Selected Topics in Slavic linguistics

Slavic languages are sufficiently similar and sufficiently different to provide an attractive research laboratory. (Corbett 1998)

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Agreement in Slavic[*]

The range of the phenomenon

- Defining agreement is difficult: "a quite intuitive notion which is nonetheless surprisingly difficult to delimit with precision" (Anderson 1992:103)

- The essential notion is <u>relational</u>:

  - **systematic covariation** of grammatical / linguistic forms, i.e. between feature specifications of two separate elements

  - yet, attempts to define agreement typically focus on the **elements themselves**

- Agreement is interpreted as inherently asymmetric

  - The element which determines the agreement is the trigger.

  - The element whose form is determined by agreement is the target.

  - The syntactic environment in which agreement occurs is the domain of agreement.

  - When we indicate visible effects of agreement, we are referring to agreement features (gender, person, number).

- Insufficient insight into the nature of the relations between 'agreeing' items (!)

Some non-trivial cases

- Analytical verb forms

Ти	си	щяла	да	дойдеш.
you.2SG	AUX.2SG	AUX.SG.F	PRT	come.2SG

Bulgarian: 'You would come (reportedly).'

- Co-dependents

Она	растёт	счатливым	ребёнком.
she.NOM.3SG.F	grow.3SG	happy.INST.SG.M	child.INST.SG.M

Russian: 'She grows (up) as a happy child.'

- Clitic doubling

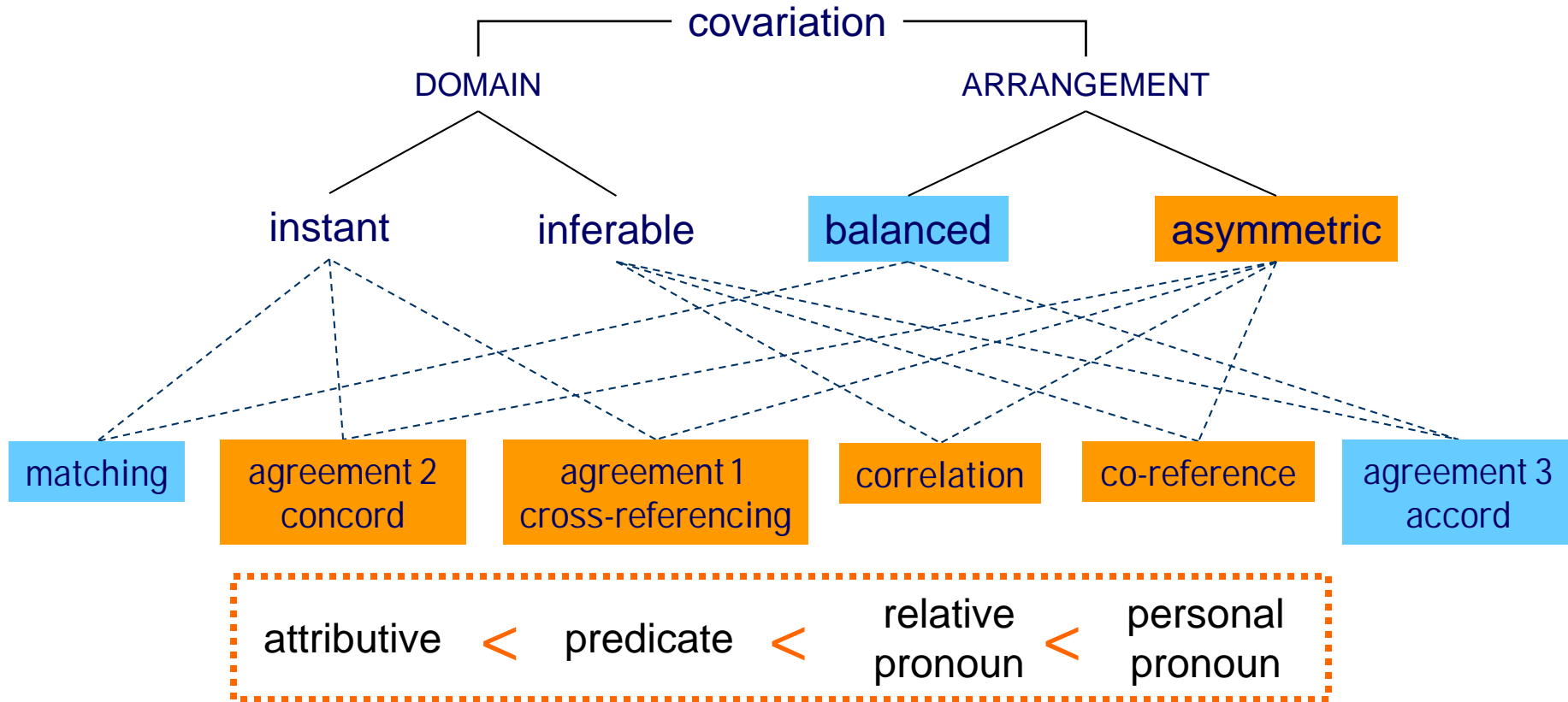| Мария	я	видяха	маскирана.
Mary.SG.F	ACC.3SG.F	saw.3PL	disguised.SG.F

Bulgarian: 'They saw Mary disguised.'

