The Subject, Targeting, and Subject Agreement

322 Intermediate Syntax

1   External Argument Targeting

The subject position[1] is considered to be an operator called Prominence (Prom). The purpose of Prom is to target one of the verbal or adjectival arguments which makes it more prominent than the other argument(s). The features of the targeted argument are copied to the Prom position. By default, the features are spelled out as the tail of the link, though in rare cases in English they can be spelled out at the head of the link. Targeting also determines the voice of the clause. Targeting an external argument determines the active voice, and targeting an internal argument determines the passive voice. n English and most if not all Indo-European languages, only the internal and the external arguments can be targeted. This is not always the case in other languages where most or all arguments may be targeted. Tagalog is one such language.

We will cover the active and the passive voices of the following pair of sentences:

(1)   a.   The student bought a pen.

b.   A pen was bought by the student.

The argument structure of BUY is shown below:

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[1] For a more conservative and traditional account of the subject, please go to the file "Raising" on the courser outline page.

(2)

$V^\#$

V^1

NP
THE STUDENT

V^0
BUY

NP
A PEN
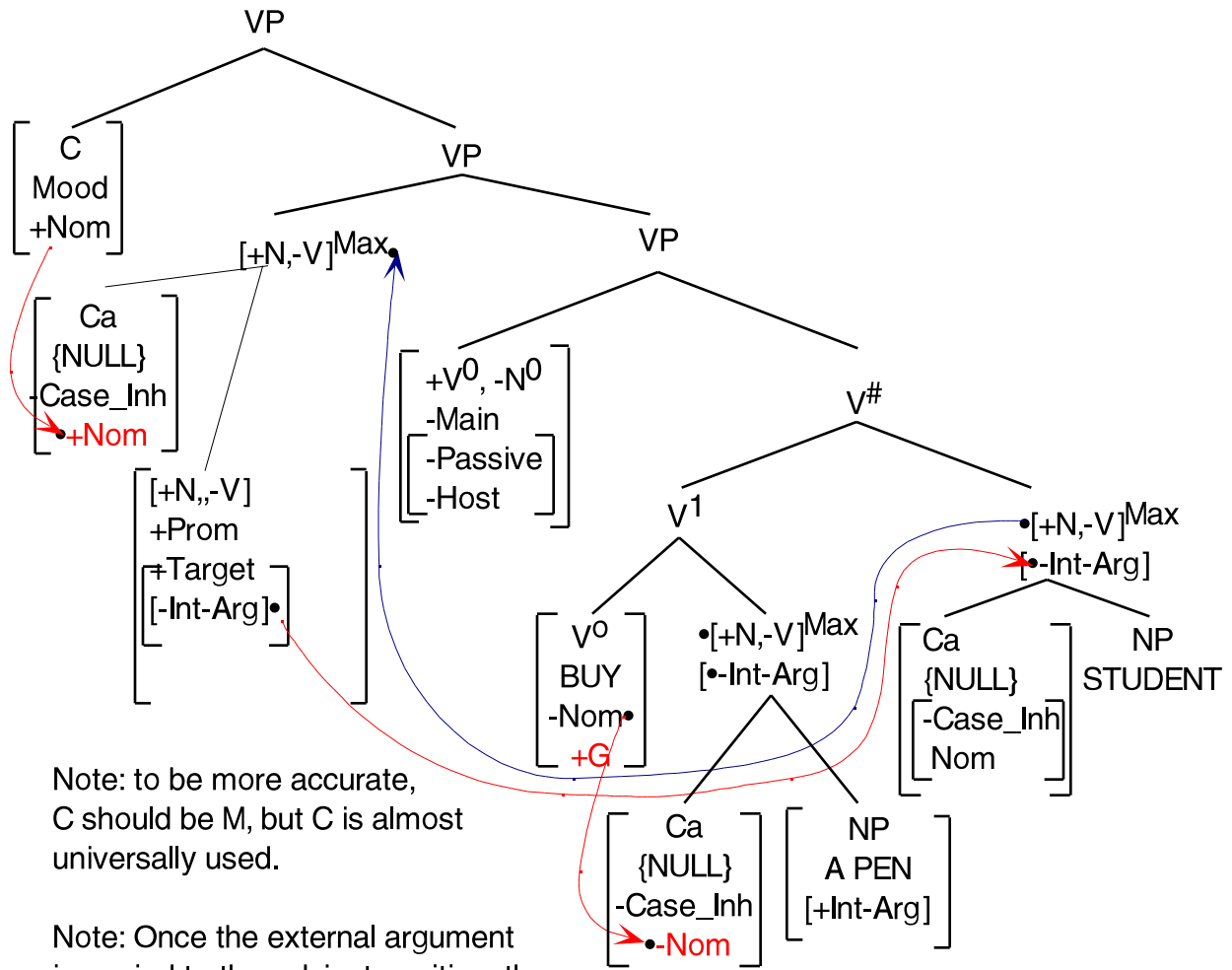
[+Cause]

