

# The syntax and semantics of bare nominals in Wolof

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## Overview of lecture #5

- Brief summary of Dayal's (2011) analysis is the number interpretation of BNs in Hindi.
- **Feature licensing** (Béjar & Rezac, 2009; Kalin, 2017, 2019)
- Feature licensing analysis of BNs in Wolof.

## 1 Singular BNs in Hindi: Dayal (2011)

### A. Overview

- **Dayal**: BNs in Hindi are not number-neutral, but rather singular.
- Proposal: the plural interpretation arises as a byproduct of a pluractional operator that applies at the sentential level and which is introduced by aspect.

### B. Empirical basis for the proposal

- (1) a. anu-ne [ tiin ghanTe meN ] / [ tiin ghanTe tak ] **kitaab**  
Anu-ERG [ 3 hours in ] / [ 3 hours for ] book  
paRhii.  
read-PFV

- i. 'Anu read a book in three hours' (= exactly one book.)  
ii. 'Anu read a book for three hours' (= one or more books.)
- b. anu-ne [ tiin ghanTe meN ] / \*[ tiin ghanTe tak ] **kitaab**  
Anu-ERG [ 3 hours in ] / \*[ 3 hours for ] book  
paRh Daalii.  
read COMPL.PFV  
'Anu read a book in three hours' (= exactly one book)
- c. \* anu-ne [ tiin ghanTe meN ] **kitaab** ikaTTaa kar lii.  
Anu-ERG [ 3 hours in ] book collect do COMPL.PFV  
Lit.: 'Anu got done collecting a book in three hours.'
- d. anu-ne [ tiin ghanTe meN ] **kitaabeN** ikaTTaa kar lii.  
Anu-ERG [ 3 hours in ] books collect do COMPL.PFV  
'Anu got done collecting books in three hours.'

[Dayal 2011, (32); adapted]

- (1a) shows that the number interpretation of the BN *kitaab* 'book' depends on the telicity of the predicate.
  - The temporal adverb *tiin ghanTe meN* 'in three hours' picks out the telic reading of the predicate. In that case, the BN has an exclusively singular interpretation.
  - It is only when an atelic reading is singled out (in (1a), by using *tiin ghanTe tak* 'for three hours') that the number-neutral interpretation of the BN arises.
- In (1b), the atelic reading is eliminated via the addition of the completive particle *Daalii*.
  - As expected from the pattern observed in (1a), only a singular interpretation is available. Or, more relevantly for Dayal's claim, a number-neutral interpretation becomes impossible.
- In (1c), the verb is now a collective predicate and the telic reading is enforced by a completive particle. A BN is disallowed.
- If the BN is replaced with a bare plural, the result is well-formed again (1d).
  - ⇒ (1) demonstrates that **the number interpretation of BNs in Hindi is correlated with the aspectual properties** of the overall sentence where it is embedded.

### C. Analysis

- **Dayal** proposes that BNs in Hindi are singular, but aspect may introduce a pluractional operator that applies to the event the BN is a part of.

- The iterative interpretation of the event has a byproduct a number neutral interpretation of the otherwise singular object BN.
  - See technical implementation in the original paper.

#### D. Would this analysis apply to Wolof?

- I don't think so: aspect remains the same in the Wolof data.
  - (2) \* Jangalekat b-i dajeele-na xale ci bayaal  
 teacher CM.SG-DEF gather-NA.3SG child PREP park  
 b-i.  
 CM.SG-DEF  
 Lit.: 'The teacher gathered child in the park.'
  - (3) Jangalekat b-i dajeele-na xale [ y-u Samba  
 teacher CM.SG-DEF gather-NA.3SG child [ CM.PL-COMP Samba  
 xam ] ci bayaal b-i.  
 know ] PREP park CM.SG-DEF  
 'The teacher gathered some students who Samba knows in the park.'
  - (4) \* Roxaya dajeele-na féckkat brezilien.  
 Roxaya gather-NA.3SG dancer Brazilian  
 Lit.: 'Roxaya gathered Brazilian student.'
  - (5) \* Dajeele-na-a sama muus ci tool b-i.  
 gather-NA-1SG POSS.1SG cat PREP garden CM.SG-DEF  
 Lit.: 'I gathered my cat in the garden.'
  - (6) Roxaya boole-na xaj-u Kadeer \*( ak xaj-u  
 Roxaya put.together-NA.3SG dog-GEN Kadeer \*( CONJ dog-GEN  
 Kumba ).  
 Kumba )  
 'Roxaya put together Kadeer's dog \*(with Kumba's dog).'

- What does change: presence or absence of nominal-internal elements that expone a plural feature.

#### E. Looking forward

- I will propose an analysis that accounts for the correlation between the interpretation of BNs in Wolof and the the presence of the occurrence of plural morphology.
- How: by stipulation a condition on the licensing of the feature [Plural], an extension of existing analyses of independent phenomena.
- Next section: background on nominal licensing based on Agree with interpretable features.

