1. Overview

In this course, we will deal with $\phi$-agreement in natural language.

Right from the start, I’d like to highlight the following distinction:

- $\phi$-agreement — an empirical phenomenon (we will provide a formal definition soon)
- Agree — a particular theoretical device, put forth by Chomsky (2000, et seq.) to account for $\phi$-agreement; but since exploited for many other purposes

This course is about $\phi$-agreement

- in fact, one of the things I hope to show is that the Agree-based analysis is not a viable theory of $\phi$-agreement
  - at least not without major emendation

Let us, then, define what we mean — empirically — when we say $\phi$-agreement:

\[
(1) \text{ host+}[\text{agreement-morpheme}]_{\phi_1} \ldots (<\text{other material}>) \ldots [\text{full noun-phrase}]_{\phi_1}
\]

- where $\phi_1$ is a language-specific set of $\phi$-features (along with their values)
  - its contents are language-dependent
  - normally, some non-empty subset of the following:
    - person
    - number
    - gender
    - noun-class
  - but it may include others, on a language-specific basis

- for example:

\[
\begin{align*}
(2) a. \text{Dina} & \quad \text{axl-}[-a] \quad \text{tapuax} \\
\text{\textit{Dina}_{fem}} & \quad \text{ate-}^{3\text{sg.FEM}} \quad \text{apple}_{\textit{masc}} \\
\text{‘Dina ate an apple.’} & \\
\text{host=\textit{ax(a)}l; agreement-morpheme=\textit{-a}; full noun-phrase=Dina} \\
\hline
b. \text{anaxnu} & \quad \text{axal-}[-nu] \quad \text{tapuax} \\
\text{\textit{we}} & \quad \text{ate-}^{1\text{pl}} \quad \text{apple}_{\textit{masc}} \\
\text{‘We ate an apple.’} & \\
\text{host=\textit{ax(a)}l; agreement-morpheme=\textit{-nu}; full noun-phrase=anaxnu}
\end{align*}
\]
and just to demonstrate how nice and complicated things can get:

\[ (3) \quad \text{Guraso-e-k} \quad \text{niri} \quad \text{belarritako ederr-ak} \quad \text{erosi} \quad \text{(Basque)} \]

\[ \text{parent(s)-ART}\text{pl}-\text{ERG} \quad \text{me-DAT} \quad \text{earring(s) beautiful-ART}\text{pl}(\text{ABS}) \text{ bought} \]

\[ d-i-zki-da-te. \]

\[ \text{3.ABS} \quad \text{have-}\text{pl.ABS} \quad \text{1sg.DAT} \quad \text{3pl.ERG} \]

‘(My) parents have bought me beautiful earrings.’

\[ \text{[Laka 2005]} \]

2. \( \varphi \)-agreement, and things that look like \( \varphi \)-agreement

- As some of you probably already know, it turns out that there is more than one way in which scenarios that look like (1) can come about

1. a feature-valuation relation (e.g., Agree)
   - some syntactic head — henceforth, the probe — has the capacity to morphologically reflect different values of the same feature
     - e.g., a verbal element that can inflect for \([\text{NUM}=\text{sg.}], \text{[NUM}=\text{dual}], \text{or [NUM}=\text{pl.}] \]
   - another element in the sentence — henceforth, the goal — determines which of these values the aforementioned head will actually reflect
     - e.g., a noun-phrase in the sentence determining, based on its own \([\text{NUM}] \text{ value, which [NUM] value will be morphologically reflected on the verb} \]

   \[ \text{➢} \] this process can then reiterate:
     - the head, whose feature-value(s) has/have been determined in this fashion, can in turn determine the feature-values determine on some other head
       - NOTICE: This is an instance of recursion in natural language! (Usually, when people discuss recursion in language, they talk about sentential embedding — or, in other contexts, the very operation of Merge; but this is every bit as “recursive” as those examples.)