Arg
(agent)

STUDENT

Arg
(theme)

[+State]

PEN
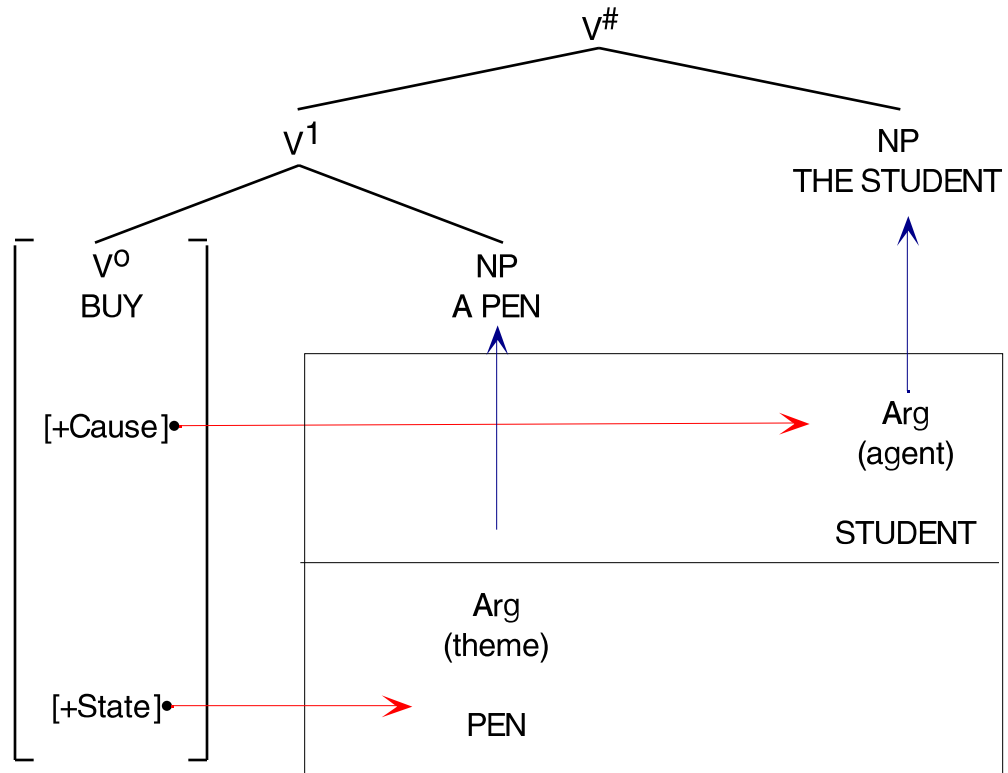
(2) underlines both active and passive voice. If the external argument is targeted, the active voice is selected.

