

The Person Case Constraint (PCC) and honorification

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1 Introduction

A version of the Person Case Constraint (PCC) states that the direct object (DO) clitic cannot be first person or second person (1/2P) when the indirect object (IO) clitic is 1/2P.

(1) IO_{1/2P} ... DO_{*1/*2P} (1/2P > 3P)

The PCC is observed in various languages, including Catalan, French, Greek, and Spanish. An example exhibiting the PCC effect in Greek is shown in (2).

- (2) a. Tha **mu to** stilune.
FUT 1.GEN 3.N.ACC send.3PL
'They will send it to me'
b. *Tha **mu se** sistisune.
FUT 1.GEN 2.ACC introduce.3PL
'They will introduce you to me.' (Greek, Anagnostopoulou 2005:202)

I will show that a similar restriction holds for languages displaying honorification.

(3) IO_H ... DO_{*H} (H > non-H)

Empirical evidence mainly comes from Korean. Under the current analysis, honorific (H) agreement is epiphenomenal, and honorification is person feature agreement in disguise. Parsimony is maintained in the sense that an honorific feature need not be posited in the grammar. The facts follow from what we already know as phi(φ)-features (person, number, gender).

Adger & Harbour (2007) and Pancheva & Zubizarreta (2018) argue that an IO is introduced by the head Appl(licative) and that Appl checks 1/2P on the IO. Pancheva & Zubizarreta claim that Appl is the locus of perspective ('point-of-view'), which encodes the semantic information about the speaker (1P) and the addressee (2P). Since 1/2P licensing is reserved for IOs, DOs cannot be licensed 1/2P. This leads to the PCC effect shown in (1). I propose that this way of viewing the PCC has implications for the distribution of the honorific (H) case markers in Korean: IOs can be H case-marked, but DOs cannot even if both internal arguments (IAs) are honorified nominal-internally as shown in (4).

- (4) Mina-ka halme.nim-**kkey** sensayng.nim-**ul** sokayha-si-ss-e-yo.
Mina-NOM grandma.H-H.DAT teacher.H-(*H.)ACC introduce-H-PST-D-YO
'Mina introduced the teacher to grandmother.' (1P: Ann, 2P: Ann's mom)

This work is organized as follows: Section 2 discusses a version of the PCC that is relevant to our phenomena of interest. Section 3 draws parallels between the PCC effect and the restrictions on Korean H case markers. It also introduces a φ -feature agreement-based approach to handling honorification. Section 4 presents cross-linguistic evidence from Japanese, which speaks in favor of the current proposal. Section 5 concludes.

2 The PCC effect

The Person Case Constraint (PCC) is a syntactic phenomenon observed in certain languages where constraints are imposed on the co-occurrence of clitic pronouns with respect to their person features. Specifically, the PCC restricts the combination of clitic pronouns based on their person hierarchy. Generally, it states that the DO clitic cannot be 1/2P if the IO clitic is present. Several versions of the PCC have been put forward in the literature. The following version is taken from Adger & Harbour (2007):

- (5) The Person Case Constraint (Adger & Harbour 2007:4)
 In a ditransitive, where both internal arguments are realized as phonologically weak elements, the direct object must be third person.

This effect is prevalent in many Romance languages, impacting grammaticality.

- (6) a. On **me** **le** montrera.
 one me.DAT it.ACC show.FUT
 ‘They will show it to me.’
 b. *On **me** **lui** montrera.
 one me.ACC him.DAT show.FUT
 ‘They will show me to him.’ (French, Adger & Harbour 2007:3)

Case plays an important role. Contrast (6b) with (7). The IO in (6b) is associated with DAT whereas the IO in (7) is associated with á ‘to,’ which constitutes a PP. The difference observed here is enough to bring a change in grammaticality.

