

West Flemish possessor doubling and the anaphor agreement effect*

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Abstract

The so-called anaphor agreement effect is a descriptive generalisation due to Rizzi (1990) to account for the ungrammaticality of nominative anaphors. The anaphor agreement effect was shown by Woolford (1999) to capture the (non-)occurrence of anaphors in object positions. This paper examines to what extent Rizzi's generalisation can be used to account for the (non-) occurrence of reciprocal possessors in the West Flemish DP.

1. Introduction

Rizzi (1990) signals the contrast between Italian (1a) and (1b), for which the traditional Binding Theory does not give a satisfactory account. In (1a) a dative EXPERIENCER *a loro* ('to them') binds the post-verbal anaphor (*se stessi*, 'themselves'). In (1b), one might expect *a loro* to serve as a preverbal binder for the postverbal anaphoric subject (*se stessi*), but the sentence is ungrammatical. Rizzi (1990, p.26) proposes the descriptive generalisation (2).

- (1) a. *A loro importa solo di se stessi.* (Rizzi 1990, his (12b))
to them matters (SG) only of themselves
- b. **A loro interessano solo se stessi.* (Rizzi 1990, his (13))
to them interest (PL) only themselves

- (2) The anaphor agreement effect.

Anaphors do not occur in syntactic positions construed with agreement. (1990, p.26)

(2) also rules out a nominative reciprocal in English (3) (cf. Woolford 1999, p. 257¹):

(3) *They think that each other are nice.

Rizzi (1990) derives (2) by arguing that verbal agreement, being composed of person and number, is [+pronominal] (cf. Picallo 1990). The [+pronominal] agreement enters into a CHAIN with the element it is construed with. CHAIN formation between an anaphor and [+pronominal] agreement will result in a clash in feature specifications between the CHAIN links.² [+anaphoric] elements are subject to principle A of the Binding Theory and [+pronominal] elements are subject to Principle B.

Rizzi (1990) essentially demonstrates how, without appealing to case as such, (2) rules out nominative anaphors (as in (1b)). Woolford (1999) extends the empirical coverage of (2) by looking at object anaphors and their (in)compatibility with object agreement. One major point to emerge from her discussion, and one that will be relevant here, is that she distinguishes two types of agreement: [+anaphoric] agreement and [+pronominal] agreement. While object anaphors are incompatible with [+pronominal] object agreement, they are compatible with [+anaphoric] object agreement. This is so because in the latter pattern, the anaphor will enter into a CHAIN with an anaphoric element, thus there will not arise a conflict in binding requirements.

In this paper I examine some data mainly drawn from West Flemish (WF) that suggest that the anaphor agreement effect (2) may also bear on DP internal (non)-occurrences of anaphors as pronominal possessors.

2. The data: West Flemish prenominal possessors

WF has two constructions with prenominal possessors, illustrated in (4):

- (4) a Marie euren boek
Marie her book
- b Marie-se boek Marie-sen oto
Marie se book Marie sen car

(4a) illustrates possessor doubling: the DP possessor *Marie* is doubled by the possessive pronoun *euren*, which agrees in person, gender and number with the possessor, and which also agrees in number and gender with the *possessum*. In (4b) the possessor *Marie* is associated with a bound morpheme *se(n)* which corresponds roughly to the English genitive marker. *Se* alternates with *sen*, the former is used in front of consonants, the latter in front of vowels. For more discussion of the two constructions I refer to Haegeman (2003, to appear).

While the doubling construction allows for a plural possessor (5a), the possessor in the *se(n)* construction must be singular (5b):

- (5) a die studenten under boeken
those students their books
- b *die studenten-se boeken
those students se books

Whereas a prenominal reciprocal possessor is incompatible with the doubling construction (regardless of whether one chooses a singular or plural doubling pronoun), it is compatible with the *se(n)* construction. Thus English (6a) corresponds to WF (6c); WF (6b) is ungrammatical.

