

A default theory of default case

Pavel Caha

Abstract. Schütze (2001) argues that Universal Grammar makes use of the so-called default case. These are “case forms used to spell out nominals that do not receive a case specification by assignment or other syntactic means” (Schütze 2001:205). This article proposes a theory of default case whose goal is to capture the phenomenon without adding anything to the theory beyond the defining property of the default (the lack of case features): after the DP exits syntax without case features, it is realised in the morphological component as any other syntactic object, namely by finding the best matching lexical item. I argue that this theory is not only the simplest one theoretically, but also the most empirically restrictive one. Specifically, once it is combined with the so-called cumulative case decomposition (Caha 2009), it restricts the range of possible values of the default: out of all cases, only the nominative (or absolutive) can be the default. This leads me to investigate languages with an apparent accusative default. This is a small set of languages with case on pronouns only. I argue that these languages, too, have a default nominative, but it is the nominative of a strong pronoun, which happens to be syncretic with the weak accusative pronoun.

1. Introduction

In Schütze (2001), it is proposed that nouns and pronouns may remain without any case specification in the syntax, and they enter the spellout component caseless. The forms spelling out the caseless forms represent the so-called default case, which Schütze (2001:210) defines as follows:

(1) The default case forms of a language are those that are used to spell out nominal expressions

I would like to thank my informants for their judgements and insights into the fine details of various constructions. Alphabetically: Bjarne Ørsnes (Danish), Gillian Ramchand (English), Jeff Parrott (English), Joe Emonds (English), Maria Cortiula (Italian), Roland Wagner (German), Tarald Taraldsen (Norwegian), Tom Rankin (English). I also thank Itai Bassi and Justin Colley for a discussion of gapping. I am indebted to three anonymous reviewers of this paper for constructive criticism and helpful suggestions. All errors are my own.

(e.g., DPs) that are not associated with any case feature assigned or otherwise determined by syntactic mechanisms.

As an example, consider the German hanging-topic left dislocation in (2). The relevant observation is that the left-peripheral DP (*der Hans*) is in the nominative (NOM), despite being doubled by an accusative (ACC) pronoun. Since there is no obvious assigner for NOM, the left-dislocated DP represents default case: NOM here is a form used to realise a DP that lacks any case in syntax.

- (2) { **Der** / ***Den** } Hans, an den erinnere ich mich nicht.
the-NOM *ACC Hans of him-ACC remember I myself not
'Hans, I don't remember him.' (Schütze 2001:224)

This article is concerned with the morphological realisation of such caseless DPs, focussing specifically on the question which case forms realise the default case. Schütze (2001) and subsequent work observe that the default case is most frequently NOM (or absolutive), in a few languages it is ACC, but there are no candidate languages with default genitives, datives or instrumentals.¹ The goal of this paper is to propose a theory of default case that restricts its possible values in a principled way, and rules out default genitives, datives and instrumentals.

Assuming a realisational approach to morphology, I argue that the only thing needed to derive this result is the so-called cumulative case decomposition (see Caha 2009, 2013, McFadden 2018, Smith et al. 2019). Once this decomposition is adopted, nothing special needs to be said about caseless DPs at all. It is enough to assume that lexicalisation simply finds the best-matching vocabulary item for the relevant caseless DP, ships its phonology to PF, and that's all there is to it: the resulting theory rules out default genitives, datives and instrumentals. This approach represents what I believe to be a default theory of default case.²

Section 2 discusses the predictions of such a theory in detail. It shows that the theory predicts

¹Nominative-default languages: Arabic, German, Greek, Icelandic, Latin, Russian (Schütze 2001:225), Enga, Hindi, Niuean, Warlpiri (Legate 2008:61), Dutch (Havranová 2014), Polish (Lindert 2016), Estonian (Norris 2018), Czech (Čakányová 2022). Accusative default: English, Danish, Irish, Italian 2.SG (Schütze 2001).

²An important property of the theory I explore is that it avoids providing case values to caseless DPs by a dedicated postsyntactic/morphological rules. Such rules not only bring extra theoretical cost, but given that there is no principled restriction on their functioning, they make it difficult to derive the observed restrictions in a principled way.

that out of all the cases, only NOM/ABS can be the default. This captures the majority pattern, but apparently clashes with the observation that in a few languages, the default appears to be ACC (these are English, Danish, Irish and partly Italian). Starting with Section 3, my goal will be to argue that these languages, too, feature a default NOM. Let me sketch the argument briefly below.

The four languages identified by Schütze are each slightly different. Overall, however, it can be noted that they share two properties. The first property is that in all these languages, only pronouns show any case marking at all. Because of this, I refer to languages like English (with an apparent accusative default) as pronominal default-ACC languages.

The second property of these languages is that the default is found in a larger set of environments compared to languages with a default NOM. To see that, consider English. Schütze (2001) argues that English default environments include fragment answers (3-a), left dislocation (3-b), gapping (3-c), pronoun modification (3-d) and coordination (3-e). The notable feature of these examples is that they contain subject pronouns whose form is the same as that of object pronouns.

(3) The default accusative in English ³

- | | | |
|----|---|------------------------|
| a. | Who wants to try this game? – Me | (fragment answers) |
| b. | Me , I like beans. | (left dislocation) |
| c. | She likes rice, and him beans. | (gapping) |
| d. | Us linguists are a crazy bunch. | (pronoun modification) |
| e. | Her and Sandy went to the store yesterday. | (coordination) |

The large set of default environments in English contrasts with languages like German, where only left dislocation shows default NOM (recall (2)). All the other environments in (3) show regular non-default case in German. For example, DPs in fragment answers always bear the same case as

³Examples (a), (b) and (d) are from Schütze (2001). The example (c) is from Johnson (2018:ex. 119); coordination from Grano (2006:1). It should be noted that in some of these environments, there is variation between the “default-ACC” and NOM forms (these are allowed in c-e). Often, the variation is described in terms of register (Emonds 1986, Sobin 1987, Grano 2006, Parrott 2009). For the time being, I focus on the register with the ACC forms, referred to by Emonds (1986) as ‘normal usage.’ I am leaving the other register (referred to as prestige usage by Emonds) aside. I do so to make it clear how the proposal of a universal default NOM handles the facts that appear most problematic, i.e., the apparent ACC shape. I come back to the variation in Section 5.3.

a corresponding DP in a full-sentence answer. This is shown in (4).

- (4) Fragment answers in German (Frazier 2007)
- a. Wer hat Hans geschlagen? – Ich/*Mich.
who.NOM has Hans hit-INF – **I.NOM/I.ACC**
 ‘Who hit John? Me.’
- b. Wen hat Hans geschlagen? – Mich/*Ich.
who.ACC has Hans hit-INF – **I.ACC/I.NOM**
 ‘Who did John hit? Me.’

Similarly, modified pronouns are not a default-case environment in German either. This is demonstrated in (5). (5-a) shows that modified subject pronouns must be in NOM. (5-b) shows that the case on the modified pronoun changes depending on its syntactic position.

- (5) Pronoun modification, German
- a. {**Wir** / ***uns**} Linguisten sind ein verrückter Haufen
 we us linguistis are a crazy bunch
- b. Das Leben kann für {***wir** / **uns**} Linguisten sehr schnelllebig sein.
 the life can for we us linguists very fast-paced be
 ‘Life can be very fast-paced for us linguistis.’

Pronouns in gapped clauses also truthfully reflect their syntactic function, see (6). When subjects, they are NOM, when objects, they are ACC.

- (6) Ich sehe dich und **du** **mich**
 I.NOM see you.ACC and you.NOM me.ACC
 ‘I see you and you me.’

To sum up, the puzzle is why the accusative sometimes appears to be the default, why this only happens in languages with case marking restricted to pronouns, and why the range of default-case environments appears to be larger in these languages than elsewhere.

The starting point of my analysis is the observation that all the constructions given in (3) are the

same constructions that have been cross-linguistically identified as requiring the so-called strong pronouns (Kayne 1975, Cardinaletti and Starke 1999, Cardinaletti 1999, Van Riemsdijk 1999, Quinn 2005). Consider, for instance, left dislocation. In French, a left dislocated pronoun is always a strong pronoun (e.g., *moi*), see (7). The strong pronoun differs from the deficient NOM pronoun (*je*), which cannot occur in a left-dislocated position. Note that *je* ‘I’ doubles the strong pronoun inside the clause that follows.

- (7) {**Moi** / ***je**}, je vois Marie.
 1SG.STRONG 1SG.DEFICIENT I see Mary
 ‘Me, I see Mary.’

Suppose now that the distinction between strong and deficient pronouns exists also in English, and that *I* is a deficient pronoun. If that is so, we can explain the absence of pronouns such as *I* in left dislocation by reference to their deficient status (rather than their case), as indicated in (8).

- (8) Me / *I, I like beans.
 STRONG DEFICIENT

Following this line of thinking, my specific proposal for English 1.SG pronoun is shown in Table (9). In this table, the deficient-pronoun paradigm is given in the leftmost column of Table (9), and it corresponds to the traditional paradigm. The form *I* only occurs in the deficient paradigm, and that is why it cannot occur in strong-pronoun contexts, such as those in (3).⁴

(9) English 1st person pronoun

	1.SG.	1.SG.
	DEFICIENT	STRONG
NOM	I	me
ACC	me	me

(10) French 3rd person masculine

	DEFICIENT	STRONG
NOM	il	lui
ACC	le	lui
DAT	lui	lui

As for the strong paradigm in (9), I propose that it is entirely occupied by a case-invariant strong

⁴I shall further refine this approach in Section 5.

form *me*, which is syncretic with the weak ACC. The point is that if all the pronouns in (3) are strong (and Section 5.1 argues that they are), we can analyse them as strong NOM pronouns. Once this is adopted, English is in fact in line with all other languages, showing a default NOM.

It should be noted that while the paradigm (9) may be unusual when compared to the standard way of looking at English, it is not unusual from a comparative perspective. In fact, the paradigm shape in (9) is similar to that found in French for 3.SG masculine, see (10) (Heap et al. 2017:191). This pronoun too has a case-invariant strong form syncretic with one of the deficient pronouns.

Let me now make explicit two consequences of the paradigm (9), which analyses *me* as a case-invariant strong pronoun (syncretic with the weak ACC). First, as already mentioned, since the form *me* occupies the NOM cell of the strong paradigm, it is possible to analyse the default-case shape *me* as NOM even in English, namely as the NOM of a strong pronoun.

The second consequence of the analysis in (9) is linked to the ambiguity (syncretism) of the form *me*. Namely, if *me* represents both the NOM and ACC of a strong pronoun, it cannot be determined by looking at the pronoun alone which constructions in (3) require the default case, and which constructions show a strong pronoun in the appropriate (non-default) case.

As an illustration, consider fragment answers. The starting point is again the observation that crosslinguistically, only strong pronouns can be used in this construction (Kayne 1975, Cardinaletti and Starke 1999, Van Riemsdijk 1999, Quinn 2005). The example (11) illustrates this for French.

- (11) Qui viendra avec nous? — **Moi.** / ***Je=**
who come-FUT.3SG with us I.STRONG I.DEFICIENT
'Who will come with us? – Me.' (Heap et al. 2017:184)

Taking this into consideration, and adopting the paradigm (9), it becomes unnecessary to analyse English fragment answers as featuring a default case. Rather, *me* in subject fragments such as (12-a) can be treated as the realisation of a regular NOM-marked strong pronoun (i.e., not caseless DEF). Similarly, *me* in (12-b) can be analysed as a regular ACC of a strong pronoun.⁵

⁵We can, of course, also analyse the forms as a default. Given the proposed ambiguity of *me*, we cannot decide this based on the form alone, which is precisely the point I am making.

Generalising, under the analysis in the paradigm (9), the apparent gap between pronominal default-ACC languages and nominative-default languages disappears. First of all, we unify the value of the default (always NOM, albeit the NOM of a strong pronoun). Secondly, we also unify the two language types in terms of the distribution of the default: left-dislocation yes, other constructions no. Finally, we also explain why languages with apparent accusative defaults only exist among languages with case restricted to pronouns. This is because for full DPs, the strong \sim weak distinction does not exist (full DPs are always strong), so full DPs never exhibit default ACC.

