

snippets

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Editorial Statement

1. Purpose

The aim of *Snippets* is to publish specific remarks that motivate research or that make theoretical points germane to current work. The ideal contribution is brief, self-contained and explicit. One encounters short comments of this kind in earlier literature in linguistics. We feel that there no longer is a forum for them. We want *Snippets* to help fill that gap.

2. Content

We will publish notes that contribute to the study of syntax and semantics in generative grammar. The notes are to be brief, self-contained and explicit. They may do any of the following things:

- point out an empirical phenomenon that challenges accepted generalizations or influential theoretical proposals;
- point out unnoticed minimal pairs that fall outside the scope of any existing theory;
- point out an empirical phenomenon that confirms the predictions of a theory in an area where the theory has not been tested;
- explicitly describe technical inconsistencies in a theory or in a set of frequently adopted assumptions;
- explicitly describe unnoticed assumptions that underlie a theory or assumptions that a theory needs to be supplemented with in order to make desired predictions;
- call attention to little-known or forgotten literature in which issues of immediate relevance are discussed.

We also encourage submissions that connect psycholinguistic data to theoretical issues. A proposal for a pilot experiment in language acquisition or language processing could make for an excellent snippet.

The earliest *Linguistic Inquiry* squibs exemplify the kind of remark we would like to publish. Some of them posed unobserved puzzles. For instance, a squib by Postal and Ross in *Linguistic Inquiry* 1:1 (“A Problem of Adverb Preposing”) noted that whether or not we can construe a sentence-initial temporal adverb with an embedded verb depends on the tense of the matrix verb. A squib by Perlmutter and Ross in *LI* 1:3 (“Relative Clauses with Split Antecedents”), challenging the prevailing analyses of coordination and extraposition, noted that conjoined clauses, neither of which contains a plural noun phrase, can appear next to an “extraposed” relative that can only describe groups. Other squibs drew attention to particular theoretical assumptions. For instance, a squib by Bresnan in *LI* 1:2 (“A Grammatical Fiction”) outlined an alternative account of the derivation of sentences containing *believe* and *force*, and asked whether there were principled reasons for dismissing any of the underlying assumptions (among them that semantic interpretation is sensitive to details of a syntactic derivation). A squib by Zwicky in *LI* 1:2 (“Class Complements in Phonology”) asked to what extent phonological rules refer to complements of classes. None of these squibs was more than a couple of paragraphs; all of them limited themselves to a precise question or observation.

3. Submission details

Snippets is an electronic journal. We will solicit submissions twice a year. The submissions that we accept will be posted on the journal website approximately 3 months after each deadline, and all accepted submissions will remain permanently on the website. *Snippets* is intended as a service to the linguistics community. Consequently, authors are advised that, when they submit to *Snippets*, we understand them as allowing their submission to be reproduced if published. At the same time, the rights for the published snippets themselves will remain with the authors. As a result, citation of *Snippets* material will have to indicate the author's name and the specific source of the material.

We will accept electronic submissions at the address snippetsjournal@gmail.com. Electronic submissions may take the form of (a) the text of an e-mail message, or (b) an attached file. The attached file should be a simple text file, a Word file (Mac or Windows), a Rich Text Format (RTF) file, or a PDF. The files must be anonymous, but must be accompanied with information about the authors: name, affiliation, and (postal or electronic) address. Submissions can be of any length below 500 words (including examples), with an additional half page allowed for diagrams, tables, and references. The submissions may not contain footnotes or general acknowledgments, except acknowledgements of funding sources, which must be credited in a line following the references. Authors who wish to acknowledge language consultants are allowed but not required to do so. We will not consider abstracts.

4. Editorial policy

Submissions will be reviewed by our editorial board and review board, and review will be name-blind both ways. While we guarantee a response within 3 months of the submission deadline, we will not necessarily provide more than a yes/no response to the submitter. We allow resubmission (once) of the same piece.

This statement reproduces with minor modifications the editorial statement in Issue 1 of Snippets (January 2000), edited by Carlo Cecchetto, Caterina Donati and Orin Percus.

