

Directions of Agree
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1. The Story So Far

Recall from last time:

Original definition of Agree stated that a probe searches *downwards* to find a goal.

Revised definition of Agree states that a probe searches *upwards* to find a goal. This is **Upwards Agree** (UA).

- (1) *Upward Agree*: α can Agree with β iff:
- a. α carries at least one uninterpretable feature and β carries a matching interpretable feature.
 - b. β c-commands α .
 - c. β is the closest goal to α .

Plan for today: Problems for this first version of UA.

- I. Agreement with *in situ* subjects (below T)
- II. Motivating movement for Agree (EPP): a look-ahead problem
- III. Long-distance agreement in Tsez and Basque

2. Problem I: Agreement with low subjects

We argued for UA partly on the basis that φ -agreement with low subjects is often *defective*, as in Arabic VSO clauses:

- (2) Arabic (*Harbert and Bahloul 2002: 45*)
- a. **qadim-a** /*qadim-uu *al-ʔawlaadu*.
came-3SG.M /*came-3PL.M the-boys.3PL.M
“The boys came.”

But we must nonetheless explain the fact that φ -agreement is *possible* in these kinds of contexts.

And the classic case of agreement in the context of English *there*:

- (3) English
- a. There **seem** to be *several trees* outside the window.
 - b. There **seems** to be *one book* on the table.

Without downwards probing, how can we account for these kinds of cases?

Some (unsatisfactory) options:

- Covert movement
- Silent pronominal elements

3. Problem II: “Solving” the EPP creates new problems

Previously discussed: Cases where Agree seems to trigger movement (i.e. “EPP” effects) can be explained by unidirectional Agree, if movement is necessary to create the right c-command relationship (Bošković 2007).

- Why do subjects move to SpecTP? Because that movement is necessary to create a configuration in which [$u\phi$] on T is c-commanded by [$i\phi$].

But how do you know what to move? (cf. discussion of Spec-Head checking)

If it is necessary to search downwards to find an element with the right features, have we simply re-introduced downwards probing?

Problem is more serious for UA than for DA: in UA, cannot simply stipulate EPP properties, must actually reintroduce downwards probing.

4. Problem III: Long-distance agreement in Tsez and Basque

Preminger (2013): The problem for UA is yet more serious. There are cases of LDA that *cannot* be analyzed as either covert movement or via a silent expletive in the matrix clause.

Relevant examples come from **cross-clausal agreement** in Tsez and Basque.

In both these languages, a matrix verb can show ϕ -agreement with an embedded absolutive argument:

- (4) Tsez (*Polinsky and Potsdam 2001: 606*)
Enir [užā magalu b-āc’ruḥi] b-iyxo
mother [boy bread.ABS(III) III-ate] III-know
‘The mother knows [(that) (as for the bread) the boy ate it.]
(Tsez: Polinsky and Potsdam 2001:606)

- (5) Basque (*Preminger 2013*)
[[[Miren-entzat] [harri horiek] altxa-tze-n] probate d-it-u-zte]
Miren-BEN stones those.PL.ABS lift.NMZ.LOC attempted 3.ABS-PL.ABS.√.3.PL.ERG
‘They have attempted to lift those stones for Miren’

Why is this a problem for UA?

- The version of UA we have defined so far **requires** that the goal (iF) c-command the probe (uF) at some point in the derivation.
- Two options reviewed earlier:
 - Covert movement creates Spec-Head (or other relevant c-command) configurations.
 - Doubling by a silent pronominal.

Polinsky and Potsdam (2001) argue explicitly against the doubling possibility—in context, they are in fact arguing against uniform Spec-Head configurations for feature checking (and in favour of DA).

Preminger similarly argues against movement/clitic-doubling analyses of the Basque data.

4.1 Polinsky and Potsdam (2001) on Tsez

The LDA in Tsez alternates with clausal agreement:

(6) Tsez: Clausal agreement (a) alternates with LDA (b)

- eni-r [uʒā magalu bāc'-ruʃi] r-iy-xo
mother-DAT [boy-ERG bread.III.ABS III-eat-PART-NMLZ].IV IV-know-PRES
“The mother knows that the boy ate the bread.”
- eni-r [uʒā magalu bāc'-ruʃi] b-iy-xo
mother-DAT [boy-ERG bread.III.ABS III-eat-PART-NMLZ] III-know-PRES
“The mother knows that the boy ate the bread.”

The alternation is not free: LDA correlates with a **topic** interpretation of the embedded argument.

