

Agreement: a crash-course
(DAY 2)

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1. The Person Case Constraint

- The Person Case Constraint (PCC), a.k.a. the “**me-lui*” Constraint:
 - a family of restrictions on the PERSON features of different arguments in relation to one another
 - usually affecting combinations of multiple internal arguments of a single predicate
- ⇒ and so, it is most commonly illustrated using the direct and indirect objects of a ditransitive verb
- The constraint comes in (at least) four variants: “Strong”, “Weak”, “Me-First”, “UltraStrong”
 - see Anagnostopoulou (2005), Nevins (2007), and references therein
 - if we have time, we’ll talk about these different variants in a little more detail

Let us examine the effect in Basque:

- (1) “STRONG” PCC IN BASQUE DITRANSITIVES:
In Basque finite clauses, the direct object of a ditransitive verb must be 3rd person.
- Or, in the terms developed in our first class:
- (2) “STRONG” PCC IN BASQUE DITRANSITIVES:
In Basque finite clauses, the direct object of a ditransitive cannot bear [participant].

Examples:

- (3) a. Zuk niri liburu-a saldu d-i- ϕ -da-zu (Basque)
you.E me.D book-ART_{sg(A)} sell 3.A- \sqrt -sg.A-1sg.D-2sg.E
‘You have sold the book to me.’
- b. * Zuk harakin-ari ni saldu n-(a)i- ϕ -o-zu
you.E butcher-ART_{sg.D} me(A) sell 1.A- \sqrt -sg.A-3sg.D-2sg.E
‘You have sold me to the butcher.’ [Laka 1996]

- This effect is asymmetric, in two important ways:
 - first, as (3a–b) show, it restricts the features of the direct object in the presence of an indirect object —
 - but not the other way around
 - second, while this restriction affects person features ([participant]), there is no corresponding restriction affecting number features —
 - e.g. there is no restriction on the [group] features of the direct object in the presence of an indirect object
(as Nevins 2011 puts it: there is no “Number Case Constraint”)

1.1. The role of overttness

- The PCC is famously absent in environments that lack overt agreement morphology with the internal arguments of the verb
 - This is true cross-linguistically —
 - Hebrew lacks agreement morphology with internal arguments; and Hebrew does not exhibit the PCC:
- (4) ha-menahel-et ta-cig la-hem oti
the-manager-F FUT.3sg.F-introduce DAT.the-them ACC.me
‘The manager will introduce me to them.’
- And it is also true *intra*-linguistically —
 - non-finite environments in Basque (incl. nominalizations) lack agreement morphology; and these environments do not exhibit the PCC
 - compare (3b) with (5):
- (5) Gaizki irudi-tzen ϕ -zai- ϕ -t [zuk ni harakin-ari sal-tze-a]
wrong look-IMPV 3.A- \sqrt -sg.A-1sg.D you.E me(A) butcher-ART_{sg.D} sold-NMZ-ART_{sg(A)}
‘It seems wrong to me for you to sell me to the butcher.’ [Laka 1996]
- the embedded non-finite clause in (5) contains the same verb & the same combination of arguments as (the ungrammatical) (3b), above
 - but this embedded clause lacks agreement morphology, and the PCC does not arise

- This has led many to conclude that the PCC is therefore a morphological filter (Bonet 1991, 1994, *a.o.*)
 - as we will see shortly, this view of the PCC is probably incorrect
 - but even if so, the interaction with overt is real, and demands an account

1.2. The deeply syntactic nature of the PCC

Despite the common view of the PCC as a morphological filter, several authors have observed that the PCC behaves unlike a morphological filter, and more like a syntactic effect, in several respects (see Albizu 1997, Baker 2008, 2011, Rezac 2008, *a.o.*). Here, I will review arguments by Albizu (1997) and Rezac (2008).