Inalienable interpretation in attributive possession

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Scottish Gaelic (SG) has two ways of expressing attributive pronominal possession. The first is to use a possessive pronoun (1a). The other is to use a definite determiner and an inflected form of the preposition *aig* ‘at’ (1b). (All data from my native speaker consultants, Muriel Fisher and Margaret Stewart.)

- | | | | | | |
|-----|----|------------|--|----|-----------------|
| (1) | a. | mo mhac | | b. | am peann agam |
| | | my son | | | the pen at.1s |
| | | ‘my son’ | | | ‘my pen’ |
| | c. | #mo pheann | | d. | ?mo pheann fhìn |
| | | my pen | | | my pen self |
| | | ‘my pen’ | | | ‘my own pen’ |
| | e. | mo làmh | | f. | #an làmh agam |
| | | my hand | | | the hand at.1s |
| | | ‘my hand’ | | | ‘my hand’ |

The prescriptive literature on these two constructions identifies (1a) as expressing various forms of inalienability (kinship, whole part, body parts etc.) (Lamb 2003). The possessive pronoun construction with an alienable possession is either unacceptable or requires a special interpretation of closeness: (1c) means something like ‘my favorite pen’ but is viewed as odd by native speakers. The strangeness of (1c) is ameliorated by adding an emphatic particle like ‘self’ in (1d). The *aig*-construction in (1b) is typically used for alienable possession. (1e) would be the normal way of expressing body-part possession. (1f) requires special context to be acceptable, e.g., you are holding a severed hand.

This suggests that there is a structural difference between alienable and inalienable possession, since different constructions are used for the two types. However, the connection is not perfect, consistent with the literature on clausal possession (Bernd 1997, Myler 2016, Alshehri 1994, Guéron 2003). There are well-documented exceptions to tying the *aig*-construction to alienable possession, e.g., ‘my husband’ and ‘my daughter’ most naturally use *aig*-possession, by contrast to ‘my wife’ and ‘my son’, which use *mo*-possession (2):

- | | | | | |
|-----|----|-----------------|-------------|---------------|
| (2) | a. | an duine agam | #mo dhuine | ‘my husband’ |
| | b. | an nighean agam | #mo nighean | ‘my daughter’ |
| | c. | #a’ bhean agam | mo bhean | ‘my wife’ |
| | d. | #am mac agam | mo mhac | ‘my son’ |

Similarly, in East Sutherland Gaelic, the *mo*-construction has disappeared entirely, leaving only the *aig*-possessive construction for inalienable functions (Dorian 1981, Adger 2017). However, the connection between the *mo*-construction and inalienable is typically described in the descriptive literature as absolute.

SG does not have a verb ‘have’. Instead, it uses ‘to be’ combined with the preposition *aig* ‘at’ (3a). An attributively possessed DP inside a clausal possession structure is completely rejected when the two pronouns are identical (3b). In order to express ‘I have my pen’, the preferred form uses the possessive pronoun (3c) – normally reserved for inalienable possession. The ungrammaticality of (3c) appears to be a haplological effect: if you change the person inflection on either of the two possessors then the sentence becomes acceptable (3d). Similarly, if you disrupt the adjacency of the two *aig* forms, then the double *aig* becomes acceptable. The *agam agam* sequence is disrupted in (3e) by clefting the possessed DP. In (3f), it is disrupted by the emphatic particle.

- (3) a. Tha peann agam.
 be.PRES pen at.1s
 ‘I have a pen.’ (literally ‘a pen is at me’)
- b. *Tha [DP am peann agam] agam.
 be.PRES the pen at.1s at.1s
 ‘I have my pen.’
- c. Tha [DP mo pheann] agam.
 be.PRES my pen at.1s
 ‘I have my pen.’
- d. Tha [DP am peann agad] agam.
 be.PRES the pen at.2s at.1s
 ‘I have your pen.’
- e. ‘S e [DP am peann agam(sa)]_i a th’ _{t_i} agam
 CLEFT the pen at.1st(EMPH) WH be.PRES at.1s (‘S e = CLEFT)
 ‘It’s my pen that I have.’
- f. Tha [DP am peann agam-sa] agam.
 be.PRES the pen at.2s-EMPH at.1s
 ‘I have your pen.’