- (7) On **me** montrera **á lui**.
 one me.ACC show.FUT to him
 ‘They will show me to him.’ (French, Adger & Harbour 2007:3)

(6) and (7) go to show that the PCC effect is regulated by person features and Case. The effect is a matter of how the two grammatical properties interact, as the two can be closely intertwined with each other.

The PCC has been a subject of extensive theoretical investigation due to its implications for our understanding of syntactic structures and the intricate interplay between syntax and morphology. One line of research suggests that the PCC reflects the need for certain syntactic features to be checked in a local fashion. While the PCC is prominently observed in Romance languages, similar constraints appear in other language families, though the specific rules and manifestations can vary. This

work makes a contribution in this regard. I propose that the restrictions observed for honorification in Korean and Japanese can be captured using the basic mechanisms introduced to account for the PCC. By making use of person features, I wish to bring the two phenomena closer together and ensure parsimony in handling the restrictions/constraints in syntax.

3 Honorification

The distribution of the H case markers in Korean showcases a restriction akin to the PCC effect discussed in Section 2. Table 1 provides a list of case makers in Korean.

Gloss	Phonological content
NOM	<i>-i~-ka</i>
H.NOM	<i>-kkeyse</i>
DAT	<i>-eykey</i>
H.DAT	<i>-kkey</i>
ACC	<i>-(l)ul</i>
H.ACC	N/A

Table 1: Korean case markers

A subject can be associated with H.NOM, and an applied argument (e.g., an IO) can be associated with H.DAT. Quite crucially, there is no reserved morphology for H.ACC. Hence, a DO cannot be associated with H.ACC. In fact, a DO cannot be associated with any of the H case markers in the Korean case paradigm. Although a DO can be realized with plain NOM in psych verb constructions, H.NOM cannot replace NOM in this context (see Lee 2023, 2024). We will return to this issue in (11b) and (12b).

When it comes to honorification, I argue that its restrictions are manifested in a slightly different way. It is not necessarily about the IAs' person features per se but whether or not 1/2P is *added* to the featural make-up of these IAs (see Stegovec 2020). The level of honorificity cannot be measured without the information about the speaker (1P) and the addressee (2P). This is evidenced by the fact that honorification can be suppressed by the social status of the addressee in relation to those of the speaker and the referent (e.g., the IO). In (5), for instance, the IO, Ann's grandmother, is equal in social status to the addressee, Ann's grandfather. Therefore, the speaker, Ann, uses plain DAT instead of H.DAT on the referent IO, *halmeni* 'grandmother.' The contrast between (4) and (8) suggests that both 1P and 2P are necessary when honorification is at play.

- (8) Mina-ka halmeni-**eykey** sensayng.nim-ul sokayhay-ss-e-yo.
 Mina-NOM grandma-DAT teacher.H-ACC introduce-PST-D-YO
 'Mina introduced the teacher to grandma.' (1P: Ann, 2P: Ann's grandpa)

(9) shows how H case markers are realized using person features. In (9), the IO receives 1/2P while the DO does not. Attentive readers may have already noticed that the information about the referent (e.g., R₁ or R₂) comes for free since the referent is the nominal argument itself (e.g., the IO or the DO). Based on the idea that 1/2P

feeds the realization of H, the featural make-up [**1/2P**, R(REFERENT)] determines the presence of an H case marker. [\emptyset , R(REFERENT)], on the other hand, cannot result in honorification since 1/2P is absent in the featural make-up.

- (9) a. IO_{1[1/2P, R₁]} → IO-(H.)DAT (✓ H measured)
 b. DO_{2[\emptyset , R₂]} → DO-(*H.)ACC (✗ H measured)

A question arises as to how and why 1/2P is assigned to the IO but not to the DO. Adger & Harbour argue that person feature agreement and argument-introduction are closely tied together. Under this view, 1/2P on Appl is licensed only to the argument introduced by Appl. I argue alongside Adger & Harbour and Pancheva & Zubizarreta that the licensing of 1/2P is carried out between Appl and its applied argument (e.g., the IO). It is predicted, then, that other applied arguments introduced by Appl, such as beneficiaries and causees, should also be eligible for H case assignment. The prediction is borne out as shown in (10).

