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A default theory of default case

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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). The goal of this paper is to capture the morphological realisation of the default without adding anything to the theory beyond the default's defining property (the lack of case features): after the DP exits syntax without case features, it is realised in the morphological component as any object would, namely by finding the best matching lexical items.

This theory is not only the simplest one theoretically, but also the most restrictive one empirically. Specifically, once combined with the 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 provide the morphology for the default. This prediction is borne out in most languages, however, cases of an apparent accusative default have also been reported. This happens in a small set of languages with case on pronouns only. The paper argues that these languages, too, have the nominative as their default, but it is the nominative of a strong pronoun, which happens to be syncretic with the weak accusative pronoun.

The paper further argues that once this analysis is adopted, only hanging-topic left dislocation must be treated as a default case environment, all other environments with a suspected default (e.g., fragment answers) are compatible with a non-default analysis.

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 (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: in syntax, it is case-less, and NOM here is just 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 syntactically caseless DPs, focussing specifically on the question which morphological case forms realise the default case. Schütze (2001) and subsequent work observe that syntactically case-less DPs (i.e., default cases) are most frequently realised by the same form as found in the nominative (or absolutive) case. In a few languages, these are ACC forms, 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 realisation that restricts the choice of the relevant form in a principled way, and rules out default genitives, datives and instrumentals.

Assuming a realisational approach to morphology, I argue that the only theoretical ingredient 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 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 is labeled here as a default theory of default case.

Section 2 discusses the predictions of such a theory in detail. It shows that the theory predicts that out of all the cases, only NOM/ABS can provide the forms for the default. This captures the

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[1] Nominative-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).

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 with an apparent ACC as the default are each slightly different. Overall, however, it can be noted that they share two additional properties. The first property is that in all these languages, only pronouns show any case marking at all. 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. As an example, consider English. Schütze (2001) argues that English default environments include fragment answers (3a), left dislocation (3b), gapping (3c), pronoun modification (3d) and coordination (3e). The notable feature of these examples is that they contain subject (or subject-related) pronouns whose form is the same as that of object pronouns.

(3)   The default accusative in English[2]
        a.   Who wants to try this game? – **Me**.   (fragment answers)
        b.   **Me**, I like beans.   (left dislocation)
        b.   She likes rice, and **him** beans.   (gapping)
        b.   **Us** linguists are a crazy bunch.   (pronoun modification)
        b.   **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 case (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 a corresponding DP in a full-sentence answer, see (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). (5a) shows that modified subject pronouns must be in NOM. (5b) shows that the case on the modified pronoun changes depending on its syntactic position.

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[2] Examples (a), (b) and (d) are from Schütze (2001); (c) originates in Johnson (2018: ex. 119); (e) comes from Grano (2006: 1). In (c)–(e), there is variation between *she/her*, etc. Often, the variation is described in terms of register (Emonds 1986; Sobin 1997; Grano 2006; Parrott 2009). For now, the focus is on the register with the ACC forms. Variation is discussed in Section 5.3.

(5) Pronoun modification, German

    a. {**Wir** / *****uns**} Linguisten sind ein verrückter Haufen.
        we   us   linguists 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 linguists.'

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 not only why some languages apparently have the accusative as a default, the question is also 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 crucial observation that links these properties is that all the environments traditionally treated as default in English are environments that cross-linguistically require the so-called strong pronouns (Kayne 1975; Cardinaletti & Starke 1999; Cardinaletti 1999; Van Riemsdijk 1999; Quinn 2005). Consider, for instance, French. 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 (but doubles the strong pronoun inside the clause).

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

This observation fully generalises: in all the English examples in (3), French (and other languages) have strong pronouns.

Why should this be so? Why do apparent accusative pronouns appear in contexts that cross-linguistically require strong pronouns? The answer I propose here is that this is because pronouns such as *I* vs. *me* etc. differ not only in case, but also in pronoun strength. The specific proposal for English 1.SG pronoun is shown in Table (8). In this table, it is proposed that English has a distinct paradigm for strong and deficient pronouns. The deficient-pronoun paradigm is given in the leftmost column of Table (8), the strong paradigm is shown on the right. The form *I* only occurs in the deficient paradigm. The strong paradigm has only one

form, *me,* which functions both as the strong NOM and ACC, and it is further syncretic with the weak ACC.[3]

(8)   English 1st person pronoun

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

Once this paradigm is adopted, the ungrammaticality of *I* in constructions such as left-dislocation can be explained by simply saying that in English (just like in French), these constructions require strong pronouns. On this approach, *I* is ruled out in (9) because it is a deficient pronoun. No reference to its case is needed.

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

The same reasoning can be extended to all the English examples in (3). Since all the environments in (3) are strong (as Section 5.1 shows), the paradigm (8) predicts that only *me* can be used, since it is the only strong 1.SG pronoun. Crucially, given that the strong form is ambiguous between NOM and ACC, we actually cannot conclude that English has a default ACC; in all the contexts in (3), the use of *me* is compatible with the general observation that default forms are drawn from the NOM cell of a paradigm, specifically the strong-pronoun paradigm in the case of (8).

   It should be noted that while the paradigm (8) may be unusual when compared to the standard way of looking at English, it is not unusual from a comparative perspective. To see that, consider French. In French, some persons have a dedicated strong pronoun different from all other pronouns, see the 1.SG pronoun in Table (10). The paradigm illustrates one relevant property of strong pronouns in French, which is that they are always case invariant, just like the English strong pronouns according to the proposal in (8). Another relevant fact is that in some persons, the French strong form may be syncretic with one of the weak forms, see the 3.SG.MASC pronoun in Table (10). The paradigm of this pronoun has the same abstract shape as the English paradigm in (8).

(10)   French (Heap et al. 1999: 191)

	1.SG		3.SG.MASC	
	DEFICIENT	STRONG	DEFICIENT	STRONG
NOM	*je*	*moi*	*il*	*lui*
ACC	*me*	*moi*	*le*	*lui*
DAT	*me*	*moi*	*lui*	*lui*

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[3] This paradigm will be further refined in Section 5.

The analysis according to which English has a pronominal system as given in (8) is therefore a logical possibility to consider. An argument in its favour is that it explains all the puzzles related to the apparent default-accusative languages. First of all, it now becomes clear why the apparent accusative default only arises in languages with pronominal case: this is because only pronouns have the strong ~ weak distinction. Second of all, we solve the crucial conundrum: relying on the paradigm (8), English is in fact compatible with the idea that the default is universally NOM, namely the NOM of a strong pronoun. And finally, the analysis allows one to dissolve the discrepancy between the syntax of the default in English (many constructions) and German (left-dislocation only).

On this last point, the idea is that once the paradigm (8) is adopted, it allows for an analysis where English, like German, has a true default (i.e., the absence of case) only in left-dislocation constructions. In the other environments, such as in fragment answers, the paradigm (8) allows for an analysis where English pronouns bear the appropriate non-default case in syntax; e.g., a true nominative in subject fragments, and a true accusative in object fragments. However, since these are strong-pronoun environments, *me* is the only candidate for the realisation of the strong nominative and accusative pronoun. This analysis is depicted in (11).