The effect in (3) holds in all persons. The grammaticality of (3b) is not improved by putting *-sa* on the second *agam*, which is independently allowed.

Critically, in (3c) the *mo*-construction loses its inalienability requirement. When the competing force of haplology comes into play, the *mo*-strategy becomes the primary way of expressing alienable possession too. The syntactic coding of inalienability in SG attributive possession is thus not as rigidly enforced as typically described. While prepositional *aig*-possession was already known to allow both interpretations, the fact that the *mo*-possession in SG also allows alienable possession is new.

The haplological phenomenon in (3) also has implications for the model of the grammar. There are two competing sets of constraints: (a) a syntax-semantics mapping constraint for the *mo*-construction corresponding with alienable possession and (b) a syntax-phonology mapping constraint against identical adjacent forms. When these two constraints come in conflict, the phonological constraint wins. This competition is hard to express in a traditional Y model where LF and PF branches do not interact. Instead, a model that allows transderivational comparison is required.

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Raising, uncased

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In his influential account of hyperraising in Brazilian Portuguese (BP), Nunes (2008, 2019) argues that hyperraising is mediated by whether a given raising predicate assigns inherent case to its CP complement. Per Nunes, for A-movement out of a CP to be licit, the CP itself must have been assigned inherent case by the raising predicate. An inherent case-bearing CP is taken by Nunes to be inactive for A-movement such that the CP does not count as an intervener in an A-over-A (Chomsky 1964) configuration, and accordingly hyperraising is not blocked. I challenge this case-mediated-intervention account by providing counterexamples from BP.

Nunes purports to show that (i) hyperraising is possible with some predicates (1a), but not others, (1b); and (ii) predicates that permit hyperraising *disallow* CP-raising to subject (1c), while predicates that disallow hyperraising do allow CP-raising (1d).

(1) Nunes's (2008) contrast

- a. *OK* Os menino-s parece-m [_{CP} que os ~~meninos~~ estão doente-s].
OK the boy.M-PL seem-3PL [_{CP} that ~~the boys~~ are sick-PL]
'The boys seem to be sick.'
- b. * Os menino-s fora-m dit-o-s [_{CP} que os ~~meninos~~ estão doente-s].
* the boy.M-PL be.PAST-PL said-M-PL [_{CP} that the boys are sick-PL]
Intended: 'The boys were said to be sick.'
- c. * [_{TP} [_{CP} Que os ~~menin-o-s~~ estão doente-s] parece].
* [_{TP} [_{CP} that the boy.M-PL are sick-PL] seem.3SG]
Intended: 'It seems that the boys are sick.'
- d. *OK* [_{TP} [_{CP} Que os ~~menin-o-s~~ estão doente-s] foi dito].
OK [_{TP} [_{CP} that the boy.M-PL are sick-PL] was said.3SG]
'That the boys were sick was said.'

Nunes claims that this asymmetry is due to *parecer* being an inherent case assigner while *foi dito* isn't.

Nunes' contrast is confounded by a factor observed by Halpert (2019): that CP-raising is only possible where a DP is permitted. A DP is not permitted as the subject of *parece* 'seems' in BP (2), so CP-raising is ruled out on independent grounds, in contrast to *ser certo* 'to be certain'-type predicates as in (3), which are not systematically considered by Nunes (2008, 2019).

- (2) * O fato que os ~~meninos~~ estão doentes parece.
* the fact that the boys are likely seems
Intended: 'The fact that the boys are sick seems.'
- (3) O fato que os ~~meninos~~ estão doentes é certo.
the fact that the boys are sick is certain
'The fact that the boys are sick is certain.'

