workers
            'Workers eat under that tree.'

      b. * En dinen en aquell restaurant cinc.
            of-them lunch in that restaurant five
            'Five of them eat lunch in that restaurant.'

Thus, the position of the bare plural or trace of *ne* extraction seems to be restricted to the directly postverbal position.[7] The pattern of data is significant because in Catalan the unmarked order of a transitive structure with an inverted subject is VOS, so the bare plural and *ne* extraction data contrast with the expected word order in Catalan.[8]

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6 Here the unmarked orders are considered. I am not considering orders which involve contrastive focus.

7 This is true of bare plurals and the *ne* extraction site for unaccusative verbs as well.

8 See Bonet (1989) for further discussion of postverbal subjects in Catalan.

3.2. Properties of the External Argument

Both the bare plural and the *ne* extraction site must involve indefinite noun phrases.[9] In the case of the clitic *ne* this is self-evident given that the clitic by nature involves either partitive or quantitative entities. The examples below, however, which involve bare plurals, demonstrate that a definite NP is in complementary distribution with indefinite NPs with respect to such structures:[10]

(13) a. * Viuen tots els immigrants en aquest barri.
          live all the immigrants in this neighborhood
          'All the immigrants live in this neighborhood.'

    b. * Parlen aquells experts en aquest congrès.
          speak those experts at this conference
          'Those experts speak at this conference.'

3.3. Modification of the Verb

A third property of this structure is that the verb cannot be modified. If the verb is modified, the structure becomes ungrammatical, as the examples below illustrate:

(14) a. * Viuen mendicants malament en aquest barri.
          live beggars in this neighborhood
          'Beggars live badly in this neighborhood.'

    b. * En treballen tres dur en aquesta empresa.
          of-them work three hard in this company
          'Three of them work hard in this company.'

3.4. Objects

Finally, no object of any kind can appear in either of these structures. The examples below show that a lexical NP object cannot appear:

(15) a. * Mengen treballadors els seus entrepans sota d'aquell arbre.
          eat workers their sandwiches under that tree
          'Workers eat their sandwiches under that tree.'

    b. * En dinen cinc un plat de botifarra amb mongetes.
          of-them lunch five a plate of sausage with beans
          'Five of them lunched on a plate of sausage with beans.'

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[9] I refer to these entities as NPs or noun phrases ignoring possible distinctions between DPs and NPs.

[10] This type of restriction is usually referred to as the Definiteness Effect (Milsark 1974). Not surprisingly, it applies to such structures when an unaccusative verb appears as well.

A WH-phrase is also ruled out in such structures, as the examples illustrate:

(16) a. * Què mengen treballadors sota d'aquell arbre?
          what eat workers under that tree
          'What do workers eat under that tree'?   .

      b. * Què en dinen cinc en aquest restaurant?
          what of-them lunch five in that restaurant
          'What do five of them eat for lunch in that restaurant'?

The presence of an object clitic also renders the structures ungrammatical:

(17) a. * El mengen treballadors sota d'aquell arbre.
          it eat workers under that tree
          'Workers eat it under that tree.'

      b. * L'en dinen cinc en aquest restaurant'?
          it of-them lunch five in that restaurant
          'Five of them eat it in that restaurant.'

In conclusion, objects can not appear in either of these structures.

3.5. Summary

In this section properties of the two structures illustrated in (1) and (2) are detailed. These properties are as follows. The element representing the external argument can appear only directly postverbally and must be indefinite. No object of any sort is possible in these structures nor can the verb be modified. In the next section I propose a possible interpretation and analysis of these structures.

4. PRESENTATIONAL SENTENCES

Guéron (1980) proposes that certain structures can be interpreted as presentation sentences, and that in such structures, the verb denotes no more than appearance in the world of discourse. Below I briefly review the main points of Guéron (1980) and then provide evidence to show that the structures of (1) and (2) follow the pattern of data established by Guéron (1980) for presentation sentences.[11]

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[11] Thanks go to Tim Stowell for pointing out to me the similarities between the structures in (1) and (2) and Guéron's (1980) presentational structures.

4.1. Guéron (1980) & properties of presentation structures

Guéron (1980), focusing on PP Extraposition in English, proposes that such structures may be interpreted either as predication or presentation sentences. In predication sentences the subject refers to an individual or object (or set of these) whose existence in the world of the discourse is presupposed. In this case, the VP describes a property of the thematic subject.[12] In presentation sentences the VP essentially denotes the appearance of the subject in the world of the discourse. As Guéron contends, it follows from this approach that a sentence like *a man appeared from India* is the best possible type of presentation sentence, the verb *appear* denoting appearance in the world of the discourse by lexical definition. According to Guéron, however, other verbs may be taken pragmatically as predicating no more of the subject than its appearance in the world of discourse. In other words, a verb which is not normally interpreted as a presentation or appearance verb can be interpreted as such when the information surrounding the discourse context renders the verb virtually void of any semantic content other than that of introducing the subject NP. The examples below, taken directly from Guéron's article, illustrate this claim:

(18) a. * A man died from India.

b. Several visitors from foreign countries died in the terrible accident. A woman died from Peru and a man died from India.

