Revisiting the Person Case Constraint in Czech*

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1 Introduction

The Person Case Constraint (PCC), first noted by Perlmutter 1971 as the me-lui/I-II constraint, is a restriction on certain combinations of phonologically weak arguments of ditransitive verbs (see also Bonet 1991; Anagnostopoulou 2003, 2005; Adger and Harbour 2007; Haspelmath 2004, among many others).

Linguists have disagreed on whether Czech exhibits the Person Case Constraint (PCC).


We conducted self-paced reading and judgment task experiments that show that Czech speakers do, indeed, exhibit PCC effects, see (1a-b).1

(1) a. Karel mi ji ukázal na fotce.2
   Karel 1SG.DAT.CL 3SG.ACC.CL showed on photo
   ‘Karel showed her to me in the photo.’

   b. *Karel mu mě ukázal na fotce.
      Karel 3SG.DAT.CL 1SG.ACC.CL showed on photo
      ‘Karel showed me to him in the photo.’

2 Overview of the PCC

The PCC is a constraint on phonologically weak pronominal arguments of ditransitive verbs and is found in many unrelated languages across the world. Weak pronominal elements include: pronominal clitics, weak pronouns and agreement markers.

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1 Reading time results are compatible with the judgment task results, but are not discussed in this talk due to time constraints.

2 Abbreviations are as follows: C (complementizer), PST (past), INF (infinitive), COND (conditional), AUX (auxiliary), CL (clitic), REFL (reflexive), REL (relative pronoun), PRT (particle), SG (singular), PL (plural), ACC (accusative), DAT (dative), NOM (nominative), INSTR (instrumental), LOC (locative).
The Person-Case Constraint (Bonet 1991:181-182)
In a combination of a direct object and an indirect object:

a. **Strong**: the direct object has to be 3rd person
   (OK: 3 > 3, 1 > 3, 2 > 3 / Ruled out: 1 > 2, 2 > 1, 3 > 1, 3 > 2)

b. **Weak**: if there is a 3rd person, it has to be the direct object.
   (OK: 3 > 3, 1 > 3, 2 > 3, 1 > 2, 2 > 1 / Ruled out: 3 > 1, 3 > 2)

c. **Me-First**: if there is a 1st person, it has to be the indirect object.
   (Ruled out: 3 > 1, 2 > 1)

Languages with the strong PCC prohibit (3c) and (3d) while languages with the weak PCC only prohibit (3d). Czech exhibits the weak version of the PCC; only (3d) is prohibited. *(Me-First is not pictured here.)*

**3 Overview of Czech**

3.1 **Czech Clitic Inventory**


Though some strong and weak accusative and dative forms are segmentally identical (see (4) and (5)), they differ in that strong forms are stressed. Additionally, full pronouns are found in contrastive topic and focus positions, at the left and right edges of the clause, respectively (see Mathesius 1947, Hajičová et al. 1995 for discussion).

In the stimuli used in our study, the position of the pronominal form in the clitic cluster leads the reader to a clitic interpretation; clitics do not appear at the right or left edge of the clause in any of the stimuli.

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³ Czech has 7 nominal cases: nominative, accusative, genitive, dative, locative, instrumental and vocative, but only has pronominal clitic forms in accusative, genitive and dative. Genitive clitics are positioned last among the pronominal clitics: DAT > ACC > GEN.

⁴ Later, we will see that in certain instances, Czech allows the clitic order ACC > DAT.
(4) Czech Pronominal Clitics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1SG</th>
<th>2SG</th>
<th>3SG-MASC</th>
<th>3SG-FEM</th>
<th>1PL</th>
<th>2PL</th>
<th>3PL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accusative</td>
<td>mě</td>
<td>tě</td>
<td>ho</td>
<td>ji</td>
<td>nás</td>
<td>vás</td>
<td>je</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dative</td>
<td>mí</td>
<td>ti</td>
<td>mu</td>
<td>jí</td>
<td>nám</td>
<td>vám</td>
<td>jim</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(5) Czech Strong Pronouns

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1SG</th>
<th>2SG</th>
<th>3SG-MASC</th>
<th>3SG-FEM</th>
<th>1PL</th>
<th>2PL</th>
<th>3PL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accusative</td>
<td>mě</td>
<td>tebe</td>
<td>jeho</td>
<td>ji</td>
<td>nás</td>
<td>vás</td>
<td>je</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dative</td>
<td>mně</td>
<td>tobě</td>
<td>jemu</td>
<td>jí</td>
<td>nám</td>
<td>vám</td>
<td>jim</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.2 PCC Effects in Czech

Czech exhibits the weak version of the PCC and the Me-First condition with both plural and singular clitics (also in Classical Arabic, Nevins 2007, and some dialects of Spanish, Perlmutter 1971).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PCC-Licit Clitic Combinations:</th>
<th>*PCC Clitic Combinations:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 &gt; 3</td>
<td>*3 &gt; 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 &gt; 2</td>
<td>*3 &gt; 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 &gt; 3</td>
<td>*2 &gt; 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 &gt; 3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In all persons, both singular and plural clitics show the same PCC effects.