When we do consider predicates like *ser certo* ‘to be certain’ (a baseline example is given in (4)), an embedded CP can indeed raise to subject (5), and for 8/10 BP speakers I consulted, it can also host a hyperraised matrix subject that triggers plural agreement on the verb (6):

- (4) [_{TP} É certo [_{CP} que esses lugar-es existe-m]].
 [_{TP} is certain.M.SG [_{CP} that these place.M-PL exist-PL]].
 ‘It is certain that these places exist.’
- (5) [_{TP} [_{CP} Que esses lugar-es existe-m] é certo]].
 [_{TP} [_{CP} that these place.M-PL exist-PL] is certain.M.SG]].
 ‘That these places exist is certain.’
- (6) [_{TP} Esses lugar-es são cert-o-s [_{CP} que esses lugar-es existe-m]].
 [_{TP} these place.M-PL are certain-M-PL [_{CP} that these places exist-PL]].
 ‘These places are certain to exist.’

Further, 5/6 consultants confirmed in subsequent judgments the availability of an idiomatic reading in (7) for the expression *o bicho vai pegar* (literally “the bug is going to grab”, meaning ‘bad things are going to happen’), which supports this being a true raising structure.

- (7) O bich-o é cert-o [_{CP} que o bich-o vai pega-r].
 the bug-M.SG is certain-M.SG [_{CP} that the bug goes grab-INF]
 Lit. “The bug will certainly grab.”; equivalent to ‘Shit is certainly going to hit the fan.’

Finally, counterexamples are not limited to *ser certo* ‘to be certain’ and are attested with other adjectives, such as *ser claro* ‘to be clear’¹ or *ser provável* ‘to be likely’², and with the raising verb *parecer* ‘seems’ as long as *parecer* is followed by an adjective, as in (8). Crucially, the same *parecer* + *ADJ* predicate also allows CP-raising to subject as in (9), which I constructed and checked with two BP-speaking consultants:

- (8) As outras 62 conjurações parecem claras que correspondem a Jesus.
 the other 62 conjuration.F.PL seem.PL clear.F.PL that correspond.PL to Jesus.
 ‘It seems clear that the other 62 examples correspond to Jesus.’³
- (9) Que as outras 62 conjurações correspondem a Jesus parece claro.
 that the other 62 conjuration.F.PL correspond.PL to Jesus seem.3SG clear.M.
 ‘That the other 62 examples correspond to Jesus seems clear.’

I should also note that Nunes (2008) includes a single example of *parece obvio* ‘seems obvious’ and deems it unable to license hyperraising, although this too is attested in various written sources and judged grammatical in follow-up judgments from two BP speakers (10), who also allow the constructed example in (11) with a CP subject.

¹ <https://istoedinheiro.com.br/nogueira-tenho-mil-vezes-mais-identificacao-com-bolsonaro-do-que-tinha-com-pt/>

² <https://www.iguariasnaturais.com.br/temperos-e-especiarias/mostarda-em-po>

³ <https://books.google.com/books?id=F3qXEAAQBAJ&pg=PT43&lpg=PT43&dq=%22parecem+claras+que%22&source=bl&ots=1NaOpI9EtL&sig=ACfU3U1tD1cWB1pupB1jzYw-sCT6QLQ6rA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwi28svkr7CEAxWrElkFHTAuDvgQ6AF6BAgUEAM#v=onepage&q=%22parecem%20claras%20que%22&f=false>

- (10) % algumas coisas que parecia-m ‘óbvias’ que ir-iam acontece-r não ir-ão.
 % some thing.F.PL that seemed-PL obvious.F.PL that go-COND happen-INF NEG go-FUT
 ‘Some things where it seemed ‘obvious’ that they were going to happen won’t actually happen.’⁴
- (11) Que algumas coisas ir-iam acontecer parecia óbvio.
 that some things go-COND happen seemed obvious.M.SG
 ‘That some things were going to happen seemed obvious.’

While Nunes acknowledges microvariation with respect to possible hyperraising predicates (reflected here with the observation that Nunes himself apparently rejects data like (10)), speakers who do allow hyperraising over *parece óbvio* ‘seem obvious’ crucially also allow CP itself to raise to subject, contra Nunes’s predictions.