- These authors start by noting that the relevant effect in Basque is a bit broader than the definitions in (1–2) would suggest;
 - The effect observed in ditransitives is actually a subcase of broader generalization, given in (6):
- (6) In finite clauses that have a DAT argument located higher than the ABS argument, the ABS argument must be 3rd person.
- And, crucially, they demonstrate that this effect is syntactic in nature
 - They start by examining 2-place unaccusative verbs in Basque — (verbs that take an ABS DP and a DAT DP, but no ERG DP) — which Rezac calls “applicative unaccusatives.”
 - It turns out that there are two classes of applicative unaccusatives in Basque:
 - DAT » ABS verbs
 - ABS » DAT verbs
 - This is unlike true (triadic) ditransitives in Basque, which are all DAT » ABS (see Elordieta 2001, Rezac 2008)

- (7) DAT » ABS:
- a. Kepa-ri bere buru-a gusta-tzen zako
Kepa-DAT his head-ART_{sg}(ABS) like-HAB AUX
‘Kepa likes himself.’
- b. * Kepa bere buru-a-ri gusta-tzen zako
Kepa(ABS) his head-ART_{sg}-DAT like-HAB AUX

- (8) ABS » DAT:
- a. * Kepa-ri bere buru-a ji-ten zako ispilu-a-n
Kepa-DAT his head-ART_{sg}(ABS) COME-PROG AUX mirror-ART_{sg}(ABS)-LOC
Intended: ‘Kepa is approaching himself in the mirror.’
- b. Miren bere buru-a-ri mintzatu zaio
Miren(ABS) his/her head-ART_{sg}-DAT talk-PRT AUX
‘Miren talked to herself.’ [Rezac 2008:75]

- Crucially, the DAT » ABS verbs show the PCC, while the ABS » DAT ones don’t:

- (9) DAT » ABS verb:
- a. Miren-i gozoki-ak gusta-tzen ϕ -zai-zki-o
Miren-DAT sweet-ART_{pl}(ABS) like-IMP 3.ABS-√-pl.ABS-3sg.DAT
‘Miren likes candy.’
- b. */?? Ni Miren-i gusta-tzen na-tzai- ϕ -o
me(ABS) Miren-DAT like-IMP 1.ABS-√-sg.ABS-3sg.DAT
‘Miren likes me.’

- (10) ABS » DAT verb:
- Ni Peru-ri hurbildu na-tzai- ϕ -o
me(ABS) Peru-DAT approach 1.ABS-√-sg.ABS-3sg.DAT
‘I approached Peru.’

[Albizu 1997:21, Rezac 2008:73]

• Things to note:

- the ‘target forms’ in (9b) and (10) are identical
 - and they are not just *phonologically* identical (i.e., this is not an instance of accidental homophony);
 - they are *morpho-syntactically* identical: the two express the same set of features, {1sg.ABS, 3sg.DAT}
- the distinction between the two cases is only in the finer *hierarchical* organization of the relevant arguments

- This is a distinction that lives in the module of grammar known as **syntax**.

NB: As far as I can tell, this also renders impossible any meaningful account of the PCC in terms of ‘grammaticalization’ or ‘usage’ (see, e.g., Haspelmath 2004).

- since whatever you want to say about the target form in (9b), you cannot say it has not been grammaticalized into the language

⇒ What we now need is:

- an syntactic account of the PCC, that delivers this result concerning DAT ≫ ABS verbs vs. ABS ≫ DAT verbs

1.3. Béjar & Rezac's (2003) account

- Assumptions:

- (i) probing for person features and number features occurs in two separate steps of the derivation —
 - (see also Anagnostopoulou 2003, Béjar 2003, Laka 1993, Shlonsky 1989, Sigurðsson 1996, Sigurðsson & Holmberg 2008, Taraldsen 1995)
 - with person probing first
 - (all of the above, except Sigurðsson & Holmberg 2008)
- (ii) clitic doubling of a DP renders that DP invisible for subsequent probing (i.e., for subsequent applications of IDS; see class 1)
 - the clitic and the full noun phrase behave like an A-chain whose head is the clitic (Alexiadou & Anagnostopoulou 1997, Anagnostopoulou 1994, 2003, Sportiche 1996, 1998) ...
 - ... and tails of A-chains are not interveners (Holmberg & Hróarsdóttir 2003, *a.o.*; we saw this in the first class as well)

- (iii) A licensing condition on [participant] features:

- (11) PERSON LICENSING CONDITION (PLC):¹

A [participant] feature on a DP that is a viable agreement target (as far as its case, etc.), and for which there is a clausemate person probe, must participate in a valuation relation.