- such feature-valuation can be conceived of in various ways:
  - (i) movement of features (Chomsky 1995)
  - (ii) transmission of feature-values (a.k.a., Agree; Chomsky 2000, et seq.)
  - (iii) sharing of a single feature-value across multiple syntactic elements/loci (Pesetsky and Torrego 2007)

**STRUCTURAL CONDITIONS:**

- (i) c-command:
the probe must c-command the goal

- this requirement holds at the level of representation at which valuation occurs; these c-command relations might subsequently be disrupted

(ii) locality:
the probe and the goal must be sufficiently close to each other

- this is a fertile ground for theorizing (e.g., phases; Chomsky 2001, 2004, etc.) — but the empirical generalization is this:
  - the probe and the goal cannot be separated by the boundary of a finite clause

(iii) minimality:
a probe $P$ cannot enter into a feature-valuation relation with a goal $G$ if there is another suitable goal $G'$ within $P$'s domain, and $G'$ asymmetrically c-commands $G$ (where domain refers to the combination of c-command and locality; i.e., (i)+(ii))

- the situation where such a $G'$ exists is called intervention
  - and $G'$ is called the intervener
- example:

(4) Manninum virðast [hestarnir vera seinir]. (Icelandic)
the.man.sg.DAT seem.pl the.horses.pl.NOM be slow
'The man finds the horses slow.' [Holmberg and Hróarsdóttir 2003:11]

(5) það virðist/*virðast einhverjum manni [hestarnir vera seinir].
EXPL seem.sg/*seem.pl some man.sg.DAT the.horses.pl.NOM be slow
'A man finds the horses slow.' [Holmberg and Hróarsdóttir 2003:12]

- **NOTE:** suppose that (4) is derived from a structure very similar to (5), except with A-movement to subject position, instead of expletive-insertion (and there is some evidence for this)

⇒ it looks like A-movement traces don’t count for the purposes of minimality
  - this has various interesting implications, particularly given the Copy/Re-Merge Theories of Movement

Finally, this kind of feature-valuation relation has also been implicated in certain accounts of Case-assignment:

- through the notion that Case is somehow “parasitic” on the valuation of the $\varphi$-features on certain kinds of probes (Chomsky 2000, 2001)

  ➢ I hope to show you that this idea is quite plainly untenable

--- TERMINOLOGICAL NEWSFLASH ---

From this point forward, when I say $\varphi$-agreement, I will be referring specifically to this type of feature-valuation relation (and not, for example, (II)–(III), below).
I will hereby stop italicizing the term “$\varphi$-agreement”, now that it has been introduced and defined.
II. the Pronominal Argument Hypothesis (Jelinek 1984)

(6) [‘Awéé bì- ’nii- sh- hóósh. (Navajo)
    bì- sh- hóósh.
    baby INCH- tickle
    ‘I (start to) tickle the baby.’

    • the agreement-morpheme is the actual argument
      o it shows up affixed to the host
        (i) for phonological/prosodic reasons
        - or -
        (ii) via incorporation (Baker 1985, 1988)
    • the full noun-phrase, to the extent that it can co-occur with the agreement-morpheme, is an unselected modifier

Syntactically, this entails the following:

• the so-called agreement-morpheme is actually a pronoun-like element, and it is the one that occupies an argument-position/A-position

• the so-called full noun-phrase is, syntactically speaking, an adjunct

⇒ this places these constructions roughly on par with utterances such as (7)

(7) He, the doctor, tells me, the patient, what to do. [Jelinek 1984:(50)]

EMPIRICAL PROPERTIES:

• the agreement-morpheme should — ideally — bear some resemblance to the series of strong pronouns in the language in question

• in the same vein, it would be surprising if the form of the agreement-morphemes depended on the tense/aspect of the host, in a way that is beyond reasonable phonological explanation (Arregi and Nevins 2008)
  o since we normally don’t find pronouns behaving like (8):

(8) UNATTESTED PATTERN IN PRONOMINAL ARGUMENTS:

a. I SEE HIM.
b. I SAW HOM.
c. I WILL SEE HAM.
d. I HAVE SEEN HUM.