The novel data provided here suggest that hyperraising is possible in BP even when the CP being raised out of it is active for A-movement (e.g. movement to Spec,TP), weakening Nunes’s inherent case account. Given the new data that reshape the locality profile of hyperraising in BP, we should revisit analyses that rely on phase-deactivation and/or Minimality (in which barrierhood is related to whether the constituent to be raised out of is able to raise) to mediate hyperraising (e.g. Nunes 2008, 2019; Carstens and Diercks 2013; Halpert 2019), or we should revisit Nunes’s classification of BP hyperraising as a strictly A-movement phenomenon (see Dias 2022 on this possibility in BP and Lohninger et al. 2022; Lohninger and Yip 2023 on the typology of cross-clausal A/A’ movement cross-linguistically).

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⁴<https://twitter.com/Paninodesu/status/1304586148874989568>

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Agreement resolution in ditransitives: An undiscussed pattern from Sampang

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This paper notes an agreement system of a type apparently undiscussed in the theoretical literature. This system is found in Sampang (Kiranti [Tibeto-Burman], Nepal [Khotang district] — see Hodgson 1857; Konow 1909; Wolfenden 1933; Wong 2006; Rai 2009; Huysmans 2007, 2011; Rai et al. 2015; Rai 2018). a language with biactantial (ergative-absolutive) verb agreement, displaying three-way contrasts in person (1, 2, 3) and number (singular [SG], dual [DU], plural [PL]), as well as a two-way clusivity contrast (inclusive [INC] vs. exclusive [EXC]). An example is given below, with ergative agreement underlined and absolutive agreement **bolded**:

- (1) Japs-a-**tsi-ka-na**.
hit-PST-DU-**1EXC-2**
'You (sg.) hit us (du.).'

Unusually, certain ditransitive verbal forms show a single marker (optionally) expressing *resolved* agreement with the two object arguments, similar to what is crosslinguistically observed with coordinate constructions (e.g. Corbett 1983, 1991, see also Nevins and Weissner 2019 for a recent review, as well as references below) or between subjects and objects (Gluckman 2016). We observe the following resolutions:

- (2) *Feature Resolution in Sampang Agreement*

Number

SG	+	SG	→	DU
SG/PL/DU	+	PL/DU	→	PL

Person

1EXC	+	3	→	1EXC
1EXC	+	2	→	1INC
2	+	3	→	2

Some of the relevant contrasts are neutralised on the surface due to other properties of the Sampang agreement system – in particular, 3DU and 3PL marking are generally not distinguished for object agreement.

An example of resolved agreement can be seen in (3):

- (3) Gita-wa kã-lai um-pama-lo tup-m-**e-ka**.
Gita-ERG 1SG-DAT 3SG.POSS-parents-COM meet-CAUS-**1PL.ABS-EXC**
'Gita introduced me to her parents.'

In (3), first and third persons are resolved as first person exclusive, with singular and dual resolved as plural number.

These sorts of resolutions are symmetric – they occur regardless of the order or case-marking of the elements in question, as can be seen in (4):

- (4) a. Rame-wa kã-lai ana-lo m^hu-mj-a-tsi.
 Ram-ERG 1SG-DAT 2SG-COM fight-CAUS-PST-DU.ABS(1INC)
 ‘Ram made me fight [with] you (sg.).’
 b. Rame-wa ana-lai kã-lo m^hu-mj-a-tsi.
 Ram-ERG 2SG-DAT 1SG-COM fight-CAUS-PST-DU.ABS(1INC)
 ‘Ram made you (sg.) fight [with] me.’

(It may be noted that all of the examples here are derived ditransitives, in particular causatives – the reason for this is that Sampang only permits agreement with animate arguments, and simple ditransitives in Sampang like *pi-ma* ‘to give’ are difficult to elicit with multiple animate arguments for pragmatic reasons. As such I have not been able to obtain examples of simple ditransitives with multiple potential object agreement targets. I do not entirely rule out the possibility that simple ditransitives may show different behaviour to the derived ditransitives shown here.)