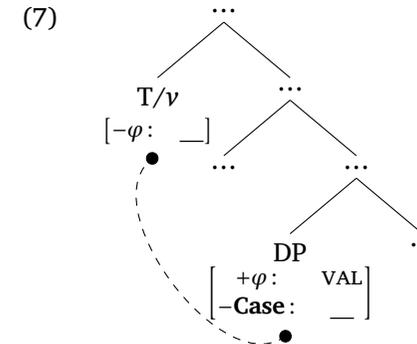
## 2 Generalized nominal licensing: Kalin (2017, 2019)

### A. Overview

- Kalin diverges from the view that nominal licensing depends on the valuation of a Case feature.
- Rather, the author argues that nominal licensing is driven by the needs of valued/interpretable features.
- The proposal is based on an extension of a prominent analysis of the Person Case Constraint (PCC; Béjar & Rezac 2009), and which is empirically motivated by similarities that Kalin finds between the PCC and Differential Object Marking (DOM).

### B. Chomsky (2000, 2001)'s view of nominal licensing.

- Features come in two types: (i) interpretable and valued; (ii) uninterpretable and unvalued.
- Uninterpretable/unvalued  $\varphi$ -features in e.g. T or  $v$  act as probes. Interpretable/valued  $\varphi$ -features in DPs in the c-command domain of a probe can value and delete the matching features in the probe.



- Importantly, an uninterpretable/unvalued **Case** feature renders a DP visible in the derivation.
  - Case valuation in the DP is taken to be a reflex of  $\varphi$ -feature valuation.
  - Nominal licensing under this view is taken to be the valuation of the DP's Case feature.

### C. Kalin (2017, 2019)'s alternative view of nominal licensing

- Nominal licensing is driven not by the need to value a Case feature, but rather by **the need to legitimize its valued features**.
- Empirical motivation: similarities between Differential Object Marking (DOM) and the Person Case Constraint (PCC).

## 2.1 Similarities between DOM and the PCC

### A. Person Case Constraint (PCC)

- Descriptively, “[t]he Person-Case Constraint (PCC) is a restriction on co-occurring weak pronominal direct (DO) and indirect objects (IO) that restricts the person value of the DO” (handy definition by [Stegovec 2019](#)).

(8) *PCC in Catalan: in a combination of a weak DO and a weak IO, the DO has to be third person.*

- El director, **me** l’=ha recomanat la Mireia.  
the director 1SG 3SG.ACC=has recommended the Mireia  
‘As for the director, Mireia has recommended him to me.’
- \*A-l director, **me li** ha recomanat la Mireia.  
to-the director 1SG 3SG.DAT has recommended the Mireia  
Mireia  
Int.: ‘As for the director, Mireia has recommended me to him.’

[Bonet 1991, cited by [Kalin 2019](#), p. 16]

- A prominent analysis of the PCC: [Béjar & Rezac \(2003, 2009\)](#): PCC effects stem from the need of a nominal to be licensed, above and beyond Case licensing.
- Specifically, the PCC is derived from the need of marked person features to be Agreed with. Importantly, person features in a nominal are usually assumed to be interpretable/valued.

#### Person Licensing Condition (PLC)

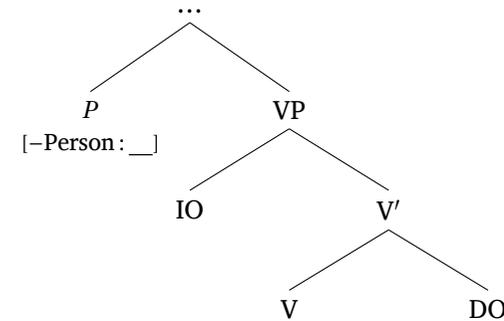
- (9) Interpretable 1st/2nd person features must be licensed by entering into an Agree relation with an appropriate functional category.

[[Béjar & Rezac 2003](#)]

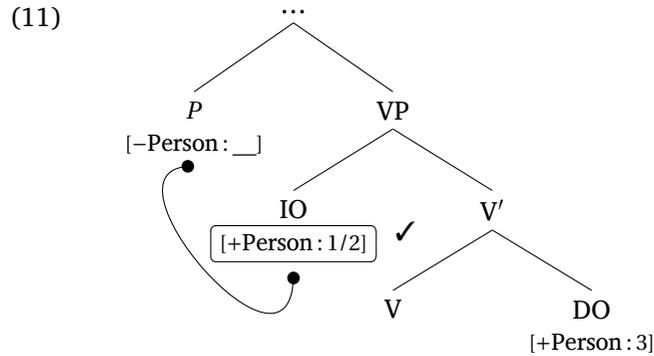
B. How (9) captures data like (8):

- Assume that the IO asymmetrically c-commands the DO and that a  $\varphi$ -probe (which includes a person feature) asymmetrically c-commands both.
- Assume also that a probe cannot reach a goal Y if there is a closer goal X, such that X asymmetrically c-commands Y.