- (6) a. They have seen each other's guests.
 b. *dan ze mekoar under/zen/eur gasten gezien een
that they each-other their/his/her guests seen have
 c. dan ze mekoar-se gasten gezien een

The same incompatibility with the doubling construction is found in Dutch and in German:

- (7) a. Dutch *Ze hebben elkaar hun/z'n/d'r gasten gezien.
they have each other their/his/her guests seen
 b. German *Sie haben einander ihre Gäste gesehen.
they have each other their guests seen

One might try to account for the ungrammaticality of WF (6b) in terms of an incompatibility of anaphors and nominative case, but such a proposal has independently been argued against by Rizzi (1990) and moreover it would not extend to the German data (6b). In the German doubling construction, the possessor is in the dative case:

- (8) German dem Vater sein Buch
the father -DAT his book

WF pronouns and similar functional elements as such are not banned from the possessor position in the doubling construction. (9a) and (9b) illustrate personal pronouns as possessives; in (9c) and (9d) the possessive is a demonstrative. In (9e) the reciprocal *mekoar* is an indirect object and the direct object *under exoamens* ('their exams') contains a coreferential possessive pronoun *under*.

- (9) a ?Z'een ZIE euren vent nie gezien.
 they have SHE her husband not seen
- b Z'een ZIE doar euren vent nie gezien.
 they have SHE there her husband not seen
- c Z'een dedie euren vent nie gezien.³
 they have the-that her husband not seen
 'They did not see the husband of that one'
- d Z'een dedeze euren vent nie gezien.
 they have the-this her husband not seen
 'They did not see the husband of this one.'
- e Z_i'een mekoar_i (gisteren) under_i exoamens getuogd.
 They have each other (yesterday) their exams shown

3. The anaphor agreement effect in the DP

3.1. WF doubling constructions

Before accounting for the contrast between (6b) and (6c), I briefly sketch an analysis for the prenominal possessor construction (see Haegeman 2003). In the doubling constructions illustrated so far, in which the *possessum* NP is overt, no article or demonstrative can be associated with the *possessum* (10a). Following Corver (1990), I assume that when in complementary distribution with the determiner, the WF possessive pronoun occupies D. On the other hand, when the *possessum* NP is ellipted, the possessive pronoun has a strong form and follows the determiner, which is then obligatory (10b).

- (10) a Valère (*den) zenen oto
*Valère (*the) his car*
- b Valère *(den) zynen
*Valère *(the) his*

Following among others Zribi-Hertz (1998) and Picallo (1995), and simplifying for reasons of space, I propose that the WF possessive pronoun originates as the head of the IP projection of DP. In (10a), the possessive pronoun undergoes I-to-D movement (see Corver 1990 for the same idea, and Haegeman 2003 for a more detailed analysis). When there is no possessor DP, as in (11a), the *phi* features of the possessive pronoun which spells out I/D license a possessor *pro* (cf. Picallo 1990), the subject of 1P/DP. The prenominal possessor DP *Valère* in (11b) occupies [Spec,DP]⁴ and forms a CHAIN with *pro* in the nominal [Spec,IP], with which it shares the POSSESSOR role. (See Den Dikken 1998, 1999 for a similar *pro*-based approach). When the *possessum* NP is ellipted (11c), the pronoun remains in I to allow recovery of the ellipted material (cf. Lobeck 1995; Kester 1996).

- (11) a [DP [D zenen_i] [IP pro [I t_i] [NP boek]]]
his book
- b [DP Valère [D zenen_i] [IP pro [I t_i] [NP boek]]]
- c [DP Valère [D den] [IP pro [I zynen] [NP]]]

Following Rizzi's account for the anaphor agreement effect (see also Woolford (1999)), a configuration like that in (12a) will give rise to the anaphor agreement effect, since the members of the possessor CHAIN <*mekoar*, *pro*> have contradictory binding requirements: *mekoar* is anaphoric, *pro* is pronominal (cf. Woolford (1999) and Burzio (1995) for

alternative interpretations of the anaphor agreement effect which also rule out (12a)). The ungrammaticality of the elliptical construction in (12b) follows in the same way.

