Multiple agreement on finite verbs: Morphological challenges for locality and cyclicity

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**Background:** When one syntactic head has two potential elements in its c-command domain to agree with, the question arises as to how this single Probe manages to agree with multiple Goals at different distances. Various proposals have been advanced in the literature for multiple agreement on either *v*, T or C level: (i) parallel simultaneous Multiple Agree with both Goals (Hiraiwa, 2001; Anagnostopoulou, 2005; Nevins, 2007, 2011); (ii) sequential agreement first with the closer and then with the more distant lower Goal after the deactivation of the higher one (Georgi, 2013*a*,*b*; Kalin and van Urk, 2015); (iii) sequential agreement whereby Agree interacts with the higher Goal by copying its feature set, subsequently continuing the search for the rest of the unvalued features on the lower Goal (Deal, 2015); (iv) agreement with the higher Goal, followed by the movement of the lower Goal above the previously targeted one, making it the closest Goal for the following Agree operation (Bobaljik and Branigan, 2006).

**Problem:** Morphological evidence sometimes indicates that it is the further of the two Goals that the Probe interacts with first. Take for instance finite verb agreement in Greenlandic in (1) (Baker, 2008) and Khanty in (2) (Volkova and Reuland, 2014). Assuming that finite verb agreement with a subject and an object is carried out by T, it is puzzling that object features are realised closer to the verb than those of the subject, considering the fact that the subject is the closer goal to T and should, accordingly, be the first element to undergo agreement.

(1) Niqi niri-niq ajur-pa-a-t.
meat eat-NOML NEG.HAB-IND-**3sO-3pS**
'They don't eat meat.' (Baker, 2008, 213)

(2) Učitel-$t_i$ ɬiveɬ$_{i/k}$ išək-s-əɬ-əɬ.
teacher-PL they.ACC praise-PST-**PLO-3PLS**
'The teachers praised them(selves).'
(Volkova and Reuland, 2014, 608)

Previous accounts mostly employ one of the strategies (i)-(iv) above, but say very little about morphological realisation of the features of the subject and the object (see Baker 2008 on Greenlandic and Nez Perce, Bittner 1994; Bok-Bennema 1991 on Inuit and Bobaljik and Branigan 2006 on Chukchi). However, taking both the syntactic and morphological information into account seems to be necessary for achieving the right degree of explanatory adequacy.

**Proposal:** Locality conditions on agreement should be defined from the perspective of the Probe, not the location of the Goal. I will argue that this can be achieved by means of two crucial assumptions: (i) precise specification of the Probe's valuation conditions; (ii) defining the domain of the second Agree by the length of the path of the first one. Assumption (i) can be formalized under the Relativized Probing approach to Agree (Béjar and Řezáč, 2009; Preminger, 2014) (e.g. by having the probe on T look for an NP with the [case:acc] in (1)-(2)). This is reminiscent of the Relativized Minimality idea of intervention (Rizzi, 1990; Béjar, 2003; Preminger, 2014) – the higher Goal is skipped simply because its feature structure does not satisfy the Probe's conditions on valuation. Assumption (ii) can be formalized as the *Condition on Agree Domains* (CAD): After an Agree operation X, triggered by a probe P from a syntactic head H, has targeted a goal G, any subsequent Agree operation Y, triggered by a probe Q on H cannot target any constituents c-commanded by G. More informally, the first Agree does what is best and it is allowed to seek for its most appropriate possible goal as far in its c-command domain as possible. The following Agree, however, must be economical and converge with whatever it manages to find (if it does not succeed in doing so, it may eventually fail. c.f. Preminger 2014). The CAD can thus be seen as a locality constraint parallel to constraints on movement such as *Shortest Move* (Richards, 2001) or *Approach the Probe Principle* (Branigan, 2012, 2013).

**Outlook:** This approach to multiple agreement does away with the concept of defective intervention (also argued against by Bruening 2014) – the higher Goal cannot be an intervener, as it does not have the relevant feature for the Probe. It is also not necessary to assume deactivation of Goals after agreement or postulate otherwise unattested/unjustified movement operations. All that is necessary is the precise specification of the valuation conditions on Agree and the condition that the first Agree delimits the search space for the following Agree. I show that the proposal can be extended to other restrictions on multiple agreement, such as the Person-Case Constraint in double-object agreement and superiority effects in Wh-movement.

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