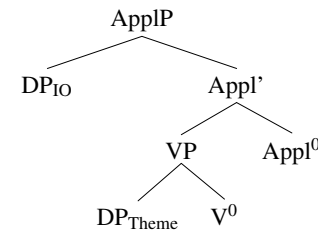
¹There is a tantalizingly simpler version of the PLC, which has been put forth in the literature:

- (i) A [participant] feature on a DP must participate in a valuation relation.
[Baker 2008:126–150, Béjar & Rezac 2003:53, *a.o.*; cf. Nichols 2001:525–526]

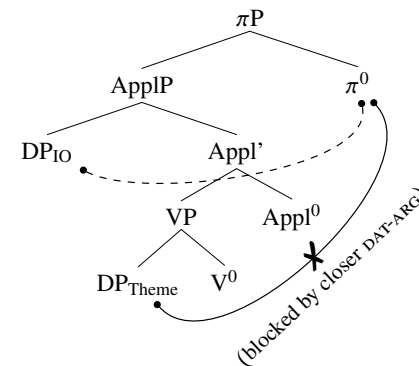
On why this simpler formulation is in the end inadequate, see Preminger (2011b:928ff.), as well as the discussion below.

- Given these assumptions, here is how Béjar & Rezac (2003) derive the PCC:

- (12) DAT ≫ ABS: BASE-GENERATION

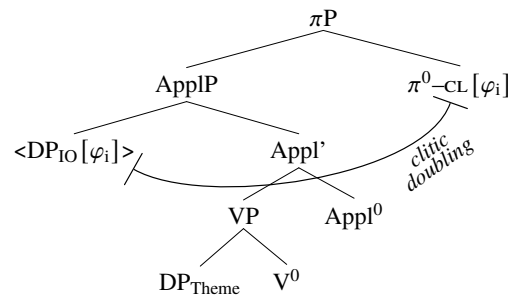


- (13) DAT ≫ ABS: PERSON PROBING

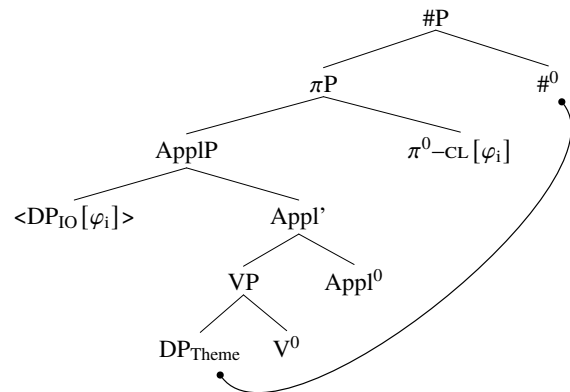


- Notice now that if the Theme DP in (13) is 1st/2nd person (i.e., bears a [participant] feature), the result will be a violation of (11)
- This is perhaps the “central” component of the PCC; but remember that we need number agreement with the Theme DP to go through successfully
 - Nevins’ “no ‘Number Case Constraint’”

(14) DAT ≫ ABS: CLITIC DOUBLING



(15) DAT ≫ ABS: NUMBER PROBING

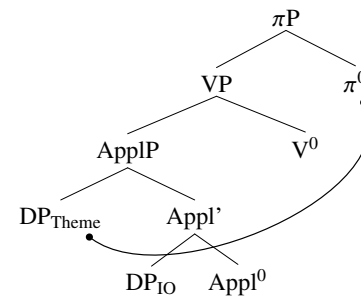


⇒ This derives the PCC effect for any verb in Basque whose dative argument is structurally higher than its Theme

- including all true (triadic) ditransitives, as well as DAT ≫ ABS applicative unaccusatives

➔ And it also derives the absence of PCC effects with ABS ≫ DAT verbs:

(16) ABS ≫ DAT: PERSON PROBING



(17) ... [rest of derivation continues as in (14–15)]

1.4. Consequences

- What we have in the PCC, then, is a **syntactic effect** par excellence, which nevertheless only arises in the presence of **overt agreement morphology**
- ⇒ How can something in narrow syntax be sensitive to the overtness of agreement morphology?

As best I can tell, the only possible answer is this:²

The mechanisms of agreement & intervention, implicated in the PCC, are only in place when we can see them.

- To put this another way:
 - **there is generally no such thing as “null” agreement**
 (“null” here means “null across the entire paradigm”; there is no prohibition against particular cells being null in what is otherwise an overt paradigm, of course)
- ⇒ The PCC goes away in the absence of overt agreement morphology not because it is a morphological filter —
 (we already saw in §1.2 that the PCC cannot be a morphological filter)
 — but because, in the absence of overt agreement morphology, *there is no agreement there*, not even “abstract” agreement.

²The only possible answer that maintains the modularity of syntax vs. morpho-phonology, that is.

