

## Feature Doubling, Aspectual Structure, and the Beginnings of a Theory of Expletives

(Abstract)

In this paper I present an analysis of a phenomenon which is quite pervasive cross-linguistically, namely, occurrences of a type of pronominal element whose grammatical features match the feature make-up of an NP/DP or PP complement. I call these elements, whose features are (a) purely syntactic without any semantic content, and (b) multiply present in the sentence, *expletives* in the broad sense, and the operation that creates these elements *feature doubling*. This double of a phrase is able to serve as its proxy during operations that require only feature movement; I take feature doubling to be a purely syntactic process, and the thus created expletives to be syntactic constructs rather than elements of the numeration.

In the larger part of the paper I concentrate on a specific case of such doubling, namely, so-called case-doubling verb modifiers (VM) in Hungarian. These are cases where the verb is preceded by a VM that matches the case and number/person features of an oblique complement, as exemplified in (1):

- (1) *János*            *rá-*                    *tette*                    *a*            *fed\_-t*                    *a*            *fazék-ra.*  
john                    onto-3<sup>rd</sup> sg            put                    the            lid-Acc                    the            pot-onto  
'John put the lid onto the pot.'

I argue, counter to Kiss(1998), that these VM's cannot satisfactorily be handled as part of the lexical representation of the verb. Rather, I propose an analysis whereby these particles are created on-line in the syntax. I also show how the doubling particle in the VM position points to the delimiter of the action (its associate), and thus has the side-effect of making the interpretation of the verb perfective.

Based on Ramchand(1997), Travis(2000) and much other work, I assume that the traditional argument/adjunct distinction can be replaced by the better-defined notions of whether or not an element takes part in the aspectual structure of a sentence. In essence, then, the oblique complement in (1) is promoted into the argument structure via doubling. Observe the effect of the promotion of an oblique complement in the following examples:

- (2) a. *Anna*   *rá-*                    *írta*   *a*            *vers-et*                    *a*            *táblá-ra.*  
Anna   onto-3<sup>rd</sup> sg            wrote   the            poem-Acc                    the            board-onto  
'Anna wrote the poem onto the board.'
- b. *Anna*   *meg-*                    *írta*   *a*            *vers-et*                    *a*            *táblá-ra.*  
Anna   perf-                    wrote   the            poem-Acc                    the            board-onto  
'Anna wrote the poem for the board. (She wrote the poem, which will go on the board.)'

This promotion into the argument structure is supported by the fact that extraction out of the doubled oblique is possible, while the same extraction out of a non-doubled oblique is out, which is explained if the non-doubled oblique is an adjunct – the failure of extraction is then reduced to a standard adjunct island violation.

I assume (based on Larson(1988)) that adjuncts are situated low in the structure and the order of merge is counter to the hierarchy of complements: adjuncts merge first then

oblique arguments, then objects, and finally the subject. Therefore the first *argument* to merge is crucial: I suggest that it is invariably this argument that controls the presence and nature of the VM. In other words, the associate of the VM marks the lower edge of the aspectual domain, while the double itself marks the higher edge.

Therefore I propose the following syntax to account for the contrast between (2a) and (2b): while in (2b) the locative remains in its base (complement) position, the features of the locative that has been promoted into the aspectual structure in (2a) move up into the Spec of VP to establish agreement with the verb. The  $\_$ -features of this argument are copied into this Spec position, representing the locative in relevant respects: its grammatical features (but not its semantic ones) are necessary to establish its argument status. This Spec position (but not the complement position) is later accessible to further movement. The higher ranking arguments are located in the Spec positions of a series of vP-shells.

There are two crucial assumptions here which require further support. First, that the first-merged argument of the verb has such a prominent status, and that it is always this argument that is associated with the Spec of AspP. Second, that this first-merged argument starts out in complement position, but moves (via full or feature movement) into the Spec position of the lowest verbal projection, and it is this position which is then targeted by movement into Spec of AspP. The first claim will receive further support from an analysis of cases in Hungarian where the first-merged argument is an object (as objects of simple transitives, and covert objects of unergatives) or a subject (as the subjects of unaccusatives). These cases show that it is the specificity of this object/subject that is relevant in Spec,AspP, determining the presence of the VM. Crucially, they also provide evidence for claiming that there is no particular subject or object position, rather, it is the order of merge that is important. The second claim will be supported by the analysis of CP complements, which are doubled by a case-marked pronominal when the CP is the relevant first-merged argument. The overt case on this pronominal shows that the features of the complement must move through a case position at some point on their way up to AspP.

In the final part of the paper, I show how this analysis can be extended to “expletives” in other languages, in particular, to clitic doubling in Spanish, and to the expletive ‘it’ in English. I will also outline some possible further applications of the idea that (1) pronominal doubles of arguments bearing only syntactic features without any meaning are derived on-line in the syntax, and that (2) this type of doubling can help us understand *argumenthood* and *thematic roles* as derived categories in a framework that takes aspectual categories as its primitives.