- (10) a. Mina-ka halme.nim-**kkey** khayikh-ul kwuwe-tuli-ess-e.
 Mina-NOM grandma.H-H.DAT cake-ACC bake-give.H-PST-D
 ‘Mina baked a cake for grandma.’ (benefactive)
 b. Kamtoknim-kkeyse paywunim-**kkey** chima-lul ip-hi-si-ess-e.
 director-H.NOM actor-H.DAT skirt-ACC wear-CAUS-H-PST-D
 ‘The director made the actor wear a skirt.’ (causative)

Based on the analysis that Appl assigns 1/2P to its applied argument, another prediction can be established: DOs should not be eligible for H case assignment even in simple transitives. This is because Appl and its applied argument do not take part in the derivation. Hence, no functional head can supply 1/2P to the DO. This prediction is borne out in (11). Note that (11b) is a psych verb construction which contains a NOM-marked DO. Crucially, NOM on the DO cannot be replaced with H.NOM. This is well in line with the current analysis.

- (11) a. Mina-ka halape.nim-**lul** an-ass-e.
 Mina-NOM grandpa.H-(*H.)ACC hug-PST-D
 ‘Mina hugged grandpa.’ (simple transitive)
 b. Mina-eykey halape.nim{-i/***kkeyse**} kuliw-e.
 Mina-DAT grandfather-NOM/*H.NOM miss-D
 ‘Mina misses grandpa.’ (psych verb)

One question that needs to be addressed is the following: Why is the DO ineligible for an H case marker even in the absence of an IO? This is evidenced by (11) and (12). In (11) and (12), the subject and the DO, to the exclusion of an IO, are introduced in the derivation.

- (12) a. Sensayng.nim-kkeyse halape.nim-**lul** an-usi-ass-e.
 teacher.H-H.NOM grandpa.H-(*H.)ACC hug-H-PST-D
 ‘The teacher hugged grandpa.’ (simple transitive)

- b. Sensayng.nim-kkeyse halape.nim{-i/*kkeyse} kuliwu-si-e.
 teacher.H-H.NOM grandfather-NOM/*H.NOM miss-H-D
 ‘The teacher misses grandpa.’ (psych verb)

Based on the discussion so far, (3) can be updated as (13). The DO cannot receive an H case marker in the presence of an IO or a subject.

- (13) $\text{Subj}_H/\text{IO}_H \dots \text{DO}_{*H}$ (H > non-H)

(13) can be reinterpreted as (14) based on (9). Any one of the two higher nominal arguments blocks the DO from participating in 1/2P agreement.

- (14) $\text{Subj}_{1[1/2P, R_1]}/\text{IO}_{2[1/2P, R_2]} \dots \text{DO}_{3[\emptyset, R_3]}$

In cases where an IA is realized as the subject, an H case marker can be assigned to the IA. This is illustrated in (15) which exhibits unaccusative and passive predicates. Under the proposal advanced in this work, the IA realized as the subject is eligible for 1/2P agreement.

- (15) a. Sensayng.nim-kkeyse nemeci-si-ess-e.
 teacher.H-H.NOM fall-H-PST-D
 ‘The teacher fell.’ (unaccusative)
- b. Sensayng.nim-kkeyse kyengchal-eyuyhay cap-hi-si-ess-e.
 teacher.H-H.NOM police-by catch-PASS-H-PST-D
 ‘The teacher was caught by the police.’ (passive)

To make sure that our story is airtight, we confirm that the subject of an unergative predicate is also eligible for an H case marker:

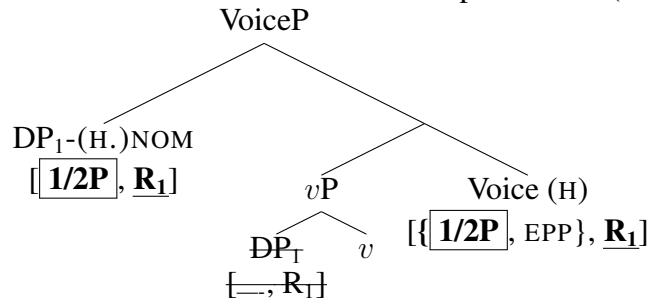
- (16) Sensayng.nim-kkeyse wus-usi-ess-e.
 teacher.H-H.NOM laugh-H-PST-D
 ‘The teacher laughed.’ (unergative)

When it comes to the PCC, some have argued that 1/2P is localized on Voice (see Béjar & Rezac 2003, Anagnostopoulou 2005, Nevins 2007, and Stegovec 2020). In fact, this is desirable under the current analysis. The DO is H case marker-less in simple transitives because 1/2P is licensed to the subject by Voice instead. In cases where Voice does not introduce an argument, as in unaccusatives and passives, 1/2P is licensed to the IA after it moves to the edge of VoiceP (see Legate 2003). This provides the necessary condition for the IA to be assigned an H case marker.

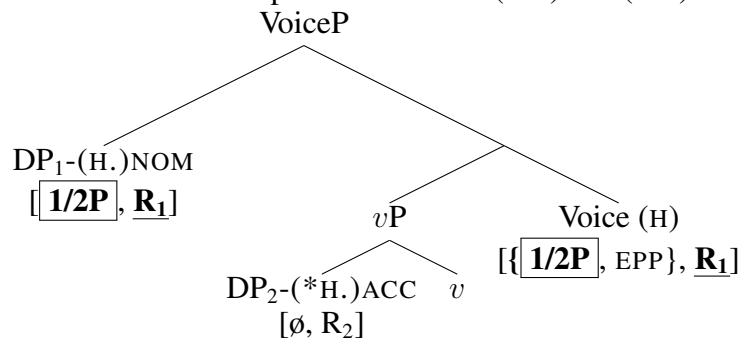
Based on the empirical data from Korean, we have established that 1/2P agreement takes place between (i) Appl and its applied argument, and (ii) Voice and the subject. For both cases, I assume that a Spec-head configuration is established where 1/2P on Appl and Voice is licensed to their nominal arguments. (17)–(19) schematizes how H is licensed in unaccusatives, passives, simple transitives, and ditransitives. To ensure that the agreement takes place in a Spec-head relation, it may be the case that EPP and 1/2P are bundled together (see Baker 2003, Collins 2004, and Carstens 2005 for discussions on EPP and φ -feature bundling in Bantu

languages). Here, EPP and 1/2P on Appl and Voice are checked together by the nominal arguments in Spec,ApplP and Spec,VoiceP, respectively. In fact, this is what makes the restrictions on H case markers resemble the PCC. Note that Voice probes R_1 and Appl probes R_2 when the two heads participate in agreement.