An ontology of covariation relations
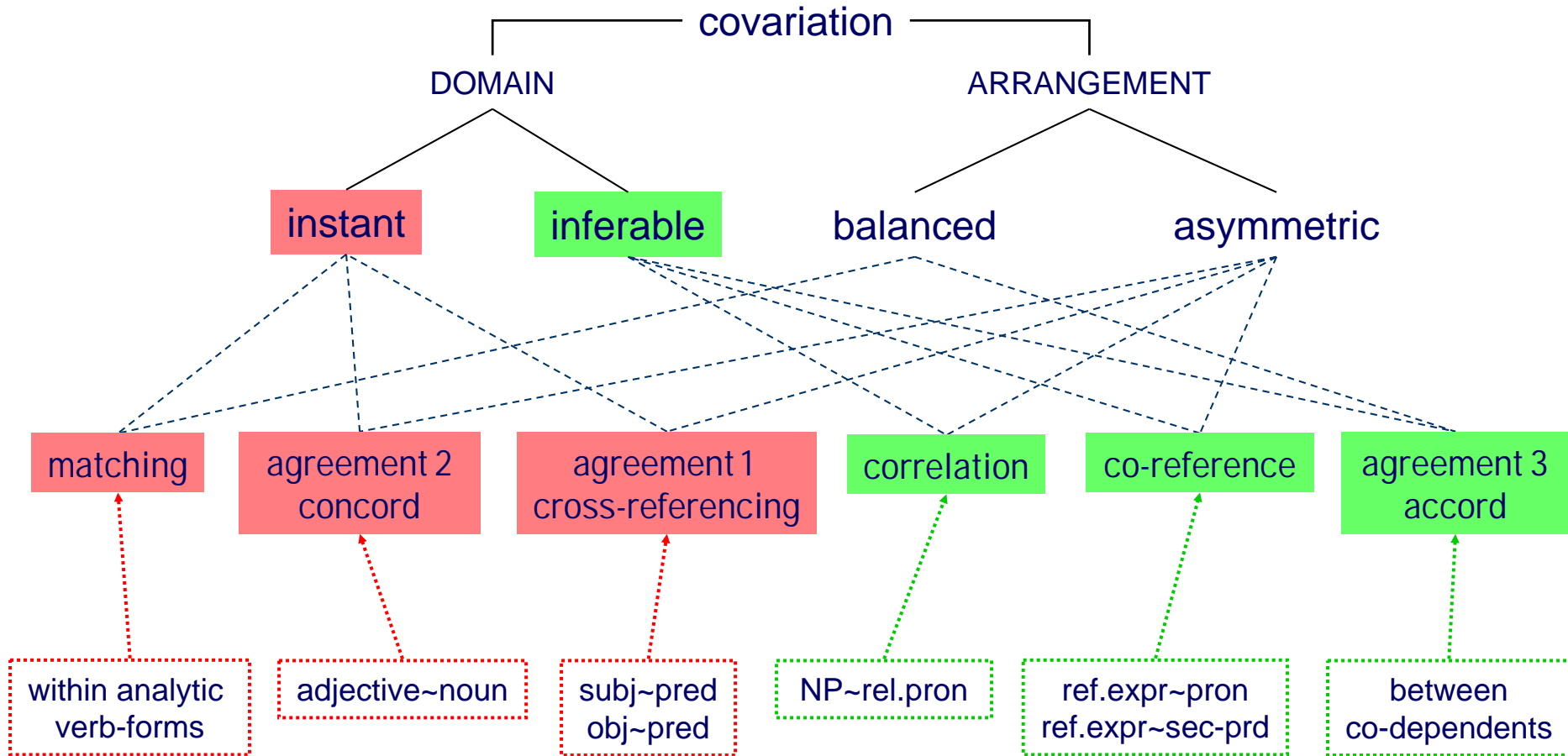
Accommodating the Agreement Hierarchy

covariation

DOMAIN   ARRANGEMENT

instant   inferable   balanced   asymmetric

matching   agreement 2   agreement 1   correlation   co-reference   agreement 3
            concord   cross-referencing   accord

