Eccentric agreement can be monstrous

Dmitry Ganenkov
Institute of Linguistics RAS (Moscow) and University of Bamberg
d.ganenkov@gmail.com

Béjar and Rezac (2009) develop an elegant proposal which accounts for the syntax of so-called agreement displacement sensitive to person hierarchies, i.e. patterns of agreement where either the subject or the object may control agreement in the same morphological position depending on their relative specification for person and grammatical function (also called eccentric agreement, context-sensitive agreement, and dependent agreement). E.g. in Basque the controller for person agreement alternates between the internal argument (IA) and the external argument (EA) depending on their relative φ-feature specification. In brief, the essence of their Cyclic Agree mechanism boils down to the following ingredients: (i) The π-probe is placed between the EA and the IA on v°, (ii) The π-probe in a given language is sensitive to a particular specification of the goal in terms of [person], [participant], and [speaker], and (iii) The agreement displacement pattern follows from a bottom-up derivation whereby the EA is added later that the IA, so that the π-probe attempts to agree with the IA in the first place and can agree with the EA only if the agreement with the IA failed.

In this paper, I first provide evidence from the Nakh-Daghestanian language Dargwa that the Cyclic Agree approach cannot account for the choice of π-features on the verb. Unlike most other Nakh-Daghestanian languages, Dargwa obligatorily shows person agreement of the finite verb with one of its arguments, either absolutive or ergative. Virtually all Dargwa lects display eccentric agreement and fall into three basic types (Sumbatova 2011): (a) lects with purely hierarchical person agreement based on the hierarchy 2 > 1 > 3, as in Itsari and some other varieties from the southern periphery of the Dargwa-speaking area, (b) lects with the hierarchy 1, 2 > 3 and the preference for the IA when both arguments are speech act participants, as in Standard Dargwa and other varieties from the northern dialect cluster, (c) lects with the hierarchy 1, 2 > 3 and the preference for the EA when both arguments are speech act participants, only attested in Chirag.

On a first view, the data cannot present a challenge to the CA theory. Indeed, the approach is specifically designed to account for the existence of types (a) and (b), whereas type (c) can be derived by locating unvalued π-features on a probing head above the EA, e.g. T°. The problem, however, comes from the fact that person agreement in Dargwa is also "monstrous" (Sundaresan 2011), which means that in reported speech constructions argument's π-features reflected on the finite verb may be interpreted not in the context of the actual speech act, but from the point of view of the reported speech act. In particular, in Dargwa person agreement may only be interpreted in the context of the reported speech act, unlike personal pronouns which allow both unshifted and shifted interpretations.

(1) rasul-li$_k$ b-ur-ib, nu$_{CS}$ moskwa.li-zi la^ʕ<w>q'-a^{ʕ}n ili.
Rasul-ERG N-tell:PF-PST I(ABS) Moscow-LOC <M>come:IPF-FUT:**3** COMP
'Rasul$_k$ said that I$_{CS}$ would come to Moscow.'

(2) rasul-li$_k$ {nu$_k$ / sa-j$_k$} mosk:wa.li-zi arq'-asi-ra ili b-ur-ib.
Rasul-ERG I(ABS) self-M(ABS) Moscow-LOC go:IPF-FUT-**1** COMP N-tell:PF-PST
'Rasul$_k$ said that he$_k$ would go to Moscow.'

In (1), the first person pronoun *nu* 'I' referring to the speaker of the actual speech act (Current Speaker, CS) does not trigger first person agrement on the embedded finite verb. In contrast, as (2) demonstrates, the argument denoting the original speaker of the reported speech act triggers first person agreement on the verb, irrespective of whether it is expressed by the normal first person pronoun *nu* 'I' or the reflexive-logophoric pronoun *sabi*.

Syntactically, the original speaker's point of view in reported speech is usually derived by introducing a null S(peaker), or logophoric agent, argument at the left periphery of the speech complement (e.g. Sigurðsson 2004, Baker 2008). Arguments in the embedded clause enter into an Agree relation with the left peripheral S argument and thus receive their π-specification. This means that if we assume a model of monstrous agreement that relies on the presence of the null S argument in the C layer of the embedded clause, then a scenario à la Béjar and Rezac (2009) is impossible for eccentric agreement, since at the moment when v° is supposed to probe the object and the subject, none of the latter has been assigned π-features.

The second goal of this paper is to propose a theoretical solution to the problem of person agreement that is sensitive both to logophoric operators in CP and to relative π-specification of the EA and IA. In a nutshell, I propose that eccentric agreement in Dargwa belongs to the family of Person-Case Constraint effects and maintain that the problem may be dealt with using the Multiple Agree mechanism proposed by Nevins (2007, 2011). The derivation proceeds as follows.

(4) i. The probing head H may be any functional head above the subject and object (I show evidence from morphology that this is Fin°);

ii. Fin° > ERG > ABS: The structural configuration is the same as for the indirect and direct object in the ditransitive domain, v°> IO > DO (Nevins 2007, 2011);

iii. After Fin° is merged in the embedded clause, it establishes Multiple Agree with the ergative and absolutive arguments in its c-command domain;

iv. Both arguments have no/unmarked/default values for both features [–Auth], [–Part];

… (waiting till the matrix subject gets merged)

v. Person is computed and arguments get their π-values (Sigurðsson 2004);

vi. Due to previously established Multiple Agree, assigned π-features are transmitted to Fin° by feature sharing;

vii. The resulting representation is checked for two conditions on MA: Contiguous Agree and Matched Values (Nevins 2007, 2011);

viii. Depending on the probe's value-relativization in a given language, some combinations are licit and some are illicit;

ix. If a combination is licit, the verb agrees with both arguments, but only agreement with the subject is seen on the surface, due to language-specific morphological restrictions;

x. If a combination is illicit, a repair strategy applies to fill in the obligatory morphological slot for agreement: the verb agrees with either the object or an argument with a specific π-value (cf. Rezac 2011 on repair strategies in PCC violations);

xi. Different types of eccentric agreement in Dargwa, see (a)–(c) above, are simply different types of PCC (strong or weak) combined with one of the two repair strategies: Strong/Weak PCC + late insertion of [addressee] or object agreement as repair.

References

Baker, Mark. 2008. *The syntax of agreement and concord.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Béjar, Susana, and Milan Rezac. 2009. Cyclic Agree. *Linguistic Inquiry* 40(1): 35–73.

Nevins, Andrew. 2007. The Representation of Third Person and Its Consequences for Person-Case Effects. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* 25(2): 273–313.

Nevins, Andrew. 2011. Multiple agree with clitics: person complementarity vs. omnivorous number. *Natural Language & Linguistic Theory* 29(4): 939-971.

Rezac, Milan. 2011. *Phi-Features and the Modular Architecture of Language*. Springer.

Sigurðsson, Halldór Ármann. 2004. The Syntax of Person, Tense, and Speech Features. *Italian Journal of Linguistics/Rivista Di Linguistica* 16(1): 219–251.

Sumbatova, Nina R. 2011. Person hierarchies and the problem of person marker origin in Dargwa: facts and diachronic problems. In: Authier, Gilles and Timur Maisak (eds.), *Tense, aspect, modality and finiteness in East Caucasian languages*. Universitätsverlag Dr. N. Brockmeyer: Bochum.

Sundaresan, Sandhya. 2011. Monsters, Agreement, and Anaphora: Evidence from Tamil. http://ling.auf.net/lingbuzz/001205/v2.pdf, accessed May 25, 2013.