(11)   a.   Who wants to try this game? – **Me**.
                                    STRONG.NOM

       b.   Who did John hit? – **Me**.
                           STRONG.ACC

The attractiveness of the treatment in (11) is not only that it unifies the syntax of English fragment answers with German, it also brings the analysis of English fragments in line with a candidate universal, noted in Merchant (2005: 676). The universal says that "the morphological case form of a fragment DP is always exactly the same as the case we find on the corresponding DP in a fully sentential answer." Under the default-case analysis, English is a counterexample to this generalisation (because a fully sentential answer would not have a default case). If the current analysis is adopted, it is in line with it.

The paper is organised as follows. Sections 2 and 3 deal with the morphological realisation of caseless DPs. Section 2 shows why out of all cases, the default can only be realised by NOM forms. Section 3 discusses how syncretism between deficient and strong pronouns can be accounted for. The section compares Danish (an apparent default-ACC language) to Oslo Norwegian (a prototypical NOM-default language), providing explicit lexical entries for the pronouns. In this section, it is also explained how the syntax of default can be unified across the two types of languages, such that, ultimately, only left dislocations feature a true default case, while all the other constructions identified as default by Schütze turn out not to require a default. Section 4 investigates Italian, and Section 5 turns to English, further refining the strong/deficient distinction. Section 6 concludes.

2 The default theory and case decomposition

The default theory is based on the idea that when caseless DPs exit syntax, they are simply lexicalised using the independently existing vocabulary of the language, without introducing any special rules. The main goal of this section is to see what restrictions, if any, follow from this approach. The 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). It shows that when cumulative decomposition is adopted, both issues are resolved.

2.1 Two issues for the default theory

The first claim to be demonstrated is that a theory with non-decomposed cases allows for any case to be the default. To have a concrete case to work with, consider again left-dislocation in English, see (12).

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

Schütze (2001) argues that *me* is the realisation of a case-less pronoun, an analysis which I adopted here as well. Assuming non-decomposable case values, one can model this fact as in (13). Here, *me* happens to be lexically specified for person and number only, but underspecified for case features, see (13a).

(13)   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 (13a) 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 this feature, see (13b). *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.

It turns out that this approach places no restrictions on the range of available defaults. It turns out that this is impossible to achieve as long as cases are considered non-divisible primes such as NOM, ACC, etc. To see this, consider the invented paradigm in (14).

(14) Pseudo-English

	3.SG
NOM	he
ACC	him
GEN	his
DAT	hin

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 (14) may look as in (15).

(15) Lexical entries (*hin* underspecified)
 a. *he* ⇔ [3.SG.NOM]
 b. *him* ⇔ [3.SG.ACC]
 c. *his* ⇔ [3.SG.GEN]
 d. *hin* ⇔ [3.SG]

Each rule in (15a–c) perfectly matches a particular case. The rule inserting *hin* in (15d) 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 expressed by the dative form.

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 (16). Such a system would lead to a nominative default.

(16) Lexical entries (*he* unspecified for case)
 a. *he* ⇔ [3.SG.]
 b. *him* ⇔ [3.SG.ACC]
 c. *his* ⇔ [3.SG.GEN]
 d. *hin* ⇔ [3.SG.DAT]

In fact, any of the forms in the invented paradigm (14) could be inserted by a rule that is not specified for case (with the other rules fully specified). However, if any of the rules can be construed as unspecified for case, any case can be the default. This clashes with the observations in Footnote 1 that the literature only found default NOM and to some extent ACC, but no other case (like genitive or dative). Ideally, this state of affairs should somehow follow from the theory (see McFadden 2007 for the same desideratum); but it does not follow, as things stand.

Another issue for an approach with non-decomposable case values is undergeneration. This problem arises in paradigms with certain types of syncretism. To see that, consider the paradigm in (17) from German, discussed from the perspective of default case in Schütze (1997: 51–2).

(17) German

	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 it, we specify *ihr* as [DAT], and *sie* is underspecified, see (18a–b).

(18) Lexical entries for (17)
    a. *ihr* ⇔ [3.SG.FEM.DAT]
    b. *sie* ⇔ [3.SG.FEM]
    c. *wir* ⇔ [1.PL.NOM]
    d. *uns* ⇔ [1.PL]

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 (18d). But if *uns* is underspecified, then to model (17), we must specify *wir* as NOM, see (18c). However, this wrongly predicts that *uns* would be the default case (appearing in the absence of case features), which is not the case.

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.

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 (19) expresses this constraint:

(19)   *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).[4]

Table (20) illustrates which patterns of syncretisms are allowed and which are not allowed under the constraint in (19). 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 (19), the last row is incompatible with it. OBL is used as a placeholder for the relevant oblique case.

(20)   Patterns of syncretism

	NOM	ACC	OBL
allowed	A	A	B
allowed	A	B	B
allowed	A	A	A
not allowed	A	B	A

The current literature on *ABA in case agrees that the generalisation (19) puts some constraints on the decomposition of cases into features (McCreight & Chvany 1991; Johnston 1996; Caha 2009; 2013; Harðarson 2016; Starke 2017; McFadden 2018; Bergsma 2019; Smith et al. 2019; Zompì 2019; Davis 2021). To be able to derive the constraint (19), the literature 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 (21), 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.[5]

(21)   Cumulative Case Decomposition
a.   NOM = [K1]
b.   ACC = [K1 K2]
c.   OBL = [K1 K2 K3]

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

[5] Caha (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.

The cumulative decomposition (21) 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 (22).

(22)   An ABA paradigm

	FEATURES	FORM
NOM	[K1]	*ey*
ACC	[K1 K2]	*bee*
OBL	[K1 K2 K3]	*ey*

In (22), *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 (23a). Any other specification for *bee* is out of question, given the paradigm (22).

(23)   Trying to derive ABA
   a.   *bee* $\Leftrightarrow \phi +$ K1, K2
   b.   *ey* $\Leftrightarrow \phi +$ K1, K2, K3

Before we start discussing *ey*, note that if there were no other entries than (23a), *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 it from appearing in OBL in the paradigm (22), 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 (23b).

However, this forced specification makes it impossible for *ey* to appear in NOM. The two lexical entries in (23a,b) therefore fail to generate the paradigm (22).

It is impossible to modify any of the entries in (23) in a way that the paradigm (22) 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:

(24)   *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 (24) loses with the rule inserting *bee* (see (23a)), which is a better match. However, the rule (24) also loses to *bee* in OBL. Therefore, the combination of the rules (23a) and (24) 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.[6]

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[6] 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 more widely known, the Subset Principle is used to illustrate the reasoning. The Superset Principle will be introduced in Section 3 to deal with cross-paradigm syncretism.

Let me now demonstrate that when the cumulative decomposition is combined with the default theory of default case, it only allows that the NOM form is used as the default. This is shown in Table (25). Here the DEF(AULT) case has been added as a special case, so that the cases ore ordered top-down in the order DEF-NOM-ACC-OBL. Following the definition of DEF in (1), the case is added as a form with no case features.