Targeting creates a link, a slight different link called an A-link. An link is created when a projection of X is linked to a similar projection of X in another governed position. This kind of government is called A-government, where "A" stands for antecedent. In the following diagram, the tense, perfect, and aspect operators are not shown to keep the diagram simple:

(3)

VP

C
Mood
+Nom

VP

$[+N,-V]^{Max}$

Ca
{NULL}
-Case_Inh
+Nom

VP

$[+N,,-V]$
+Prom
+Target
$[-Int-Arg]$

$\begin{bmatrix} +V^0, -N^0 \\ -Main \\ -Passive \\ -Host \end{bmatrix}$

$V^{\#}$

V^1

V^0
BUY
-Nom
+G

$[+N,-V]^{Max}$
$[•-Int-Arg]$

Ca
{NULL}
-Case_Inh
Nom

$[+N,-V]^{Max}$
$[•-Int-Arg]$

NP
STUDENT

Ca
{NULL}
-Case_Inh
•-Nom

NP
A PEN
[+Int-Arg]

Note: to be more accurate,
C should be M, but C is almost
universally used.

Note: Once the external argument
is copied to the subject position, the
Case link agreement should apply.
[Nom] -> [+Nom]. We left this link
out to keep the clutter down.

These two links are closely related, but they are not the same. The red link is a feature link connect the features [-Int-Arg]. The blue link as an A-link connect NP^{Max}. The A-link is necessary to connect all the features of NP^{Max}.

To be consistent with the use of binary feature, we consider NP to be $[+N,-V]^{Max}$

When the features of NP^{Max} are copied to [+Prom], Case still needs a feature. The is feature will be coped from mood, represented as C for Complementizer, adhering to traditional labels here.

We need to refine the definition of government. The basic definition of government includes the following:

(4)   Basic Government (Revised)

A governs B iff

a.   A c-commands B,

b.   there is no closer governor C such that A governs C, and C governs B.

Note: (b) must be understood in the context of H-, F-, and A-government immediately below.

There are three known types of government—head, feature, and antecedent:

(5)   H-government

A h-governs B iff:

a.   A basic-governs B

b.   A is a head

c.   A is a governor.

(6)   F-government

A h-governs B iff:

a.   A f-governs B

b.   A is a feature

c.   A is a governor.

(7)   A-government

A a-governs B iff:

a.   A basic-governs B

b.   A is an antecedent of B

A is an antecedent of B if A and B are coindexed. That is, they share the same referential property. Thus, in (3) [-Int-Arg] f-governs the same in the external complement, and NP^{Max}

must have the same referential property as that in the external complement, since it is copied there. A-government is common in more advanced syntax. For example the antecedent of an anaphor is a-governed by its antecedent.If the antecedent had a different referent from the anaphor, there would be no a-government, and hence no a-link.

2   Internal Argument Targeting

When the internal argument is targeted, it is copied to the Prom position. Then the subject NP a-governs the internal complement of the verb as in the following sentence, a passive form of (1a); (1b) is repeated here as (8):

        (8)   A pen was bought by the student.