Licit clusters: 1 > 3, 2 > 3 and 3 > 3.

(6) a. Chválil mi ho za dobrou práci minulý týden. 

*praised 1SG.DAT.CL 3SG.ACC.CL*for good work last week

‘He praised him to me for his good work last week.’

b. Karel vám je ukázal na fotce.

*Karel 2PL.DAT.CL 3PL.ACC.CL*showed on photo

‘Karel showed us to you in the photo.’

c. Představil jí ho včera v Hradci Králové.

*introduced 3SG.DAT.CL 3SG.ACC.CL* yesterday in Hradec Králové

‘He introduced me to you yesterday in Hradec Králové.’

Illicit clusters: *3 > 1, *3 > 2.5

(7) a. *Doporučil mu mě na místo minulý týden.

*recommended 3SG.DAT.CL 1SG.ACC.CL*on position last week

‘He recommended me to him for the position last week.’

5 Stars are used here for clarity, but some combination of ‘?’ and ‘*’ might be a more accurate representation of the status of these examples.
b. *Vedoucí jim nás doporučil minulý týden.

The boss recommended us last week.

The 'Me-first' condition:

(8) a. Představil mi tě včera v Hradci Králové.

He introduced me to you yesterday in Hradec Králové.

(9) a. Ukážu mu ho/??tě zítra. Goal/Experimenter

'I will show him/?*you to him tomorrow.'

The PCC holds for all non-argumental uses of the dative (from Řezáč 2005: (43)):

b. Pozvu mu ho/?*tě zítra. Beneactive

'I will invite him/?*you for his sake tomorrow.'

c. Viděl jsem mu ho/??tě v rukou. Possessive

'I saw him/?*you in his hands.'

d. Vona ti ho/ tě ale nenávidí. Address/Ethical

'You know, she really hates him/you.'

The PCC also holds in restructuring contexts in which the clitics have climbed out of an embedded infinitival, the only configuration in which clitic climbing is licit (from Řezáč 2005: (44)). 'I' indicates association with the embedded clause.

(10) a. Honza mu ho/ je/ ?*tě poradil pozvat na večerí

Honza advised him to invite him/them/?*you for dinner.

b. Honza mu/ ho/ je/ ?*tě chce ukázat

Honza wants show-INF to him/them/?*you to him.
4 New Experimental and Corpus results

4.1 Experimental Investigation of the PCC

Goal: To determine whether Czech exhibits PCC effects.

Judgment Task, 7 point scale (109 speakers):
- 6x3 design
- 108 stimuli, 276 fillers
  - Combinations of singular and plural clitics with the following ditransitive verbs:
    - chválit (‘to praise’), představit (‘to introduce’), doporučit (‘to recommend’), ukázat (‘to show’), svěřit (‘to confide/entrust’)

Table 1: PCC Judgment Task Results

1. 1 > 3 and 2 > 3: Clitic combinations that satisfy the weak version of the PCC are considered to be grammatical. (1 > 2 did not show statistically significant results.)

2. *3 > 1 and *3 > 2: Clitic combinations that violate the weak version of the PCC are degraded.
3. *2 > 1 and *3 > 1: Clitic combinations that violate the 'Me-first' condition are degraded.

Results are identical when only the clitic forms which are segmentally identical to strong pronoun forms are considered, (see (5-6) for summary of the forms).

4.2 The PCC in the Czech National Corpus

Researchers have reported that languages with the weak PCC tend to exhibit some variation in judgments among speakers (see Bonet 1991:179-182, Anagnostopoulou 2005, Nevins 2007:294, Ormazabal and Romero 2007:332-3).

(12) *PCC examples in the Czech National Corpus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Number in Corpus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>*PCC</td>
<td>&lt;15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PCC-licit</td>
<td>&gt;8,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*3 > 1, *3 > 2:

(13) No a rodiče mu mé nedali.

Yeah and parents 3SG.DAT.CL 1SG.ACC.CL NEG.give

‘Yeah, and my parents didn’t give me to him.’

(14) Někdo jí váš doporučil?

someone 3SG.DAT.CL 2PL.ACC.CL recommend

‘Did someone recommend you to her?’

*PCC structures that involve clitics that are segmentally distinct from strong forms also occur:

(15) Dám mu tě do pytle.

give 3SG.DAT.CL 2SG.ACC.CL to bag

‘I’ll give you to him in a bag.’