The paper is organised as follows. Sections 2 and 3 deal with the morphology of caseless DPs. Section 2 shows why out of all cases, the default can only be syncretic with NOM. Section 3 discusses how we can model syncretism between deficient and strong pronouns. The section compares Danish (a pronominal default-ACC language) to Oslo Norwegian (a NOM-default language), providing explicit lexical entries for pronouns that correctly capture their distribution in the two distinct language types. Section 4 investigates Italian and argues that Italian has a default NOM. Section 5 turns to English, and further refines the strong/deficient distinction. Section 6 concludes.

2. The default theory and case decomposition

The default theory of default case is based on the idea that caseless DPs are simply spelled out using the independently existing vocabulary of the language, without introducing any special rules. My main goal is to see what restrictions, if any, follow from this approach. This section shows that the predictions of the default theory are crucially linked to the representation of case in grammar.

Section 2.1 shows that if case values are considered primitive, non-decomposable entities like [NOM] or [ACC], the default theory encounters two issues. First, it overgenerates in the sense that it makes no predictions concerning the range of possible values for default case; i.e., it can generate systems of all kinds. This is problematic, because empirically, the range of default case values is restricted (default genitives, datives or instrumentals have not been reported). Second, as pointed out by Schütze (1997:51-2), the default theory with non-decomposed case values also undergenerates in that it cannot correctly model specific paradigms.

Section 2.2 therefore introduces the cumulative case decomposition (Caha 2009, 2013). When cumulative decomposition is adopted, both issues are resolved.

2.1 Two issues for the default theory

I begin by demonstrating that a theory with non-decomposed cases allows for any case to be the default. To have a concrete case to work with, let me return to left-dislocation in English, see (15).

(15) **Me**, I like beans.

Schütze (2001) argues that *me* in these constructions is the default-case form of the pronoun, an analysis which I adopt here as well. Assuming non-decomposable case values, a default theory can model the facts as in (16). Here, *me* happens to be lexically specified for person and number only, but underspecified for case features, see (16-a).⁷

(16) Lexical entries (*me* unspecified for case)

- a. *me* ⇔ [1.SG]
- b. *I* ⇔ [1.SG.NOM]

Assuming the Subset Principle of Distributed Morphology, the lack of case specification in (16-a) makes *me* compatible with all 1.SG environments, regardless of case. This correctly entails that *me* can appear in the ACC and in default (i.e., caseless) environments. However, the rule also allows *me* to be the realisation of NOM. The reason why *me* does not actually surface in NOM is because *I* is specified for it, see (16-b). *I* and *me* therefore compete for insertion in the NOM environment, and *I* wins because it is a better match. *Me* therefore only appears in the ACC and in caseless environments, since it has no competitor there.

Let me now turn to the question what restrictions (if any) this approach imposes on the range of available defaults. This is relevant because the literature only found default NOM and to some

⁷The rules in (16) go back at least to the analysis proposed in Emonds (1985:239), who proposes that “in the lexicon, pronouns without case features are listed as *me*, *him*, etc., while *I*, *he*, *she*, *we*, and they are listed as [PRON, SP(V)].” The feature SP(V) is similar to the NOM feature in (16).

extent ACC, but no other case (like genitive or dative); recall Footnote 1. Ideally, this state of affairs should somehow follow from the theory (see McFadden 2007 for the same desideratum).

It turns out that this is impossible to achieve as long as cases are considered non-divisible primes such as NOM, ACC, etc. To show this, let me turn to the invented paradigm in (17).

(17)	<u>Pseudo-English</u>								
		3.SG							
	NOM	he							
	ACC	him							
	GEN	his							
	DAT	hin							

(18) Lexical entries (*hin* underspecified)

- a. *he* ⇔ [3.SG.NOM]
- b. *him* ⇔ [3.SG.ACC]
- c. *his* ⇔ [3.SG.GEN]
- d. *hin* ⇔ [3.SG]

Suppose now that in syntax, each case corresponds to a non-decomposable feature like [NOM] or [ACC]. In this setting, the rules that generate the paradigm (17) can look as in (18). Each rule in (18-a-c) perfectly matches a particular case. The rule inserting *hin* in (18-d) is not specified for case. In this setting, *hin* can in principle appear in any case, but it loses in competition to other lexical items in all other cases but the dative. What is most interesting to us is that the form *hin* would also realise a caseless 3.SG form, leading to a system with a default dative.

Of course, it is not necessary to set up the rules like this; the nominative could be easily modelled as the default, if the form *he* was unspecified for case, while the other forms fully specified, as in (19). Such a system would lead to a nominative default.

(19) Lexical entries (*he* unspecified for case)

- a. *he* ⇔ [3.SG.] c. *his* ⇔ [3.SG.GEN]
- b. *him* ⇔ [3.SG.ACC] d. *hin* ⇔ [3.SG.DAT]

In fact, any of the forms in the invented paradigm (17) could be inserted by a rule that is not specified for case (with the other rules fully specified). And this is precisely the point: if any of the rules can be construed as unspecified for case, any case can be the default, which in turn leads to a

rather unconstrained theory of default case.

Another issue for an approach with non-decomposable case values arises in paradigms with certain types of syncretism. To see that, consider the following paradigm from German, discussed from the perspective of default case in Schütze (1997:51-2); see also Schütze (2001:221).

(20)	German		(21) Lexical entries for (20)												
	<table style="border-collapse: collapse; width: 100%; border-top: 1px solid black; border-bottom: 1px solid black;"> <tr> <td style="width: 15%;"></td> <td style="width: 35%; text-align: center; padding: 2px 5px;">3.SG.FEM</td> <td style="width: 50%; text-align: center; padding: 2px 5px;">1.PL</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">NOM</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">sie</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">wir</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">ACC</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">sie</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">uns</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">DAT</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">ihr</td> <td style="padding: 2px 5px;">uns</td> </tr> </table>		3.SG.FEM	1.PL	NOM	sie	wir	ACC	sie	uns	DAT	ihr	uns		a. <i>ihr</i> ⇔ [3.SG.FEM.DAT] b. <i>sie</i> ⇔ [3.SG.FEM] c. <i>wir</i> ⇔ [1.PL.NOM] d. <i>uns</i> ⇔ [1.PL]
	3.SG.FEM	1.PL													
NOM	sie	wir													
ACC	sie	uns													
DAT	ihr	uns													

Recalling that the default case in German is the nominative, the 3.SG.FEM paradigm is unproblematic. To model the three paradigm cells in (20), we specify *ihr* as [DAT], and *sie* is underspecified, see (21-a-b). This automatically leads to the consequence that *sie* is also the default, inserted as the best candidate in environments where case features are absent.

However, adopting a theory with non-decomposable case values, the 1.PL pronoun brings some issues. In order to model the fact that the form *uns* is found in both ACC and DAT, the form must be underspecified for case, as in (21-d). But if *uns* is underspecified, then to model (20), we must specify *wir* as NOM, see (21-c). However, this wrongly predicts that *uns* would be the default case (appearing in the absence of case features), which is not the case.⁸

To conclude, a default approach to default case does not fare well if non-decomposable case values are assumed. First, it fails to provide any restrictions on the range of possible defaults. Second, it fails to account for paradigms where a syncretic (elsewhere) form is not the default. The next section shows that this is not an inherent property of the default theory. Rather, it is the property of the specific case representations (non-decomposable case values) used in the reasoning.

⁸Schütze (1997:52) proposes that one way to solve this problem would be to postulate a special Feature-Filling rule in German, which applies before insertion, and supplies the NOM feature to all DPs that exit syntax caseless. This works, but goes beyond the default theory. Moreover, the format of such rules places no principled restriction on which features can (or cannot) be inserted. I therefore refrain from invoking Feature-Filling.

2.2 *Cumulative decomposition*

This section introduces the cumulative decomposition (Caha 2009, 2013). It argues that if the decomposition is adopted, then the German facts can be easily modelled within the default theory. At the same time, the decomposition is also restrictive, and it rules out default genitives, datives and instrumentals, predicting that out of all the cases, only the nominative can be the default.

The cumulative decomposition has been proposed to capture a *ABA constraint on case syncretism. *ABA is a term devised by Bobaljik (2012), conveying the impossibility (hence the asterisk) of a particular pattern of syncretism, where the first and last term of a particular sequence are identical, while the middle term is different. For case paradigms, it has been established that there is a *ABA constraint on syncretism in the sequence NOM–ACC–OBL (Baerman et al. 2005:56, among others). The statement in (22) expresses this constraint:

- (22) *A *ABA constraint on syncretism in case: If one of the two core cases (NOM, ACC) is syncretic with an oblique case, it is the marked core case (ACC).*⁹

Table (23) illustrates which patterns of syncretisms are allowed and which are not allowed under the constraint in (22). In the table, each row represents a particular pattern of syncretism, where identical letters indicate the identity of form. The first three rows present patterns consistent with (22), the last row is incompatible with it. I use OBL as a placeholder for the relevant oblique case.

(23)	<u>Patterns of syncretism</u>		(24) Cumulative Case Decomposition			
	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 0 10px;">NOM</td> <td style="padding: 0 10px;">ACC</td> <td style="padding: 0 10px;">OBL</td> </tr> </table>	NOM	ACC	OBL		a. NOM = [K1]
NOM	ACC	OBL				
allowed	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px 10px; background-color: #e0e0e0;">A</td> <td style="padding: 5px 10px; background-color: #e0e0e0;">A</td> <td style="padding: 5px 10px;">B</td> </tr> </table>	A	A	B		b. ACC = [K1 K2]
A	A	B				
allowed	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px 10px;">A</td> <td style="padding: 5px 10px; background-color: #e0e0e0;">B</td> <td style="padding: 5px 10px; background-color: #e0e0e0;">B</td> </tr> </table>	A	B	B		c. OBL = [K1 K2 K3]
A	B	B				
allowed	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px 10px; background-color: #e0e0e0;">A</td> <td style="padding: 5px 10px; background-color: #e0e0e0;">A</td> <td style="padding: 5px 10px; background-color: #e0e0e0;">A</td> </tr> </table>	A	A	A		
A	A	A				
not allowed	<table style="margin: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="padding: 5px 10px; background-color: #e0e0e0;">A</td> <td style="padding: 5px 10px;">B</td> <td style="padding: 5px 10px; background-color: #e0e0e0;">A</td> </tr> </table>	A	B	A		
A	B	A				

⁹In ergative-absolutive languages, the core cases are ABS, ERG, with ABS the unmarked core case (Bobaljik 2008).

The current literature on *ABA in case agrees that the generalisation (22) puts some constraints on the decomposition of cases into features.¹⁰ Caha (2013:1027-9) shows that if cases decompose into binary features like [+/- oblique], any two cases can be syncretic. The same carries over to the model with non-decomposed case values discussed in Section 2.1.

To be able to derive the constraint (22), the literature cited in Footnote 10 relies on a type of decomposition where case features are privative, and their number monotonically grows as we go left-to-right in the *ABA sequence NOM–ACC–OBL. This is shown in (24), where the nominative has just one case feature, and the number of features grows as we move to the accusative and to the oblique cases. Caha (2009) calls this cumulative decomposition.¹¹

The cumulative decomposition (24) derives the *ABA constraint because the decomposition makes it impossible to write realisation rules that would generate an ABA paradigm. To see that, let us indeed try to write the rules needed to generate the ABA paradigm in (25).