(9)
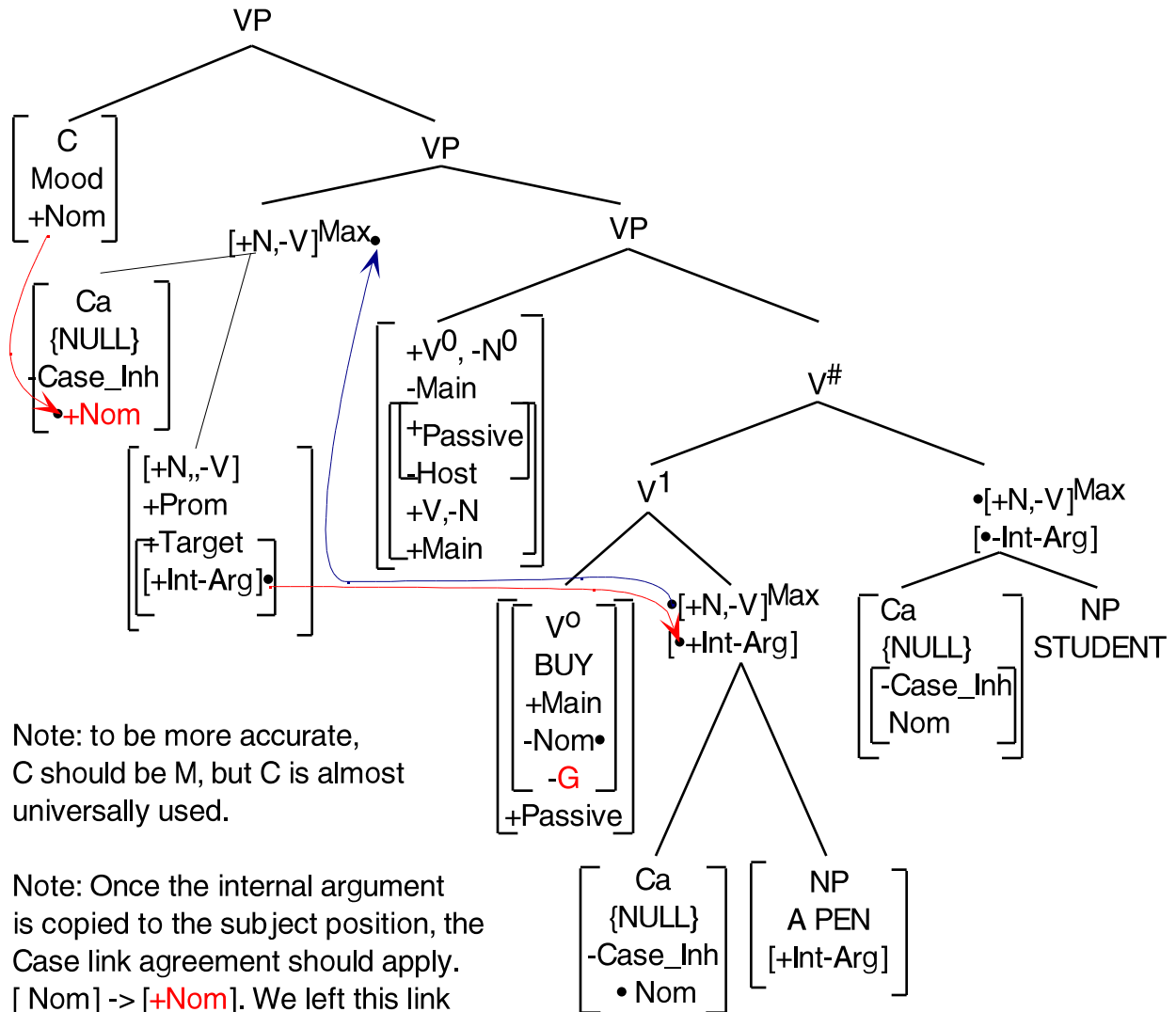
Note: to be more accurate,
C should be M, but C is almost
universally used.

Note: Once the internal argument
is copied to the subject position, the
Case link agreement should apply.
[Nom] -> [+Nom]. We left this link
out to keep the clutter down.

All the features of the internal complement NP are copied to [+Prom]; A PEN replaces NULL.
The complementizer marking mood will govern and assigned the [+Nom] case-form to the
subject.

3   Subject-Verb Agreement

Many languages contain the rule of Subject-Verb Agreement. Here, certain features of the
Verb must agree with the same feature of the subject NP. In English as in many languages
the features of person and number must agree. However, it is not the main verb which nec-