- (12) a *_{[DP Mekoar [D under_i] [IP pro [I t_i] [NP gasten]]]}
each other their guests
- b *_{[DP Mekoar [D de] [IP pro [I undere] [NP]]]}
each other the their

3.2. Hungarian nominative possessors

An potential testing ground for the DP-internal anaphor agreement effect is provided by Hungarian, in which DP-internal possessors trigger agreement with the *possessum* N. The data, though not conclusive, are compatible with the proposal above that the anaphor agreement effect applies DP-internally. I briefly consider the distribution of the reciprocal possessor in Hungarian. Consider the data in (13) from Kiss (2002, chapter 7, her (16), glosses also hers):

- | | | |
|--------|------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| (13) a | az én diák -ja -i -m | a mi diák -ja -i -nk |
| | <i>the I student-POSS-PL-1SG</i> | <i>the we student-POSS-PL-1PL</i> |
| | ‘my students’ | ‘our students’ |
| b | a te diák -ja -i -d | a ti diák -ja -i -tok |
| | <i>the you student-POSS-PL-2SG</i> | <i>the you student-POSS-PL-2PL</i> |
| | ‘your students’ | ‘your students’ |
| c | az ő diák -ja -i - | az ő diák -ja -i -k |
| | <i>the he student-POSS-PL-3SG</i> | <i>the he student-POSS-PL-3PL</i> |
| | ‘his students’ | ‘their students’ |

The possessor constructions in (13) show agreement between the nominative prenominal possessor and the *possessum* N. For instance, a nominative first person possessor *én* ('I') is matched with a *possessum* N (*diák*, 'students') carrying (i) a possessor morpheme (*ja*), (ii) a plural morpheme (*-i*) for the *possessum* ('students'), and (iii) a 1st person morpheme *-m* to agree with the first person possessor. Agreement is also found in the third person, though there is no overt marking for the third person singular possessor (see (13c)).

With lexical DPs as nominative possessors there is no overt agreement morphology on N (example from Kiss 2002, her (17)).

- | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|------|----|---|-------------------|-------------|-----------------|--|----|---|-------------------|-------------|-----------------|
| (14) | a. | a | fiú | könyv-e | -i | | b. | a | fiúk | könyv-e | -i |
| | | | <i>the boy</i> | <i>book</i> | <i>-POSS-PL</i> | | | | <i>the boys</i> | <i>book</i> | <i>-POSS-PL</i> |
| | | | 'the boy's books' | | | | | | 'the boys' books' | | |

In (14) the plural marking *-i* on the *possessum* N is related to the plural feature of the *possessum*, and not to the plurality of the possessor. The plural of the possessor is spelt out on the possessor itself (*fiú* vs *fiúk*). The fact that only a pronominal possessor agrees with the *possessum* and that a lexical possessor does not so agree, is interpreted by Szabolcsi (1992a), den Dikken and Lipták (1997), and den Dikken (1998, 1999), among others, as analogous to the 'anti-agreement effect' in the Welsh clause (Rouveret 1991). Simplifying Den Dikken's (1998, 1999) proposal somewhat, the idea is that, to check their number feature, pronominal possessors move to a DP-internal AgrP, which dominates a projection PossP. DP possessors remain in PossP, i.e. lower than the nominal AgrP (or else, when dative, they raise above D.) For detailed discussion I refer to Kiss (2002) and the references cited there.