➢ we will refer to this property (i.e., the lack of alternations like (8)) as the tense-invariance of pronominals (following Arregi and Nevins 2008)


(9) Lo vimos a Juan (Rioplatense Spanish)
    him saw.1pl DAT Juan
    ‘We saw Juan.’ [Jaeggli 1986:32]
• the **full noun-phrase** is in argument-position
• the **agreement-morpheme** is a clitic, which is either:
  (i) base-generated in its surface position  
      o possibly: the **full noun-phrase** undergoes covert movement to the position
         of the clitic (Sportiche 1996, 1998)
  (ii) the result of movement of the **full noun-phrase** (Kayne 1989, 1991)
      o normally, movement results in the moved element being pronounced only
         in its upstairs position
      o if at least some instances of resumptive pronouns are best analyzed in terms
        then these instances furnish an example of movement where the full noun-phrase is pronounced upstairs,
        and a pronoun-like element is pronounced downstairs
         ➢ this instance of movement, then, would be the opposite of such resumption-chains:
         a pronoun-like element (the clitic) is pronounced upstairs, and the
         full noun-phrase is pronounced downstairs (Anagnostopoulou 2003:211)
  (iii) the result of movement of a D⁰ out of a “Big DP” (Boeckx 2003, Torrego 1988,
        Uriagereka 1995), which originally contained both the clitic and the full noun-phrase
  (iv) the result of feature-movement (Anagnostopoulou 1999, 2003)
      o NOTE: feature-movement has generally been subsumed by Agree
         (see above); crucially, the kind of feature-movement invoked by
         Anagnostopoulou cannot be subsumed in this way (Anagnostopoulou 2003:215)

➢ What all these approaches agree upon — and is, in fact, part of the empirical
   landscape they seek to explain — is this:

Once clitic-doubling has occurred, the **full noun-phrase** behaves like an
A-movement trace (or, in more theory-neutral terms, a non-final link in an
A-chain):
– for intervention
– for binding

o under the movement-based approach (in (ii), above), this is completely expected
  – the other 3 approaches must derive this some other way

**OTHER EMPIRICAL PROPERTIES:**
(i) the **agreement-morpheme** and the **full noun-phrase** must be sufficiently local
• modulo restructuring/“clause-union”, the two must be clause-mates
  (Burzio 1986, Rizzi 1982, Sportiche 1996)
      o NOTICE: this is more strict than the locality-condition for \( \varphi \)-agreement
        – in particular, the two relations differ in their ability to cross the
           boundary of an infinitival clause
(ii) since a pronominal clitic is a kind of pronoun, we also have similar expectations to those generated under the Pronominal Argument Hypothesis (PAH) —

- the *agreement-morpheme* should — ideally — bear some resemblance to the series of strong pronouns in the language in question
- *tense-invariance* (Arregi and Nevins 2008)

A side-note: consider the following question —

- How would one distinguish whether a given agreement-morpheme falls under the purview of (i) the Pronominal Argument Hypothesis, or (ii) clitic-doubling?
  - On the one hand, the *full noun-phrase*, under the PAH, is an adjunct
    \[ \Rightarrow \] it should be optional
  - but what if a language has pro-drop?
    - then, the *agreement-morpheme* could be the result of *clitic-doubling* of pro
      - this is, in fact, Baker’s (1996) modification to Jelinek’s proposal
    - and notice: since clitic-doubled noun-phrases behave like lower links in an A-chain, it’s not entirely clear how the presence of this pro could be diagnosed
  - On the other hand, if the *full noun-phrase* is phonologically present:
    - the PAH predicts it should behave syntactically as an adjunct
    - a *clitic-doubling* account predicts it should behave as an A-trace
    \[ \Rightarrow \] once again, these are quite similar — though not identical…!

- QUESTION: how would we tell the two apart?

References


This is svn-revision 1082.