Given the comitative marking on the embedded object in (3) and (4), it may be tempting to suppose that what we are observing here is in fact a coordinate phrase, in particular as Sampang coordinate phrases both typically involve the same marker *-lo*, and show resolved agreement. A coordinate analysis is not tenable, however, for two reasons. First, in coordinate constructions *-lo* appears on the first coordinand, not on the second, as we see here. Secondly, as with most languages of the region, Sampang case markers are clitics attaching to whole arguments, including whole coordinate phrases. In these examples, however, *-lai* attaches only to the first of the object-like elements. Both of the relevant properties are illustrated in an example involving true coordination below (coordinate phrase underlined):

- (5) Rame-wa Ramese-lo Krisne-lai Sjame-lo tup-mj-u-tsi.
 Ram-ERG Ramesh-COORD Krishna-DAT Shyam-COM meet-CAUS-PST.TR.3ABS-NSG.ABS
 ‘Ram introduced Ramesh and Krishna to Shyam.’

The comitative marking is in fact due to selectional properties of the embedded predicate in these constructions. If we consider a non-causative version of one of these predicates we can observe that we *do not* see resolved agreement, in spite of the presence of the marker *-lo*. Instead we see normal ergative/absolutive agreement. This is further evidence against treating the forms with *-lo* as coordinate phrases.

- (6) Kã k^ho-tsi-lo tup-u-ŋ-tsu-ŋ.
 1SG 3-NSG-COM meet-PST.TR.3ABS-1SG.ERG-NSG.ABS-1SG.ERG
 ‘I met them.’

The fact that we do not have a coordination construction here means we cannot directly apply accounts where feature resolution applies within the coordinate phrase itself (e.g. Dalrymple and Kaplan 2000; Wechsler 2008; Bošković 2009; Franks and Willer-Gold 2014; Marušič et al. 2015; Murphy and Puškar 2018). Instead we must assume the locus of resolution is another agreement probe – cf., e.g., Grosz 2015; Citko 2018; also cf. the cases of agreement discussed by e.g. Gluckman (2016); Nevins (2018); Shen (2019); Camargo Souza (2020). In particular, we can plausibly suppose that the probe in question here is an absolutive agreement probe.

This pattern does not extend to all ditransitives, or indeed all forms which take *-lo* on one of their objects – most show absolutive agreement with only a single argument. In fact, the verbs permitting resolved agreement tend to be causatives of *symmetric* predicates. For example, the verb translated ‘introduce’ above is a causative of *tup-ma* ‘to meet’. This is a symmetric predicate – ‘I met him’ implies ‘he met me’. Causatives of *asymmetric* predicates do not show the same patterning. Take *toi-me-ma* ‘to make ask’. The verb ‘ask’ is asymmetric – ‘I asked you’ does not imply ‘you asked me’. Its causative accordingly does not permit resolved agreement – contrast the examples below:

- (7) a. Gita-wa ana-lai Rames-lo tup-mj-a-**tsi-na**.
 Gita-ERG 2SG-DAT Ramesh-COM meet-CAUS-PST-**DU-2**
 ‘Gita introduced you (sg.) to Ramesh.’
 b. Ram-wa ana-lai Gita-lo toi-mj-a-**na**.
 Ram-ERG 2SG-DAT Gita-COM ask-CAUS-PST-**2(SG)**
 ‘Ram made you (sg.) ask Gita.’ (*toi-mj-a-tsi-na)

Symmetric predicates show additional special properties in Sampang – e.g. they do not permit reciprocal voice marking, instead showing a bare detransitivised form. Consider the forms below:

- (8) a. Katsika tol-mj-a-**tsi-ka**.
 1DU.EXC push-RECIP-PST-**DU.ABS-1EXC**
 ‘We (du.) pushed each other.’
 (Asymmetric predicate; licenses reciprocal voice marking)
 b. Katsika tup-(*mj-)a-**tsi-ka**.
 1DU.EXC meet-(*RECIP-)PST-**DU.ABS-1EXC**
 ‘We (du.) met [each other].’
 (Symmetric predicate; does not license reciprocal voice marking)

It seems likely that this is linked to the reason for the availability of resolved agreement in the ditransitive forms.

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