Let us now turn to reciprocal possessors in Hungarian. (15a) illustrates an instrumental reciprocal *egymással* in a complement position. A nominative reciprocal *égymás* cannot occur

as a subject of a finite clause, as illustrated in (15b). The ungrammaticality of (15b) can once again be ascribed to the anaphor agreement effect. A nominative reciprocal *egymás* is not as such excluded. Specifically, and relevant for our discussion, it can be the possessor in a DP (15c) (cf. Szabolcsi 1994, p. 202-203 for binding properties of the reciprocal):

- (15) a. A férfiak egymással találkoztak.
the men each other-INST met-PL
- b. *A férfiak tudták hogy [egymás elmegy].
the men know that each other will leave
- c. egymás kalap-ja-0⁵
each other hat-POSS-SG

The DP internal possessor in (15c) does not trigger agreement marking on the possessed noun. There are a number of options to interpret this. If we assume that reciprocal possessors behave like DP possessors, the absence of an agreement marker will be seen as anti-agreement in the sense of Den Dikken (1998), which would be compatible with the proposal above.⁶ Like other DPs, reciprocals would not trigger agreement. Alternatively, one might say that reciprocals behave like pronouns, and that they agree with the *possessum* in terms of [NUMBER]. To reconcile this agreement with our analysis, we should propose that because the relevant agreement is restricted to [NUMBER], the instantiation of agreement is [+anaphoric] (see Woolford 1999, see section 4 for this proposal) and can therefore form a licit CHAIN with a reciprocal.^{7 8 9}

4. Licit reciprocal possessors

4.1. Norwegian possessor doubling

A prediction of the account is that a prenominal reciprocal possessor may be licit if it enters into a CHAIN with the anaphoric agreement. In this case, CHAIN formation does not result in conflicting binding requirements. In the Norwegian doubling construction (16a), doubling *sin* is a reflexive (it is opposed to pronominal *hans*, see Delsing (1998)). We correctly predict that the Norwegian possessor doubling construction is compatible with a reciprocal possessor.¹⁰

(16) a. Per sin bil

Peter his car

b. kvarandre sin bil Norwegian: Nynorsk¹¹

each other sin car

A second situation in which a reciprocal might be licit is when it fails to trigger any kind of agreement. We turn to this case in 4.2.

4.2. Afrikaans

Afrikaans has a possessor construction that is somewhat similar to the WF *se(n)*-construction (Ponelis 1979; Taeldeman 1995). For our discussion there is one relevant difference: both singular (17a,b) and plural (17c) possessors are found:

- (17) a. Jan se bevele
Jan se orders
- b. die predikant se motor
the curate se engine (Ponelis 1979, p.126)
- c. die amptenare se verslag
the officials se report (Ponelis 1979, p.127)

Evidently, the Afrikaans possessive marker *se* does not enter into an agreement relation with the possessor and hence it will be expected to be compatible with reciprocals.

- (18) a. Piet en Jan respekteer mekaar se methodes.
Piet and Jan respect each other se methods
- b. Ons moet nie mekaar se werk doen nie.
we should not each other se work do not (Ponelis 1979, p. 85)

4.3. West Flemish *se(n)*

Let us return to the licit WF reciprocal possessor in (6c) repeated here for convenience as (19a). I assume, following Corver (1990), that *se(n)* is in D and that the prenominal possessor-DP is in [Spec,DP]. (19b) is a partial representation. No problem arises if we assume that *se(n)*, like the Afrikaans possessive marker *se*, does not agree with the possessor.

- (19) a. dan ze mekoar-se gasten gezien een
that they each other se guests seen have
- b. dan ze [_{DP} mekoar-_D se] [_{IP} [_{NP} gasten]] gezien een

However, there is a potential complication. Recall that WF *se(n)* imposes a number restriction on the pronominal possessor, which must be [+SINGULAR] (cf. (5)). If this restriction is stated in terms of matching *phi* features, in particular in terms of matching [NUMBER], then the anaphoric possessor (*mekoar* in (19)) does enter into an agreement relation with *se(n)* in D.¹² In line with the discussion above, we might propose that agreement as realised by WF *se(n)* is featurally restricted and hence of the anaphoric type. In section 5 below I speculate on the nature of anaphoric agreement in relation to feature composition.

5. Some speculations on defining anaphors on the basis of feature deficiency

This section, based on a suggestion due to Burzio (1995), further explores the distinction between agreeing heads that qualify as anaphoric - and hence can be construed with anaphors without violating Rizzi's (1b) - from those that qualify as pronominal.