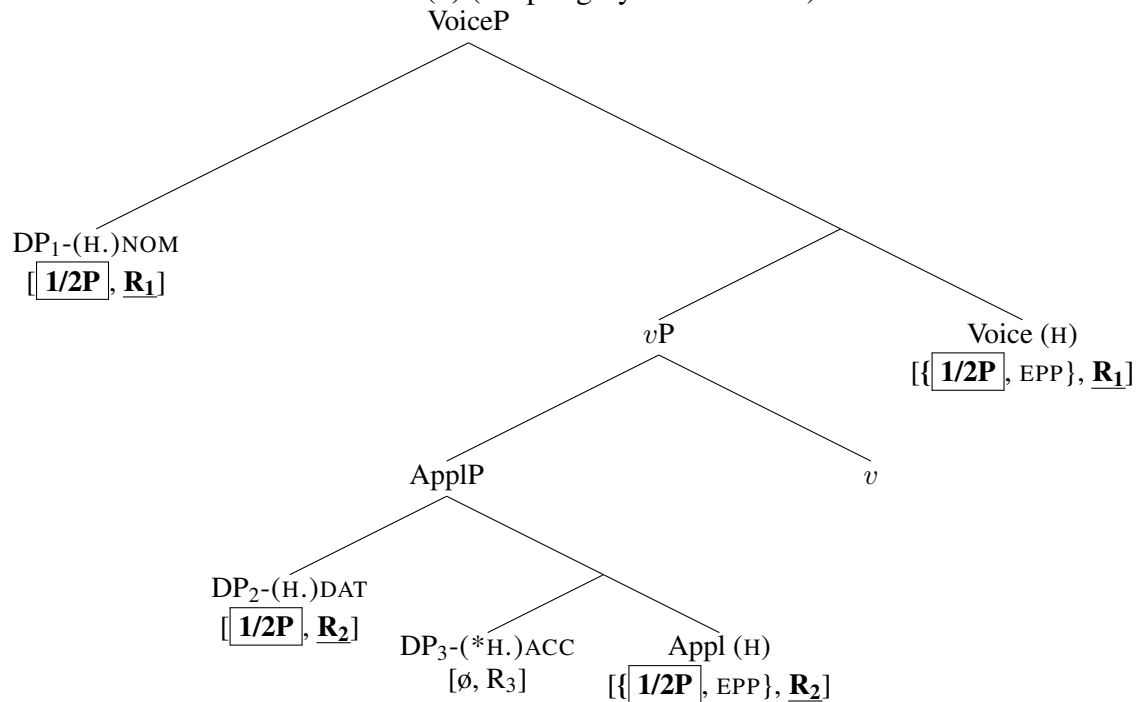
- (17) A derivation for unaccusatives and passives μ_{EPP} (15) (adopting Legate 2003)



- (18) A derivation for simple transitives μ_{EPP} (11a) and (12a)

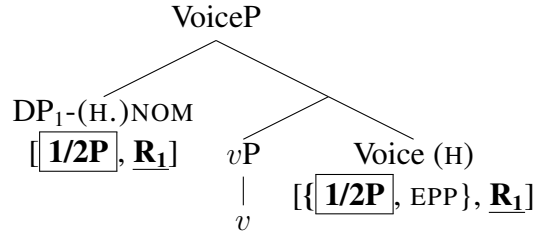


- (19) A derivation for ditransitives μ_{EPP} (4) (adopting Pylkkänen 2008)