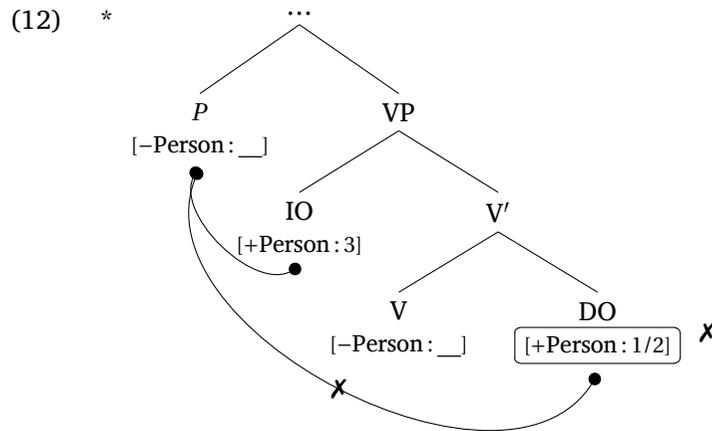
(10)



- If the IO is a 1st (or 2nd) person weak pronoun the probe can Agree with it, satisfying the PLC (9).



- If the IO is a 3rd person weak pronoun, as in (8b), the probe can no longer Agree with the 1st person DO. This violates the PLC (9).



C. Differential Object Marking (DOM)

- Informally, DOM consists in the occurrence of some morphology (case or agreement) which is required by objects that are high in some property like definiteness, specificity, animacy, etc.

(13) DOM in Spanish: mood in relative clause

- María buscó a/∅ una gestora [RC que hablara alemán ].  
 María sought DOM/∅ a manager [ that spoke.SBJV German ].  
 ‘María was looking for a manager that spoke German.’
- María buscó a/\*∅ una gestora [RC que hablaba alemán ].  
 María sought DOM/\*∅ a manager [ that spoke.IND German ].  
 ‘María was looking for a manager that spoke German.’

[López 2012, p. 1ff]

- Subjunctive mood in a relative clause ensures that the noun modified by it be interpreted exclusively as non-specific. As such, *gestora* ‘manager’ in (13a) can only be non-specific. In that case, DOM is optional.
- Conversely, indicative mood in a relative clause enforces a specific interpretation for the head of the relative. In that case, DOM is obligatory.  
 ⇒ “[U]nmarked objects cannot be specific while marked objects can be (but do not have to be)” (López, 2012, p. 2).

D. Similarities between the PCC and DOM

- Prima facie, there is not much in common between the two phenomena.
- Nevertheless, Kalin (2017, 2019) outlines the commonalities that do exist between them, once we look at at right level of abstraction. Some of them are the following (see more similarities in the original papers):
  - Both DOM and the PCC involved two nominals: DOM appears in an object, which implies the presence of a subject. The PCC affects a direct object in a ditransitive constructions, which involves an indirect object.
  - Both target just the lower of the two nominals: object (not subject) in DOM and direct object (not indirect object) in the PCC.
  - Both phenomena can be restated in terms of a “rescue” or “repair” for some configuration that is deemed illicit in a given language.

(14) Repair in the Catalan PCC

M’ha recomanat \*(a) tu per a la feina la  
 1-has recommended \*(P) 2 for P the job the  
 subdirectora.  
 deputy.director

‘The deputy director has recommended you to me for the job.’

[Kalin 2019, (6)]

(15) *Repair in the Spanish DOM*

Bes-ó            \*(a) María.  
kiss-3SG.PAST \*(P) María  
‘S/he kissed María.’

[Kalin 2019, (7), adapted]

- iv. The higher of the two nominals involved in the PCC or DOM is immune from the effect: subjects and indirect objects are not similarly restricted or differentiated the way that direct objects are.

E. Impetus drawn from the similarities between the PCC and DOM:

- Given these similarities, Kalin (2017, 2019) proposes to extend Béjar & Rezac’s PLC to nominal licensing in general.
- In other words, interpretable/valued features in nominals play a crucial role in their licensing.

## 2.2 Nominal licensing as licensing of interpretable/valued features

A. Feature ontology in Kalin (2019):

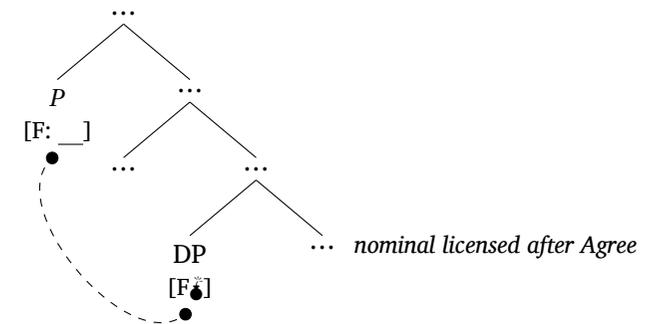
- |      |    |                   |   |
|------|----|-------------------|---|
| (16) | a. | [F: _]            | unvalued feature (= a probe)                      |
|      | b. | [F]               | a potential goal                                  |
|      | c. | [F <sub>•</sub> ] | a potential goal; a <b>derivational time bomb</b> |

- Derivational time bomb:** a feature that must be licensed during the course of the derivation, otherwise the derivation crashes.