The central idea is that sentence (18b) becomes a presentation sentence because the context empties the verb of all semantic content beyond that of 'appearance in the world of discourse.' Guéron proposes that although the surface order of structures may be the same, the difference is mediated at LF. In other words, presentation and predication structures are associated with different LF representations, although in some cases, they may have the same surface word order.

Properties proposed by Guéron as distinguishing PP Extraposition presentation sentences from predications coincide with properties of the structures seen in (1) and (2).

First, such structures allow no verbal complement. Consider the examples taken directly from Guéron's article:

(19) a. A man walked in with green eyes.
      b. * A man walked in purposely with green eyes.

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12 The term thematic object refers to discourse not semantic properties, i.e., no reference to thematic role is suggested.

(20) a.   A bird hovered above us with red wings.
      b. * A bird hovered above us menacingly with red wings.

Second, PP Extraposition from the subject is blocked if the VP contains an object:

(21) a.   A book by Charles delighted Mary.
      b. * A book delighted Mary by Charles.

If the verb plus object combine to form a verbal complex, and if the resulting semantic unit has the 'appearance' meaning, then PP Extraposition is permitted:[13]

(22) a.   A book by Chomsky is making the rounds.
      b.   A book is making the rounds by Chomsky.

Finally, Guéron mentions the fact that there is a lexico-semantic constraint on the NP source of PP Extraposition in that it must be indefinite.

4.2. Conclusion

Although I have not provided an exhaustive comparison of Guéron's (1980) data with the data in (1) and (2), I have shown that certain patterns of data function in the same way, which seems to suggest that structures such as those seen in (1) and (2) above may indeed be presentation structures in the sense of Guéron (1980). If this is true, however, it is curious that Italian does not also allow presentation structures with intransitive verbs. In the next section, a possible explanation for this fact is proposed.

5. ITALIAN VERSUS CATALAN

Catalan and Italian, related Romance languages, have in common the presence of the element *ne* and the possibility of bare plural subjects in certain structures. It is thus curious that Catalan allows such presentation structures with *ne* and bare plural subjects in the presence of intransitive verbs while Italian does not. The ungrammatical Italian examples below, (23a) taken from Burzio (1986) and (23b) taken from Belletti (1988), illustrate this difference:

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13 Stowell (1979), in a discussion of there-insertion in English, mentions the no-object condition in reference to Guéron (1980). He accounts for the fact that verb plus object idioms follow a different pattern of data by the claim that such configurations appear in the lexicon under the category of verb.

(23) a. * Ne telefoneranno molti.
of-them will telephone many
'Many of them will telephone.'

b. * Alla manifestazione parleranno estremisti.
to the manifestation will speak extremists
'Extremists will speak at the manifestation.'

A possibility is that Catalan has a weaker AGRO and thus allows non-object like entities, such as external arguments, to appear in the specifier of AGROP. Below I briefly discuss some evidence in favor of this proposal. In section 5.1. I consider object agreement, in section 5.2. null objects and in section 5.3. auxiliary selection.

5.1. Agreement and Case

The proposal that there is a link between object agreement and accusative case is not new (Sportiche 1990, Chomsky 1991). In Italian, third person accusative clitics must trigger agreement on a past participle selected by *avere*, and the other accusative clitics trigger optional agreement, while in Catalan third person accusative clitics trigger optional agreement and the other clitics of the accusative template do not trigger agreement:

(24) a. Maria, ti ho visto/a.
Maria, you have seen
'Maria, I have seen you.'

b. Maria, la ho vista.
Maria, her have seen
'Maria, I have seen her.'

(25) a. Maria, t'he vist(*a).
Maria, you have seen
'Maria, I have seen you.'

b. Maria, l'he vist(a).
Maria, her have seen
'Maria, I have seen her.'

The data show that Italian has a much richer object agreement system than does Catalan.[14]

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[14] For more detail on the Italian data see Burzio (1986) and for data and an analysis of the Catalan facts, see Cortés (1993).