<p>(25) <u>An ABA paradigm</u></p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 10%;"></th> <th style="width: 40%; text-align: center; border-bottom: 1px solid black;">FEATURES</th> <th style="width: 50%; text-align: center; border-bottom: 1px solid black;">FORM</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: left;">NOM</td> <td style="text-align: center;">[K1]</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>ey</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: left;">ACC</td> <td style="text-align: center;">[K1 K2]</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>bee</i></td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: left;">OBL</td> <td style="text-align: center;">[K1 K2 K3]</td> <td style="text-align: center;"><i>ey</i></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		FEATURES	FORM	NOM	[K1]	<i>ey</i>	ACC	[K1 K2]	<i>bee</i>	OBL	[K1 K2 K3]	<i>ey</i>	<p>(26) Trying to derive ABA</p> <p>a. $bee \Leftrightarrow \phi + K1, K2$</p> <p>b. $ey \Leftrightarrow \phi + K1, K2, K3$</p>
	FEATURES	FORM											
NOM	[K1]	<i>ey</i>											
ACC	[K1 K2]	<i>bee</i>											
OBL	[K1 K2 K3]	<i>ey</i>											

In (25), *ey* occupies multiple cells, while *bee* is fixed to the accusative. This means that *ey* needs to be underspecified, and we need to specify *bee* for the features of the accusative, i.e., K1 and K2; see (26-a). Any other specification for *bee* is out of question, given the paradigm (25).

Before we start discussing *ey*, note that if there were no other entries than (26-a), *bee* would be expected to appear in the OBL cell. This expectation arises due to The Subset Principle: since *bee* is specified for a subset of the features of OBL, it is a candidate for insertion in OBL. To prevent

¹⁰The relevant literature includes McCreight & Chvany (1991), Johnson (1997), Caha (2009, 2013), Harðarsson (2016), Starke (2017), McFadden (2018), Bergsma (2019), Smith et al. (2019), Zoppi (2019), Davis (2021).

¹¹Caha (2009, 2013) proposes that each such feature is an independent syntactic head, but this assumption is not shared across different approaches (see, e.g., Smith et al. 2019). Nothing in this paper hinges on this, and I therefore abstract away from such differences and depict the gist of the consensual proposal.

it from appearing in OBL in the paradigm (25), we need to write a lexical entry for *ey* such that it blocks *bee* from surfacing in OBL. The only way this can be achieved is as shown in (26-b).

However, this forced specification makes it impossible for *ey* to appear in NOM. The two lexical entries in (26-a,b) therefore fail to generate the paradigm (25).

It is impossible to modify any of the entries in (26) in a way that the paradigm (25) is generated. To begin with, changing *bee* is a non-starter. Similarly, we could posit the following entry so that *ey* is able to realise NOM:

(27) ey (version 2) $\Leftrightarrow \phi + K1$

This rule is applicable in all cases and it therefore correctly inserts *ey* in NOM. In ACC, the rule (27) loses with the rule inserting *bee* (see (26-a)), which is a better match. However, the rule (27) also loses to *bee* in OBL. Therefore, the combination of the rules (26-a) and (27) generates and ABB pattern. In sum, when cumulative decomposition is adopted, there is no way to set up lexical entries in a way that an ABA pattern is generated.^{12,13}

Let me now show that when the cumulative decomposition is combined with the default theory of default case, the theory rules out default genitives, datives and instrumentals. In fact, out of all the various cases, it only allows that the NOM can be the default.¹⁴ To show that, let me add the DEF(AULT) case as a special row in the paradigm, see (28). Following the definition of DEF in (1), the case is added as a form with no case features in the first row of Table (28).

(28) Placing the DEFAULT case in the case paradigm

¹²One could of course keep both rules for *ey* and generate an *ey*₁-*bee*-*ey*₂ pattern that way. However, at the level of lexical items, this is an ABC pattern (we have three different rules). I assume that accidental homophony of this sort is counteracted by a learner's bias, such that when a learner postulates a lexical entry for *ey* based on prior experience, and then encounters another instance of *ey* in the input, the default strategy is not to list each new occurrence as a new lexical item, but try to subsume it under an existing entry.

¹³Let me point out at this point that in the current literature, the two most prominent frameworks dealing with *ABA use conflicting insertion principles. Distributed Morphology uses the Subset Principle to derive *ABA patterns (Bobaljik 2012) while Nanosyntax uses the Superset Principle (Caha 2009). The logic of both approaches is very similar, and they both successfully derive the constraint. Since DM is widely known, I use the Subset Principle to illustrate the reasoning. I introduce the Superset Principle in Section 3 to deal with cross-paradigm syncretism.

¹⁴Recall that apparent default accusatives will be handled later on.

	FEATURES	AAB...	ABA...	AB...A
DEF	ϕ	α	α	α
NOM	K1 ϕ	α	β	β
ACC	K2 K1 ϕ	β	α	...
OBL	K3 K2 K1 ϕ	α

Once the default case is added, it is easy to see that it becomes a part of the cumulative decomposition. This is because the bare ϕ of the default is incrementally augmented by one feature at a time as we go down the paradigm. Therefore, it is predicted that a *ABA constraint should hold over this paradigm, and the only case that can be syncretic with the default is therefore NOM (see the first column). Paradigms where the default is the same as the accusative or an oblique – across a distinct nominative – are ruled out because they represent the ABA pattern, which is underivable.

This is a good result because in most languages, the default is indeed NOM (see Footnote 1). However, this is the point where English (and other languages like that) become problematic. The logic of the cumulative decomposition makes it impossible to have one form in DEF and in ACC, across a distinct NOM because this is a *ABA violation. Therefore, the discussion of English and similar cases will preoccupy me in the remainder of this paper starting from Section 3.

The final point of this section is to demonstrate that the cumulative decomposition also allows us to generate the (originally problematic) German paradigm (20). I repeat the paradigm for convenience in (29), with the row for default added on top.

(29) German

	FEATURES	3.SG.FEM	1.PL
DEF	ϕ	sie	wir
NOM	K1 + ϕ	sie	wir
ACC	K2, K1 + ϕ	sie	uns
DAT	K3, K2, K1 + ϕ	ihr	uns

- (30) a. *uns* \Leftrightarrow [ϕ , K1, K2]
 b. *wir* \Leftrightarrow [ϕ]

Assuming the Subset Principle, the problematic paradigm of the 1.PL can now be captured as follows. *Uns*, even though it appears in multiple cases, does not need to be radically underspecified: due to the cumulative decomposition, the environments where it appears (ACC and DAT) share the features K1 and K2. This allows us to specify *uns* as in (30-a).

Wir is then stored without any case features, see (30-b). This specification makes *wir* applicable in any case, including the default. The surface paradigm is then derived by competition: *wir* appears in NOM and DEF, where it has no competitor. *Uns* is used in ACC, DAT, where it wins over *wir* because it is more specific. Generalising, decomposing case allows us to capture the fact that a form that has a wide distribution in the paradigm (*uns*) does not necessarily have to be the default. The reason why this is important is that the mismatch between an elsewhere form (*uns*) and a default form (*wir*) led Schütze (1997:52) to argue against the idea that the default theory is all that is needed to explain the form of the default. However, this only holds if cases are not decomposed. Adopting the cumulative decomposition allows us to maintain the default theory even in this case.

2.3 *Conclusions*

This section combined the idea that the default case is the absence of case features in syntax (Schütze 2001) with the cumulative case decomposition (Caha 2009). Relying on a default approach, the theory predicts that out of all cases, the default case can only be identical to NOM/ABS.

In most languages, this prediction is borne out, and we now have a principled explanation for why that should be so. However, we have to say something languages, where the default appears to be the accusative. The discussion of such languages occupies the three following sections.

3. **Lexical Items as the source of cross-linguistic variation**

This section shows how the current system encodes the difference between nominative-default languages like German and pronominal default-ACC languages like English. The section demonstrates that the difference boils down to a simple lexical difference in the specification of the subject pronoun (*I* is different from *ich*). On this approach, the apparent parametric difference in the choice of a default reduces to a simple lexical difference (the Borer-Chomsky conjecture).

I illustrate the working of the theory on two closely related languages, namely Danish and (Oslo) Norwegian. Section 3.1 discusses Danish, given by Schütze as a representative of a language with an accusative default, and provides the specific lexical entries needed to generate such system. Section 3.2 turns to Oslo Norwegian as a representative of a nominative-default language.

3.1 Danish as a pronominal-default language

This section provides the lexical items needed to generate the correct distribution of pronouns in pronominal default-ACC languages. The target paradigm is in (31). The important thing about (31) is that the DEF form β is a part of a licit AAA paradigm, namely that of a strong pronoun.

(31) The abstract paradigm of pronominal default-ACC languages

		DEFICIENT	STRONG
DEF	ϕ	—	β
NOM	K1 ϕ	α	β
ACC	K2 K1 ϕ	β	β

The deficient DEFAULT cell is empty, reflecting my claim that all default environments are strong environments. The weak default (whichever form that would be) therefore never surfaces.

To have a concrete example to work with, the section introduces Danish as an example of a pronominal default-ACC language (see Ørsnes 2002, Parrott 2009, 2021, Jensen 2019). In presenting the facts, I assume that pronominal default-ACC languages have the same distribution of NOM, ACC and DEF case as vanilla-flavour languages like German, and that the only special thing about them is their paradigm shape as given in (31). The point of the discussion is to make it clear how such an analysis works both on the syntax side and on the side of morphological realisation.

I start from the fact that in some sentence types, Danish distinguishes deficient/weak object pronouns from strong ones by their placement (see Vikner 2005 for an overview). Weak object pronouns undergo the so-called object shift, and they are obligatorily found to the left of negation, see (32-a). Strong (contrastive) objects are found after negation, see (32-b). Note that the mor-

phological shape of the object pronoun remains constant across the two environments, suggesting a syncretism of these two cells, see the bottom row in (31).

(32) Danish weak object shift (Andréasson 2008:28-9)

- a. Agnes søgte efter David, men hun så **ham** ikke.
Agnes look-PST after David but she see-PST him not
'Agnes was looking for David, but she didn't see him.'
- b. David så Agnes, men hun så ikke **ham**.
David see-PST Agnes, but she see-PST not him
'David saw Agnes, but she didn't see him.'

It is relevant to note that object shift is impossible with modified or coordinated pronouns in Danish, see (33-a,b) respectively.

(33) Danish coordinated or modified pronouns do not shift (Engels & Vikner 2014:17)

- a. Hvorfor læste Petter {***den her**} aldrig {**den her**}
Why read Petter this here never this here
'Why did Petter never read this here?'
- b. Han så {***dig og hende**} ikke {**dig og hende**} samman.
he saw you and her not you and her together.
'He never saw you and her together.'

This gives us reasons to think that coordinated and modified pronouns are strong in Danish just like in French, recall (13-b) and (13-c).

Let me now turn to subject pronouns. Based on the abstract paradigm shape (31), we expect a distinction between weak subjects and strong subjects, with the latter homophonous to the object pronoun. (34-a) shows a subject coordination. Since coordinations generally require strong pronouns (recall (13-b)), I analyse the form that we see here (*dig*) as a strong NOM. As expected (based on (31)), this is the same form as with strong objects; recall *dig* in (33-b). The weak subject form is *du* 'you,' see (34-b).¹⁵

¹⁵In formal registers, (34-a) also allows *du* 'you.' For now, I focus on the forms that are problematic for the idea of a default NOM, and I turn to register variation in Section 5.

(34) Danish strong vs. weak NOM (Hansen & Heltoft 2011:439-40)

- a. **dig** **og** **Bente** bør absolut også deltage
 you.ACC and Bente should absolutely also participate
 ‘You and Bente should definitely also participate.’
- b. vil **du** ikke have en kop kaffe?
 will you not have a cup coffee
 ‘Won’t you have a cup of coffee?’