(25) Placing the DEFAULT case in the case paradigm

	FEATURES	allowed	disallowed	disallowed
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. Specifically, 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.[7]

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 (17). The paradigm is repeated for convenience in (26), with the row for default added on top.

(26) 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

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[7] Blix (2022) argues that under certain assumptions, ABA paradigms may be generated also under cumulative decomposition. This may be relevant for some languages, but I do not think that this is the right approach for English and other languages discussed here.

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 (27a).

(27)   a.   *uns* ⇔ [φ, K1, K2]
       b.   *wir* ⇔ [φ]

Wir is then stored without any case features, see (27b). 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.

Before we leave this section, it should be noted that since syncretism is never necessary, the current theory also allows for the default to have a unique form distinct from NOM. There are reasons to think that Japanese is such a language (Moritake 2008). In Japanese, hanging topic left-dislocations require a bare DP at the left edge of the clause, which is distinct from NOM *-ga* or ACC *-o*, see (28).

(28)   Takuya-ø/*ga/*o,   kare-wa   kasiko-i.
       Takuya-Ø/*NOM/*ACC,   he-TOP   intelligent-PRES
       'Takuya, he is intelligent.'   (Japanese, Moritake 2008: 516)

Within the current approach, this can be analysed as the default simply not being syncretic with any case, which is an option in the proposed system.[8]

Finally, note that even though default case has no case features, is not necessary that a noun in a default case would always be bare. Consider, for instance, the following Icelandic paradigm, where the accusative is Ø marked, while the nominative has an actual suffix.

(29)   Icelandic (Harðarson 2016: 1332)

	3.SG
NOM	arm-ur
ACC	arm-Ø
GEN	arm-s
DAT	arm-i

Since in Icelandic, the default is syncretic with NOM, the default inherits the quirk of the language, and shows an overt suffix. The reason why an affix appears even in the absence of any case

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[8] Weisser (2024) makes a similar point regarding Choctaw.

features is analogous to pronouns. Pronouns are often portmanteau markers for ϕ features and case; so even in the absence of case, there are still ϕ features to lexicalise (see, e.g., (27)). Under the plausible assumption that Icelandic nominal suffixes are portmanteau markers for number and case, the suffix is needed even in the absence of case (see, e.g., Caha 2021 for an analysis of case-number portmanteau morphology compatible with this idea).

2.3 Conclusions

This section combined the idea that the default case is the absence of case features with the cumulative case decomposition. Relying on the default theory, we predict 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 details how the current system encodes the differences between 'nominative-default' languages like German and apparent default-ACC languages like English. The section demonstrates that the difference boils down to a simple lexical difference in the specification of subject pronouns. On this approach, the apparent parametric difference in the choice of a default reduces to lexical differences among languages (the Borer-Chomsky conjecture). The working of the theory is illustrated on two closely related languages, namely Danish and Oslo Norwegian (as spoken by my informant).

3.1 Danish

This section details how the current proposal achieves the correct distribution of pronouns in apparent default-ACC languages. The abstract paradigm proposed for such languages is in (30). The important thing about (30) is that there are two series of pronouns, deficient and strong, and that the DEFAULT form β is a part of a licit AAA paradigm, namely that of a strong pronoun.

(30)   The abstract paradigm of apparent 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 the claim that the only true default environment – namely left dislocation – is a strong environment. The weak default (whichever form that would be) therefore never surfaces.

The empirical discussion looks at Danish (see Ørsnes 2002; Parrott 2009; 2021; Jensen 2019). In presenting the facts, I focus on the environments identified by Schütze (2001) as default in English (coordination, pronoun modification, gapping, fragment answers, left dislocation). However, in presenting the facts, I do not assume that all of these are default-case environments. As outlined in Section 1, the idea is that languages like Danish have the same distribution of NOM, ACC and DEF as German, and that the only special thing about them is the paradigm shape as given in (30).

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 (31a). Strong (contrastive) objects are found after negation, see (31b). The morphological shape of the object pronoun remains constant across the two environments, suggesting a syncretism of these two cells, see the bottom row in (30).

(31)   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.' (weak ACC)

    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.' (strong ACC)

It is relevant to note that object shift is impossible with modified or coordinated pronouns in Danish, see (32a,b) respectively.

(32)   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?' (strong ACC)

    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.' (strong ACC)

This gives us reasons to think that coordinated and modified pronouns are strong in Danish. This is relevant since coordination and pronoun modification are two of the environments where Schütze (2001) assumes a default-case analysis.

Let us now turn to subject pronouns. (33a) shows a subject coordination. Coordination requires strong pronouns (recall (32b)). Therefore, the form that we see here (*dig*) is analysed as a strong NOM. As expected (based on (30)), this is the same form as the strong object; recall *dig* in (32b).

(33)   Danish strong vs. weak NOM (Hansen & Heltoft 2011: 439–40)

    a.   **Dig**   og Bente bør   absolut   også deltage.
        you.STR and Bente should absolutely also participate
        'You and Bente should definitely also participate.' (strong NOM)

    b.   Vil **du** ikke have en kop kaffe?
        will you not have a cup coffee
        'Won't you have a cup of coffee?' (weak NOM)

The weak subject form *du* 'you' is in (33b). As expected, it is different from the strong subject *dig*.[9]

    Let us now move to modified pronouns. Recall from (32a) that modified pronouns pattern with strong pronouns in Danish in not allowing object shift. They are therefore analysed in (34a) as strong NOM. The form found here is the same as the object form (*dem* 'them'), but different from the weak subject form, which is shown in (34b).[10]

(34)   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?' (strong NOM, Ørsnes 2002: 337)

    b.   **De**   er sjaskvåde, mine sko.
        they are wet   my   shoes
        'My shoes, they are wet.' (weak NOM, Hansen & Heltoft 2011: 439)

Continuing with strong subjects, let us move to fragment answers. Recall from Section 1 that Merchant (2005) noted a strong tendency for languages to use DPs with matching case in this construction. In conformity with this universal, I analyse the form *mig* in (35) as a NOM form, albeit the NOM of a strong pronoun.

(35)   Hvem vil   have is?   – **Mig**. / *Jeg.
       Who   wants have ice.cream   me   I
       'Who wants to have ice cream? – Me.' (strong NOM)

Once again, the point is that the strong-subject form *mig* is identical to the form of the direct object in conformity with (30).[11]

    As the final example of a strong nominative, consider the case of non-locally extracted subjects (Ørsnes 2002). The example in (36a) serves as a base-line example, showing a nominative (weak)

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[9] In formal registers, (33a) also allows *du* 'you.' I turn to register variation in Section 5.

[10] Again, (34a) allows also *de* 'they' in formal registers. Variation is treated in Section 5.

[11] My informant tells me that fragments such as (35) 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).

subject *han* in the embedded clause. Some speakers allow for such subjects to be extracted and placed on the left periphery of the matrix clause. In such examples, the subject must have the form *ham* (identical to the direct object); *han* is impossible, see (36b). (*e* indicates the original position of the subject, the verb *tror* 'think' moves across the matrix subject *Peter* due to the V2 requirement.)