2. The impetus for probing

- As we remarked in the first class:
 - one thing we lost when we moved to the (more empirically adequate) geometric model of φ -features was the explanation for *why* probing occurs
 - The common view holds that probing occurs because, without it, the “unvalued features” borne by the probe would cause ungrammaticality
 - this is what Chomsky’s (2000, 2001) ‘uninterpretability’ is all about:
 - features without values are considered to be a problem for interpretation at the interfaces, yielding ungrammaticality
 - However, as we saw in yesterday’s class, φ -features are privative;
 - The absence of a φ -feature value is not only *interpretable*, it’s in fact *interpreted*
 - e.g. the absence of [participant] means the referent is not part of the speech-act; the absence of [group] means the referent is atomic; etc.
- ⇒ The absence of φ -feature values does not give rise to ungrammaticality.
- But then, what is the impetus for probing in the first place?

.....
 - We could always try to salvage the original view of probing with a ‘hack’ —
 - a feature that does nothing but cause probing, is valued by any (nominal) target, and whose unvalued variant causes ungrammaticality
 - and we could even recruit Harley & Ritter’s (2002) [Referring Expression] node in this capacity
- What I want to show you now is that we shouldn’t—in fact, that we can’t—salvage the original account for the impetus probing, period.
- DISCLAIMER:
As of now, I know of no better explanation for why probing happens; I can only show you that Chomsky’s explanation doesn’t work.

- Recall the “omnivorous agreement” pattern found in the Kaqchikel *Agent-Focus* construction:

- (18) 3PL \gg 3SG
- a. ja rje' x-**e**/* ϕ -tz'et-ö rja'
FOC them COM-**3pl**/***3sg**.ABS-see-AF him
'It was them who saw him.'
- b. ja rja' x-**e**/* ϕ -tz'et-ö rje'
FOC him COM-**3pl**/***3sg**.ABS-see-AF them
'It was him who saw them.'
- (19) 1(/2) \gg 3
- a. ja rat x-**at**/***e**-ax-an rje'
FOC you(sg.) COM-**2sg**/***3pl**.ABS-hear-AF them
'It was you(sg.) who heard them.'
- b. ja rje' x-**at**/***e**-ax-an rat
FOC them COM-**2sg**/***3pl**.ABS-hear-AF you(sg.)
'It was them who heard you(sg.).'
- (20) OKAY TO HAVE TWO PLURALS, OKAY TO HAVE NO PLURALS
- a. ja **röj** x-**oj**-tz'et-ö **rje**'
FOC **us** COM-1pl.ABS-see-AF **them**
'It was us who saw them.'
- b. ja **ri xoq** x- ϕ -tz'et-ö **ri achin**
FOC **the woman** COM-3sg.ABS-see-AF **the man**
'It was the woman who saw the man.'

- What this is not: [Preminger 2014:18-20, 67–73, 89, 123–128]
 - Multiple Agree³
 - feature-percolation⁴
 - a morphological effect (e.g. portmanteau morphemes)
 - the effects of a scale/hierarchy (e.g. reflecting “cognitive salience”)⁵
 - multiple lexical variants of the probe (cf.: C⁰[+decl] vs. C⁰[+decl, +wh])

Here are schemata of a few derivations —

- and what we would need the interfaces’ verdict to be in each case

(21)

	PROBE	SUBJ	OBJ	desired verdict	
a.	H ⁰	‘e-’	3pl	3sg	✓ (agreement w/closest available pl target) [= <i>ex.</i> (18a)]
b.	H ⁰	‘e-’	3sg	3pl	✓ (agreement w/closest available pl target) [= <i>ex.</i> (18b)]
c.	H ⁰	ϕ	3sg	3pl	✗ (“gratuitous non-agreement”: pl target available) [= <i>cf.</i> (21b)]
d.	H ⁰	ϕ	3sg	3sg	✓ (no pl targets, no agreement) [= <i>ex.</i> (20b)]

What rules out “gratuitous non-agreement”, as schematized in (21c)?

- Can it be ruled out because of a property of the *probe* (H⁰)—e.g. an unchecked “uninterpretable feature”?
- **No.** — There are two possibilities to consider:
 - If 3sg targets can remove this property (“check the uninterpretable feature”), then (22) should be good... contrary to fact:

(22)

	PROBE	SUBJ	OBJ	desired verdict	
	H ⁰	ϕ	3sg	3pl	✗ (“forced” agreement w/ <i>sg</i> target) [= <i>cf.</i> (21b)]

- If 3sg targets cannot remove this property (“check the uninterpretable feature”), and only 3pl ones can, then (21d) (above) should be bad...
 - again, contrary to fact.