Let me now move to modified pronouns. Recall from (33-a) that modified pronouns pattern with strong pronouns in Danish in not allowing object shift. I therefore analyse the modified subject pronoun in (35-a) as a strong NOM pronoun (recall also (13-c)). The form found here is the same as the object form (*dem* ‘them’), but different from the weak subject form, which is shown in (35-b).¹⁶

(35) Danish strong vs. weak NOM

- a. **dem her** ser da meget bedre ud
 them here look PARTICLE a lot better out
 ‘These here look much better, don’t they?’ (Ørsnes 2002:337)
- b. **de** er sjaskvåde, mine sko
 they are wet my shoes
 ‘My shoes, they are wet.’ (Hansen & Heltoft 2011:439)

Continuing with strong subjects, recall from Section 1 that Merchant (2005) noted a strong tendency for languages to use DPs with matching case in fragment answers. In conformity with this universal, I am led to analyse also the form *mig* in (36) as a NOM form, albeit the NOM of a strong pronoun (recall from (11) that this is a strong-pronoun environment crosslinguistically).

(36) Hvem vil have is? – **Mig** / *Jeg
 Who wants have ice.cream me I
 ‘Who wants to have ice cream? – Me.’

Once again, the point is that the form we find here (*mig*) is identical to the form of the direct object

¹⁶Again, (35-a) allows also *de*. Variation is treated in Section 5.

in conformity with (31).¹⁷

As a final example of a strong nominative, consider the case of non-locally extracted subjects, discussed in Ørsnes (2002). The example in (37-a) serves as a base-line example, showing a nominative (weak) subject *han* in the embedded clause. Some speakers allow for such subjects to be extracted and placed on the left periphery. In such examples, the subject must have the form *ham* (identical to the direct object); *han* is impossible, see (37-b). (*e* indicates the original position of the subject, the verb *tror* ‘think’ moves across the matrix subject *Peter* due to the V2 requirement.)

- (37) a. Peter tror [**han** vinder]
 Peter thinks he wins
 ‘Peter thinks he is going to win.’
- b. { **ham** / ***han** } tror Peter [*e* vinder]
 him he thinks Peter wins
 ‘he is the one of whom Peter believes that he is going to win’

Ørsnes (2002:338) argues that (37-b) is not a default-case environment because the extracted subject moves from a case position, designated by *e* in (37-b). The difficulty of analysing (37-b) as a default case leads me to suggest that it is a strong NOM form, identical to the direct-object form.¹⁸

Let me now move to the default. Recall from Section 1 example (2) that hanging-topic left dislocation requires DEF in German. In Danish (just like in English), we find here a form identical to the strong/weak object form. (38) provides some relevant examples.

- (38) Danish
- a. Men **mig**, jeg dyrker en anden sport.
 but me, I practice an other sport
 ‘But me, I practice a different sport.’

¹⁷My informant tells me that fragments such as (34-a) feel impolite. The example is thus judged in the context of a group of children answering the relevant question. For analogous examples, see Parrott (2021:138).

¹⁸Ørsnes (2002:336-8) considers the analysis entertained here, according to which *ham* is a strong (contrastive) subject pronoun. He rejects such an analysis on the basis of the fact that in strong-subject positions, there is usually variation (correlating with register differences); but this is not the case here. Given the absence of variation, Ørsnes rejects the strong-subject analysis for (37-b). This is, however, not an issue if such subject extractions are only allowed in the informal register, a point I shall return to in Section 5.3. Additional important facts are also discussed in Section 5.2, Footnote 26.

- b. **dig**, du kan gå din vej
 you.ACC, you.NOM can go your way
 ‘As for you, you can go your own way.’ (Ørsnes 2002:335)
- c. **ham**, han er en skat
 him, he is a treasure
 ‘Him, he is a treasure.’ (Jensen 2019:77)

This completes the overview of the different functions of the pronominal forms such as *mig* ‘me,’ *dig* ‘you’ or *ham* ‘him’ in Danish. In addition to being used as weak object pronouns (32-a), they can also be used as strong object pronouns ((32-b), (33)), as strong nominative pronouns ((34-a), (35-a), (36), (37-b)) and strong default pronouns (38). On the basis of these facts, I propose the following paradigm, where one and the same form occupies all the relevant cells.

(39) Danish 1st person pronouns (strong and weak)

		[Ø]	[STR]
DEF	ϕ	—	<i>mig</i>
NOM	K1 ϕ	<i>jeg</i>	<i>mig</i>
ACC	K2 K1 ϕ	<i>mig</i>	<i>mig</i>

In order to generate the paradigm (39), I adopt two proposals from the existing literature. First, it is necessary to encode the distinction between strong and deficient pronouns in terms of morphosyntax. In the literature, there are two options, both of which boil down to the idea that strong pronouns have more features than deficient pronouns. Cardinaletti (1994) proposes that weak pronouns lack the lowest projection of the extended NP, i.e., the NP itself and realise only higher functional projections. On the other hand, Cardinaletti and Starke (1999) propose that weak pronouns lack a high functional projection, C_N . Both of these options contain the same idea: that strong pronouns have an extra feature compared to the weak form. Adopting this idea, the feature STR is placed in the strong column in (39). Deficient pronouns lack this feature, indicated by [Ø].

The second assumption I make is that lexical insertion is governed by the so-called Superset

Principle, see (40).

(40) The Superset Principle (Vanden Wyngaerd 2018:289)¹⁹

A lexical entry L may spell out a syntactic node SN iff the features of L are a superset of the features dominated by SN.

The Superset Principle is for most intents and purposes largely equivalent to the Subset Principle. The reason why I adopt the Superset Principle is that the paradigm in (39) has one particular property, which is impossible to model by the Subset Principle. The property is that a special form (*jeg*) is found in an environment with the smallest number of features. I shall not discuss this issue for reasons of space, but see Christopoulos & Zompì (2022).

With the two assumptions in place, let me turn to the question what lexical entries are needed to generate Paradigm (39). Consider first the lexical entry for *mig*. The Superset Principle says that if an item like *mig* is to be inserted in a cell (corresponding to a node in the tree), its entry must contain all the features of the given cell. The cell in (39) with the most features is the strong ACC form. Since *mig* appears here, it must be specified for all the features of that cell, see (41-a).

(41) The rules for Danish 1.SG pronouns

a. *mig* ⇔ [K2, K1, ϕ, STR]

b. *jeg* ⇔ [K1, ϕ]

(42) Rule competition

		[∅]	[STR]
DEF	ϕ	—	<i>mig</i>
NOM	K1 ϕ	<i>jeg / mig</i>	<i>mig</i>
ACC	K2 K1 ϕ	<i>mig</i>	<i>mig</i>

This specification makes *mig* a candidate in every cell of Paradigm (42), since it contains the features defining each cell. The reason why it does not appear in the weak NOM is because of the competing entry in (41-b). This entry does not spell out the STR feature, and it therefore cannot

¹⁹The Superset Principle has been first proposed by Starke (2009). However, his statement relies on the idea that each feature is a syntactic head. I adopt here a slightly different formulation, due to Vanden Wyngaerd (2018), which preserves the core intuition, but allows one to abstract away from the specific structure of the features.

appear in any of the strong-pronoun cells. Similarly, it fails to spell out K2, and it therefore cannot appear in the weak ACC. However, we do find *jeg* in the weak NOM, where it is a perfect match, and it is therefore a candidate for insertion. Since it is a better match than *mig*, it wins in competition.²⁰

3.2 Oslo Norwegian

This section shows how the approach sketched above handles languages with NOM defaults. As an example of such a system, I discuss Oslo Norwegian. Table (43) compares Oslo Norwegian (on the right) with the Danish system on the left (as established in Section 3.1). We can see that Oslo Norwegian differs in that its strong NOM form is identical to the weak NOM, rather than to the strong ACC. Predictably, in such a language, the default copies the shape of the strong NOM. (It cannot copy the strong ACC, as this would be a *ABA violation.)

(43) Oslo Norwegian 1st person pronouns (strong and weak)

		DANISH		OSLO NORWEGIAN	
		1.SG	1.SG.STR	1.SG	1.SG.STR
DEF	ϕ	—	<i>mig</i>	—	<i>jeg</i>
NOM	K1 ϕ	<i>jeg</i>	<i>mig</i>	<i>jeg</i>	<i>jeg</i>
ACC	K2 K1 ϕ	<i>mig</i>	<i>mig</i>	<i>meg</i>	<i>meg</i>

Let me start by establishing the paradigm. I start from the fact that object shift in Oslo Norwegian also distinguishes strong and weak object pronouns, despite their identity in shape. Namely, weak non-contrastive pronouns precede the negation, while contrastive pronouns follow it.

(44) Norwegian weak object shift

- a. Gigi lettet etter Tarald, men hun så **ham** ikke.
 Gigi look-PST after Tarald but she see-PST him not
 ‘Gigi was looking for Tarald, but she didn’t see him.’

²⁰If the weak default cell existed, we would expect *jeg* to be the weak default. The reason is that the weak default only corresponds to the bare ϕ -feature set. Any of the forms in (42) can spell it out, but *jeg* wins in competition.

- b. Tarald så Gigi, men hun så ikke **ham**.
Tarald see-PST Gigi, but she see-PST not him
'Tarald saw Gigi, but she didn't see him.'

Like in Danish, object shift becomes impossible with modified or coordinated pronouns, see (45-a,b) respectively.

(45) Oslo Norwegian

- a. Hvorfor leste Petter {***den her**} aldri {**den her**}
Why read Petter this here never this here
'Why did Petter never read this here?'
- b. Han så {***deg og henne**} ikke {**deg og henne**} sammen
he saw you and her not you and her together.
'He never saw you and her together.'

However, when modified pronouns are in the subject position (46-a), they cannot look like object pronouns. The object form *ham* 'him' (seen in (44)) is ungrammatical in (46-a). Instead, one has to use *han* 'he,' which is the same as the regular subject pronoun, see (46-b).

(46) Oslo Norwegian

- a. **han** / ***ham** som snakker så mye kom først til festen
he.NOM he.ACC who talks so much came first to the.party
'Him who talks a lot arrived to the party first.'
- b. **han** kom først til festen
he.NOM came first to the.party
'He arrived to the party first.'

This contrast between Danish and Oslo Norwegian is captured in the paradigm (43) by placing into the strong NOM cell a form different from the strong ACC, but identical to the weak NOM.

The same contrast emerges for pronouns in coordination. (47-a) shows that the object form *deg* 'you' is impossible in subject coordination in Oslo Norwegian (which is different from Danish, recall (34-a)). Instead, we see a form identical to the weak subject pronoun (shown in (47-b)).

(47) Oslo Norwegian

- a. **Du** / ***deg** **og Gigi** bør absolutt også delta
 you.NOM you.ACC and Gigi should absolutely also participate
 ‘You and Gigi should definitely also participate.’
- b. **Du** bør absolutt også delta
 you.NOM should absolutely also participate
 ‘You should definitely also participate.’

Predictably, these differences between Oslo Norwegian and Danish also show up in fragment answers. While Danish uses a pronoun identical to the object form in subject fragments (recall (36)), Oslo Norwegian has a different pronoun, namely *jeg* ‘I,’ identical to the weak NOM, see (48-a).

(48) Oslo Norwegian

- a. Hvem vil ha is? – **Jeg** / ***Meg**
 Who wants have ice.cream I me
 ‘Who wants to have ice cream? – Me.’
- b. Hvem bet Gigi? – **Meg** / ***Jeg**
 Who bit Gigi I me
 ‘Who did Gigi bite? – Me.’

(48-b) shows that the NOM in (48-a) is not a default, but a form that faithfully reflects the case assigned in a fully sentential counterpart, see the accusative in (48-b).²¹

Another contrast between Danish and Norwegian arises in the case of non-locally extracted subjects (Taraldsen 1981). The example in (49-a) serves as a base-line, showing a (weak) NOM subject *han* in the embedded clause. When extracted, the subject keeps the form *han*, see (49-b). This contrast with the Danish (37-b), which requires *ham*.

(49) Oslo Norwegian (based on Taraldsen 1981:379)

- a. De hadde trodd **han** ville komme for sent
 they had though he would arrive too late

²¹The question in (48-b) is ambiguous between a subject question and an object question. The judgement pertains to the object-question reading.

- b. { **han** / ***ham** } hadde de trodd *e* ville komme for sent
 he him had they though would arrive too late
 ‘It was him who they though would come too late.’

