Agreement and its failures
PART TWO
Omer Preminger (omerp@mit.edu)

TWO ACCOUNTS OF φ-AGREEMENT

1. *Agree* (Chomsky 2000, 2001)

- Let $\mathcal{P}$ be a probe (i.e., the agreement-morpheme), and let $\mathcal{G}$ be the corresponding goal (i.e., the full noun-phrase)

- $\mathcal{G}$ bears the semantically "contentful" versions of the relevant φ-features (e.g., *number*, *person*, *gender*, etc.)

  - this is called *interpretable* — as in "**can** be **interpreted** by the semantics"

- the same features, when expressed on $\mathcal{P}$, make no semantic contribution

  - this is called *uninterpretable* — as in "**cannot** be **interpreted** by the semantics"

(1) *CONDITIONS ON Agree* (repeated from PART ONE)

   a probe $\mathcal{P}$ can enter into a feature-valuation relation with a goal $\mathcal{G}$ **iff**:

   (i) $\mathcal{G}$ is within $\mathcal{P}$'s *domain*

      a. $\mathcal{G}$ is c-commanded by $\mathcal{P}$

      b. $\mathcal{P}$ and $\mathcal{G}$ are not separated by a locality boundary (e.g., a phase)

   (ii) there is no other suitable goal $\mathcal{G}'$ within $\mathcal{P}$'s *domain*, such that $\mathcal{G}'$ asymmetrically c-commands $\mathcal{G}$

- When an *Agree* relation is established, the uninterpretable features on $\mathcal{P}$ are deleted, and replaced with the interpretable features found on $\mathcal{G}$ (along with their values)

  - this is sometimes referred to as *feature-checking*

- **uninterpretable features — if they are not checked by the time the derivation culminates — cause the derivation to "crash"**

  - **resulting in ungrammaticality**

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(2) *THE ACTIVITY CONDITION* (Chomsky 2001)

   a goal $\mathcal{G}$ is accessible for *Agree* **iff** $\mathcal{G}$ has at least one uninterpretable feature

⇒ **QUESTION:** what *uninterpretable* features do noun-phrases have?

○ [Chomsky]'s answer: *Case*

– noun-phrases are "born" with uninterpretable Case-features

– when a probe $\mathcal{P}$ checks its uninterpretable φ-features using the interpretable counterparts on a noun-phrase $\mathcal{G}$, the uninterpretable Case-feature on $\mathcal{G}$ gets (magically) checked

· receiving different values, depending on $\mathcal{P}$'s identity:

$$\mathcal{P} = T^0 \implies Case = \text{NOMINATIVE}$$
$$\mathcal{P} = v^\star \implies Case = \text{ACCUSATIVE}$$
$$\vdots \qquad\qquad \vdots$$

– in this framework, being a "suitable goal" for φ-agreement (as in (1)) amounts to having an uninterpretable Case-feature

(though, without an independent *uninterpretable-Case-feature*-detector, this of course amounts to a stipulation)

2. φ-agreement as a *post-syntactic* operation ([Bobaljik 2008])

> **OBSERVATION:**
> One cannot hope to correctly characterize the relation between Case and φ-agreement by looking only at languages that lack quirky Case
> - because in those languages, φ-agreement and (NOMINATIVE/ABSOLUTIVE) Case never diverge, in the first place

2.1. Quirky Case

(3)   *"QUIRKY" SUBJECTS*[1]
      subjects that bears morphological Case other than NOMINATIVE, but otherwise behave as any other subject would[2]

(4)   a. Jóni   líkuðu þessir sokkar   (Icelandic)
          Jon.DAT like.pl these socks.NOM
          'Jon likes these socks.'   *[Jónsson 1996:143]*

      b. þeim   var   hjálpað
          them.DAT was.sg helped
          'They were helped.'   *[Zaenen et al. 1985:97]*

- Crucially, it is the DATIVE element in (4a–b) that passes all the tests for subjecthood ([Sigurðsson 1989], [Zaenen et al. 1985], others)

  ○ control, binding, constituency, word-order with auxiliary/participle, etc.