Crucially, the same contradiction obtains even if we avail ourselves of covert expletives, and/or other undetectable agreement targets.

- Suppose H⁰ in (21d) successfully agrees with some XP β; then either:
 - β is formally singular → ⊥
 - if H⁰ could target singular DPs, (22) would be okay, contrary to fact
 - β is formally plural → then H⁰, having agreed with β, would be spelled out as ‘e-’ (pl.) → ⊥
 - this is simply not so, in the relevant cases (e.g. (21d))

Can “gratuitous non-agreement” be ruled out because of a property of one of the DP arguments—e.g. a lack of “Case”—that causes ungrammaticality at the interface?

- **No.** If DPs in this language/construction *needed* to be agreed with, then (21a–b) would be bad—as would (23), below—contrary to fact.

(23)

	H ⁰	‘e-’	3pl	3pl	✓ (agreement w/closest available pl target) [= <i>ex.</i> (20a)]
.....					

³Anagnostopoulou 2005, Hiraiwa 2001, 2004, *a.o.*.
⁴Chomsky 1973, Cowper 1987, Gazdar et al. 1985, Grimshaw 2000, Kayne 1983, Webelhuth 1992, *a.o.*.
⁵Dayley 1978, Mondloch 1981, Norman & Campbell 1978, Smith-Stark 1978, *a.o.*; see also Stiebels 2006.

- What this shows us is that the impetus for probing cannot be reduced to the ungrammaticality of some unvalued feature at the interface —
 - *regardless of the identity of the feature*
 - NOTICE: No assumptions were made in the argumentation above about the identity of the relevant feature(s)
 - it could be [plural] itself, it could be Harley & Ritter’s [Referring Expression], it could be something else —
 - none of these would work
- ⇒ We have to abandon the view that probing happens as a response to unvaluedness
- Maybe probing is just a *sui generis* obligatory operation (Preminger 2014), or maybe a way to derive it from something deeper will yet be discovered!
 - However, one question we can ask right now is the following:
 - how special is this to φ -feature agreement in particular?
 - one might imagine, for example, that the rest of syntax behaves in the manner predicted by Chomsky (2000, 2001), and that agreement is somehow an outlier...
 - ... but this turns out not to be the case.
 - In §3, I will show you that case actually behaves exactly like φ -feature agreement, in this respect —
 - it, too, cannot be enforced via unvalued/unchecked features
 - And see Preminger (2014:215–232) for related discussions of *wh*-movement, Object Shift, and the Definiteness Effect.

3. A bit about case

- I will focus, here, on the assignment of accusative (ACC)
 - For concreteness, I will adopt the implementation given in (24):
- (24) a nominal/DP α is assigned ACC as soon as there is a nominal/DP β **such that**:⁶
- i. β c-commands α
 - ii. β and α are in the same locality domain
 - iii. β is caseless(=‘nominative’)

- While I think it is fairly clear that (24) does better than its alternatives (see, e.g., Baker & Vinokurova 2010, Marantz 1991, McFadden 2004) —
 - the argument does not depend on adopting (24) in particular
 - all that is crucial is that the assignment of ACC is sensitive to factors that are clearly syntactic in nature
- Now, suppose that—empirically speaking—we observe that some nominal/DP α must surface bearing ACC
- On a feature-checking approach, this obligatoriness would arise as follows:
 - any derivation in which α did not check its case-related feature(s) would be flagged as ungrammatical
 - and, if the only opportunity for this particular α to get case was via the configuration in (24) —
 - then the obligatoriness of this instance of ACC could be derived from interface conditions.
- Alas, this doesn’t work...

⁶It is possible that (24) needs to be parameterized, so that it is suppressed in so-called “ergative languages.”

- Raising-to-ACC in Sakha (Turkic):⁷

- (25) a. Sardaana **Aisen**-(*)**(y)** beqehce [бүгүн *t* kel-er dien] ihit-te
Sardaana **Aisen**-(*)**(ACC)** yesterday today come-AOR COMP hear-PAST.3
'Sardaana heard yesterday that Aisen is coming today.'
- b. Sardaana beqehce [бүгүн **Aisen**-(*)**(y)** kel-er dien] ihit-te
Sardaana yesterday today **Aisen**-(*)**(ACC)** come-AOR COMP hear-PAST.3
'Sardaana heard yesterday that Aisen is coming today.'