attributive < predicate < relative pronoun < personal pronoun

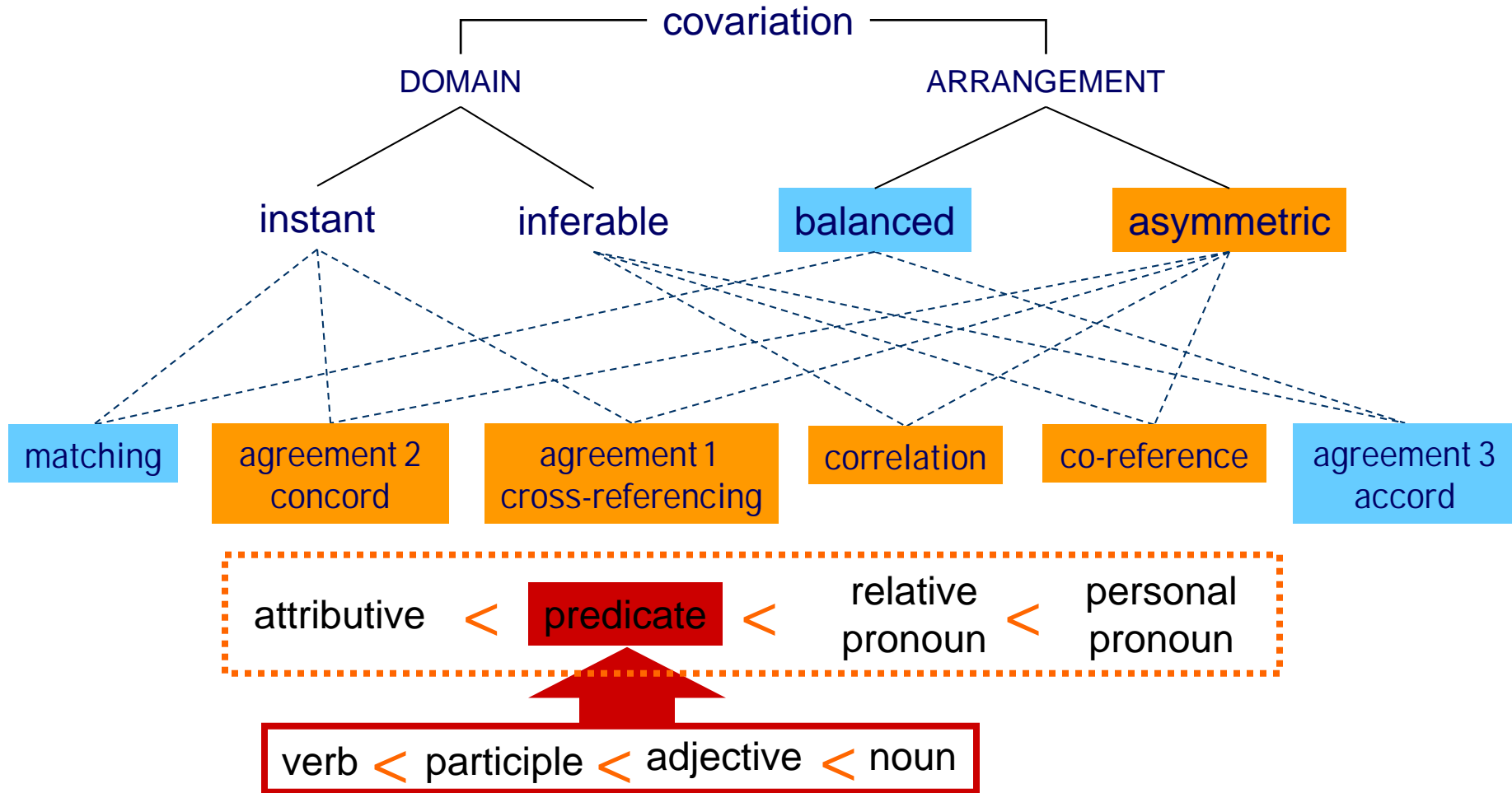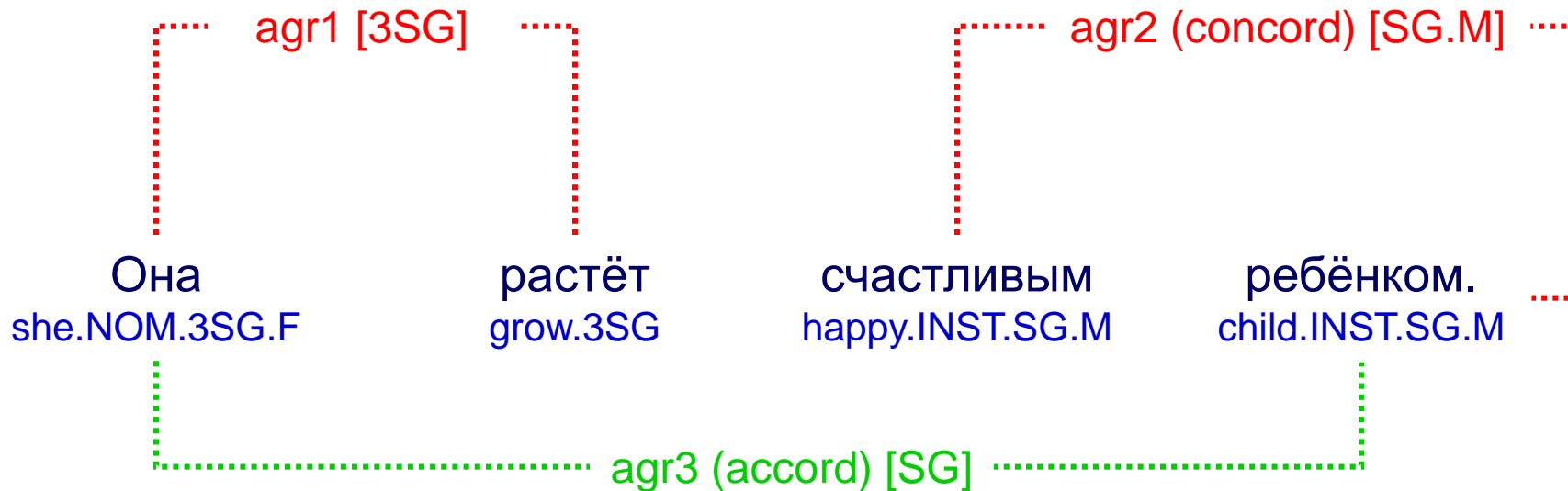# … and the Predicate Hierarchy

"For any trigger that permits alternative agreement forms, as we move rightwards along the Predicate Hierarchy, the likelihood of agreement forms with greater semantic justification will increase monotonically (that is, with no intervening decrease)." Comrie (1975), Corbett (1998)

agr1 [3SG] agr2 (concord) [SG.M]

Она	растёт	счастливым	ребёнком.
she.NOM.3SG.F	grow.3SG	happy.INST.SG.M	child.INST.SG.M

agr3 (accord) [SG]

"She grows (up) as a happy child."

agreement 1 (cross-referencing)	
agreement 2 (concord)	agreement 3 (accord)

Bulgarian (ex.2)

agr1 [3SG.F]

object cliticisation

Мария	я	видяха	маскирана.
Mary.3SG.F	ACC.3SG.F	saw.3PL	disguised.SG.F

co-reference [SG.F]
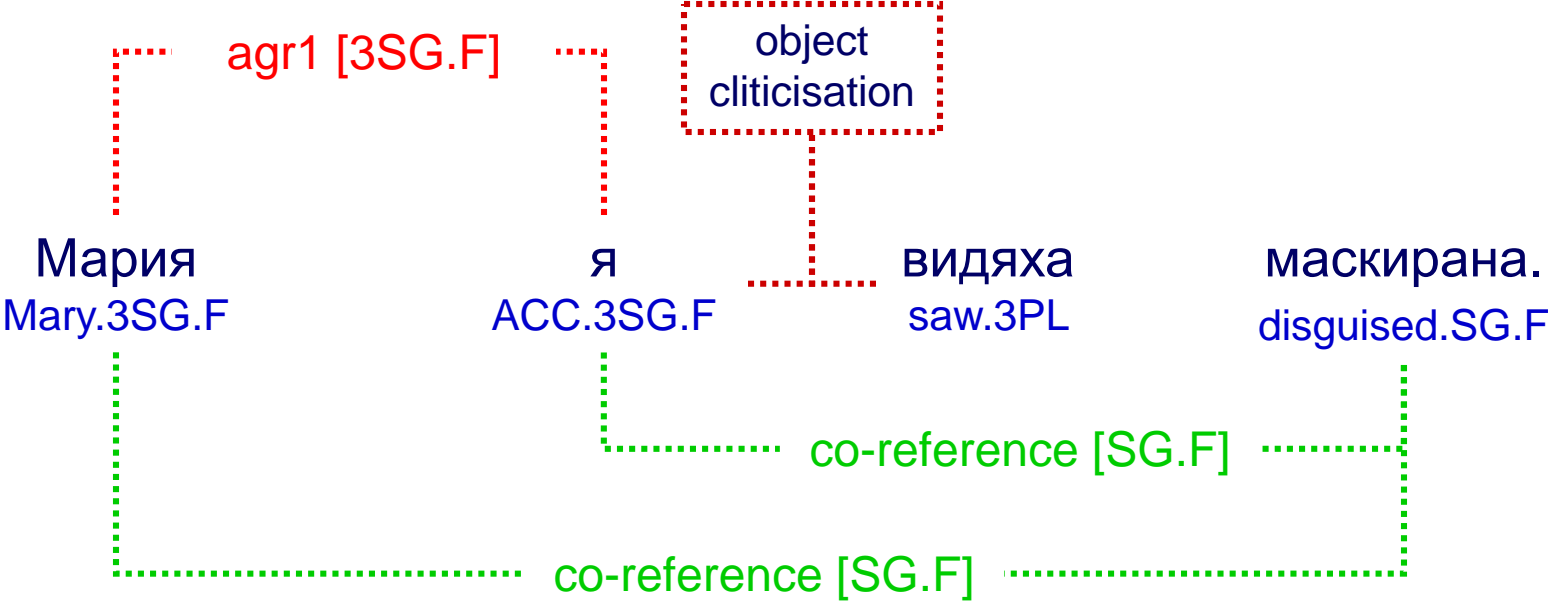
co-reference [SG.F]