Recall now from Section 1 that hanging-topic left dislocation is the only construction that requires DEF case in German. In Oslo Norwegian, we find the same form as weak subjects have (again contrasting with Danish (38)). (50) provides two relevant examples.

(50) Oslo Norwegian

- a. **Jeg** / ***meg**, **jeg** vet det ikke
 I me, I know it not
 ‘Me, I don’t know that.’
- b. **Han** / ***ham**, **han** er jo en verre slyngel
 He him he is though a worse scoundrel
 ‘Him, he is a worse scoundrel, though.’

This completes the overview of pronoun forms in Oslo Norwegian. In this dialect, we find one form used as a weak object pronoun (44-a), and a strong object pronoun ((44-b), (45), (48-b)). Differently from Danish, strong subject pronouns ((46-a), (47-a), (48-a), (49-b)) are identical to weak subject pronouns. As a result, the default form (50) cannot be identical to the strong accusative, since that would be a *ABA violation. Instead, the default form is predictably the same as the strong nominative form, see (51), repeated from (43).

(51) Norwegian 1st person pronouns (strong and weak)

		DANISH		OSLO NORWEGIAN	
		1.SG	1.SG.STR	1.SG	1.SG.STR
DEF	ϕ	—	<i>mig</i>	—	<i>jeg</i>
NOM	K1 ϕ	<i>jeg</i>	<i>mig</i>	<i>jeg</i>	<i>jeg</i>
ACC	K2 K1 ϕ	<i>mig</i>	<i>mig</i>	<i>meg</i>	<i>meg</i>

The lexical items that generate the Oslo Norwegian paradigm are in (52). *Meg* is specified for all

the relevant features, i.e., as a strong ACC. This makes it a candidate for insertion in all the cells.

(52) The rules for Oslo Norwegian pronouns

- a. *meg* \Leftrightarrow [K2, K1, ϕ , STR]
- b. *jeg* \Leftrightarrow [K1, ϕ , STR]

The difference between Oslo Norwegian and Danish is only in the specification of *jeg*, see (52-b). While in Danish, the relevant item lacks the STR feature (recall (41-b)), the Oslo Norwegian form *jeg* has it. As a result, it matches the strong NOM cell of the paradigm and, as a consequence of Elsewhere, it wins over *meg* both there and in the cell corresponding to the strong default.

What emerges from the comparison of the two systems is that the ‘parameter’ distinguishing languages with default nominative from languages with default ‘accusative’ boils down to a rather simple difference in the makeup of post-syntactic lexical entries. This type of explanation for morphosyntactic differences has been known as the Borer-Chomsky conjecture (Borer 1984, Baker 2008), and it constitutes one of the desiderata of theoretical research up to this day.

3.3 Conclusions

To summarise, this section has introduced the strong \sim weak distinction into pronominal paradigms. I have adopted the proposal that strong pronouns have an extra feature (STR) and shown how different paradigm shapes arise. In this system, the differences between Danish and Oslo Norwegian can be reduced to a different specification of *jeg* in the post-syntactic lexicon. The grammar of case works the same across the two closely related languages.

Let me now discuss how this is different from a default-accusative account, like the one explored in Schütze (2001). As a starting point, consider the fact that all the constructions where Danish shows an unexpected ‘accusative’ have to be treated as default-case constructions, including fragment answers and coordinations. Now if Norwegian only differed in what default case it has, we would expect that Norwegian simply uses NOM in the very same constructions. If that was so, Norwegian would exhibit default NOM in all coordinations (including object coordinations), or

a default NOM in all fragment answers (including object fragments). However, this is not the case. Therefore, on this approach, it is not only the value of default that changes, but also the distribution of the default. This is different from the current approach, where the only difference is whether *jeg* is listed in the lexicon as a strong NOM (Norwegian) or weak NOM (Danish).

4. The default in Italian

This section turns to Italian, which has been identified in Schütze (2001) as another potential example of a language with a default ACC. However, as Schütze (2001) points out, Italian seems rather special, since it generally has a default NOM, except for the second person singular. This section introduces the relevant data and argues that it seems more advantageous to analyse Italian as having a NOM default throughout.²²

The first relevant fact is that the form of the 2.SG pronoun in coordination must be *te* (glossed by Weisser 2020 as ‘you.OBJ’, and it cannot be *tu* (glossed as you.SUBJ), see (53).

- (53) Io e **te** / ***tu** andremo insieme a Roma.
 I.SUBJ and you.OBJ you.SUBJ go.FUT.1.PL together to Rome
 ‘You and I will go to Rome together.’ (Weisser 2020:56)

In Section 3, I interpreted subject coordinations as a strong nominative environment. Following this idea mechanically, we could propose an analysis of (53) along the lines of (54):

- (54) Io e **te** / ***tu** ...
 I.NOM and you.NOM.STRONG you.NOM.WEAK

However, this analysis is wrong, for two reasons. First, it can be shown that *tu* is a strong nominative pronoun, not a weak one. To see that, consider the fragment answer in (55-a). Second, it can be shown that *te* is not strong NOM, but a strong ACC, see (55-b).

²²Despite proposing a unified NOM default for Italian, the system proposed in Section 3 does (in principle) allow for a ‘mixed’ language where one pronoun shows a default nominative (like Oslo Norwegian), while a different pronoun shows a default ‘accusative’ (like Danish). However, Italian does not seem to be such a language.

- (55) a. Chi è colpevole? – Tu / *te
 who is guilty – you.STRONG.NOM you.STRONG.ACC
- b. Chi inviterà? – Te / *tu
 who he.will.invite – you.ACC.STRONG you.NOM.STRONG

The examples in (55) necessitate the strong paradigm (56), making the analysis in (54) impossible.

- (56) Italian 2nd person pronouns (based on Heap et al. 2017:192)

		[Ø]	[STR]
NOM	K1 ϕ	Ø (=pro)	tu
ACC	K2 K1 ϕ	ti (te)	te

Thus, it seems that the example (53), repeated in (57), has a genuine accusative pronoun.

- (57) Io e **te/*tu** andremo insieme a Roma.
 I.SUBJ and you.OBJ/SUBJ go.FUT.1.PL together to Rome
 ‘You and I will go to Rome together.’ (Weisser 2020:56)

Within the approach pursued here, it is impossible to interpret *te* in (57) as a default form. Given the paradigm (56), that would be a *ABA violation. I therefore have to propose a different account.

I start by pointing out that there are independent reasons to doubt that *te* in (57) is a default. The relevant observation comes from hanging-topic left dislocations. Recall that this is cross-linguistically a common default-case environment, where the left-dislocated phrase does not match the case of its double in the following sentence, but appears in a form identical to the nominative. This is also the case for Italian, as discussed in Cinque (1977:407), see (58).

- (58) a. (*A) Giorgio, sono sicuro che non ho mai scritto a lui.
 (*To) Giorgio, I am sure that I have never written to him
- b. (*Di) Piero, credo che non abbiano mai parlato di lui.
 (*Of) Piero, I think that they have never talked of him

In these constructions, the form of the 2.SG pronoun is *tu*, see (59).

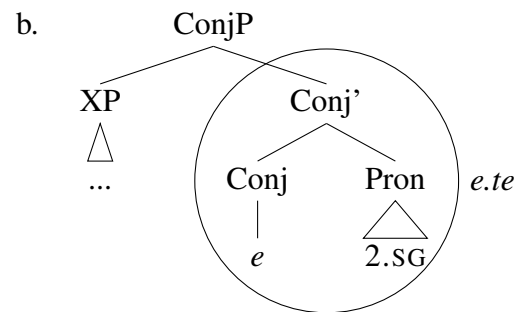
- (59) a. **Tu** / ***te**, sono sicuro che non ho mai scritto a te.
 you.NOM youACC, I am sure that I have never written to you
- b. **Tu** / ***te**, credo che non abbiano mai parlato di te.
 you.NOM youACC, I think that they have never talked of you

If *tu* in (59) is a default, as seems reasonable to conclude, then we have independent reasons to reject an analysis according to which *te* in (57) is a default.

If *te* in (53) is neither NOM or DEF, then what is it? What I suggest here is that it is a part of a morphologically opaque, non-decomposable unit *e.te*. More specifically, I analyse the form as a portmanteau morpheme realising a complex structure, arising historically from a bimorphemic realisation of such a node.

I provide a technical implementation of this idea in (60). (60-a) gives the realisation rule for *e.te* understood as a phrasal spellout rule that realises the non-terminal dominating the CONJ node and the 2.SG pronoun (see, e.g., Starke 2009 and subsequent work for a worked-out phrasal spellout model). As a result of this rule, the node circled in (60-b) is realised by the (synchronically non-decomposable) string *e.te*.

- (60) a. [CONJ + 2.SG.STR.K1] \Leftrightarrow *e.te*



This analysis correctly predicts the two following facts. Since the phrasal spellout rule in (60-a) affects a full phrase consisting of a conjunction and a pronoun, it is predicted that placing anything into that constituent will disrupt the required constituency, and the idiomatic form will not be usable. Under such circumstances, the regular (non-idiomatic) form is expected to surface. This

is indeed the case, as shown in (61). We can see that the addition of an intervener between the pronoun and the conjunction leads to the fact that the strong nominative form *tu* appears.

- (61) Pietro **e** probabilmente **tu** siete stati invitati al colloquio settimana prossima.
 Peter and probably you.NOM are been invited to.the interview week next
 ‘Peter and probably you are invited to the job talks next week.’ (Weisser 2020:56)

Consider now the fact that when the 2.SG pronoun is placed in the Spec of the ConjP (when it is the 1st conjunct), it no longer forms a constituent with CONJ and the rule (60-b) is inoperative. We thus predict that the form *tu* (impossible when the pronoun directly follows the conjunction) becomes possible when used as the first conjunct. This is borne out, as the data in (62-b) show (from Schütze 2001:222). (62-b) also shows that *te* is degraded in the first conjunct.

- (62) a. Io **e** **te** / ***tu**...
 I.NOM and you.ACC you.NOM
- b. **Tu** / ?**te** **e** io andremo insieme a Roma.
 you.NOM you.ACC and I.NOM go together to Rome

It is also interesting to note that pronouns other than the 2.SG *te* are uniformly NOM in subject coordination, which is exemplified in (62) by the invariance of *io*. This makes it hard to analyse these cases as examples where the conjunction assigns ACC to the pronoun, since that rule would have to be pronoun specific. On the other hand, the differential behavior of different pronouns falls out from the phrasal spellout-rule, which is found in the lexicon for the 2nd person, but its existence implies nothing about the existence of analogous idiomatic entries for other pronouns.

To summarise, this section discussed the possibility that Italian shows a default ACC for the 2.SG pronoun. However, the hanging-topic left dislocations in (59) show that 2.SG pronouns actually have a default NOM. Because of this, the apparent default accusative in coordination must be analysed differently. I suggested that it arises due to a phrasal spellout rule (60-a), which lexicalises a whole constituent by the (synchronically) non-decomposable string *e.te*.

5. The default in English

The current section turns to English. Its goal is to provide a detailed discussion of the relationship between strong environments and the default-case environments identified in Schütze (2001). (I continue calling these default-case environments despite the fact that I only analyse left dislocations as a true default, recall Section 1.) The discussion proceeds as follows. Section 5.1 discusses evidence for the claim that all default environments in English are strong environments (drawing on Cardinaletti 1999, Cardinaletti & Starke 1999, and Quinn 2005). Section 5.2 discusses the fact that not all strong environments are default-case environments. Section 5.3 addresses variation.

5.1 *All default-case environments are strong-pronoun environments*

This section provides evidence for the claim that the five default-case environments identified in Schütze (2001) (repeated in (63)) are strong-pronoun environments.