[Vinokurova 2005:363; annotations added]

- As (25a) illustrates, ACC on the raised embedded subject is obligatory when it has raised

What rules out “gratuitous non-ACC” on *Aisen* in (25a)?

- Prima facie, what (25b) shows is that there is nothing wrong with an instance of [_{DP} *Aisen*] that has not been assigned ACC
- ⇒ The feature-checking approach to case is forced into the following position:
 - the embedded clause in (25b) has a property *p* — (say, the ability to “assign NOM case”) — that ameliorates whatever representational lacuna the ACC-less version of [_{DP} *Aisen*], in (25a), has
- But at the same time, the embedded clause in (25a) must lack property *p*
 - otherwise, the ACC-less variant of (25a) would be fine
- What ensures that the embedded clause in (25a) will lack property *p*?
 - It must be the case that having property *p* would prevent the movement seen in (25a) from happening
 - as per, e.g., Chomsky’s (2001) *Activity Condition*
 - Otherwise, the ACC-less version of (25a) would be okay, with NOM instead of ACC on [_{DP} *Aisen*]
 - That, unfortunately, just doesn’t seem to be so (at least not in Sakha):⁸

- (26) min **ehigi(-ni)** [бүгүн *t* kyaj-yax-xyt] dien erem-mit-im
I **you(-ACC)** today win-FUT-2pl.S that hope-PST-1sg.S
'I hoped you would win today.' [Vinokurova 2005:361; annotations added]

⁷See Baker & Vinokurova (2010), Kornfilt & Preminger (2015) and Levin & Preminger (2015).

- The distinction between (25a) (obligatory ACC on the raised subject) and (26) (optional ACC on the raised subject) is simply a matter of the nominal’s position relative to VP-peripheral adverbs
 - as such, it is replicable even in monoclausal contexts:⁹
- (27) a. Masha salamaat-*(**y**) **turgennik** *t* sie-te
Masha porridge-*(**ACC**) **quickly** eat-PAST.3sg.S
'Masha ate the porridge quickly.'
- b. Masha **turgennik** salamaat-(#**y**) sie-te
Masha **quickly** porridge-(#**ACC**) eat-PAST.3sg.S
'Masha ate porridge quickly.' [Baker & Vinokurova 2010:602]

- The reason it looks like there’s “optionality” in (26) is because there is no adverb there to delimit the edge of the matrix VP
- The contrast between (25a) and (26) shows is that this is not about adjacency to the verb—e.g. (*pseudo*-)incorporation
 - contrary to what some have claimed (Baker & Vinokurova 2010, Levin & Preminger 2015)
- It is simply about being inside or outside (the matrix) VP
- But this means that having property *p* — (whatever it is that allows embedded subjects to surface without ACC) — does not prevent movement out of the embedded clause
- ⇒ Contradiction.

⁸The embedded verb in (26) shows full agreement with the raised embedded subject, in both number and person. Sakha also allows partial agreement (in number but not in person) on the embedded verb, in which case accusative on the raised embedded subject becomes obligatory (rather than optional, as it is in (26)); see Vinokurova (2005:361). Note, however, that the subject in (25a) is 3rd person, meaning the string in question is compatible with both a full agreement parse and a partial agreement parse (as far as the agreement morphology in the embedded clause is concerned). Therefore, the possibility of partial agreement does not explain the obligatoriness of accusative in (25a) (cf. Baker 2011:893–896).

⁹As Baker & Vinokurova (2010:602) note, accusative in (27b) is possible only if the object bears contrastive focus, hence the ‘#’ annotation (w.r.t. a neutral context).

- We have reached a similar conclusion to the one we had regarding φ -feature agreement:
 - in this case, the conclusion is that the assignment of ACC is obligatory-when-possible —
 - in particular, when a DP has moved it out of the verb phrase into a position still c-commanded by the subject
 - but this obligatoriness cannot be reduced to the need of the noun phrase to receive ACC case;
 - nor can it be reduced to the need to discharge ACC case (cf. (27));
 - nor can it be because NOM has been assigned exactly and only in those derivations where ACC is not assigned
(in other words, whether you believe NOM is assigned in the embedded clauses, the assignment of NOM cannot be a sufficient condition for bleeding ACC)
- ⇒ The obligatoriness of ACC assignment in an example like (25a) cannot be reduced to feature-checking.

.....

So, it's not just φ -feature agreement; it's case too (and probably other things; see above) whose obligatoriness cannot be reduced to ungrammaticality-caused-by-unvaluedness.



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