"They saw Mary disguised."

agreement 1 (cross-referencing)		co-reference	

Bulgarian (ex.3)

agr1 [2SG]

Ти	си	щяла	да	дойдеш.
you.2SG	AUX.2SG	AUX.SG.F	PRT	come.2SG

matching [2SG.F]
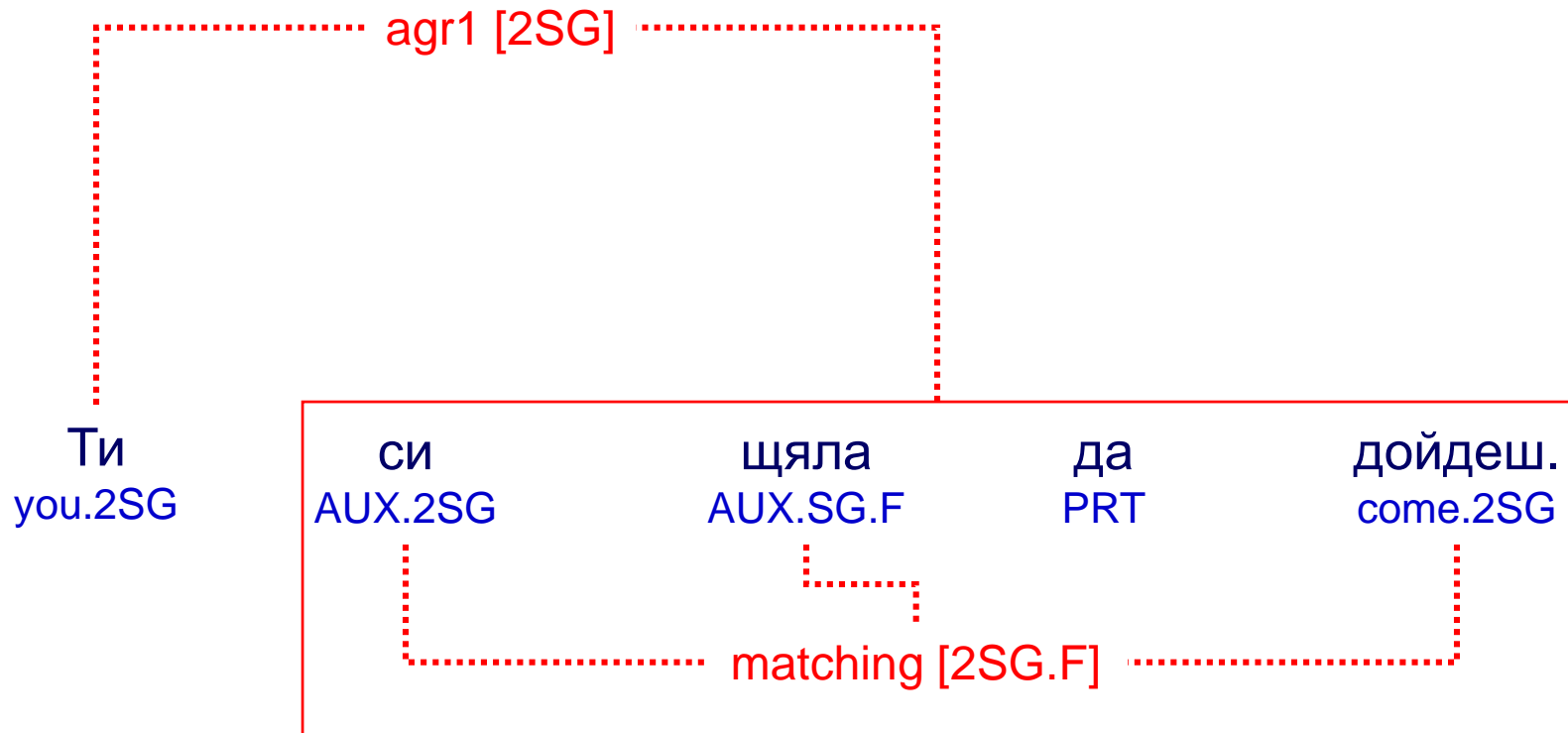
"You would come (reportedly)."

agreement 1 (cross-referencing)	
matching	

Bulgarian (ex.4)

agr1 [3SG]