essarily undergoes this agreement, but the verb containing tense. If tense has been adjoined to the main verb, then it agrees. If one of the auxiliary verbs contains tense, then it must agree:
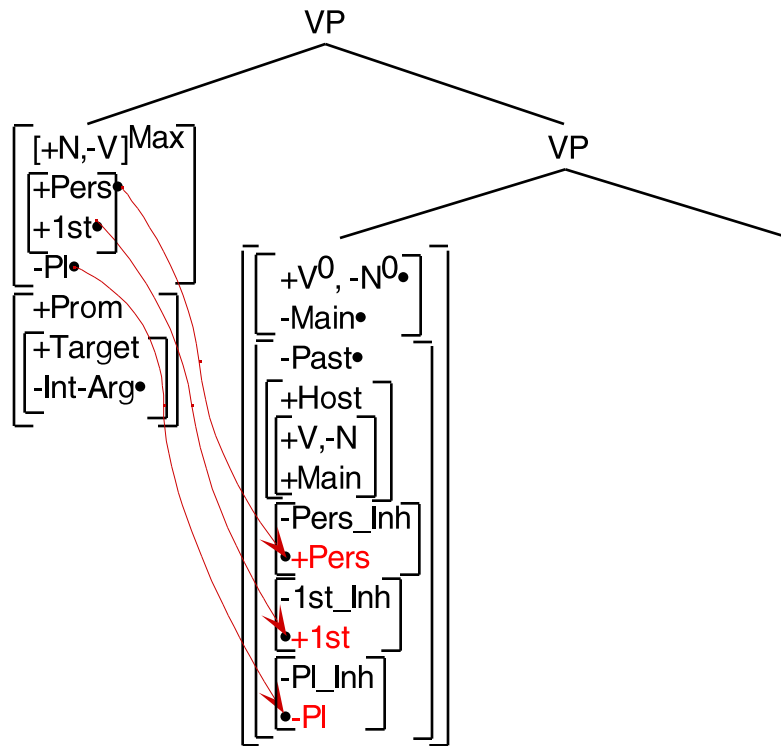
(10) a. I am the king.

    b. You are the queen.

    c. He is the court jester.

    d. She is a lady-in-waiting

    e. We are the royal family.

    f. You are the children of the king and queen.

    g. They are paupers.

English shows overt agree for the verb BE for the first person singular, the third person singular, and the plural and the second person, both singular and plural.

[-Person] refers to all nouns, and to the third person pro-forms such as *he, she, it,* and *who.* [+Person] refers to all first and second person pro-forms. [+Plural] refers to any quantity greater than the absolute value of one. For agreement to work, the feature Tense must be marked with [-Person_Inh] and [-Plural_Inh]. Each presuppose the unmarked features [Person] and [Number]. Each of these must receive a value, in order for the sentence containing them to survive as a grammatical string. Let us take (11) as an example. In the following diagram assume that the pronominal *I* has been raised to the external argument:

(11)   I am talking to you.

(12)

$$VP$$

$$\begin{bmatrix} [+N,-V]^{Max} \\ +Pers\bullet \\ +1st\bullet \\ -Pl\bullet \end{bmatrix}\begin{bmatrix} +Prom \\ +Target \\ -Int\text{-}Arg\bullet \end{bmatrix}$$

$$VP$$

$$\begin{bmatrix} +V^0, -N^0\bullet \\ -Main\bullet \\ -Past\bullet \end{bmatrix}\begin{bmatrix} +Host \\ \begin{bmatrix} +V,-N \\ +Main \end{bmatrix} \\ \begin{bmatrix} -Pers\_Inh \\ \bullet+Pers \end{bmatrix} \\ \begin{bmatrix} -1st\_Inh \\ \bullet+1st \end{bmatrix} \\ \begin{bmatrix} -Pl\_Inh \\ \bullet-Pl \end{bmatrix} \end{bmatrix}$$

The subject is spelled out as pronominal *I*. {BE} replaces {NULL} in the tensed verb since it governs [+Prog], the features [+1st] and [-Pl] are copied to the tensed verb through agreement. This bundle of features is spelled out as *am*. In a sentence such as

(13)　　　　He sees her.

The person and number features of the subject *he* are copied to node containing Tense as above. Tense needs a main verb host. Thus, Tense and everything adjoined to it will be copied to and adjoined to the main verb; hence the suffix "s", which marks subject verb agreement.

　　　　Now we are nearly close to accounting for a complete sentence. The next to formally account for is mood, following by negation.