5 Czech Syntactic Assumptions

5.1 Clause Structural Assumptions

The Czech verb remains low in the syntax; it raises from V₀ to v₀, but no higher (see Veselovská 1995, Sturgeon 2008, a. o.). A single, clause initial XP appears before the clitic cluster; this XP is interpreted as a topic, contrastive topic or focus (see Sturgeon 2008 for details). This XP may be the nominative subject, but need not be. Nominative case is checked on the in situ subject via static Agree.

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6 Examples are from SYN2005, a corpus of written Czech. It is a balanced corpus of 100 million words and most of the texts are from 2000 – 2004 (Czech National Corpus, http://ucnk.ff.cuni.cz/).
5.2 Syntax of Clitics

Clitics in Czech have been argued to be syntactically positioned in the Wackernagel position (see Fried 1994, Avgustinová and Oliva 1995, Veselovská 1995, Franks and King 2000, Lenertová 2001).

- Clitics merge into the structure as verbal arguments that move from their vP-internal positions to a higher position in the clause. Evidence that Czech clitics are verbal arguments and not adjuncts comes from the fact that, like all other second-position clitic Slavic languages, Czech does not allow clitic doubling.

- They move as phrases from their positions within the vP to adjoin to a higher functional projection, TP. Movement is motivated by the need to check person and number features on T⁰. Evidence for a phrasal, rather than a head movement analysis, comes from the fact that clitics are not-verb-adjacent.

(16) Czech Clause Structure

6 Previous Theoretical Accounts of the PCC

6.1 Morphological Approaches

These approaches employ morphological repair strategies to obviate the effects of the PCC. They stipulate that a combination of an indirect object with a local direct object is not syntactically ill-formed but ruled out in the morphological component (Bonet 1991, 1995; Miller and Sag 1997). If no repair strategy is available in a language, a sentence containing the illicit combination is filtered by the morphological component as ungrammatical.
6.2 Syntactic Analyses

In recent syntactic approaches strong and weak PCC effects arise in contexts in which both objects enter a feature checking relation with the same functional head, a “one head, two arguments” configuration (Anagnostopoulou 2003, 2007, Béjar and Řezáč 2003, Adger and Harbour 2007, Migdalski 2006, Řezáč 2005, among others).

Assumptions about the featural make-up of dative and accusative arguments include:

- Dative arguments do not check number features because they are defective for number
- 3rd person dative arguments are [-person]
- 3rd person accusative arguments lack person features (see Taraldsen 1995 and Ritter 1995)

The Strong PCC

The dative argument checks person features first, then the accusative argument needs to check both person and number. Number can be checked because dative has not checked number. Person, however, cannot be checked unless the accusative is third person and, thus, lacks person features, because the person feature on the functional head has already been checked by the dative object.

(17) The Strong PCC

The Weak PCC (Anagnostopoulou 2005)

Languages with the weak version of the PCC exhibit the option of Multiple Agree: the person feature of the functional head can be checked simultaneously by two different elements.

*3 > 1, *3 > 2 are ruled out because of the conflicting person features of the two arguments: the [+person] feature of the local argument is in conflict with the [-person] feature of the 3rd person argument.
Migdalski 2006 on Slavic

Migdalski 2006 accounts for the presence of the PCC in verb-adjacent clitic languages (Macedonian and Bulgarian), but the lack of the PCC in Wackernagel clitic Serbo-Croatian and Czech by adopting a “one head, two arguments” for Bulgarian and Macedonian (both exhibiting the weak version of the PCC).

For Wackernagel clitic languages, he suggests that they lack the PCC due to the existence of 2 agreement heads on which dative and accusative arguments check person and number features separately.

This is not a possible analysis for Czech, since Czech has been shown to exhibit the PCC.

7 Theoretical Proposal

7.1 Generalizations

Czech has both the weak version of the PCC and the Me First condition.

\[(18) \quad *3 > 1 \\
*3 > 2 \\
*2 > 1 \]

The analysis must capture the following generalization:

\[(19) \quad \text{The argument with the lower person specification must dominate the argument with the higher person specification.} \]

We adopt Nevins 2007, who uses a “one head, two arguments” analysis in which Multiple Agree is an option. His analysis differs from Anagnostopoulou 2005 in that 3\textsuperscript{rd} person elements have person specifications.

Features for 1\textsuperscript{st}, 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} persons.

- Author (contains the referent and the speaker) and Participant (the referent contains one of the discourse participants).

\[(20) \quad \text{Person Features}^8 \]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Participant</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1\textsuperscript{st} person</td>
<td>+</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd} person</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3\textsuperscript{rd} person</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[^7[+\text{auth}] \text{ and } [+\text{part}] \text{ are the marked values of the features.} \]

\[^8[+\text{auth}, -\text{part}] = \text{logically impossible.} \]
7.2 The Analysis

• For Nevins, rather than the (un)availability of Multiple Agree, the probe has a specific search domain. The *domain of the probing head* is equivalent to the agreement domain of the clitic pronouns, the TP domain (see discussion in §5 above).