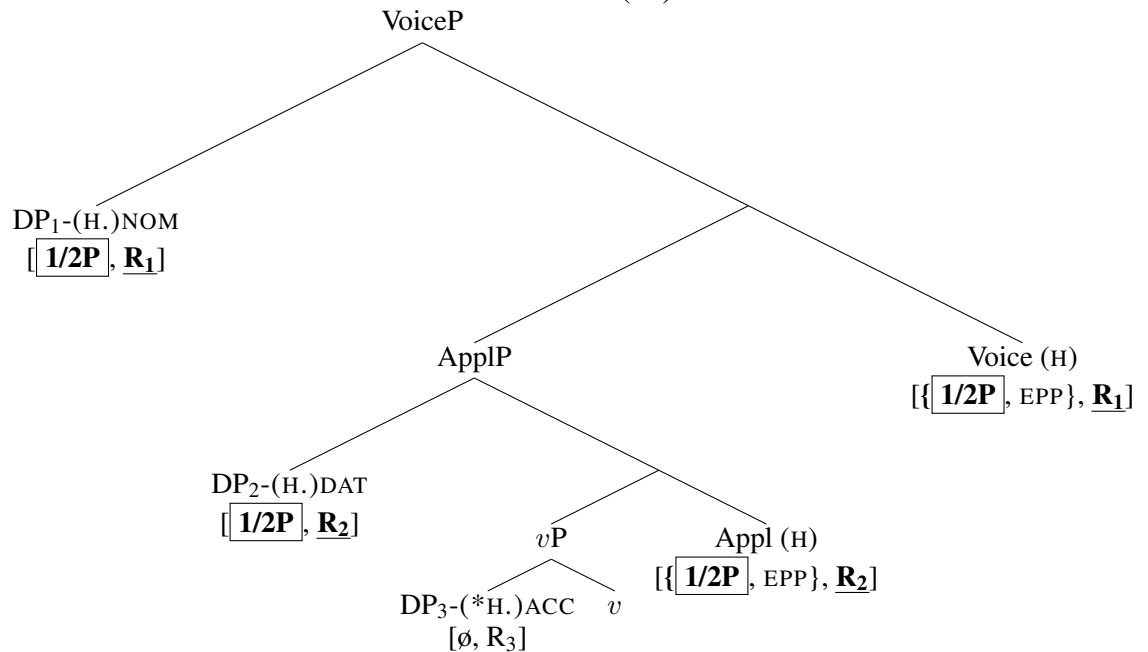


Recall that my analysis extends to unergatives, benefactives, and causatives. (20) and (21) flesh out the relevant details.

(20) A derivation for unergatives \mathbb{E} (16)



(21) A derivation for benefactives and causatives \mathbb{E} (10)



Before concluding this section, I highlight that my proposal hinges on the idea that the IO asymmetrically c-commands the DO prior to movement.¹ Lee (2024) presents independent evidence suggesting that the structural hierarchy of the IO and the DO in Korean is exactly the way it is presented here. Now, we are in a position to address whether the approach advanced for Korean applies to other languages. In what follows, I examine whether my analysis can account for the honorification facts in Japanese.

4 Cross-linguistic evidence

While Japanese does not showcase H case markers as Korean does, it exhibits H markers on the predicate. Boeckx & Niinuma (2004) report that object H agreement in Japanese is sensitive to an intervention effect that resembles the PCC effect. That

¹I thank Professor Bum-Sik Park for pointing this out.

is, object H agreement is associated with the IO instead of the DO in ditransitives. The relevant data is provided in (22) and (23). I note in passing that subject H agreement is independently motivated and is not the main concern of this paper.

(22) Hanako-ga Tanaka sensei-ni Mary-o go-syookai-si-ta.
 Hanako-NOM Prof.Tanaka-DAT Mary-ACC H-introduce-do-PST
 ‘Hanako introduced Mary to Prof. Tanaka.’

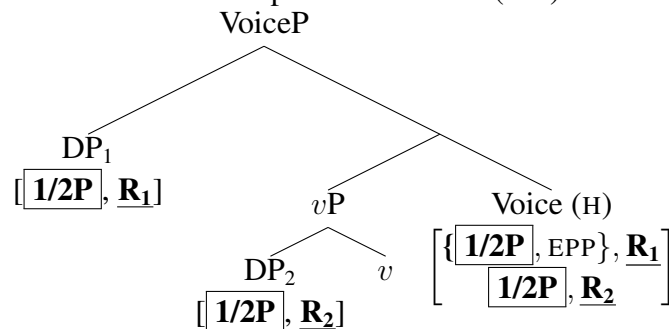
(23) *Hanako-ga Mary-ni Tanaka sensei-o go-syookai-si-ta.
 Hanako-NOM Mary-DAT Prof.Tanaka-ACC H-introduce-do-PST
 ‘Hanako introduced Prof. Tanaka to Mary.’ (Boeckx & Niinuma 2004:456)

(24a) shows that object H agreement can target the DO in simple transitives. No intervention effect is observed here due to the absence of an IO. Japanese honorification can be suppressed, however, if the subject referent holds a higher social status than the DO referent. This is demonstrated in (24b). For this reason, the subject referent has to be taken into consideration when object honorification is at play.