(36)   Danish weak vs. strong NOM
    a.   Peter tror   [**han** vinder].
        Peter thinks he   wins
        'Peter thinks he is going to win.' (weak NOM)

    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.' (strong NOM)

Ørsnes (2002: 338) argues that (36b) is not a default-case environment because the extracted subject moves from a case position, designated by *e* in (36b). The difficulty of analysing (36b) as a default case leads me to suggest that it is a strong NOM form (predictably identical to the direct-object form).

Let us 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. (37) provides some relevant examples.

(37)   Danish left dislocation
    a.   Men **mig**, jeg dyrker en anden sport.
        but me, I   practice an other sport
        'But me, I practice a different sport.' (strong DEF)

    b.   **Dig**,   du   kan gå din vej.
        you.ACC, you.NOM can go your way
        'As for you, you can go your own way.' (strong DEF, Ørsnes 2002: 335)

    c.   **Ham**, han er en skat.
        him, he is a   treasure
        'Him, he is a treasure.' (strong DEF, 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 (31a), they can also be used as strong object pronouns ((31b), (32)), as strong nominative pronouns ((33a), (34a), (35), (36b)) and strong default pronouns (37). On the basis of these facts, the paradigm (38) can be proposed, where one and the same form occupies all the relevant cells. The important point is that once this paradigm is in place, the same grammar of case can be proposed for Danish (an apparent default-ACC language) as for German (a default-NOM language).

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

			WEAK	STRONG
DEF		ϕ	—	*mig*
NOM	K1	ϕ	*jeg*	*mig*
ACC	K2 K1	ϕ	*mig*	*mig*

3.2 Deriving the Danish paradigm

In order to generate the paradigm (38), I adopt two proposals from the literature. First, it is necessary to encode the distinction between strong and deficient pronouns. The approach I adopt is one where strong and deficient pronouns differ not only prosodically and in their position, but also in their internal morphosyntactic structure and their semantics. For example, Cardinaletti & Starke (1999) point out that strong pronouns require animate referents while deficient pronouns are compatible with inanimate referents, strong pronouns allow contrastive interpretations unavailable for deficient pronouns, etc.

Such differences suggest that strong pronouns have at least one additional morphosyntactic feature compared to deficient pronouns. This idea is supported by the fact that in some languages, strong pronouns morphologically contain deficient pronouns. For instance, the Czech deficient pronouns **ho** and **mu** 'him, ACC/DAT' are contained in the corresponding strong pronouns *je-**ho*** and *je-**mu*** 'him, ACC/DAT.'

In the literature, there are at least two proposals implementing 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. Cardinaletti & Starke (1999) propose that deficient pronouns lack a high functional projection, C_N. Abstracting away from the specific implementation, this paper encodes the distinction by using the feature STR for strong pronouns. Deficient pronouns lack this feature.

The second assumption I make is that lexical insertion is governed by the so-called Superset Principle. The Superset Principle is for the current intent largely equivalent to the better-known Subset Principle, with the difference that insertion takes place when the lexical entry specifies a superset (rather than a subset) of the features in the node. I give the specific formulation to be used here in (39).

(39) The Superset Principle (Vanden Wyngaerd 2018: 289)[12]
      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.

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[12] The 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.

The reason why I adopt the Superset Principle is that the paradigm in (38) 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 (2023); Caha (2024) for a discussion.

With the two assumptions in place, let us turn to the question what lexical entries are needed to generate the paradigm (38). 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 (38) 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 (40a).

(40)   The rules for Danish 1.SG pronouns
    a.   *mig* ⇔ [K2, K1, ϕ, STR]
    b.   *jeg* ⇔ [K1, ϕ]

This specification makes *mig* a candidate in every cell of the paradigm in (41), since it contains the features defining each cell.

(41)   Rule competition

		[Ø]	[str]
DEF	ϕ	—	*mig*
NOM	K1 ϕ	*jeg* / ~~*mig*~~	*mig*
ACC	K2 K1 ϕ	*mig*	*mig*

The reason why it does not appear in the weak NOM is because of the competing entry in (40b). This entry does not spell out the STR feature, and it therefore cannot 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.

To summarise, what has just been shown is that the paradigm (41) can be generated by the rules in (40), using the Superset Principle (39). The paradigm (41) provides the correct forms needed in all the examples in Section 3.1, assuming that the only default environment is left dislocation. There is no need to assume a default accusative for any of the other sentence types.

3.3 Oslo Norwegian

This section shows how the approach sketched above handles languages like German, where a NOM default has been proposed. As an example of such a system, I discuss Oslo Norwegian. Table (42) compares Oslo Norwegian (on the right) with the Danish system on the left. 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.)

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

		DANISH		OSLO NORWEGIAN	
		1.SG	1.SG.STR	1.SG	1.SG.STR
DEF	ϕ	—	*mig*	—	*jeg*
NOM	K1 ϕ	*jeg*	*mig*	*jeg*	*jeg*
ACC	K2 K1 ϕ	*mig*	*mig*	*meg*	*meg*

Let me now show how the forms in the Oslo Norwegian paradigm are distributed in concrete sentence types. Like in Danish, object shift in Oslo Norwegian distinguishes strong and weak object pronouns, despite their formal identity. (43a) shows that weak (non-contrastive) pronouns precede the negation, while strong (contrastive) pronouns follow it. This is captured by assuming identity between weak and strong objects in both languages, see the bottom row in (42).

(43) 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.' (weak ACC)

   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.' (strong ACC)

Like in Danish, object shift becomes impossible with modified or coordinated pronouns, see (44a,b) respectively.

(44) Oslo Norwegian strong objects
   a. Hvorfor leste Petter {***den her**} aldri {**den her**}?
       Why   read Petter this   here never this   here
       'Why did Petter never read this here?' (strong ACC)

   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.' (strong ACC)

The crucial difference between the languages is that Oslo Norwegian strong subject pronouns do not look like object pronouns. The object form *ham* 'him' (seen in (43)) is ungrammatical in (45a). Instead, one has to use *han* 'he,' which is the same as the regular subject pronoun, see (45b).

(45)   Oslo Norwegian weak and strong NOM

    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.' (strong NOM)

    b.   **Han** kom først til festen.
        he.NOM came first to the.party
        'He arrived to the party first.' (weak NOM)

This contrast between Danish and Oslo Norwegian is captured in the paradigm (42) 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. (46a) shows that the object form *deg* 'you' is impossible in subject coordination in Oslo Norwegian. Instead, we see a form identical to the weak subject pronoun (shown in (46b)).

(46)   Oslo Norwegian strong and weak NOM

    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.' (strong NOM)

    b.   **Du**   bør   absolutt   også delta.
        you.NOM should absolutely also participate
        'You should definitely also participate.' (weak NOM)

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 (35)), Oslo Norwegian uses *jeg* 'I,' a form identical to the weak NOM, see (47a).