• Syntactic agreement is relativized to certain values of a feature, in particular, the marked values. In other words, marked values ([+auth] and [+part]) are the only values which are visible to the probe.

Locality condition on Multiple Agree:

(21) *Contiguous Agree*: There can be no interveners between a probe and a goal that are not in the domain of relativization that includes the goal. (Nevins 2007, (50))

• The goal with marked features ([+auth] or [+part]) must be closest to the probe.

*Deriving the Weak PCC and the Me First Condition*

The probe, for Czech -- T₀, searches for marked values, [+auth] and [+part].

Weak Version of the PCC:

• 3 >1 and 3> 2 violate Contiguous Agree because a non-marked value of participant [-part] interrupts the Agreement span.

• 3 > 3 is licit because 2 elements with identical values for author and participant satisfy Contiguous Agree.

Me First:

• 3 > 1 and 2 > 1 violate Contiguous Agree because a non-marked value of author [-auth] interrupts the Agreement span.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schematics of licit and illicit structures:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 &gt; 3: √[TP [vP ... DAT[+auth, +part] ... ACC[-auth, -part]]]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*3 &gt; 2: *TP [vP ... DAT[-auth, -part] ... ACC[+auth, +part]]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The intuition behind this proposal is that, given the features [auth] and [part], a marked value of either of these features cannot be on *only* the lower argument within the domain of the T₀.
7.3 Repair Strategies for the PCC

7.3.1 Using a full pronoun

The most common PCC repair strategy across languages is to use a full pronoun or a PP for one of the arguments of the verb, rather than a clitic. The full pronoun does not raise to agree with T^0, so no PCC effects arise.

(22) Představil ji tobě.

\textit{introduced} 3SG.ACC.CL you.DAT

‘He introduced her to you.’

Similar repair strategies:

- In Spanish, a clitic doubling language, otherwise obligatory clitic doubles can be dropped to obviate a potential PCC violation; there is no clitic to raise and agree with a functional head, so PCC effects do not arise:

(23) a. Me recomendaron a él.

1SG.ACC.CL recommended to him

‘They recommended me to him.’ (Anagnostopoulou 2005: 209: (20))

b. \textit{me} le (1SG.ACC.CL 3SG.DAT.CL) \textit{me} (1SG.ACC.CL)

- In Catalan, the third person dative clitic (\textit{hi}) can be replaced by the ‘inanimate’ dative or locative clitic (\textit{hi}). On the locative clitic there are no person features, so there are no intervention effects between the Probing head and the accusative [+auth,+part] clitic.

(24) Al president, m’ hi/*li ha recomanat en Miquel

to-the president, 1SG.ACC.CL LOC.CL/3SG.DAT.CL has recommended the Miquel

‘As for the president, Miquel has recommended me to him’ (Bonet 2008: (7a-b))

7.3.2 ACC > DAT as Repair Strategy in Czech

ACC > DAT emerges to salvage *PCC clitic clusters (first noted by Medová 2009): it only occurs when the alternative order of clitics would induce a PCC violation.

(25) Dám tě jin napospas.

give.1SG 2SG.DAT.CL 3PL.ACC.CL mercy

‘I leave you at the mercy of them.’ (Medová 2009: 50: (18))

(26) Pozdravily se a Roscoe mě ji představila.

greet.3PL REFL.CL and Roscoe 1SG.ACC.CL 3SG.DAT.CL introduced

‘We said hi to each other and Roscoe introduced me to her.’ (Czech National Corpus)

Native speakers report that the second pronominal form is stressed. This suggests that to repair PCC violations, speakers use the accusative clitic, but stress the dative pronoun (in these cases, segmentally identical to the strong pronoun). We suggest that the dative pronoun is in a focus projection within the middlefield.
8 Conclusions and Future Directions

- Czech exhibits the weak PCC and the Me First Constraint. The evidence for this comes from experimental studies, corpus analysis, and, in addition, from the use of specific repair strategies to obviate the PCC.

- The weak PCC can be accounted for under Multiple Agree (Anagnostopoulou 2005) with some modifications based on Nevins (2007).

- Given these results, parametric variation in the PCC across Slavic needs to be further investigated. The PCC seems to be unambiguously active in languages such as Bulgarian and Macedonian with verb-adjacent clitics, but there is more disagreement in the literature on the status of the PCC in other weak pronominal languages (non-verb adjacent), such as Polish and Slovene. More experimental work in this area is clearly needed.

  o Migdalski 2006 suggests that Wackernagel position Slavic languages (such as Serbo-Croatian and Czech) lack the PCC, which verb-adjacent clitic languages (such as Bulgarian and Macedonian). While this is an interesting idea, it does not capture the empirical facts.

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