B. Derivational time bombs and nominal licensing

- How are nominals licensed? If a nominal has a derivational time bomb (i.e. [F<sub>•</sub>]), it is licensed if a matching probe Agrees with it.

(17)



### Nominal licensing

- Certain (valued) nominal features are derivational time bombs, and nominals bearing such features need licensing.
- Nominals are licensed (i.e., derivational time bombs are defused) by entering into (DP-external) Agree.

[Kalin 2019, p. 20ff]

C. DOM and PCC under a theory of nominal licensing

- Recall: Kalin identifies a few similarities between the two phenomena.
- Goal: extend an existing analysis of the PCC (Béjar & Rezac, 2003, 2009) to DOM.
- How: this analysis is based on the licensing of nominal interpretable features by Agree. Under this view, it seems natural to propose that DOM is derived by the licensing of interpretable features as well.

D. Components of the system:

- Feature ontology in (16).
- By assumption, any sentence will have at least one licenser/probe (i.e. an unvalued feature that needs to be valued by Agree).
- Stipulation: secondary licensers may be introduced in the derivation as a last resort option, depending on language-specific resources.

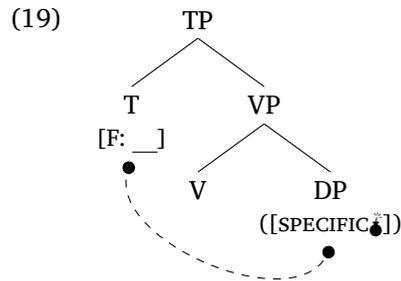
(18) *Licensing economy principle*

A secondary licenser is activated *iff* the derivation will otherwise not converge.

[Kalin 2019, (15)]

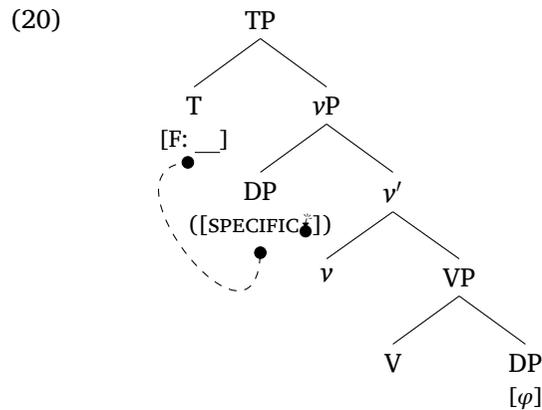
E. Accounting for DOM

- Assume: the primary licenser is the  $\varphi$ -features in T.
- Assume:  $v$  is a secondary licenser that may be introduced in the derivation as needed, in accordance with (18).
- Illustration with [SPECIFIC] as [F<sub>0</sub>] (derivational time bomb).
- Sample derivation #1: intransitive verb (unergative or unaccusative).<sup>1</sup>



- Whether or not the sole DP in the structure has a derivational time bomb, it can be licensed via Agree precisely because there is no other nominal with need of licensing.
- No need to insert a secondary licenser (the derivation converges without one).

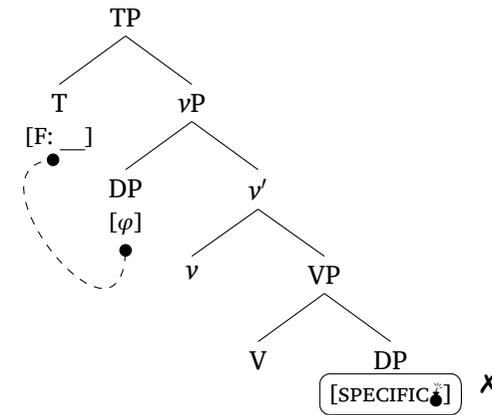
- Sample derivation #2: transitive verb; derivational time bomb in the subject



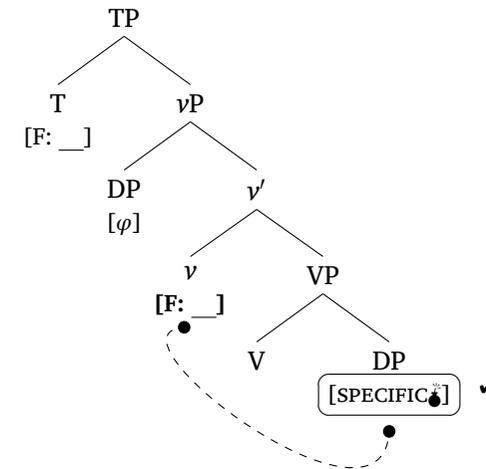
<sup>1</sup>For simplicity, I drew an unaccusative verb. The logic is the same with an unergative verb. What is relevant is that there is just one nominal to be licensed

- Again, it is of no consequence whether the subject has a derivational time bomb or not, since the probe in T will necessarily Agree with it.
- Sample derivation #3: transitive verb; derivational time bomb in the object

(21) a. Primary probe cannot Agree with object due to intervention



b. Secondary probe introduced in v to license object



- In this derivation, a secondary probe is added on v.
- This addition is sanctioned by the Licensing Economy Principle (18), since, otherwise, the derivation would crash: without the newly added secondary probe, the derivational time bomb [SPECIFIC] in the object would not be licensed.