- These quirky subjects are licensed by particular lexical items:

  ○ it is something about *líkuðu* ('like.pl') that causes its subject to be DATIVE (rather than NOMINATIVE)

  ○ it is something about *hjálpað* ('helped') that causes the subject of its passive — i.e., its underlying object — to be DATIVE (rather than NOMINATIVE)

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[1]This definition only works for NOMINATIVE-ACCUSATIVE languages, of course.
[2]Crucially, this does not include φ-agreement; see below.

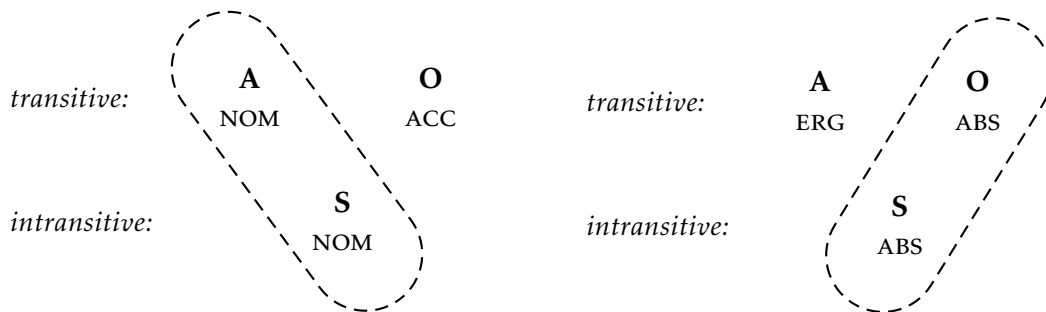⇒ compare (4a), repeated here, with (5):

(4) a. Jóni   líkuðu þessir sokkar   (Icelandic)
        Jon.DAT like.pl these socks.NOM
        'Jon likes these socks.'   *[Jónsson 1996:143]*

(5)   Drengurinn   elskar stúlkuna.
        boy.the.NOM loves girl.the.ACC
        'The boy love the girl.'   *[Thráinsson 2007:(7.1b')]*

2.2. Ergativity

(6) a. *NOMINATIVE-ACCUSATIVE SYSTEM:*   b. *ERGATIVE-ABSOLUTIVE SYSTEM:*

(7) a. He hit him.

     b. $\left\{ \begin{matrix} \underline{He} \\ *\underline{Him} \end{matrix} \right\}$ danced.

(8) a. Ehiztari-ak   otso-a   harrapatu d-   φ-   u-   φ
         hunter-ART_{sg}.ERG wolf-ART_{sg}(ABS) caught   3.ABS- sg.ABS- have- 3sg.ERG
         (Basque)
         'The hunter has caught a/the wolf.'

     b. Otso$\left\{ \begin{matrix} *\text{-ak} \\ \underline{\text{-a}} \end{matrix} \right\}$ etorri d-   a-   φ.
         wolf-ART_{sg}(ABS)/*-ART_{sg}.ERG arrived 3.ABS- be- sg.ABS
         'The wolf has arrived.'   *[Laka 2005]*

- another way to think about this, is in terms of *which Case-marking is dependent on which*:

  ○ in a NOMINATIVE-ACCUSATIVE language: ∃ACCUSATIVE ⇒ ∃NOMINATIVE

  ○ in a ERGATIVE-ABSOLUTIVE language: ∃ERGATIVE ⇒ ∃ABSOLUTIVE

2.3. m-Case

(9) *DISJUNCTIVE CASE HIERARCHY* (Marantz 1991)
     lexical/inherent Case ≫ dependent Case ≫ unmarked Case

(10) a. Sigurður   elskar Jónínu.   (Icelandic)
         Sigurd.NOM loves   Jonina.ACC
         'Sigurd loves Jonina.'   *[Thráinsson 2007:202]*

      b. Mér   líkar mjólkin.
         me.DAT likes milk-the.NOM
         'I like milk.'   *[Thráinsson 2007:186]*

- Case-assignment sequence:

	in (10a)	in (10b)
lexical/inherent Case ↓	—	SUBJ (DAT, idiosyncratically assigned by *líkar* 'likes')
dependent Case ↓	OBJ (assigned to the lower of two still-unmarked noun-phrases; see below)	—
unmarked Case (assigned to remaining unmarked noun-phrases)	SUBJ	OBJ