Влиза	студентът,	за	когото	говорихме.
comes.3SG	student.3SG.M	about	whom.SG.M	spoke.1PL
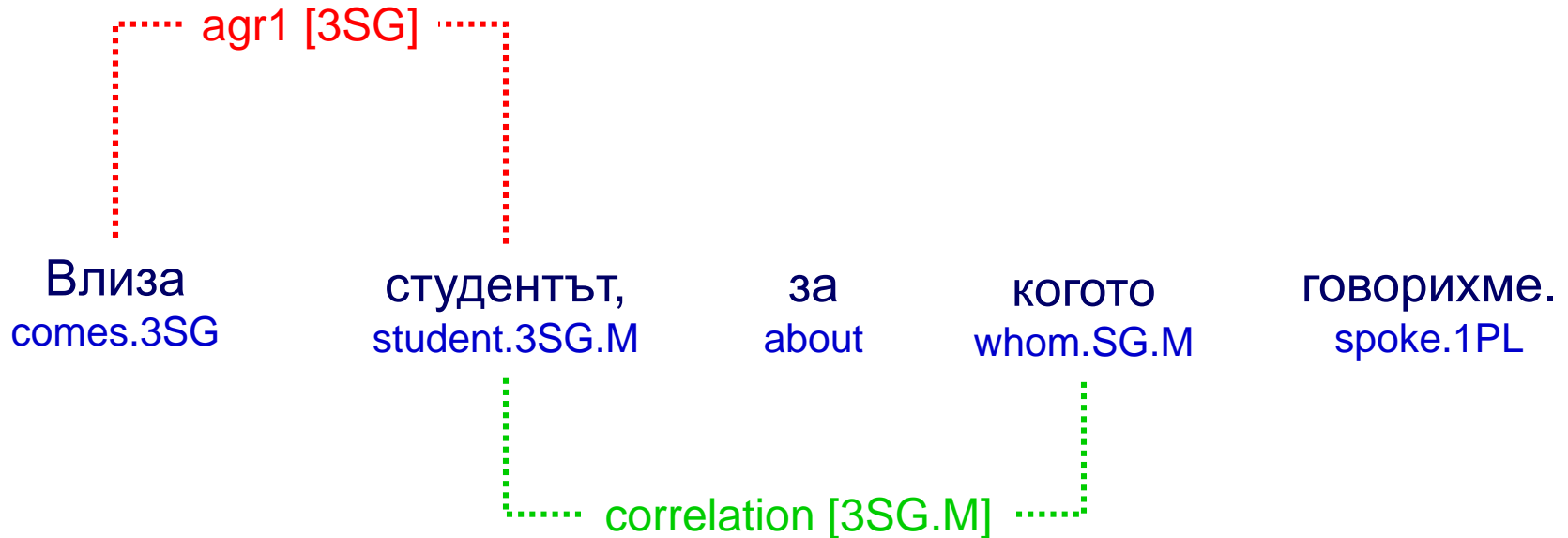
correlation [3SG.M]

"The student whom we talked about comes in."

agreement 1 (cross-referencing)	
	correlation

Phenomena in focus

1. Case in Slavic

   - Common Slavic inventory of functional cases

   - Functional and marking dimensions of case classification

   - Shared Slavic case hierarchy   ☒ **functional interpretation**

2. Clitics in Slavic

   - Common Slavic inventory of special predicative clitics

   - Module of inflecting (aux & pron) clitics   ☒ **feature exponents**
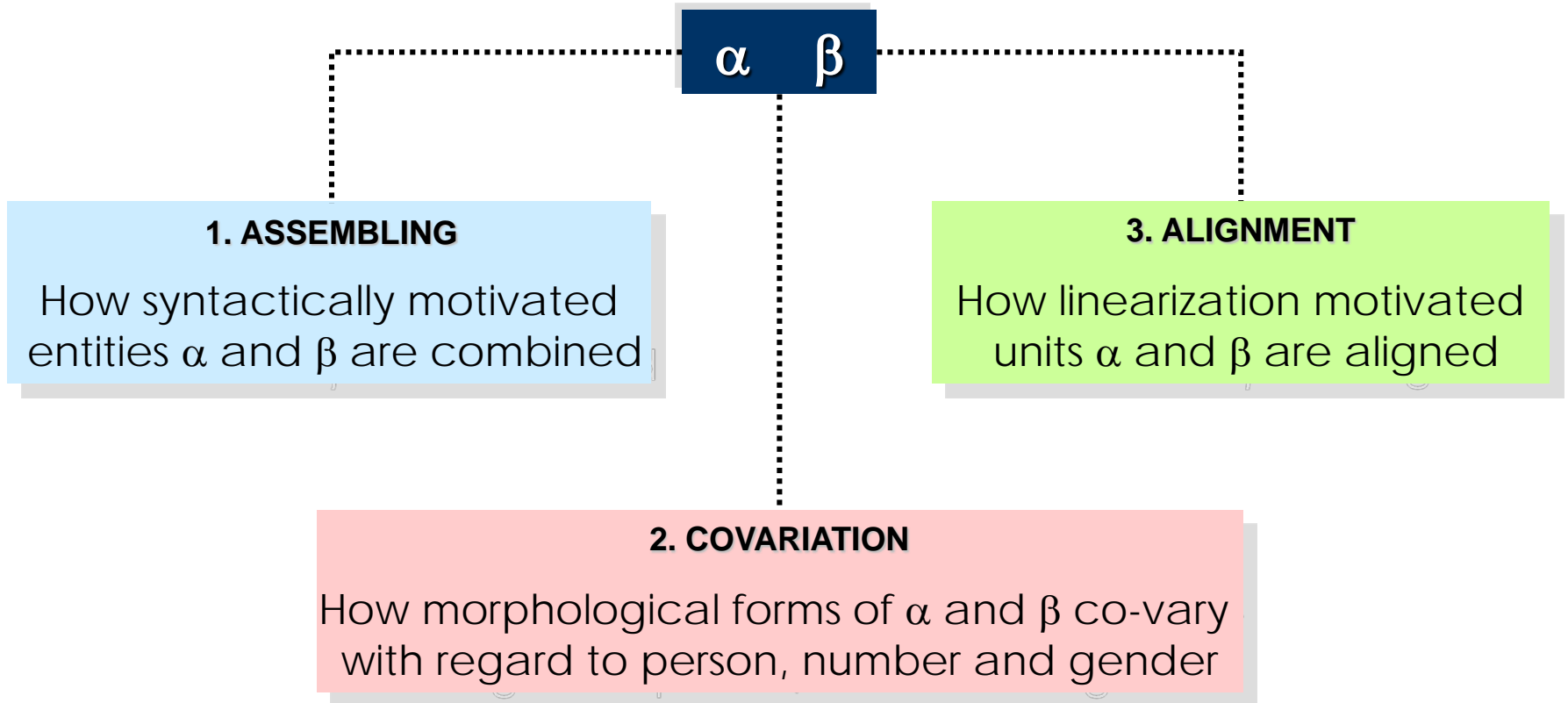
3. Agreement in Slavic