Burzio (1995, pp. 19-20) has argued that the ban on construal of anaphors with agreement in (1b) should be related to relative richness of the agreement head. A rich¹³ agreement head cannot be construed with anaphors, but a poor agreement head can. In the WF *se(n)*-construction, nominal (possessor) agreement only encodes [NUMBER]; in other words, *se(n)* lacks [PERSON] and [GENDER]. Hence, realised as *se(n)*, WF nominal AGR is substantively 'poorer' than its counterpart in the doubling constructions, which encodes [PERSON], [NUMBER] and [GENDER] features. In terms of Burzio's (1995) proposal, even when it agrees with the possessor, WF *se(n)* only agrees 'partially'. In Rizzi's (1990) terms, if we postulate that there is 'agreement' at all in the WF *se(n)*-construction, the restriction to the [NUMBER] feature will entail that *se(n)* -agreement cannot qualify as [+PRONOMINAL]. Putting it differently, *se(n)* is not referential. Pursuing this view, we could speculate that the non-referential nature of *se(n)* follows from its feature composition. Anaphoric elements are not inherently capable of referring, they are referentially dependent. Consider for instance French

anaphoric *se* in (20): it encodes third PERSON, but unlike the personal pronouns *le, la, les* in (21), it fails to encode [NUMBER] and [GENDER]:

- (20) a Pierre/Marie se lave.
Pierre/Mari se washes
- b Les hommes se lavent.
the men se wash
- (21) a Pierre le lave.
Pierre him washes
- b Pierre la lave.
Pierre her washes
- c Pierre les lave.
Pierre them washes

Exploiting this property, we might then pursue a suggestion in Burzio (1995) and propose that the lack of independent reference in anaphors is actually a consequence of their lacking the full set of ‘referential’ *phi* features. Anaphors are referentially dependent because, lacking some of the *phi* features which are at the basis of nominal reference, they cannot ‘refer’. Norwegian reflexive *sin* lacks gender and number agreement with the possessor. If WF the *se(n)* morpheme, which we considered to be anaphoric, is similarly featurally deficient. Nominal possessor agreement in Hungarian is restricted to [NUMBER] and hence might similarly be argued to qualify as anaphoric/non-referential along these lines of thinking.

Observe that to the proposal that the anaphoric status of nominal elements follows from a feature deficiency, it might be objected that English anaphors such as *himself, herself*, do encode the full set of *phi* features: [PERSON], [NUMBER] and [GENDER]. In answer to this

objection, Burzio (1995, p.12) suggests that *self* is the head of the anaphor and that the pronominal element of the reflexive is adjoined to the head but does not transfer its *phi* features to the reflexive.”

6. Reciprocals vs reflexives

Though the anaphor agreement effect seems to be able to account for some of the observed distribution of reciprocals and anaphor possessors it does not fully capture the distribution of anaphoric elements in the DP. For one thing, it cannot account for the contrast in English (22).

- (22) a They have read each other’s books.
 b *They have read themselves’ books.
 c They have read their (own) books.

That DP-internal reflexives have a more restricted distribution than reciprocals should probably be related to the more observation that in the clausal domain too reflexives are more restricted in their distribution. Lebeaux (1983), for instance, postulates that reflexives undergo LF movement and accounts for the observed differences in distribution between reflexives and reciprocals in terms of a government requirement for reflexives. I refer to his paper for a full account. We are led to conclude that if the anaphor agreement effect can be argued to apply to both reflexives and reciprocals (cf. (1) and (3)), a further distinction will still be required to capture the different distributions of reflexives and reciprocals.

7. Conclusion

This paper shows that the incompatibility of the reciprocal possessor with the possessor doubling construction in WF may possibly be seen as another reflex of the anaphor agreement

effect. Given the feature deficiency of WF possessive *se(n)*, the availability of the reciprocal possessor in the WF *se(n)* possessor construction is expected. In the final sections of the paper, I speculate on the contrast between pronominal agreement and anaphoric agreement, and I also show that though relevant to the DP-internal distribution of reciprocals, the anaphoric agreement effect is not sufficient to account for the distribution of reflexives.