- (63)
- | | | |
|----|---|------------------------|
| a. | Who wants to try this game? – Me | (fragment answers) |
| b. | Me , I like beans. | (left dislocation) |
| c. | She likes rice, and him beans. | (gapping) |
| d. | Us linguists are a crazy bunch. | (pronoun modification) |
| e. | Her and Sandy went to the store yesterday. | (coordination) |

The first piece of evidence comes from cross-linguistic comparison. Specifically, all of these environments are strong-pronoun environments in languages that morphologically distinguish strong and deficient pronouns. In (64), I repeat the relevant French examples discussed in Section 1. The constructions appear in the same order as in (63).²³

²³Some authors also discuss pronouns in the predicative position and after *than* as potential examples of default case (see (i) and (ii) respectively). The (b) examples show that French has strong pronouns in these contexts too.

- | | | | |
|-----|--|------|---|
| (i) | <p>a. It's me.
b. C'est moi.
it.is 1SG.STRONG
'It's me.' (Quinn 2005:68)</p> | (ii) | <p>a. Marie is faster than me.
b. Marie est plus vite que toi.
Marie is more fast than 2SG.STRONG
'Marie is faster than you.' (Quinn 2005:68)</p> |
|-----|--|------|---|

- (64) a. Qui viendra avec nous? — **Moi.** / ***Je=**
 who come-FUT.3SG with us I.STRONG I.WEAK
 ‘Who will come with us? – Me.’ (Heap et al. 2017:184) (fragment answers)
- b. **Moi** / ***je,** je vois Marie.
 1SG.STRONG 1SG.DEFICIENT I see Mary
 ‘Me, I see Mary.’ (left dislocation)
- c. Jean aime la physique et ****je** / **moi** la chimie
 Jean like the physics and me.DEFICIENT me.STRONG the chemistry
 ‘Jean likes physics and me chemistry.’ (Kayne 2000:169) (gapping)
- d. { ***Ils** / **eux** } deux partiront bientôt.
 they.DEFICIENT they.STRONG two will.leave soon
 ‘The two of them will leave soon.’ (based on Kayne 1975:84-5) (pronoun modified)
- e. Jean et { ***il** / **lui** } partiront bientôt.
 Jean and he.DEFICIENT he.STRONG will.leave soon
 ‘Jean and he/him will leave soon.’ (based on Kayne 1975:85) (coordination)

There is also some English-internal evidence for the strong status of these environments. Two different types of evidence have been discussed in the literature, one type stemming from the phonological reduction of pronouns, the second type stemming from the behaviour of *it*.

The phonological evidence is based on the observation that English deficient pronouns are able to undergo phonological reduction (see Quinn 2005:74-5 and the references cited there). This is illustrated in (65-a,b), where the pronouns drop their initial [h].

- (65) a. [h̩] / [ɪ] never got a word in edgeways.
 b. They beamed [ɪm] up.

Such phonologically reduced forms cannot be used in fragment answers (see (66) from Vos & Veselovská 1999:945). This indicates that fragment answers are a strong-pronoun environment.

- (66) Who did you see? — [h̩ɪm] / *[ɪm] (fragment answers)

Similarly, it has been observed that reduced pronouns cannot be modified, see (67) (from Quinn 2005:75), or coordinated, see (67-c) (from Cardinaletti and Starke 1995:7).

- (67) a. I'll see [jə] before the match. (you)
 b. I'll see [ju / *jə boys] before the match. (post-modification)
 c. *John saw [ɪm] and Mary. (coordination)

Colley & Bassi (2022) argue that weak pronouns are also unavailable in gapping. They use the contrast between the sentence (68-a,b) to illustrate this. (68-a) is a sentence that contains a verb and a weak non-contrastive pronoun. When the verb is elided in (68-b), the weak pronoun is no longer acceptable. When the object is a non-contrastive (full) noun, as in (68), gapping is possible.

- (68) a. I called Sheryl_i on Monday, and called [əʀ]_i on Tuesday too.
 b. *I called Sheryl_i on Monday, and called [əʀ]_i on Tuesday too.
 c. I called Sheryl_i on Monday, and called Sheryl_i on Tuesday too.

Reduction is also impossible in left-peripheral positions, illustrated in (69) for topicalisation.²⁴

- (69) [hɪm] / *[ɪm] I like. (left-peripheral positions)

Summarising, the examples (65)-(69) show that phonologically reduced forms are unavailable in the five environments identified in Schütze (2001) as default. If we take the impossibility of reduction to be a hallmark of a strong environment, this provides evidence that these environments are treated as strong internally to English.

The second type of evidence for the strong-pronoun status of the relevant environments comes from the behaviour of the pronoun *it*. In Cardinaletti (1999), *it* is treated as a weak pronoun. This is related to the observation in Cardinaletti and Starke (1999) that strong pronouns have an obligatory human reference. Since *it* does not have an obligatory human reference (it can refer to inanimates),

²⁴Schütze (2001:211) also discusses the so-called Mad Magazine sentences as a case of left dislocation, see (i-a). These environments are also incompatible with reduced forms of pronouns (i-b) (Akamajian 1984:8-9).

- (i) a. What?! Him/*He wear a tuxedo?! Never.
 b. { Him / *ɪm } get a job? Never.

it is predicted to be weak. Cardinaletti (1999) argues that for at least some speakers, this is indeed the case, and *it* leads to degradation when placed in the set of environments under discussion.

(70) is an example of left-dislocation. What the example shows is that *it* in (70-a) cannot occupy the left-dislocated position, while a full NP can (70-b).

- (70) Speaker A: What do you think of ‘Gone with the wind’?
- a. Speaker B: *Well, *it_i*, I think *it_i*’s the best movie ever made.
 - b. Speaker B: Well, that movie_{*i*}, I think *it_i*’s the best movie ever made.

The ungrammaticality of *it* in examples such as (70-a) is not related to case (compare (70-b)). Cardinaletti (1999) explains this by saying that peripheral positions require strong pronouns, and *it* is impossible here because it is weak.

Similarly, Cardinaletti (1999) notes that *it* is unavailable in fragment answers, see (71). Again, it does not seem plausible that (71) can be ruled out by case. To rule it out, she proposes that fragment answers require strong pronouns, which makes them incompatible with the weak *it*.

- (71) *What strikes you as implausible? *It*.

In the literature, it is also possible to find examples indicating that for at least some speakers, *it* is degraded in a coordination, in modification and with verb ellipsis; see (72-a-c) respectively.

- (72) a. *I bought *it* and *it*. (Cardinaletti and Starke 1995:4)
- b. *big *it* (Fukui 1988:264)
- c. *I drove the CAR_{*i*} on Monday, and ~~drove~~ IT_{*i*} on Tuesday.

These data support the conclusion that coordinations, pronoun modifications and gapping are strong-pronoun environments.²⁵

²⁵It has been pointed out to me by two anonymous reviewers that the facts surrounding coordination and modification are not so clear, and that *it* can be modified and used in coordinations (for at least some speakers). The examples (i-a,b) have been provided to me by the reviewers.

To conclude, this section discussed three types of evidence for the conclusion that all default-case constructions identified in Schütze (2001) are simultaneously strong-pronoun environments. Specifically, we saw that these environments require strong pronouns cross-linguistically, they are incompatible with phonological reduction, and they generally lead to a degraded acceptability of *it* (though some good cases featuring this pronoun exist).

My main idea is that if all these environments are strong, there is no need to analyse *me* as a default ACC. We can maintain the default theory of default case by treating it as a case-invariant strong pronoun (syncretic with the weak ACC).

In the following two sections, I turn to the fact that some strong environments also allow forms such as *I*. In Section 5.2, I discuss cases where *I* is the only option. In Section 5.3, I turn to variation between *I* and *me*. In both sections, I argue that these facts are compatible with the approach to default entertained here, provided that we distinguish between two classes of strong pronouns.

5.2 *Some strong-pronoun environments are not default-case environments*

This section discusses strong environments that fail to exhibit the expected case-invariant strong pronouns *me*, *he* and require pronouns such as *I*, *he*, etc. These environments are initially problem-

- (i) a. It and a bunch of other spooky songs are available on our Halloween EP.
- b. the big it and other short stories (the name of a collection of short stories)

There also seems to be variation in the Mad Magazine sentences discussed in Footnote 24. Recall that these disallow phonologically reduced pronouns, see (ii-a). Akamajian (1984:8-9) treats them as left-dislocation and says that they also disallow *it*, see (ii-b).

- (ii) a. { Him / *_im } get a job? Never.
- b. Speaker A: At last I see the book_i - it_i's on the table.
 Speaker B: Oh? *It_i (be) on the table?! We must be blind.

Contrasting with the judgement in (ii-b), an anonymous reviewer points out Siegel's (1987) observation that "While intonational factors make it harder to find good examples [of *it*], they do exist," see (iii).

- (iii) It rain on her birthday? Never! (Siegel 1987:62)

One way to interpret this is that for some speakers, *it* can behave as a strong pronoun. This would entail that strong pronouns may lack obligatory human reference (as Testelets 2003 argues for Russian). Another possibility is that the use of *it* as a strong pronoun requires some special context, which allows it to overcome its inherent weakness and appear in strong contexts. I leave this unresolved here.

atic because a theory based on a single case-invariant strong pronoun predicts that strong environments with *I* don't exist. The section provides two examples of such environments and discusses how they can be accounted for within the confines of the current approach.

The first strong environment that fails to exhibit the expected forms such as *me*, *him*, etc. are pronouns modified by *only*. To see the issue, consider first the fact that in French, this is an environment that requires strong pronouns, see (73) (from Cardinaletti & Starke 1999:152).

- (73) a. J(e) { *seulement la } ai aide
I only her.DEFICIENT have helped
- b. J(e) ai aide { seulement elle }
I have helped only her.STRONG

There are reasons to think that this is a strong environment in English too. The first reason is that pronouns cannot undergo phonological reduction after *only*, see (74-a). The second reason is that the weak *it* also cannot be modified by *only*, see (74-b).

- (74) a. *John saw only 'im (Cardinaletti & Starke 1995:7, Parrott 2021:151)
- b. *I saw only it (Cardinaletti & Starke 1999:178)

The data in (73) and (74) suggests that pronouns after *only* are strong. Yet, as shown in (75), they cannot have the case-invariant strong pronoun *me* in subject position.

- (75) a. Only I love my sister
- b. *Only me love(s) my sister

One could speculate that *only* realises the strong feature [STR] and may, therefore, be followed by a deficient pronoun. However, if *only* could morphologically realise the STR feature, we would expect to see *only I* in all strong NOM contexts, such as in fragment answers. However, in fragments, *only me* is clearly preferred, and *only I* is rather bad, see (76).

- (76) A: Who can do this? – B: Only me/??I.

To conclude, (73) and (74) indicate that pronouns after *only* are strong, yet we do not find the case-invariant *me* in (75), contrary to expectations.

The second case of a strong environment where *I, he* etc. are the only option are contrastive uses of pronouns, as in (77) (from de Hoop 2004).

- (77) a. Paul called Jim a Republican. Then he insulted him.
b. Paul called Jim a Republican. Then HE insulted HIM.

It is not completely clear whether (77-b) should be treated as a strong or deficient environment. Cardinaletti & Starke (1999:218-9) point out that deficient pronouns in French do allow some degree of contrast, as in (78-a) with a stressed deficient pronoun.

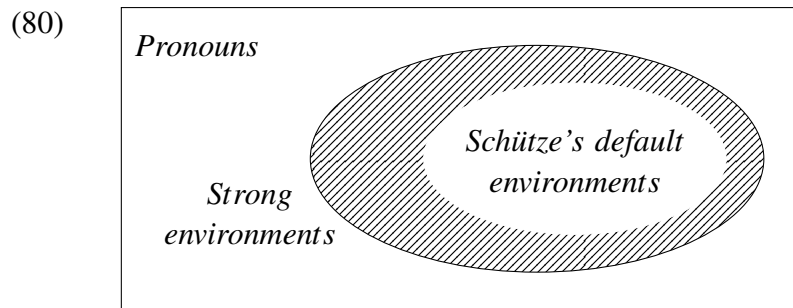
- (78) A: Jean a dit que Pierre arrivera en premier.
John has said that Peter will arrive as first
- a. B: Non, Jean a dit qu'IL arrivera en premier.
No, John has said that.HE.DEFICIENT will arrive as first
- b. B: *Non, Jean a dit qu'IL, pas son frere, arrivera en premier
No, John has said that.HE.DEFICIENT not his brother will arrive as first

However, an anonymous reviewer points out that (78-a) represents 'corrective' focus and that when different types of focus are involved, deficient pronouns become impossible. For instance, in (78-b), the contrastive phrase 'not his brother' makes the deficient pronoun impossible in French (Cardinaletti & Starke 1999:219). So if the addition of a contrastive phrase requires strong pronouns, then the example in (79) (a parallel to (78-b)) suggests that *I* can be strong.