   - Systematic relations of co-variation

   - An ontology of co-variation phenomena   ☒ **generalized perspective**

Meta-grammar of systematic relations

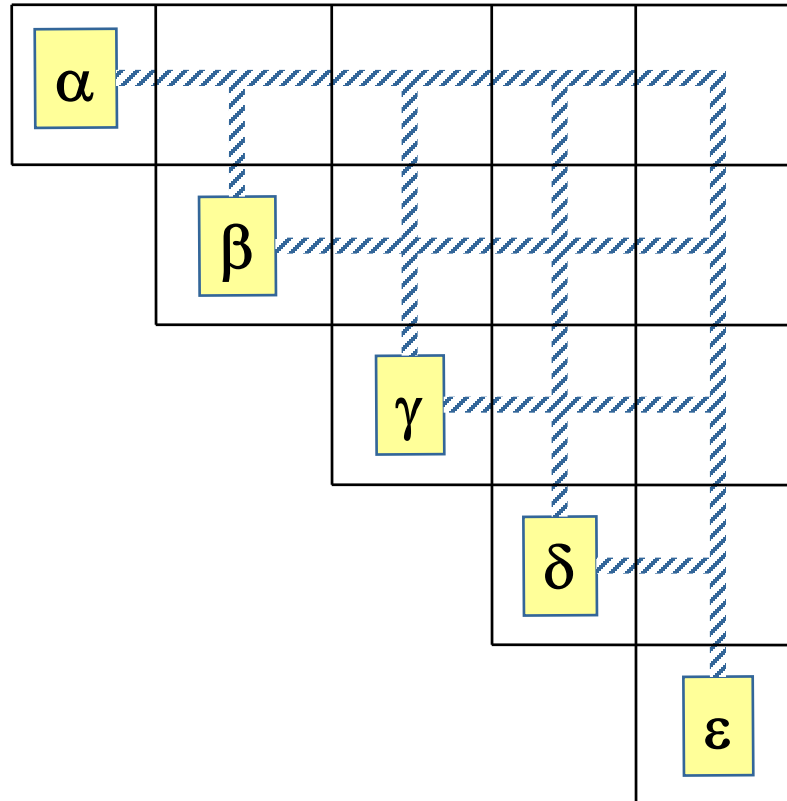A phenomena-driven approach to Slavic morphosyntax

Observable syntagmatics

α   β

1. ASSEMBLING

How syntactically motivated entities α and β are combined

3. ALIGNMENT

How linearization motivated units α and β are aligned

2. COVARIATION

How morphological forms of α and β co-vary with regard to person, number and gender

Key to formalisation

- Grammatical representations

    - identify linguistic items of different motivation and complexity

    - encode properties of linguistic items

    - specify explicit or implicit relationships between properties of linguistic items

- Theory of systematic relations

    - assembling of syntactic entities

    - covariation of morphological forms in person, number and gender

    - alignment of linearization-motivated units

- Theory of linguistic items (!)
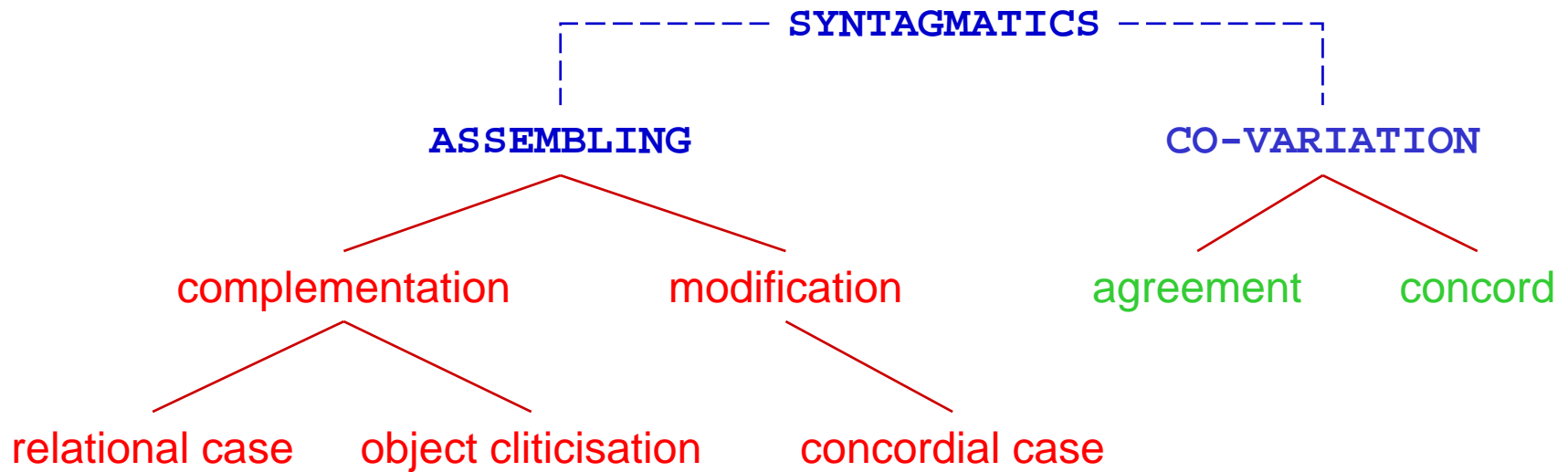- Subtasks in grammatical research defined more cleanly