(24) a. Taroo-wa butyoo-o go-syootai-si-ta.
 Taroo-TOP manager-ACC H-invite-do-PST
 ‘Taroo invited the manager.’
 b. #Syatyoo-wa butyoo-o go-syootai-si-ta.
 CEO-TOP manager-ACC H-invite-do-PST
 ‘#The CEO invited the manager.’ (Ikawa 2022:528)

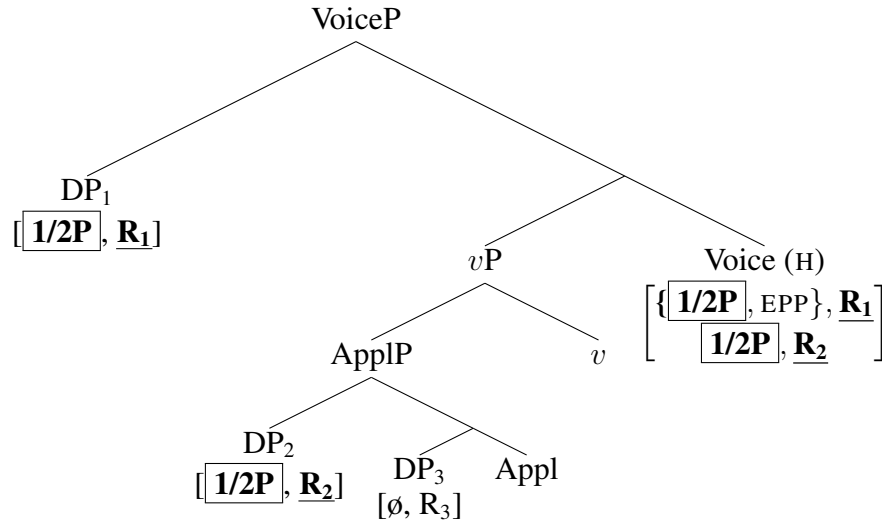
Ikawa (2022) argues that a probe searches downwards for the closest c-commanding argument (e.g., an IA) and another probe on the same head searches upwards for the closest non-commanding argument (e.g., an EA). Based on the discussion in Section 3, the speaker (1P) and the addressee (2P) also need to be factored in when honorificity is determined. Recall that Voice hosts 1/2P (see also Boeckx & Niinuma 2004). When multiple instances of agreement take place, the referents, R_1 and R_2 , are probed by Voice. (25) and (26) schematize the derivations for simple transitives and ditransitives in Japanese.²

(25) A derivation for simple transitives \Rightarrow (24a)



²In Japanese, it is not entirely clear whether Appl participates in 1/2P agreement. Perhaps language parameter is at play here. Future work remains to be done on this topic.

(26) A derivation for ditransitives (22)



Overall, I emphasize that the realization of H is made possible via φ -feature agreement. Specifically, I claim that agreement is not about H per se, but about person features that have already been widely adopted to characterize syntactic agreement patterns and the PCC. Crucially, honorification boils down to person feature agreement displaying a version of the PCC. Hence, two independent-looking phenomena receive a parallel treatment.

5 Conclusion

I have argued that the realization of H is made possible via φ -feature agreement. Specifically, I have claimed that agreement is not about H per se, but about person features that have already been widely adopted to account for other aspects of the grammar. We have gained independent evidence for placing 1/2P on an argument introducer such as Voice or Appl based on the previous literature addressing the PCC. This brings us to the following question: Why are argument introducers recruited for the realization of H? Note that a similar kind of inquiry can be leveled at the following question: Why should the PCC hold? While there are unanswered aspects to this question, I believe the PCC and the restrictions on honorification can be treated on par with each other. Hopefully, this brings us closer to a unified approach that provides a fuller explanation as to why these restrictions/constraints hold in syntax.

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