5.2. Null objects

Rizzi (1986) shows that Italian allows null objects in certain sequences of data.[15] In those same sets of data, Catalan works in the opposite way. As the data below show, Italian allows the null object to be the binding antecedent of an anaphor and Catalan does not (Italian examples taken directly from Rizzi (1986) in the (a) examples and translated to Catalan in the (b) examples):

(26) a.   La buona musica riconcilia ___ con se stessi.

     b. * La bona música reconcilia ____ amb si mateix.
         the good music reconciles with oneself
         'Good music reconciles one with oneself.'

The Catalan example can be corrected if a third person singular generic human pronoun is used:

(27)   La bona música reconcilia un amb si mateix.
        the good music reconciles one with oneself
        'Good music reconciles one with oneself.'

The understood object can be modified by an adjunct small clause in Italian but not in Catalan:

(28) a.   Un dottore serio visita ___ nudi.
        a doctor serious visits nude
        'A serious doctor visits patients nude.'

     b. * Una metgessa seria visita ___ nu.
         a doctor [+f] serious visits nude
         'A serious woman doctor visits patients nude.'

In this case an overt object must be added to the Catalan example to create a grammatical structure:

(29)   Una metgessa seria visita els pacients nus.
        a doctor serious visits the patients nude
        'A serious woman doctor visits patients nude.'

Argument small clauses selected by causative verbs in Italian can take null subjects having exactly the same interpretive and formal properties as the null objects discussed:

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[15] Rizzi (1986) shows that in Italian null objects have the features [+generic] [+human] and [+plural].

(30) a. Questa musica rende [___ allegri].
b. * Aquesta música fa tornar [___ content].
this music renders happy
'This music makes one happy.'

To achieve grammaticality in Catalan, however, the structure requires an overt object:

(31) Aquesta música fa tornar [a un content].
this music makes become to one happy
'This music makes one happy.'

In conclusion, these examples may suggest that Italian has a strong AGRO and Catalan a weaker AGRO.[16]

5.3. Auxiliary Selection

The third and final piece of evidence is auxiliary selection. In Italian unaccusative verbs always select the auxiliary *essere* (Burzio 1986). In this respect, Italian contrasts significantly with Catalan, which always selects the auxiliary *haver*, never *ser*, when the verb is unaccusative. Consider the contrast:

(32) a. Han arribat els teus amics.
have arrived the your friends
'Your friends have arrived.'

b. Sono arrivati i tuoi amici.
are arrived the your friends
'Your friends have arrived.'

Without going into the possible technical mechanisms, these facts could also be attributed to a strong AGRO in the case of Italian and a relatively weaker AGRO in the case of Catalan. The distinction would be based on Chomsky's (1993) proposal that AGRO must have both NP checking properties to check the NP in the specifier of AGROP and verb checking properties to check the verb in the AGRO head position.

Finally, consider the following data:

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[16] In one test Catalan coincides with Italian. An apparent null object in Catalan can be a controller if the sentence has a generic time reference:
(i) a. (*alla fine della vacanza) Il bel tiempo invoglia __a [PRO restare]
(at the end of the vacation) the nice weather induces to stay
b. (*al final de les vacances) El bon temps indueix a [PRO reposar]
(at the end of the vacations) the nice weather induces to rest
These structures may have a different structural analysis than the other examples in which there is a contrast.

(33) a.   N'han arribat(s) cinc a la festa.
            of-them have arrived five at the party
            'Five of them have arrived at the party.'

      b.   N'han menjat(*s) cinc en la taula rodona
            of-them have eaten five at the table round
            'Five of them have eaten at the round table.'

Applying the same logic, we could assume that if we conceive of agreement
as a linking of like properties, the pattern of data shown by these examples
follows. Object agreement is linked to accusative case and objecthood, not
to an external argument. The AGRO of Catalan is too weak to recover the
agreement properties if it is not in a specifier-head relation with a true
object.[17]

6. CONCLUSIONS

In this article I have outlined two structures in Catalan, *ne* cliticization
from the external argument of intransitive verbs and bare plurals as the
directly postverbal external argument of intransitive verbs. In addition, I
have outlined some specific properties of these structures and suggested
that they may be interpreted as presentation sentences in the sense of
Guéron (1980). Finally, I have proposed a possible account for the cross-
linguistic variation shown between Catalan and Italian based on proper-
ties of AGRO.

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[17] As Ian Roberts (personal communication) has pointed out, if Castillian
Spanish has the same pattern of data with respect to null objects as Catalan,
the analysis can be further extended given the fact that Castillian Spanish
allows bare plurals like Catalan (Torrego 1989). Patterns of data found with
the clitic *ne* are irrelevant here, however, since Castillian Spanish has no
corresponding clitic.

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