(47)   Oslo Norwegian fragments

    a.   Hvem vil   ha   is?   – **Jeg**. / ***Meg**.
        Who wants have ice.cream   I   me
        'Who wants to have ice cream? – Me.' (strong NOM)

    b.   Hvem bet Gigi? – **Meg**. / ***Jeg**.
        Who bit Gigi   I   me
        'Who did Gigi bite? – Me.' (strong ACC)

(47b) shows that the NOM in (47a) is not a default, but a form that faithfully reflects the case assigned in a fully sentential counterpart.[13]

    Another contrast between Danish and Norwegian arises in the case of non-locally extracted subjects (Taraldsen 1981). The example in (48a) serves as a base-line, showing a (weak) NOM

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[13] The question in (47b) is ambiguous between a subject question and an object question. The judgement pertains to the object-question reading.

subject *han* in the embedded clause. When extracted, the subject keeps the form *han*, see (48b). This contrast with the Danish (36b), which requires *ham*.

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

    a.   De   hadde trodd   **han** ville   komme for sent.

        they had   thought he   would arrive   too late   (weak NOM)

    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.' (strong NOM)

Let's now turn to the hanging-topic left dislocation, which is the only construction that requires DEF case in German. In Oslo Norwegian, we find here forms identical to weak subjects. (49) provides two relevant examples.

(49) Oslo Norwegian left-dislocation

    a.   **Jeg** / *meg, **jeg** vet   det ikke.

        I   me,   I   know it   not

        'Me, I don't know that.' (strong NOM)

    b.   **Han** / *ham, **han** er jo   en verre   slyngel.

        He   him   he   is   though a   worse scoundrel

        'Him, he is a worse scoundrel, though.' (strong NOM)

This completes the overview of pronoun forms in Oslo Norwegian. In this dialect, we find one form used ambiguously as a weak object pronoun (43a), and a strong object pronoun ((43b), (44), (47b)). Differently from Danish, strong subject pronouns ((45a), (46a), (47a), (48b)) are identical to weak subject pronouns. As a result, the default form in (49) cannot be identical to the strong accusative, since that would be a *ABA violation. Instead, the default is predictably the same as the strong nominative, see (50), repeated from (42).

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

			DANISH		OSLO NORWEGIAN	
			1.SG	1.SG.STR	1.SG	1.SG.STR
DEF		ϕ	—	*mig*	—	*jeg*
NOM	K1	ϕ	*jeg*	*mig*	*jeg*	*jeg*
ACC	K2 K1	ϕ	*mig*	*mig*	*meg*	*meg*

The lexical items that generate the Oslo Norwegian paradigm are in (51). *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.

(51)   The rules for Oslo Norwegian pronouns
   a.   *meg* ⇔ [K2, K1, ϕ, STR]
   b.   *jeg* ⇔ [K1, ϕ, STR]

The difference between Oslo Norwegian and Danish is only in the specification of *jeg*, see (51b). While in Danish, the relevant item lacks the STR feature (recall (40b)), the Oslo Norwegian form *jeg* has it. As a result, Norwegian *jeg* can be used in 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. This way, the correct distribution of *jeg* and *meg* emerges.

3.4 Conclusions: macroparameters in a microparametric approach

The comparison of the two systems shows that on the current account, the traditional 'parameter' distinguishing languages with default nominative from languages with default 'accusative' can be reduced to a rather simple difference in the specification of post-syntactic lexical entries. On the current account, the only difference between the languages is whether subject pronouns like *jeg* are listed in the lexicon as strong NOM (Norwegain) or weak NOM (Danish). The rest follows automatically from this simple lexical difference. This type of explanation for morphosyntactic differences has been known as the Borer(-Chomsky) conjecture and it constitutes one of the desiderata of theoretical research up to this day (see Borer 1984; Fukui 1988; Baker 2008).

It is to be admitted that on this account, there is no single parameter that controls the difference between a 'default ACC' language like Danish and a 'default NOM' language like Oslo Norwegian. Rather, this macroparametric difference between 'default ACC' and 'default NOM' arises as a cumulative effect of several microparameters, represented by the specifications of individual subject pronouns. In this approach, a system with a language-wide 'default ACC' or 'default NOM' arises if the specifications of all subject pronouns are aligned the same.

There are reasons to think that the more nuanced, microparametric approach may be correct. This conclusion is suggested by the corpus study of Danish pronouns in Jensen et al. (2023). Their results indicate that different persons behave differently when it comes to the selection of the strong subject form, and this in turn suggests that there is no macroparameter after all.

To see this, consider first the fact that Danish strong subject pronouns exhibit much variation. Jensen et al. (2023) investigate this variation in constructions where subject pronouns are modified by a relative clause. For English, Parrott (2009: 288) reports that these constructions "are rarely used in modern spoken English," but in Danish, they exist and fall under the general umbrella of modified pronouns. In this construction, the 3rd person singular pronoun has the form *ham* in 83% of cases, as in (52).

(52) Ham, der   levede længst, holdt ud i   10 dage.
      him   there lived   longest endured in 10 days
      'He who lived the longest, endured for 10 days.' (Jensen et al. 2023: 194)

Contrasting with this, Jensen et al. (2023: 194) report that when the 1.PL subject pronoun is used in this construction, it strongly prefers to have the same form as the weak subject, i.e., *vi* 'we,' which is found in 89% of cases attested in the LANCHART corpus. An example is provided in (53).

(53)   Danish (Jensen et al. 2023: 194–5)
        Vi, der   lever nu, har ikke selv valgt   …
        we there live   now have not   self   chosen …
        'We who live now did not choose …'

An asymmetry of the same kind is found in coordinations. In this construction, there is a lot of normative pressure to use the weak-subject form (e.g., *han* 'he'). Despite this pressure, Jensen et al. (2023: 204) found that in a corpus of the spoken language, 3rd person pronouns prefer the weak object form (i.e., *ham* 'him'), which is used in 60% of the cases. On the other hand, the 1.PL pronoun has the weak-subject form *vi* 'we' in 100% of the cases; i.e., the weak-object form *oss* 'us' is not attested.

Summarising, the default theory of default case explored here relies on a microparametric approach: the pattern observed in the language as a whole is a consequence of an independent setting of multiple smaller 'parameters' (lexical entries). This allows for a lot of nuance in the patterning of individual pronouns. This may be seen as a drawback from a macroparamteric perspective, but it seems to be vindicated by the fact that individual pronouns may not pattern in the same way.

4 The default in Italian

This section turns to Italian, which has been identified in Schütze (2001) as a language where the 2.SG pronoun exhibits a default ACC, while other pronouns have a default NOM. As argued in the preceding section, a language like this may be easily captured within the current (microparametric) approach. However, upon closer inspection, it seems more advantageous to analyse Italian as having a NOM default throughout.

The basic paradigm for Italian 2.SG pronoun is shown in (54).

(54)   Italian 2nd person pronouns (based on Heap et al. 1999: 192)

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

The strong paradigm can be established, for instance, by looking at subject and object fragments, see (55a,b) respectively.