Against Movement:

This topic cannot have moved out of the embedded clause: scrambling out of embedded clauses is not generally possible in Tsez:

(7) Tsez: No A'-movement from embedded clauses (*Polinsky and Potsdam 2001: 16*)

- kid-bā [uʒ-ā hibored bikori žak'-ru-ʃi] esis
girl-ERG boy-ERG stick-INST snake hit-PART-NMLZ said
“The girl said that the boy had hit the snake with a stick.”
- *uʒ-a kid-bā [hibored bikori žek'-ru-ʃi] esis
- bikori kid-bā [uʒ-ā hibored žak'-ru-ʃi] esis

Other conceptual problem (not due to Polinsky and Potsdam): φ -agreement should be able to feed morphology.

Against Doubling:

Polinsky and Potsdam consider at length the possibility that the topic is *doubled* in the matrix clause by a silent element.

They give several arguments against this conclusion:

1. The doubled element would have to be *either* a pronoun *or* a reflexive (the latter in cases where it corefers with the matrix subject). Tsez does have null pronominals (i.e. *pro-drop*), but it does not have null reflexives.
2. LDA cannot be successive-cyclic. If it is accomplished by covert elements, why not double successively upwards?

(8) Tsez LDA can only go one clause up

babir [enir [užā magalu bāc'-ruḷi] b-iy-xosi-ti] r/*b-iy-xo
father [mother [boy-ERG bread.III.ABS III-eat] III-know] IV/*III.know
“The mother knows that the boy ate the bread.”

3. LDA does not interact with scope, which is clause bound.

(9) Tsez LDA does not allow cross-clausal scope interactions

sis učitelər [šibaw užī ø-ik'ixosi-ti] ø-iyxo
one teacher [every boy I-go-NMLZ] I-know
“Some teacher knows that every boy is going.” ($\exists > \forall$, $*\forall > \exists$)

4. If the agreement source were doubled in the main clause, it should be able to license a matrix reflexive argument, but it cannot.

4.2 Preminger (2013) on Basque

In “substandard” varieties of Basque, the matrix auxiliary can show absolutive agreement with an embedded argument:

- (10) [[[Miren-entzat] [harri horiek] altxa-tze-n] probate d-it-u-zte]
Miren-BEN stones those.PL.ABS lift.NMZ.LOC attempted 3.ABS-PL.ABS.√.3.PL.ERG
“They have attempted to lift those stones for Miren”

Against Movement

Preminger observes that the agreement target cannot have moved overtly out of the embedding clause, given that the goal (*harri horiek* ‘those stones’) surfaces between the embedded nominalized verb and an adjunct.

Against Doubling

Arguing that this is in fact a case of Agree, and not some other relationship (like doubling in the matrix clause), Preminger observes that φ -agreement is **disrupted** by an intervening **dative** argument:

- (11) [[[Lankide-e-i] [**liburu horiek**] irakur-tze-n] probate d- \emptyset /***it**-u-zte]
Colleagues-ART-PL.DAT books those.**PL.ABS** read.NMZ.LOC attempted 3.ABS-**SG**/***PL.ABS**. \checkmark .3.PL.ERG
'They have attempted to read those books to the colleagues'

4.3 Why are these data problematic?

The strategies available to account for defective Verb-Subject agreement are no longer available here:

- We cannot appeal to covert movement.
- We cannot appeal to (silent) argument doubling.

(These strategies were problematic in other ways, so maybe we aren't too upset...)

5. Summary: Where we stand

Agree was originally proposed to involve *downwards* probing.

Problems with downwards probing (DA):

- Multiple Agree
- Concord phenomena
- Successive cyclic movement
- Explaining movement/agreement correlations (EPP)
- Asymmetries between VS and SV φ -agreement

Solution: Upwards Agree (UA: *upwards* probing)

Solves the problems above, but introduces **new** problems:

- φ -agreement (albeit defective) in VS configurations
- Motivating "EPP" movement
- Cross-clausal LDA phenomena in Tsez and Basque

One possible conclusion: Both UA and DA exist, but in different contexts/languages

"It would therefore be a good idea for theorizers working on the formal relation underpinning phenomena such as negative concord to find a new term for the formal mechanism they are researching, one that is distinct from "agreement". Another possibility is that the two empirical domains, agreement proper and the concord phenomena discussed by Zeijlstra, are an instance of the same phenomenon after all, and that the direction of valuation is intrinsically flexible, as recently proposed by Carstens (2012), for example." (Preminger 2013)

However, this would create more problems than it solves:

If both UA and DA exist, we have to decide when to invoke which one.

Not obvious how to distinguish their contexts:

- Not by language
- Not by feature type
- Not by location of features

Towards another solution?

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