F. DOM is in this analysis an emergent phenomenon.

- The extra morphology that appears in DOM (in Spanish, the preposition *a*) is a reflex of the need to add a secondary probe in the derivation.
- A crucial part of the analysis is that this need is triggered by the need to license an interpretable/valued feature (the derivational time bomb) via Agree.

G. How the analysis models language variation

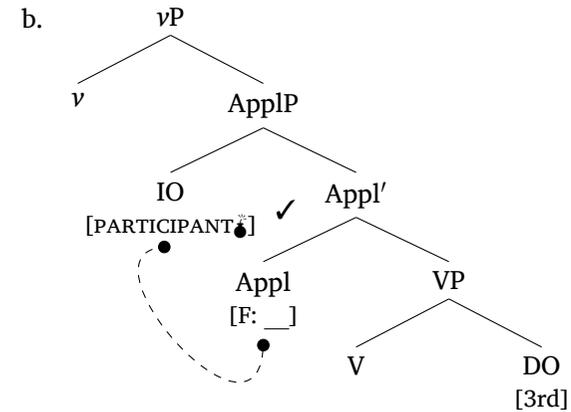
- Language without DOM (e.g. English): no derivational time bomb.<sup>2</sup>
- Different parameters of DOM (i.e. what is DOM governed by? specificity, animacy, etc): derivational time bombs differ from language to language.
- Another parameter variation: what counts as a secondary licenser and where it is located in the clausal structure.

H. Accounting for the PCC

- Assumptions:
  - Ditransitives (where the PCC arises; cf. (8)) have an applicative structure where the indirect object is the applied argument.
  - The applied argument is licensed in situ by Appl.
  - Nominals agreed with may no longer be goals for a given probe, but they do induce **defective intervention** (Chomsky, 2000).
    - If a probe *P* c-commands a goal *G1*, which in turn c-commands *G2*, where *G1* has previously been Agreed with, *P* cannot Agree with *G2*.
    - *G1* is thus said to be a defective intervener.
  - Relevant derivational time bomb: [PARTICIPANT<sub>1</sub>] (i.e. 1st and 2nd person). 3rd person is assumed not to have this feature, as it is, by definition, not a participant in the discourse.
- Sample derivation #1: IO is 1st person and DO is 3rd person.

(22) a. El director, **me** l<sup>1</sup>=ha recomanat la Mireia.  
 the director 1SG 3SG.ACC=has recommended the Mireia  
 ‘As for the director, Mireia has recommended him to me.’

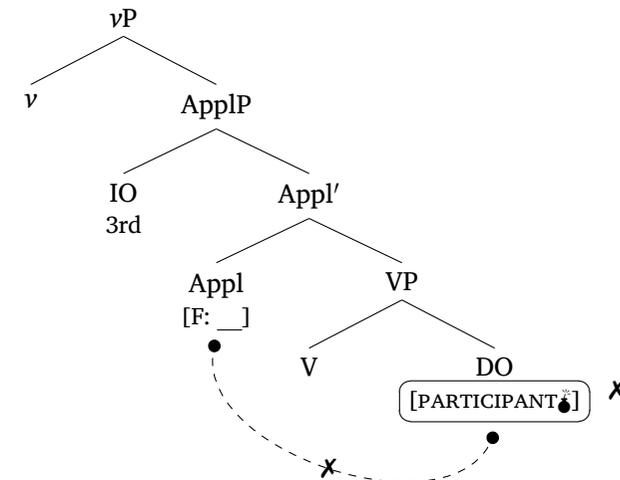
<sup>2</sup>Alternatively, a language may have a secondary licenser that has no overt exponence.



- Sample derivation #2: IO is 3rd person and DO is 1st person (PCC violation).

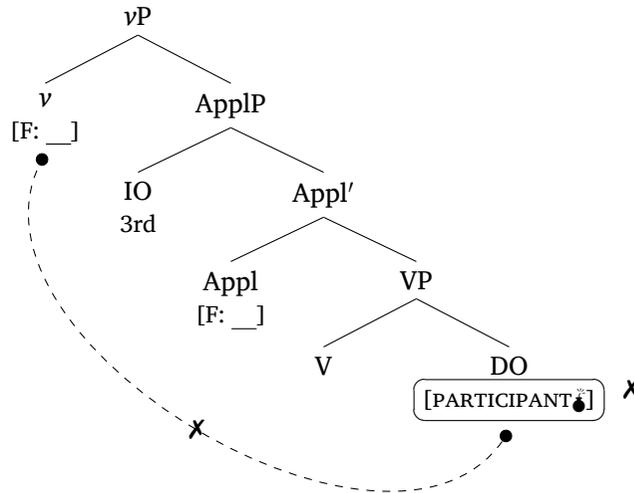
(23) a. \*A-l director, **me li** ha recomanat la  
 to-the director 1SG 3SG.DAT has recommended the  
 Mireia.  
 Mireia  
 Int.: ‘As for the director, Mireia has recommended me to him.’

b. *Primary probe cannot Agree with* ⚡



- Agree between Appl and the direct object is not possible because Appl licenses the argument in its Spec (IO).
- Sample derivation #3: IO is 3rd person and DO is 1st person, but secondary probe ( $v$ ) is added.