(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

In this context, consider the fact that the form of the 2.SG pronoun in coordination must be *te*, see (56).

(56)   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, subject coordinations were treated as a strong nominative environment. However, this analysis is impossible because of (55), which shows that *tu* is the strong nominative. Schütze therefore suggests that *te* in (56) is a default case, identical to ACC. However, this analysis is unavailable in the current approach; therefore, a different analysis must be provided.

Before we turn to the analysis, consider the fact that there are independent reasons to doubt that Italian *te* is a default. The relevant observation comes from hanging-topic left dislocations (Cinque 1977), a prototypical default-case environment. In these constructions, *tu* 'you' functions as a default, see (57).
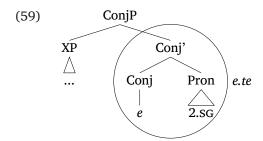
(57)   a. **Tu**   / ***te**,   sono sicuro che non ho   mai   scritto **a te**.
           you.NOM   you.ACC, I am sure   that I   have never written to you

        b. **Tu**   / ***te**,   credo che non abbiano mai   parlato **di te**.
           you.NOM   you.ACC, I think that they have   never talked of you

But if *tu* in (57) is a default, then we have independent reasons to reject an analysis according to which *te* is a default. In sum, *te* in (56) is neither a strong NOM or a default.

As a result, *te* in coordinations will be analysed here as a part of a morphologically opaque, non-decomposable unit *e.te*, realising a complex structure containing both the coordination node and the pronoun. A technical implementation of this idea is provided in (58). Here *e.te* is stored in the lexicon as a unit that realises a phrasal node dominating the CONJ node and the 2.SG pronoun (see, e.g., Starke 2009 for a worked-out phrasal spellout model assumed here).

(58)   [CONJ + 2.SG.STR.K1] ⇔ *e.te*

As a result of this rule, the node circled in (59) is realised by the (synchronically non-decomposable) string *e.te*.[14]

(59)

ConjP
- XP
  - △
  - ...
- Conj'
  - Conj
    - *e*
  - Pron
    - △
    - 2.SG

e.te

This analysis is supported by the two following facts. First, when the pronoun does not form a constituent with the conjunction, the regular (non-idiomatic) NOM.SG form *tu* surfaces. This is shown in (60). 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.

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

This is predicted by this analysis, since the phrasal spellout rule in (58) can only lexicalise the conjunction and the 2.SG pronoun together if they form a constituent, as in (59). When this constituent is disrupted, the portmanteau rule cannot apply, and *tu* surfaces as an independent lexicalisation of the 2.SG pronoun.

The second fact that supports this analysis is that when the 2.SG pronoun is found in the first conjunct, *tu* becomes available again, see (61) from Schütze (2001: 222).

(61) **Tu**   / ?**te**   e   io   andremo insieme a Roma.
      you.NOM   you.ACC   and I.NOM go   together to Rome

This again follows form the fact that the phrasal spellout rule (58) only applies when the conjunction and the pronoun form a constituent to the exclusion of other material, which they don't in (61).

Summarising, this section discussed the possibility that Italian shows a default ACC for the 2.SG pronoun. However, the hanging-topic left dislocations in (57) show that 2.SG pronouns

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[14] The proposal is a version of the proposal in Parrott (2009) or Weisser (2020), who propose an account in terms of context-sensitive rules rather than phrasal lexicalisation. I do not discuss the differences between these approaches for reasons of space, but see Caha (2024) for a general discussion.

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 (58), which lexicalises a whole constituent by the (synchronically) non-decomposable string *e.te*. This leads to correct predictions in coordinations where the 2nd person pronoun does not form a constituent with the conjunction.[15]

5 The default in English

The current section turns to English. Section 5.1 shows that all the environments identified in Schütze (2001) as default are strong. If that is so, we can treat English like Danish, i.e., attribute to it the paradigm shape in (62) (recall (38)), where the default is identical to a nominative of a strong pronoun.

(62)   English 1st person pronouns (strong and weak)

		WEAK	STRONG
DEF	ϕ	—	*me*
NOM	K1 ϕ	*I*	*me*
ACC	K2 K1 ϕ	*me*	*me*

Section 5.2 discusses the fact some strong environments have an unexpected pronoun, and introduces a bifurcation between two different classes of strong pronouns. 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 environments identified as default 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)

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[15] Some registers of English (called prestige usage by Emonds 1986) seem to have a similar rule but with the opposite effect. English strong pronouns generally have the shape *me*, but in the second conjunct, *I* is found in prestigious registers instead of *me*, as in (ia). However, this form becomes much worse when separated from *and*, see (ib).

(i)   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)

These registers thus seem to have a special *and-I* rule for the 1.SG pronoun (Sobin 1997; Parrott 2021).

Before showing this, recall that under the current analysis, only left dislocation is analysed as a true default environment. The remaining environments are analysed as featuring a strong nominative pronoun.

The first piece of evidence for the strong-pronoun status of (63a–e) comes from cross-linguistic comparison: all of the environments in (63) are strong-pronoun environments in languages that morphologically distinguish strong and deficient pronouns. (64a–e) lists the relevant French examples. In all of these environments, a strong pronoun is required.

(64)   a.   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. 1999: 184)

       b.   **Moi**   / ***je**,   je vois Marie.
            1SG.STRONG   1SG.DEFICIENT I   see   Mary
            'Me, I see Mary.'

       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)

       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)

       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)

There is also some English-internal evidence for the strong status of these environments. The evidence is of two different types. The first type concerns the phonological reduction of pronouns, the second type concerns 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 (65a,b), where the pronouns drop their initial [h].

(65)   a.   [hɪ̯] / [ɪ̯] never got a word in edgeways.
       b.   They beamed [ɪ̯m] up.

However, such phonologically reduced (deficient) forms cannot be used in any of the environments given in (63), suggesting that these environments are strong.

(66) shows that the reduced forms are unavailable in fragment answers (Vos & Veselovská 1999: 945). This indicates that fragment answers are a strong-pronoun environment.

(66)   Who did you see? — [hɪ̪m] / *[ɪ̪m]   (fragment answers)

Similarly, reduced pronouns cannot be modified, see (67a,b) (from Quinn 2005: 75), or coordinated, see (67c) (from Cardinaletti & Starke 1995: 7). Again, this indicates that these environments are strong.

(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 [ɪ̪m] and Mary.   (coordination)

Colley & Bassi (2022) argue that weak (reduced) pronouns are also unavailable in gapping. They use the contrast between the sentence (68a,b) to illustrate this. (68a) is a sentence that contains a verb and a weak non-contrastive pronoun. When the verb is elided in (68b), the weak pronoun is no longer acceptable; only strong (contrastive) pronouns survive, see (68c). When the object is a non-contrastive (full) noun, as in (68d), gapping is possible (though the sentence requires a context, for which see Colley and Bassi's work). Colley and Bassi thus conclude that gapping is in general compatible with non-contrastive remnants, but not with weak pronouns.