- (79) Mary said that I/*me, but not my brother, can come to the party.

In line with this observation, Selkirk (1980:31-32, 133) notes that 'emphatic' pronouns cannot undergo phonological reduction. On the basis of these facts, I conclude that sentences such as (79) represent another environment where we see a strong pronoun different from *me, him*, etc.

In sum, the overall picture of pronoun distribution in English can be depicted as in (80).



In (80), the rectangle represents all kinds of environments where pronouns occur. A subset of these environments can be characterised as strong; for simplicity, we can take this set to be identical to the contexts where we find strong pronouns in French, which is the same set of environments where English pronouns cannot be phonologically reduced. These environments are represented in (80) by the larger ellipsis. In Section 5.1, I argued that all the default-case environments identified by Schütze are within this set. In the current Section 5.2, I argued that there are also strong pronouns which are not in the set of Schütze's default environments, since they disallow the case-invariant *me*. Default environments are thus properly contained in the set of strong environments and they are represented by the smaller of the two ellipses.²⁶

The bifurcation within strong environments shows the need to recognise two different kinds of strong pronouns. This has been also concluded in Quinn (2005:152f), who calls the two subclasses gracile and robust. Adopting this distinction, the idea is that Schütze's default environments (which are a subset of strong contexts) are robust, and correspond to the case-invariant *me*. Pronouns that are strong (but not case-invariant) are gracile. This (final) analysis is depicted in (81).²⁷

²⁶This holds also for Danish, where the same two environments also reject the case-invariant form:

- (i) a. kun han/*ham kan klare det
only he/*him can do it (Ørsnes 2002:337)
b. HAN/*HAM kommer i hvert fald ikke
HE/*HIM comes certainly not
'HE certainly won't be here' (Ørsnes 2002:341)

²⁷Gracile pronouns are probably also used under ostension. As an anonymous reviewer points out, "*it* cannot be used for ostension, but [...] *he/she/they* perfectly well can." If this is so, ostension behaves like gracile environment.

(81) English 1.SG paradigm

		DEFICIENT	STRONG	
			GRACILE	ROBUST
DEF	ϕ	—	—	<i>me</i>
NOM	K1 ϕ	I	I	<i>me</i>
ACC	K2 K1 ϕ	<i>me</i>	<i>me</i>	<i>me</i>

This update necessitates the introduction of an additional feature for robust pronouns, ROB. Once this feature is introduced, the feature specifications of the three types of pronouns are as in (82).

(82) Pronominal features

	PRONOUN	FEATURES	DISTRIBUTION
a.	deficient	ϕ	elsewhere
b.	gracile	ϕ + STR	(after <i>only</i> , contrastive, ostension)
c.	robust	ϕ + STR + ROB	(Schütze's default environments)

As before, all pronouns have ϕ -features. All strong pronouns (now split into two sub-classes) have STR. Robust pronouns have the feature ROB in addition. Gracile pronouns are strong pronouns lacking ROB. This feature distribution reflects the type of containment relations seen in (80), where strong pronouns are a special type of pronouns, and robust are a special type of strong.

With the features in place, it is easy to model the paradigm in (81) using the rules in (83).

(83) The final rules for English pronouns

- a. $me \Leftrightarrow [K2, K1, \phi, STR, ROB]$
- b. $I \Leftrightarrow [K1, \phi, STR]$

Me is specified for all features (K1, K2, STR, ROB); it can therefore appear in any cell. *I* is excluded in ACC environments (for the lack of K2) and it is also excluded in robust environments (for the

lack of ROB). With the entries in (83), the distribution of the pronouns is as in (81).

Summarising, this section argued that strong-pronoun environments in English are of two types, gracile and robust. Robust pronouns appear in Schütze's default-case environments and they are case-invariant, while gracile pronouns appear in the remainder of strong environments and have the same paradigm as deficient pronouns. This analysis is compatible with the main claim of this paper, which is that the default case (as found in left dislocations) is always the same as NOM.

5.3 Variation

This section looks in more detail at Schütze's five default environments in (3). It addresses the fact that some of the relevant constructions only allow *me* (see (84-a-c)), while others show variation (see (85-d-f)). The presence/absence of variation leads me to split pronoun modification into two different cases, namely pre-modification and post-modification, see (84-c,d).^{28,29}

(84) Schütze's default environments

- | | | |
|----|--|-----------------------------|
| a. | Who wants to try this game? – Me / * I | (fragment answers) |
| b. | Me / * I , I like beans. | (left dislocation) |
| c. | poor me / * I | (pronoun pre-modification) |
| d. | Us / We linguists are a crazy bunch. | (pronoun post-modification) |
| e. | She likes rice, and him / he beans. | (gapping) |
| f. | Her / She and Sandy went to the store yesterday. | (coordination) |

I have set variation aside so far, because forms such as *we/I* did not seem to raise any issues for the idea that the default is universally NOM. However, given the current proposal that *me* appears in default environments because *I* is not strong (robust), the variation raises some questions. This section outlines two (mutually compatible) lines of analysis. The first approach attributes the variation to the lexicon, the second one to morphosyntax. Let me introduce these in turn.

²⁸Variation exists also in predicative position and after *than*, recall Footnote 23.

²⁹Danish closely matches English, see Parrott (2009, 2021).

The ‘lexical-variation’ approach postulates, within a special prestigious register, different lexical entries for the forms *I*, *we*, etc., treating them, in essence, as robust (within that register). The idea of relying on different registers stems from the observation that where variation exists, forms such as *I* are consistently associated with high-prestige use, while the use of *me* is variably called ‘normal usage’ (Emonds 1986) or ‘non-prestige’ (Sobin 1997).³⁰

In technical terms, the hypothesis says that the prestige register lists *I* as a robust pronoun, see (85-b) while the non-prestige register treats it as gracile, see (85-c). The lexical entry for *me* is the same in both registers, see (85-a).

(85) Two different registers, two different *I*s

a. $me \Leftrightarrow [K2, K1, \phi, STR, ROB]$

b. $I_{prestige} \Leftrightarrow [K1, \phi, STR, ROB]$

c. $I_{non-prestige} \Leftrightarrow [K1, \phi, STR]$

The idea is that depending on the relevant social variables, speakers activate either (86-b) or (86-c). If (85-b) is used, its interaction with (85-a) yields the paradigm (86) (identical to Oslo Norwegian). If (85-c) is used, we get the non-prestige paradigm discussed in (81).

(86) English 1.SG prestige paradigm

		DEFICIENT		STRONG	
				GRACILE	ROBUST
DEF	ϕ	—	—	I	I
NOM	K1 ϕ	I	I	I	I
ACC	K2 K1 ϕ	<i>me</i>	<i>me</i>	<i>me</i>	<i>me</i>

This approach works well where there is free variation conditioned by register. However, such

³⁰Emonds (1986:93) considers *I* in the relevant environments to be “an extra-grammatical deviation imposed in certain, especially written forms of language exclusively through para-linguistic cultural institutions of the dominant socio-economic class.” See also Grano (2006), Parrott (2009, 2021), Lemon (2017).

variation is not found in all cases. For instance, left dislocations and fragments require *me* and disallow *I*, recall (84-a), (84-b). Similarly, forms such as *she* are much more common in the first rather than the second conjunct, while *I* is strongly preferred in the second conjunct (Sobin 1997, Grano 2006, Quinn 2005). How can this be captured?

One could argue that there is no variation in left dislocations and fragment answers because these constructions are only found in non-prestige registers. For instance, Gregory & Michaelis (2001:1679) note, summarising the results of previous research, that “detachment constructions [by which they mean left dislocation] are inappropriate in formal register.” Parrott (2009:273) characterises these constructions as environments “with no prescriptive attention.” If this is so, the rule (85-b) would be inactive in these environments, yielding *me* as the only option.

An alternative way to capture the fact that the prestigious forms are absent in some environments would be to propose that there is no general rule for a prestige use, but rather that the prestige use is learned on a case-by-case basis, postulating possibly multiple entries for *I* for each relevant construction (an option hinted at in Parrott 2021:152-3). For instance, there are reasons to think that prestige-usage English has a special *and-I* rule for the 1.SG pronoun, analogous to the Italian *e te* rule (Sobin 1997, Parrott 2021). I give a version of it in (87). The entry can lexicalise a phrasal node containing *and* and a 1.SG robust pronoun in NOM.

(87) [CONJP [*and*] + [1.SG.STR.ROB.K1]] ⇔ /ənaɪ/

In the absence of such a rule (i.e., in registers where the rule does not exist), the 1.SG robust pronoun would be realised as *me*. But when a rule like (87) is active in the lexicon (i.e., in prestige registers), it applies at a higher phrasal node and takes precedence over the independent realisation of the nodes contained inside the phrase. As a result, the analytic *and+me* is overridden by *ənaɪ*.

As expected, separating 1.SG from *and* leads to a decrease in acceptability, see (88-b).

- (88) a. Peter and I will go to the party tomorrow.
 b. Peter and probably me/?*I will go to the party tomorrow. (Weisser 2020:54)

The contrast in (88) arises because the structural description of the rule (87) is met in (88-a), but not (88-b), explaining the difference in acceptability.³¹

Summarising, given that much of the variation is conditioned by register, it seems possible to account for the prestige-usage forms by introducing realisation rules that only belong in that register. Their effect is that when speakers activate these rules in their lexicon, they insert forms such as *I* even in robust contexts, i.e., those in (84). Given that not all contexts in (84) show variation, there is a debate to be had about when exactly these rules become activated: if left-dislocations and fragment answers are only found in non-prestige registers, we can explain why these constructions never have *I* even if there is just one all-purpose rule for a robust *I*. Alternatively, we may need several construction-specific rules introducing *I* (see, e.g., Parrott 2009, 2021).

From the perspective of default case, this approach is compatible with my main point, which is that forms such as *me* emerge in the non-prestige usage as case-invariant robust pronouns. When the case-invariant forms fail to surface, this is because of an interaction with a prestige-usage entry for *I*, which lists *I* as a robust pronoun.

Let me now turn to the second possibility of how variation can be captured, which is to treat it as morphosyntactic variation. To see the idea, recall that in some strong-pronoun contexts, discussed in Section 5.2, we only find gracile pronouns. In other strong-pronoun constructions, such as fragments (84-a), left-dislocations (84-b) and pre-modified pronouns (84-c), we only find the robust *me*. This is summarised in (89-a,b).

- (89) Three types of strong environments
- a. gracile (after *only*, contrastive)
 - b. robust (left dislocation, fragment answers, premodified pronouns)
 - c. alternating between gracile and robust (coordination, post-modification, gapping)

³¹Famously, the *ənai* rule may also ‘overapply,’ yielding *I* in object coordinations, as in (i) (see Angermeyer & Singler 2003). Such overapplication can be captured by enriching the pronoun specification in (87) by K2, in which case it applies both to nominative and accusative coordinations, spelling out both structures as *ənai*.

(i) This is starting to make [him and I] both feel really bad. (Parrott 2009:274)

The idea for contexts with variation is that the alternation between *me/I* is a morphosyntactic alternation between the two types of strong pronouns, i.e., gracile and robust, see (90-c).