(24) *Secondary probe in  $v$  cannot Agree with  $\bullet^*$  due to defective intervention induced by DO*



- Sample derivation #4: language-specific repair (e.g. preposition insertion and full pronoun).

(25) M'ha recomanat \*(a) tu per a la feina la subdirectora.  
 1-has recommended \*(P) 2 for P the job the deputy.director  
 'The deputy director has recommended you to me for the job.'

[Kalin 2019, (6)]

### I. Summary

- Kalin (2017, 2019)'s main proposal: nominal licensing is driven not by the of uninterpretable features, but by the need of certain interpretable features to be Agreed with.
- Those features are derivational time bombs,  $[F_{\bullet^*}]$ .

### J. Next section

- Analysis of the number interpretation of BNs in Wolof that is based on Kalin (2017, 2019)'s generalized feature licensing.
- Specifically, I will propose that [Number: Plural] also has to be licensed by Agree.
- When this fails, only a derivation with [Number: Singular] converges.

## 3 A feature licensing analysis of BNs in Wolof

### A. Possible values for [Number] in Wolof

- Full nominals in Wolof can be either singular or plural.

(26) Xale **y-i** lekk-na-ñu gato **b-i**.  
 child CM.PL-DEF eat-NA-3PL cake CM.SG-DEF  
 'The children ate the cake.'

- All things equal, the same values for the number feature should be available for BNs as well.
- Desideratum: only the derivation with a singular BN converges.
- Proposal: this happens because of the failure to comply with the Number-Licensing Condition (27).

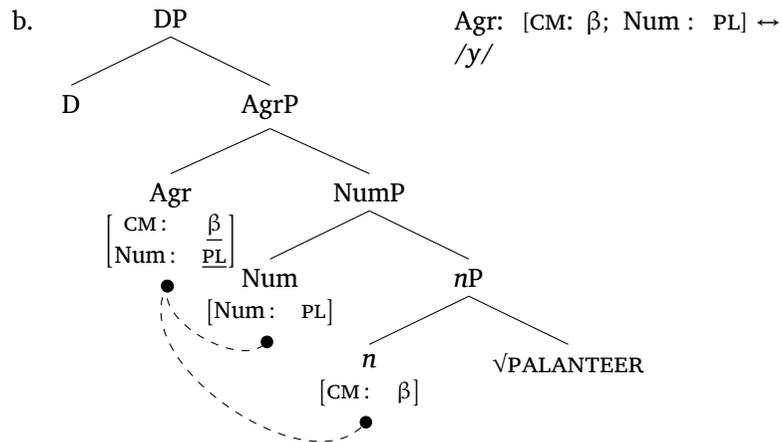
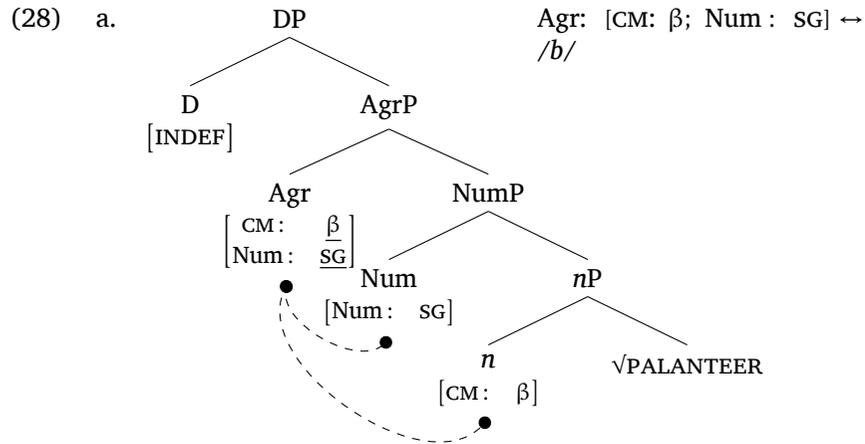
#### Number-Licensing Condition (NLC)

(27) A marked number feature (i.e. plural) must be licensed by Agree.

- Why is the NLC restricted to plural?
  - Nevins (2011): 'singular' is the absence of a number specification.
  - This could be why a condition like (27) cannot be formulated based on [SINGULAR].

B. How full nominals comply with the NLC (27)

- Stipulation: AgrP, which probes for Number and class marker, formalized as a feature.
- Recall: I assume that root-specific information like class or gender is encoded at categorizers (Acquaviva, 2009).



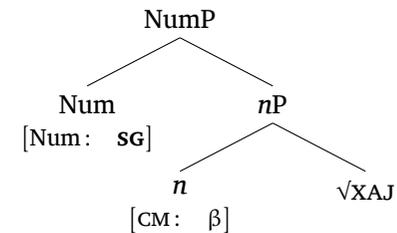
- In (28b), the NLC (27) is satisfied: the number feature in Agr Agrees with the plural feature in Num.