Metagrammar of systematic relations

(arrays of)
systematic relations

α β γ δ ε
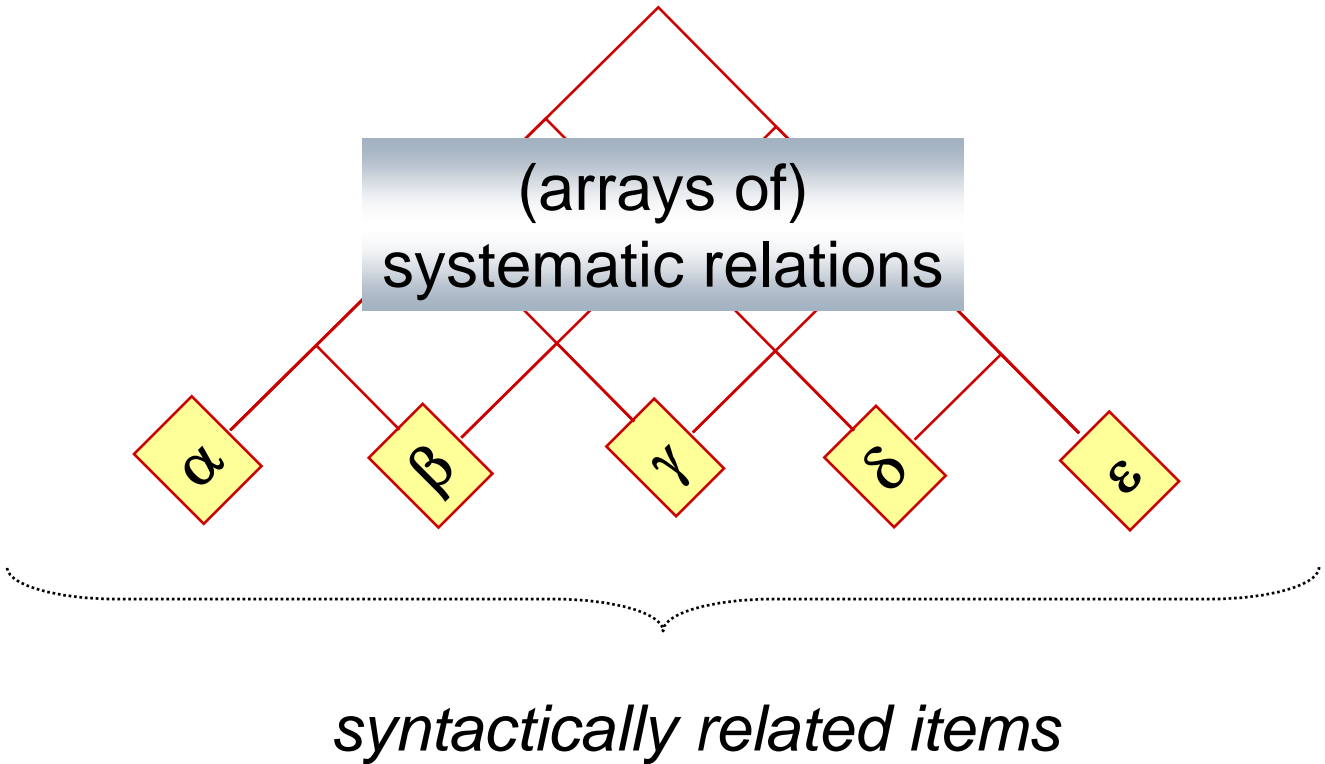
syntactically related items

Sample systematic relations (fragmentary)

Децата children.3PL	complementation agreement 3PL		
	видяха saw.3PL	complementation	
		малкото small.SG.N	modification concord SG.N
			коте. kitten.3SG.N

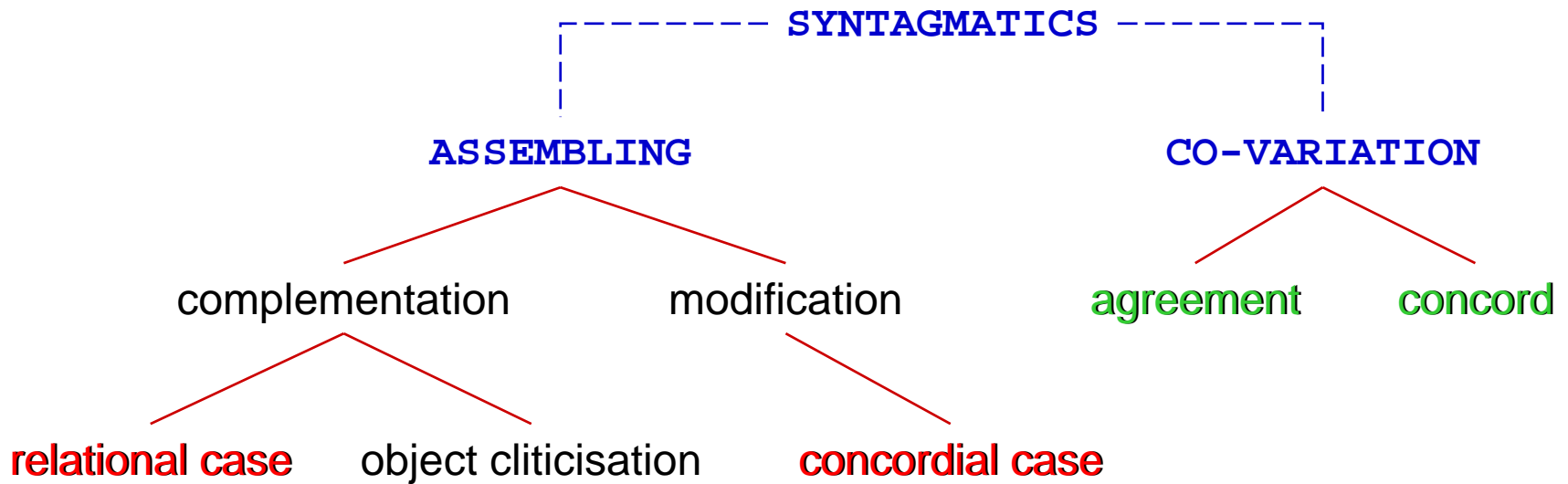"The children saw the small kitten."