- in this framework, ERG-ABS languages differ from NOM-ACC languages only in the
  following setting:
  - **NOM-ACC:** *dependent Case* assigned to the **lower** of two non-*lexically/inherently*
                  Case-marked noun-phrases
  - **ERG-ABS:** *dependent Case* assigned to the **higher** of two non-*lexically/inherently*
                  Case-marked noun-phrases

2.4. **Bobaljik's** φ**-agreement rule**

> (11) The controller of agreement on the finite verbal complex (Infl+V) is the
>   <u>highest</u> <u>accessible</u> NP in the <u>domain</u> of Infl V.   *[Bobaljik 2008:(3)]*

Explanation (esp. of underlined terms):

- ***highest***: c-command
- ***accessible***: a language-specific, right-anchored subset of the *disjunctive Case
             hierarchy* (see (12), below)

(12) *lexical/inherent Case* ≫ *dependent Case* ≫ *unmarked Case*

- in other words, we could identify three types of languages, as far as ***accessibility*** is concerned:
  - *type-1*: only noun-phrases with *unmarked* Case are accessible
  - *type-2*: noun-phrases with *unmarked* or *dependent* Case are accessible
  - *type-3*: noun-phrases with *unmarked*, *dependent* or *lexical/inherent* Case are accessible

- ➤ This means that there are also Case-accessibility combinations that should be unattested:
  - in NOMINATIVE-ACCUSATIVE languages:
    - ✔ possible sets of accessible Case-markings:
      {NOM}, {NOM, ACC}, {NOM, ACC, DAT}
    - ✗ impossible sets of accessible Case-markings:
      {ACC}, {DAT}, {ACC, DAT}, {NOM, DAT}
  - in ERGATIVE-ABSOLUTIVE languages:
    - ✔ possible sets of accessible Case-markings:
      {ABS}, {ABS, ERG}, {ABS, ERG, DAT}
    - ✗ impossible sets of accessible Case-markings:
      {ERG}, {DAT}, {ERG, DAT}, {ABS, DAT}
  - **NOTE:** these sets of accessible Case-markings indicate the set of noun-phrases that are suitable targets, when a single (Infl+V) probes for a goal
  - i.e., when the set includes multiple Case-markings, then multiple kinds of noun-phrases could potentially serve as goals for the same (Infl+V) complex
    - and the choice between them will be based on which one is present, and on ***highest*** and ***domain***

- Example: Nepali is a "*type-2*" language, as far as ***accessibility*** is concerned
  - i.e., both *unmarked* and *dependent* Cases are accessible for φ-agreement

(13) a. ma   [yas   pasal-mā] patrikā   kin-ch-u   (Nepali)
          1sg.NOM   DEM.OBL store-LOC newspaper.NOM buy-NONPAST-1sg
          'I buy the newspaper in this store.'

      b. maile   [yas   pasal-mā] patrikā
          1sg.ERG   DEM.OBL store-LOC newspaper.NOM
          kin-ē/*kin-yo
          buy-PAST.1sg/*buy-PAST.3sg.MASC
          'I bought the newspaper in this store.'

(14) malāī   timī   man   par-ch-au/*par-ch-u
      1sg.DAT 2MASC.HON.NOM liking occur-NONPAST-2MASC.HON/*occur-NONPAST-1sg
      'I like you.'

[Bickel and Yādava 2000:348]

- *__domain__*: within a finite clause
  - ○ **BUT:** datives will have to trigger **their own** domain boundary
    (in addition to those domain-boundaries introduced by finite clauses)
    - ➢ otherwise intervention cannot be modeled, in this system

2.5. The typological payoff

- a typological gap:
  - ✔ NOM-ACC Case-marking system, w/NOM-ACC φ-agreement system
  - ✔ ABS-ERG Case-marking system, w/ABS-ERG φ-agreement system
  - ✔ ABS-ERG Case-marking system, w/NOM-ACC φ-agreement system
  - ✗ NOM-ACC Case-marking system, w/ABS-ERG φ-agreement system
- ➢ the gap, derived:

accessible Case-markings	*unmarked* only	*unmarked* or *dependent*
NOM-ACC Case	NOM	NOM-ACC + *highest* = **NOM**
ERG-ABS Case	ABS	ERG-ABS + *highest* = **SUBJ**($\equiv$**"NOM"**)

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