- (28a) satisfies the NLC vacuously, as the feature in Num is unmarked (i.e. singular).

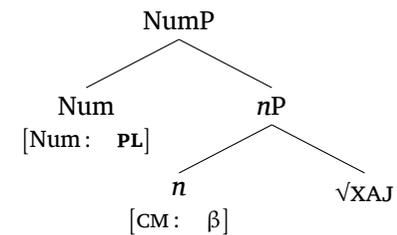
C. The structure of bare nominals and its number interpretation

- Following Massam (2001), a.o., I assume that BNs have a truncated structure.
- Specifically, I propose that BNs in Wolof lack an AgrP layer, since they lack a class marker.
- NumP is retained under the assumption that this is the only locus of number interpretation (Ritter 1991, 1992; Harbour 2011).<sup>3</sup>

(29) a. *NLC satisfied (vacuously)*



b. \* *NLC violated*



- Unlike what happens in the full nominal (28), in a BN, there is nothing to Agree with a [PLURAL] Num. As such, only a BN with a [SINGULAR] Num could converge.
- This would be why unmodified BNs in Wolof are exclusively singular.

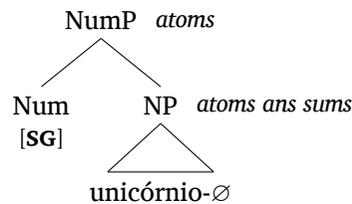
D. Further arguments to retain NumP in a BN.

- Rullmann & You (2006), Müller (2002), and Kramer (2017) investigate BNs in Mandarin, Brazilian Portuguese, and Amharic, respectively.

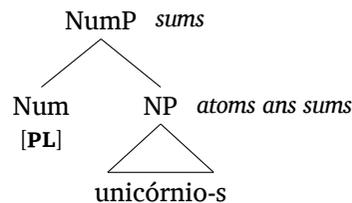
<sup>3</sup>I am so far agnostic regarding the projection of a silent DP layer (for convenience, I omit a DP in the BN representations to follow).

- In these languages BNs are number neutral.
- Rullmann & You, Müller, and Kramer capture this semantic property by proposing that BNs in these languages lack NumP.
- They assume that entities of type *e* denote singleton sets (atoms) and all their possible sums.
- What number does is restrict that denotation to only singleton sets (singular) or pluralities (plural).
- Under this view, number neutrality in BNs emerges as a consequence of the absence of a restriction that picks out just atoms or pluralities, so that both possibilities are available.
- In other words, the NumP-less nominal ends up number-neutral.

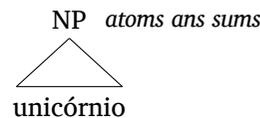
(30) a. *Singular nominal*



b. *Plural nominal*



c. *Bare nominal*



- This characterization does not fit Wolof BNs, which have a singular construal, exclusively. Hence, I keep NumP.

E. The plural morpheme in the relative clause is an instance of Agree.

- Torrence (2013): the class marker prefixed to the relative complementizer results from Agree.

- I propose to extend this analysis to the class markers that appear affixed to determiners.
- That class markers are the exponent of Agree is further suggested by the fact that more than one class marker can occur in the same nominal (cf. Kramer's (2009) analysis of multiple determiners in Amharic in terms of Agree).

(31) Bindakat b-i            binda-na    a-b            taalif [ ]  
 writer    CM.SG-DEF write-NA.3SG INDEF-CM.SG poem [ ]  
 b-u            Samba bëgg ].  
 CM.SG-COMP Samba like ]  
 'The writer wrote a poem that Samba likes.'

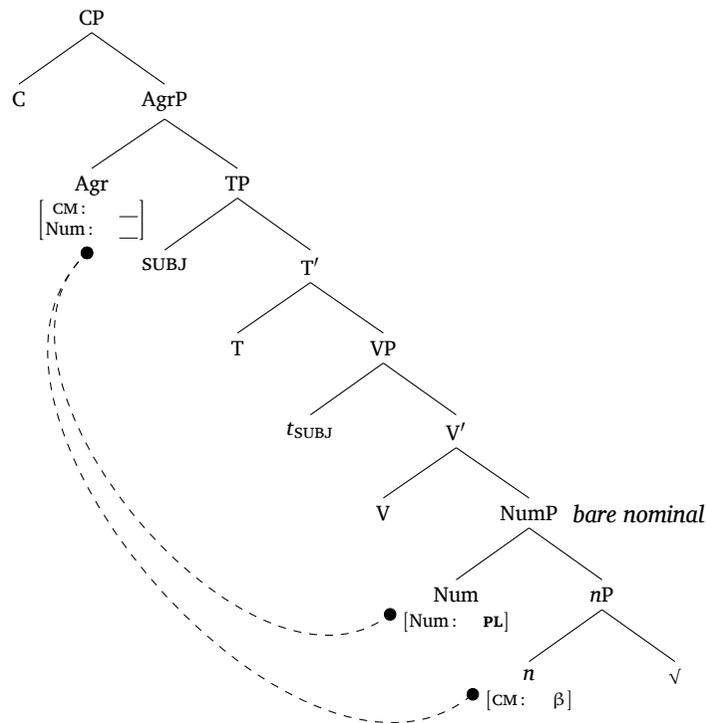
- The class markers in the determiner and in the relative complementizer must match (32). This is a property that can be attributed to multiple Agreement with the same goal.