(68)   a.   I called Sheryl$_i$ on Monday, and called [ər]$_i$ on Tuesday too.
        b.   *I called Sheryl$_i$ on Monday, and ~~called~~ [ər]$_i$ on Tuesday too.
        c.   I called Sheryl$_i$ on Monday, and called her$_j$ on Tuesday.
        d.   %I called Sheryl$_i$ on Monday, and ~~called~~ Sheryl$_i$ on Tuesday too.

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

(69)   [hɪ̪m] / *[ɪ̪m] 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 not only cross-linguistically, but also 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 because *it* may refer to inanimates, which is a hallmark of weak pronouns. If *it* is weak, we expect it to be excluded in Schütze's "default" environments. This seems to be the case, as the following examples show.

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

(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.

Similarly, Cardinaletti (1999) notes that *it* is unavailable in fragment answers, see (71).

(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 when coordinated, modified and when the verb is elided; see (72a–c) respectively.

(72)   a. *I bought it and it. (Cardinaletti & Starke 1995: 4)

    b. *big it (Fukui 1988: 264)

    c. *I drove the CAR$_i$ on Monday, and ~~drove~~ IT$_i$ on Tuesday. (Colley & Bassi 2022: ex. 6)

These data support the conclusion that coordinations, pronoun modifications and gapping are strong-pronoun environments.[16]

    Concluding, this section discussed three types of evidence for the conclusion that all constructions identified in Schütze (2001) as default are strong-pronoun environments. If this is so, the paradigm (73) correctly predicts pronoun distribution in these constructions without the need to assume that the default cell is expressed by ACC (it is expressed by strong NOM, which happens to be syncretic with weak ACC).

(73)   English 1st person pronouns (strong and weak)

				WEAK	STRONG
DEF			ϕ	—	*me*
NOM		K1	ϕ	*I*	*me*
ACC	K2	K1	ϕ	*me*	*me*

A prediction of the account is that other pronoun uses outside of this core paradigm are compatible with this analysis. In Sections 5.2 and 5.3, several facts will be discussed that may seem problematic for the current account, but turn out to be compatible with it under scrutiny.

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[16] It 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 (ia,b) have been provided to me by the reviewers.

    (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)

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. I leave this unresolved here.

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

This section focuses on strong environments that fail to exhibit the expected case-invariant strong pronouns *me, him*, etc. These environments are initially problematic because a theory based on the paradigm (73) cannot deal with such cases. The section provides two examples of such environments and accommodates them by proposing a bifurcation within the class of strong pronouns.

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 (74) (from Cardinaletti & Starke 1999: 152).

(74)　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 *only* requires strong pronouns also in English. The first reason is that pronouns cannot undergo phonological reduction after *only*, see (75a). The second reason is that the weak *it* also cannot be modified by *only*, see (75b).

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

The data in (74) and (75) suggests that pronouns after *only* are strong. Yet, as shown in (76), the supposed case-invariant strong pronoun *me* cannot be used after *only* in subject position.

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

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

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

In French, such environments disallow deficient pronouns, see (78a–b) (adapted from Cardinaletti & Starke 1999: 219).

(78)　a. *Jean a　　dit　qu'IL,　　　pas son frère,　arrivera　en premier.
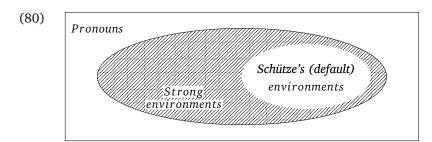　　　　　 John has　said　that.HE.DEFIC　not　his　brother　will.arrive　as　first

　　　　b. Jean a　　dit　que LUI,　　pas son frère,　arrivera　en premier.
　　　　　 John has　said　that　HE.STRONG　not　his　brother　will.arrive　as　first

In a similar vein, Cardinaletti (1999: 60) notes that *it* cannot be contrastive, see (79).

(79)   *IT is implausible, not that one.

On the basis of these facts, I conclude that sentences such as (77) represent another environment where we see a strong pronoun different from *me, him,* etc.[17] The overall picture of pronoun distribution in English can then be depicted as in (80).

(80)

In (80), the rectangle represents all kinds of environments where pronouns occur. A subset of these environments can be characterised as strong. These environments are represented in (80) by the larger ellipsis. This set of environments corresponds to the contexts where we find strong pronouns in French, which is so far the same set of environments where English pronouns cannot be phonologically reduced, and where *it* is unavailable for at least some speakers.

Section 5.1 argued that all environments that Schütze recognised as default-case environments are within this set. The current section argued that there are also strong contexts that disallow the case-invariant *me/him/*etc. The five "default" environments are thus properly contained in the set of strong environments, and they are represented by the smaller of the two ellipses in (80).

The bifurcation within strong environments (*me* vs. *I* 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. Schütze's environments are robust, and require the case-invariant *me*. Environments that are strong but do not show the case-invariant pronoun are gracile: these are contrastive pronouns and pronouns modified by *only*.[18]

This (final) analysis is depicted in (81). The new feature in the table are the gracile pronouns, which have been introduced in this section. The newly postulated class has no effect on the analysis of the original data set; the only new thing here is that once (81) is adopted, the existence of strong pronouns with the shape *I* does not invalidate the results that have been achieved.

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[17] This 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)

[18] Gracile pronouns are also used under ostension. This is because *it* cannot be used for ostension, but *he/she/they* can.

(81) English 1.SG paradigm

		DEFICIENT	STRONG	
			GRACILE	ROBUST
DEF	ϕ	—	—	*me*
NOM	K1 ϕ	*I*	*I*	*me*
ACC	K2 K1 ϕ	*me*	*me*	*me*

In terms of the technical implementation, 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 *only*, 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 possible to model the paradigm in (81) using the rules in (83).

(83) The final rules for English pronouns
 a. *me* ⟺ [K2, K1, ϕ, STR, ROB]
 b. *I* ⟺ [K1, ϕ, 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).

To conclude: faced with the fact that some strong-pronoun environments require pronouns like *I/he/*etc., 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 makes the existence of a case-invariant strong pronoun (on which the analysis of default case rests) compatible with the observation that some strong environments require *I/he/*etc.

5.3 Variation and other puzzles

The current section continues the discussion of potentially problematic cases. The first issue to consider is variation. Specifically, some of the relevant constructions only allow *me* (see (84a–c)), while others show variation (see (84d–f)). The presence/absence of variation requires splitting pronoun modification into two different cases, namely pre-modification and post-modification, see (84c,d).[19]

(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-modifiction)
    e.   She likes rice, and **him** / **he** beans.   (gapping)
    f.   **Her** / **She** and Sandy went to the store yesterday.   (coordination)

In Schütze (2001), an attempt is made to attribute this variation to the variation in case assignment. When case assignment succeeds, forms such as *I* arise. When assignment fails, *me* is used as a default. Clearly, this account cannot be used in the present case, and an alternative explanation of the variation must be invoked.

Two alternative proposals have been pursued in the literature, both compatible with the current account. The first one is a 'register-variation' approach. This 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). See also Grano (2006); Parrott (2009; 2021); Lemon (2017).