Sample systematic relations (fragmentary)
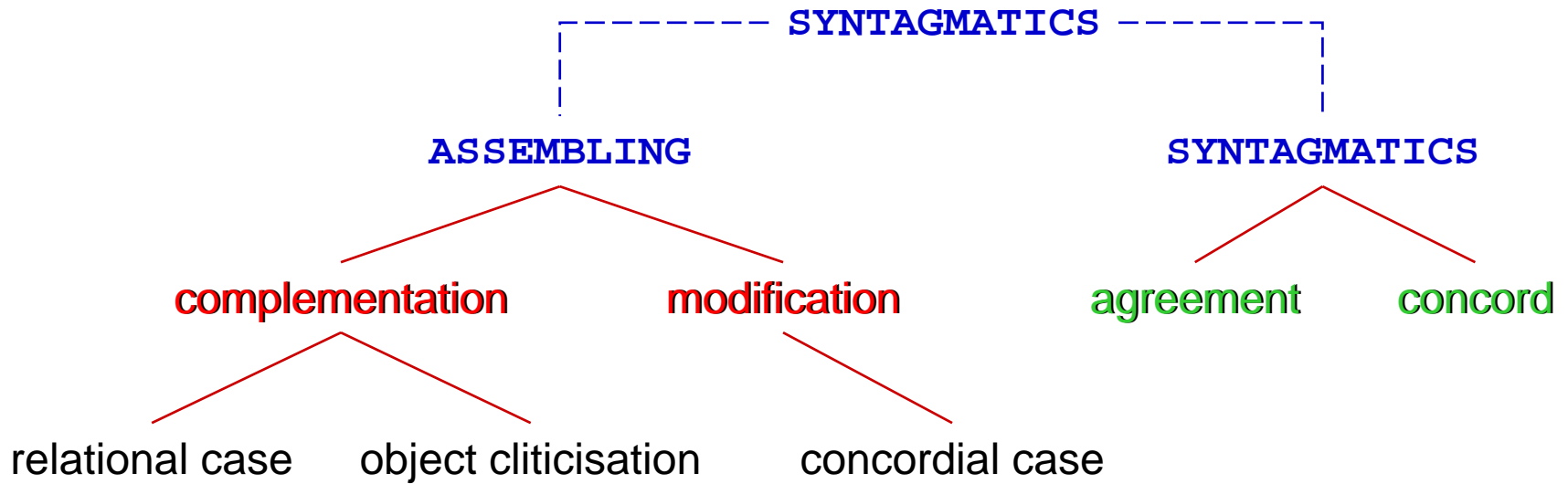
Дети kids.3PL.NOM	relational case NOM agreement 3PL		
	увидели saw.PL	relational case ACC	
		маленького small.SG.N.ACC	concordial case ACC concord SG.N
			котёнка. kitten.3SG.N.ACC

"The children saw the small kitten."

Sample systematic relations (fragmentary)

Bulgarian (ex.7)

Децата children.3PL		complementation agreement 3PL	
	го ACC.3SG.N	object cliticisation	agreement 3SG.N
		видяха saw.3PL	complementation
			котето. kitten.3SG.N

"The children saw the kitten."

Sample systematic relations (fragmentary)
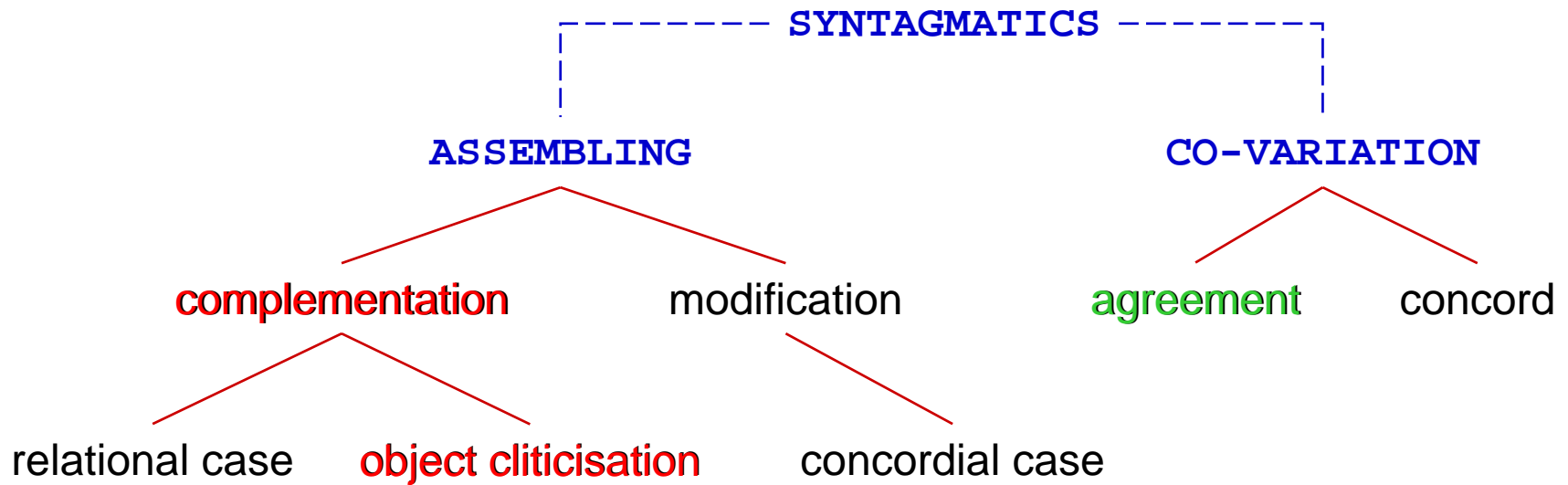
Implications for ...

- Typological research

  - grammatical relatedness "taken seriously"

  - cross-language interference

- Linguistically motivated modularity

  - patterns / strategies in bilingualism & multilingualism

  - inclusion of underrepresented and "small" languages

- Grammar sharing

  - for language acquisition

  - in technological applications

Facets of shared grammar

Grammatical Ontologies

Macedonian extension

Bulgarian extension

Bulgarian Grammar

South Slavic extension

Shared Core (Common Slavic)

East Slavic extension

Ukrainian extension

Russian extension

Specialised Domain Ontology

domain-specific Bulgarian grammar

domain-specific Russian grammar

...

linguistic knowledge of a "domain expert"