To see how this works, consider, for instance, the fact that in coordinations, the first conjunct and the second conjunct behave differently. As Quinn (2005:121) points out, if we take the 1.SG pronoun out of the picture (presumably due to the existence of the *ənai* rule (87)), then there is an asymmetry between the conjuncts in that the initial conjunct accepts gracile pronouns much more readily than the second conjunct:

- (90) For non-1SG, the [...] forms *he, she, we, they* are favoured in initial conjuncts, and the [...] forms *him, her, us, them* are favoured in final conjuncts. (Quinn 2005:121)

Quinn (2005) points out that this asymmetry can be understood if the second conjunct must be always stronger than the first. It is thus possible that the first conjunct is gracile, while the second conjunct is robust (*she and him*), but the reverse is much worse (**him and she*). It is harder to see how an account based purely on register variation could deliver such an asymmetry.

The idea of variation between gracile and robust forms may provide some interesting insights into the interaction between various default environments (namely, when we embed one default environment within another). For example, we already know that left-dislocations require robust pronouns (91-a), while post-modified pronouns show variation (91-b). It is therefore interesting to note that when a post-modified pronoun is left dislocated, we still get variation, see (91-c).

- (91) a. *Me/*I, I like beans*
 b. {We/Us} Californians get the best weather. (Lemon 2017:6)
 c. {We/Us} Californians, we seem to have this need to be liked.

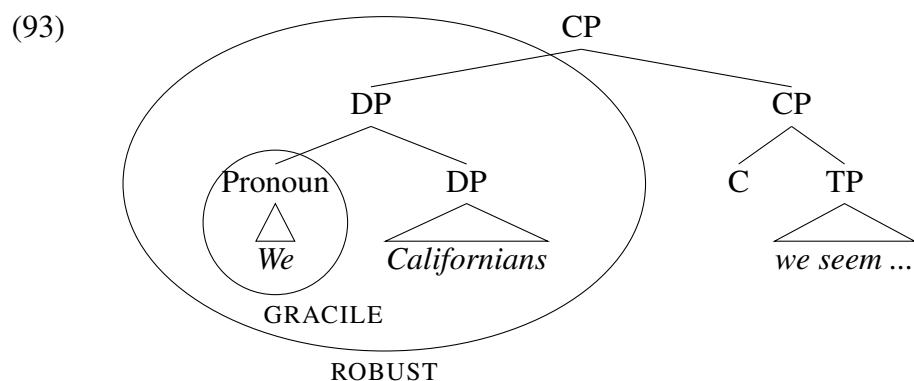
The example (91-c) suggests that the shape of the pronoun reflects its most local context: in (91-c), the pronoun behaves as a post-modified pronoun, and not as a left-dislocated pronoun.

The same effect is observed also for coordination, see (92). Again, the form of the pronouns

reflects their most local environment (coordination), rather than the containing environment (left dislocation).

(92) She and I, we laughed a lot.

This pattern can be captured under the idea that variation is due to the gracile/robust alternation. Under this hypothesis, the structure of (91-c) can be depicted as in (93), where the left-dislocated DP is placed in Spec,CP. This is a robust environment, and so if a sole pronoun was found here, it would be invariably in the case-invariant form *me*.



However, in (93), Spec,CP contains a post-modification structure. Within that structure, the post-modified pronoun is in an environment that alternates between gracile and strong. (93) depicts the gracile pronoun.³² Generalising, this approach provides a natural account of the observation that what is relevant for the pronoun shape appears to be its most local environment.

It is not clear to me whether the approach based on lexical variation can explain these facts. Recall that in order to rule out forms such as *I* in (91-a), one may suggest that left-dislocations are incompatible with the prestige register. But this may make it difficult to account for (91-c) and

³²Following Schütze (2001:218), I assume that the pronoun is not the head in the modification structure, but nothing hinges on this. Schütze basis his argument on the fact that when post-modified pronouns follow a quantifier, the phrase they are a part of behaves like a DP in that it does not require *of*, compare (i-a,b).

- (i) a. All us linguists understand the riddle of existence.
b. All *(of) us understand . . .

(92), which show that these pronouns *are* available in left-dislocated contexts as long as it is not the most local context for the pronoun.

The same facts are also challenging for some accounts that treat *us* in (91-c) as a default ACC, while *we* is treated as NOM. Under the idea that *us* is a default ACC, Schütze (2002:218) suggests that one way to look at the variation between *we/us Californians* in subject position is by proposing that sometimes, NOM can get down to the pronoun (yielding *we Californians*), while other times it can't (yielding *us Californians*). He further links the (un)availability of case reaching down onto the pronoun to different structures of the post-modified pronoun. However, the issue with this account is that in left-dislocated structures like (92-a), there should be no actual NOM that could be passed down onto the pronoun, since left-dislocations are a default-case environment. The point is that while rising challenges to some versions of the default-ACC account, constructions like (91-c) can be accommodated within the approach relying on the robust/gracile distinction.

Summarising, this section focused on the fact that in some of Schütze's default environments, we get variation between two different pronoun shapes. The full picture is given in (94).

- (94) Three types of strong environments
- a. only *I* (after *only*, contrastive)
 - b. only *me* (left dislocation, fragment answers, premodified pronouns)
 - c. alternating between *I* and *me* (coordination, post-modification, gapping)

I sketched two ways to approach such variation, namely as a lexical variation between different registers (with the formal register treating *I* as robust) or morphosyntactic variation (some environments alternate between gracile and robust). These options should not be understood as mutually exclusive, but perhaps working in tandem to develop a complex network of patterns.

5.4 Final remarks

The last issue that I would like to address is why sentences like (95) are ungrammatical.

(95) *Me arrived.

One way of ruling out such sentences relies on the logic explored in Cardinaletti & Starke (1999), which says that given several options for pronouns, the most deficient pronoun must be used:

(96) Choice of a pronoun (Cardinaletti & Starke 1999:153)

Choose the most deficient form possible.

The principle (96) rules out the sentence (95) whenever the context allows for a weaker pronoun (deficient or graceful). However, this still leaves open the question whether it is possible to rule out sentences such as (95) in general, since the observation is that (95) is not possible under any circumstances.

Interestingly, this issue is not unique for English. As observed in Kayne (2000:167), French strong pronouns cannot appear in such structures either, see (97-a). In order to be felicitously used, they must be doubled by a weak pronoun, see (97-b).

(97) a. *Moi vois Marie
 I.STRONG see Marie

b. Moi, je vois Marie
 I.STRONG I.WEAK see Marie

To capture this contrast, Kayne (2000:165) proposes that “pronominal arguments [=strong pronouns] that are structurally case marked in French must be doubled by a clitic.” Adapting Kayne’s proposal to English, one could posit the following:

(98) Doubling Requirement

Robust subject pronouns in English must be doubled by a weak pronoun.

If (98) is correct, it rules out sentences such as (99-a) (repeated from (95)) and requires (99-b) instead.

- (99) a. *Me arrived.
 b. Me, I arrived

The challenge for an account based on (98) is presented by constructions with robust pronouns, where doubling is not found (neither in English or in French, recall (64)). One option (considered, but rejected in Kayne 2000) is that in some contexts, such as fragment answers or gapping, such doubling could be present in the underlying structure, but eliminated by ellipsis, see (100).

- (100) a. Who wants ice cream? – Me, I-want-ice cream
 b. She likes rice, and **him** ~~he~~-likes beans.

However, post-modified pronouns, coordinate structures and pre-modified pronouns remain as a challenge, since there is no doubling involved (see, e.g., (91-b)). What I therefore suggest is that for reasons to be understood, the doubling requirement only pertains to isolated robust pronouns, i.e., those that on their own make out the whole DP. As far as I can see, this will exempt coordinated and both pre- and post-modified pronouns from the doubling requirement, in which case (98) turns out to be a viable approach for ruling out **me arrived*.

Regardless of how this is resolved, the point is that the issue of **Me arrived* is not an artificial problem that only arises as a consequence of a particular analysis. The very same issue exists independently in French (recall (97)), and it must be resolved regardless of the English situation. Hopefully, whichever solution is adopted for French then carries over to English.

6. Conclusions

Let me begin by a short summary of the main points. This article explored a theory of default case which I label the default theory of default case. Its main idea is to say nothing about default case beyond its definitional property, which is the lack of case features on a DP. In this approach, spell out treats caseless DPs in the same way as any other object: it finds the best matching item in the lexicon, ships its phonology to PF and that is all.

Inevitably, the properties of such a theory depend on the representation of case in the grammar.

In Section 2, I argued that if the (independently-proposed) cumulative decomposition is adopted, it severely restricts the possible values of the default case. Out of all the cases, the default can only be identical to the unmarked core case (NOM or ABS). This turns out to be the correct consequence in the large majority of languages, except a few languages with case on pronouns only. I have discussed three such languages in this article (Danish, English and Italian).

Upon closer inspection, Italian turns out to be a language with a clear NOM default. For Danish and English, I have proposed that the apparent default ACC is a form identical to the NOM of a case-invariant strong pronoun, which happens to be syncretic with the weak ACC. The gist of this idea is shown in the left part of Table (101), compared to a regular default-NOM language (Oslo Norwegian) on the right. If this analysis is adopted, Danish and English actually have a default NOM and the default theory of default case can be maintained.³³

(101) Danish and Norwegian

		DANISH		OSLO NORWEGIAN	
		1.SG	1.SG.STR	1.SG	1.SG.STR
DEF	ϕ	—	<i>mig</i>	—	<i>jeg</i>
NOM	K1 ϕ	<i>jeg</i>	<i>mig</i>	<i>jeg</i>	<i>jeg</i>
ACC	K2 K1 ϕ	<i>mig</i>	<i>mig</i>	<i>meg</i>	<i>meg</i>

I have argued that if this view is adopted, we not only maintain the default theory, but achieve three additional advantages.

The first advantage is that the syntax of the default is unified across languages. Since the strong pronoun is many-ways ambiguous, not all instances of *mig* or *me* must be analysed as a default. For instance, subject fragment answers (*Who arrived? – Me*) can now be analysed as featuring a strong NOM pronoun, which brings their analysis in line with a universal proposed in work by Merchant (2005), which says that fragment answers use a matching case. In effect, the proposal allows us to attribute to apparent ACC-default languages such as English the same distribution of

³³Section 5.2 proposed an additional distinction between two types of strong pronouns, glossed over here.

default case as found in run-of-the-mill NOM-default languages such as German. Specifically, the only construction with a true default turns out to be left dislocation.

The second advantage is that the parametric difference between the apparent ACC-default languages (Danish, English) and NOM-default languages (German) boils down to a simple lexical difference in the specification of a single lexical entry (as argued in Section 3).

The third advantage is that we explain why apparent default ACC is only found in languages with case on pronouns only. This is because only pronouns make the strong-weak distinction, and only they may have two parallel paradigms, where the case-invariant strong form is syncretic with the weak ACC.

Let me now turn to two issues that I leave open for future research. The first issue is whether there is actually any need for the category of a default as distinct from NOM. To see the issue, consider the fact that the current theory not only allows that the default is syncretic with NOM (an AA... pattern), but it also allows that the default has a unique form distinct from NOM (AB...). However, I do not know of any language like that. If there was indeed no language like this, this could be derived by adopting the proposal by McFadden (2018), who argued that NOM actually corresponds to a DP without any case features (rather than possessing K1, as in Caha's approach). Under this proposal, NOM and DEF become indistinguishable, and they are therefore predicted to always have the same form. This is an even stronger (and therefore more interesting) theory than the one proposed here, but I leave its investigation for future research.

The second open issue relates to the observation (suggested to me by an anonymous reviewer) that all languages with (apparent) default ACC like English are case-poor languages. Supposing that this is the case, the question is how this fact can be explained under the proposal advanced in this paper. I believe that this may be related to a general tendency for strong pronouns to pattern the same as full DPs (Cardinaletti & Starke 1999). If strong pronouns tend to pattern the same as full DPs, we expect that a fully syncretic strong pronoun will more likely exist in languages with fully syncretic nouns, i.e., in languages like English and Danish, but not in languages like Russian, where nouns make clear morphological differences among various cases.

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