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¹ Note that *each other* seems to be able to be used as a subject of an interrogative finite clause (see also Lebeaux 1983: 724, his (7), attributed to Chomsky, class lectures). (i) offers some attested examples. Interestingly for the discussion in this paper, the agreement properties of subject *each other* appear to be unstable, (ia) and (ib) have a plural verb and in (ic) and (id) the agreement is singular.

- (i) a When men understand what each other mean, they see that controversy is either superfluous or hopeless. (John Henry Newman, English theologian (*Independent*, 2.12.00, Weekend Review, page 3))
- b Our marriage has lots of give and take and we know what each other want. (*Independent Review* 27.11.00, page 7, col 3)
- c There 's a lot of messing about, wondering what each other is thinking. (*Guardian*, G2, 31.1.2000, p. 5, col 3)
- d Our dear friends in the humanities do get themselves awfully confused about whether the world exists, whether each other exists, about whether words mean anything. (*Guardian*, G2, 4.9.3, page page 12, col 5).

The contrast between the acceptability of (i) and the degraded status of text example (3) remains to be dealt with.

² For reasons of space, I am simplifying Rizzi's account. See also Woolford 's (1999) discussion and her clarifications on the application of generalisation (2).

³ When used independently, WF demonstrative *die* and *deze* must be preceded by a definite article. This accounts for the forms *dedie* and *dedeze* in (9c) and (9d). Note that this occurrence of the article *de* is associated with the demonstrative possessive itself (*deze*, *die*) and not with the *possessum* NP (*vent*).

This can be shown if we consider (i):

-
- (i) a Dedie eur us
 de-that her house
- b het/*de us
 *het/*de house*
- b *het die eur us
 het that her house

The N *us* ('house') is neuter, and hence it would require *het* as its definite determiner. But as shown by (ic) *het* is not licit in the possessive pattern. This is because the article in these examples is associated with the possessor, realised by the (feminine) demonstrative *die*, and not with the *possessum* N *us*.

4 This is a simplification, see Haegeman (2003, to appear) for an account in terms of an articulated DP-periphery.

5 Thanks to Genoveva Puskàs and Anikó Lipták for help with the data.

6 I adopt Szabolcsi's (1994) assumption, endorsed by Kiss (2002), that part of the possessive morphology corresponds to the Poss head. This differs from Den Dikken's (1998; 1999) approach. See Kiss (2002) for arguments.

7 Yet another option, signalled by Anikó Lipták, is that Hungarian reciprocals in fact lack number and possibly person features, thus the issue of agreement cannot arise.

8 Henk van Riemsdijk points out that Turkish has

- (i) birbir-lerin-in araba-si
 each other-pronoun-GEN car-3SG

The grammaticality of (i) seems at first sight to contradict (2). Van Riemsdijk signals that in this case *lerin* is a default singular. We could take this to mean that (i) might be another case of Den Dikken's anti agreement effect.

9 Observe that when a reciprocal is in object position it will trigger object agreement for definiteness on the finite verb. This might be seen as counterevidence for (2) but along the lines discussed in the next section we might propose that since the agreement only concerns the definiteness feature and does not include person and number, it is of the anaphoric type. See also section 5.

10 See Woolford (1999) for anaphoric object agreement.

11 Thanks to Anna Britta Stenström for the judgement on Norwegian.

12 It is important to note that it will not suffice to simply say that the agreement in the genitive is nor

morphologically realised and that abstract agreement is allowed to be construed with an anaphor, as this would wrongly entail that finite sentences in English may have an anaphor as their subject, contrary to fact (cf. Woolford 1999 for detailed discussion of the concept of abstract agreement).

¹³ Burzio uses the terms ‘strong’ and ‘weak’. In order to avoid confusion with the concepts of strong/weak features in Minimalist terms I replace these for convenience by ‘rich’ and ‘poor’.