(32) a. Samba tej-na            palanteer [ b-u            tilim ]  
 Samba close-NA.3SG window [ CM.SG-COMP dirty ]  
 b-i.            / \*y-i  
 CM.SG-DEF / \*CM.PL-DEF  
 'Samba closed the window that is dirty.'  
 b. Samba tej-na            palanteer [ y-u            tilim ]  
 Samba close-NA.3SG window [ CM.PL-COMP dirty ]  
 y-i            / \*b-i.  
 CM.PL-DEF / \*CM.SG-DEF  
 'Samba closed the windows that are dirty.'

F. BN modified by relative and the NLC

- (33) is a partial derivation where the BN is still inside the CP – recall that I am assuming a raising analysis for relative clauses in Wolof, following Torrence (2013).
  - Likewise, I follow Torrence in assuming that the class marker that appears affixed to the relative complementizer is the result of Agree with the head of the relative clause.
  - The class marker is represented as an Agr head that probes for both number and class.
- The Agr below CP probes down to value its [NUMBER] and [CM] features.

(33)



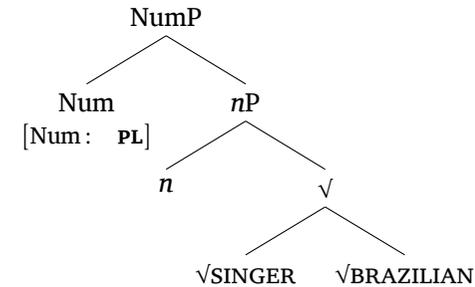
- It encounters the matching features in the BN (in boldface).
- In this structure, even though the BN itself does not have a [NUMBER] licenser (i.e. a matching probe that Agrees with it), the Agr at the CP level.
- The NLC (27) in this case can be complied with, hence why a BN can have a plural interpretation in this case.<sup>4</sup>

G. BN modified by plain modifier and the NLC

- Recall: plain modifiers are assumed to be the member of a compound without any morphological number.
- As such, there is no probe that Agrees with the number feature in NumP.

<sup>4</sup>(29) is a simplified diagram, where vP and  $\bar{A}$ -movement of the BN object to the phase edge are omitted for visual simplicity.

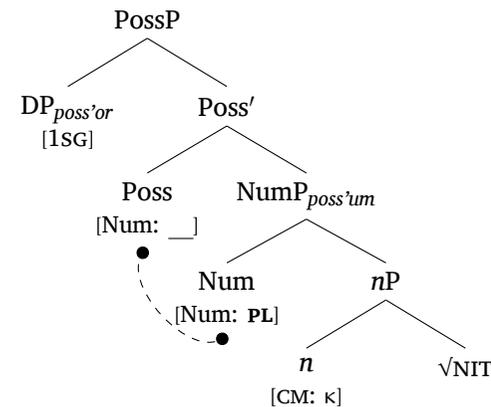
(34) BN modified by plain modifier: NLC violated



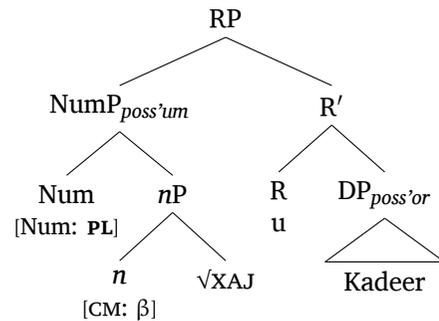
H. Possessive nominals and the NLC

- Licensing of a plural number feature by Agree is possible in the possessive construction, if y is the exponent of Agree.
- The derivation of *sama-y nit* 'POSS.1SG-PL person/friend' would be as in (34), where the head of PossP probes for a number feature in the possessum.
- If the BN there is plural, the NLC (27) can be satisfied, hence why a derivation converges where the BN has a plural construal.

(35) Possessive determiner: NLC satisfied



## I. Genitive possessives and the NLC

(36) \* *Genitive possessive: NLC violated*

- There is no probe to Agree with the [PLURAL] number of the BN, so, again, only a derivation with a singular NumP converges.

## J. Summary

- The analysis proposed to account for the exclusively singular (as opposed to the more commonly attested number neutral) interpretation of BNs in Wolof by proposing that it obeys the NLC.
- This is a condition that imposes that the marked number feature [PLURAL] be licensed via Agree, an extension of Béjar & Rezac's condition on [PARTICIPANT] features.

## 4 Overall takeaway

## A. Empirically

- We saw some ways to diagnose number interpretation.
- BNs in Wolof are typologically rather unusual in being singular – unless there is plural morphology in the nominal.

## B. Theoretically

- A theory of nominal licensing (Kalin, 2017, 2019) that is based on the licensing (via Agree) of *interpretable/valued* features.

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