In the current theory, the approach can be implemented by saying that the prestige register lists *I* as a robust pronoun, see (85b), while the non-prestige register treats it as gracile, see (85c). The lexical entry for *me* is the same in both registers, see (85a).

(85)   Two different registers, two different *I*s
    a.   *me* $\Leftrightarrow$ [K2, K1, ϕ, STR, ROB]
    b. $I_{prestige}$ $\Leftrightarrow$ [K1, ϕ, STR, ROB]
    b. $I_{non\text{-}prestige}$ $\Leftrightarrow$ [K1, ϕ, STR]

According to this proposal, speakers activate either (85b) or (85c) depending on the relevant social variables. If (85b) is used, its interaction with (85a) yields a paradigm typical of a NOM-default language. If (85c) is used, we get the non-prestige paradigm discussed in (81).

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[19] Danish closely matches English, see Parrott (2009; 2021).

It is relevant to note that in many cells, it is immaterial which of these rules speakers choose, because they yield the same results. The difference arises only in two cells of the paradigm, which are given in grey in (86).

(86)   English 1.SG prestige paradigm

			DEFICIENT	STRONG	
				GRACILE	ROBUST
DEF		ϕ	—	—	*I/me*
NOM		K1 ϕ	*I*	*I*	*I/me*
ACC	K2	K1 ϕ	*me*	*me*	*me*

This is an interesting result, because these cells correspond precisely to the five environments circumscribed as default environments by Schütze (2001). In Schütze (2001: 220), variation is linked directly to the fact that the prestigious forms can only override default case specifications, but not 'real' cases. The same result is replicated here (the set of environments with variation is restricted), but there is no need to circumscribe the relevant set of environments by the notion of a default.

This approach works well where there is free variation conditioned by register. However, such variation is not found in all cases. For instance, left dislocations and fragments require *me* and disallow *I*, recall (84a), (84b). 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." If this is so, the rule (85b) would be inactive in these environments, yielding *me* as the only option.

Another option that has been explored is to attribute the variation to morphosyntax. For instance, Quinn (2005) proposes that some of the variation can be analysed as a morphosyntactic variation in pronoun type (gracile vs. robust). As an example, consider 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, then there is an asymmetry between the conjuncts in that the initial conjunct accepts gracile pronouns much more readily than the second conjunct:[20]

(87)   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) suggests 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

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[20] The special status of *I* is presumably linked to a special *and-I* rule discussed in Footnote 15.

conjunct is robust (*she and him*), but the reverse is much worse (*him and she*). What is crucial for us is that this kind of an account allows for a degree of structural variation without invoking an alternation in case (i.e., between default ACC and an assigned NOM).

The idea of variation between gracile and robust forms may provide some interesting insights into the interaction between various strong environments (namely, when we embed one strong environment within another). For example, we already know that left-dislocations require robust pronouns (88a), while post-modified pronouns show variation (88b). It is therefore interesting to note that when a post-modified pronoun is left dislocated, one still gets variation, see (88c).

(88)   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.

In Schütze (2001: 215–6), it has been suggested that the variation between *we/us* in (88b) may arise due to how case assignment interacts with different structures. He proposed that when the modified pronoun is in the topmost D projection, nominative assignment succeeds, and *we* appears. When it is not in the topmost projection (i.e., not in D but perhaps in Num), assignment fails, and *us* surfaces.

However, the example (88c) shows that the variation between *we/us* is also found in left-dislocation constructions, where no nominative case is assigned to the left-dislocated pronoun, so it is impossible to explain the form *we* in (88c) by recourse to the mechanism proposed in Schütze (2001: 215–6).

On Quinn's approach, one could posit that phrases in left-dislocated positions must be always robust. This requirement is fulfilled by placing there a full DP (*we/us Californians*), and since this requirement is satisfied by the full phrase, the pronoun embedded inside it is free to show its regular variation between gracile and robust, as found in the regular case of post-modified pronouns.

Moving away from variation, the final puzzle to consider is the ungrammaticality of the sentence (89).

(89)   *Me arrived.

The issue with (89) is the following: if *me* is a (robust) nominative pronoun, and subjects are nominative pronouns of variable strength, the sentence (89) is expected to be grammatical. Since it is ungrammatical, it seems that *me* cannot be a nominative pronoun (contrary to the current analysis).

However, as observed in Kayne (2000: 167), French strong nominative pronouns cannot appear in such sentences either, see (90a).

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

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

Kayne proposes that in order to be felicitously used, such strong pronouns must be doubled by a weak pronoun, see (90b). Note at the same time that the doubling requirement observed in (90) only holds in sentences where the bare pronoun serves as a subject of a non-elliptical clause; none of the other strong-pronoun environments in (64) requires doubling in French (just like in English).

The parallel between the English *me* and the French *moi* suggests that (89) is quite likely ruled out for a different reason than *me* being accusative, since *moi* is routinely analysed as a strong pronoun invariant for case. As a speculation, let me pursue here Kayne's idea that such sentences are ruled out not because of case, but because the robust pronoun must be doubled, as in French, see (91b).

(91) a. *Me arrived.
      b. Me, I arrived.

The question is naturally how to define the doubling requirement so that it only applies in (91), but not in the other sentence types (where no doubling is observed). This can be achieved if one stipulates that doubling only pertains to bare pronouns. This exempts coordinated and both pre- and post-modified pronouns from the doubling requirement.

It leaves us with the question why fragment answers and gapping do not need doubling either. One option (considered in Kayne 2000) is that in these contexts, such doubling could be present in the underlying structure, but eliminated by ellipsis, see (92).

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

While the actual account is admittedly speculative, what matters is the parallel between French and English, such that subject-related *me* mirrors the behaviour of *moi*. This parallel includes apparent quirks such as the impossibility of using either *me* or *moi* as the sole subject of a non-elliptical sentence. While the ultimate explanation for this is left for future research, the conclusion I end up with is that the English-French parallel suggests that the issues are not a artefact of the analysis, but a genuine puzzle in the syntax of strong pronouns.

6 Conclusions

This article explored what has been labelled here "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, caseless DPs are simply realised by best matching item in the lexicon.

Inevitably, the properties of such a theory depend on the representation of case in the grammar. Section 2 argued that if the (independently-proposed) cumulative decomposition is adopted, the form of the default can only be identical to the unmarked core cases (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.

For these languages, it has been 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. What the possibility of such an analysis means for future research is that when determining the value of the default, primary consideration should be given to case marking of full DPs (rather than pronouns).

An issue left for future research is the cross-linguistic validity of the current findings. Out of the necessity to address the well-known facts of English, the paper mainly focussed on a limited set of languages and references to existing literature on the morphology of the default (recall Footnote 1). It is to be admitted that the claim of a universal default needs more cross-linguistic scrutiny, see, e.g., the work by Kouneli (2024) on marked-nominative languages that raise interesting challenges for the current approach.

Abbreviations

ACC = accusative, DAT = dative, DEF = default, FEM = feminine, MASC = masculine, NOM = nominative, OBL = oblique, PL = plural, SG = singular

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