AGREEMENT: FORMAL MODELS AND FURTHER QUESTIONS

Archi agreement project: Introductory seminar
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Agreement patterns

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- Special cases:
  - Extended domain as in Long Distance Agreement
  - Reduced domain as in Closest Conjunct Agreement

Agreement patterns

- Syntactic debates about agreement:
  - Nature of agreement categories
  - Interaction between agreement and Case
  - Ways of modeling agreement

Agreement in a nutshell

- Conventional Minimalist formalization in terms of Agree (Chomsky 2000, 2001)

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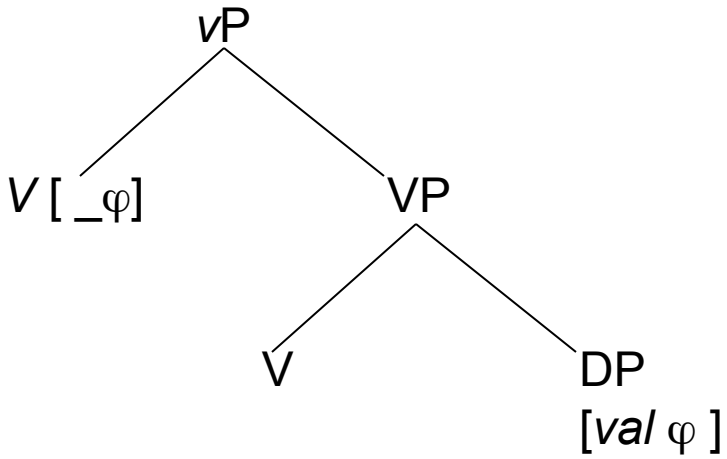
- Agree is a relation between a functional head and a DP that is established in the syntax:
  - A functional head with unvalued phi-features (*probe)* searches downwards into its c-command domain for a DP with valued phi-features *(goal)*

By way of illustration



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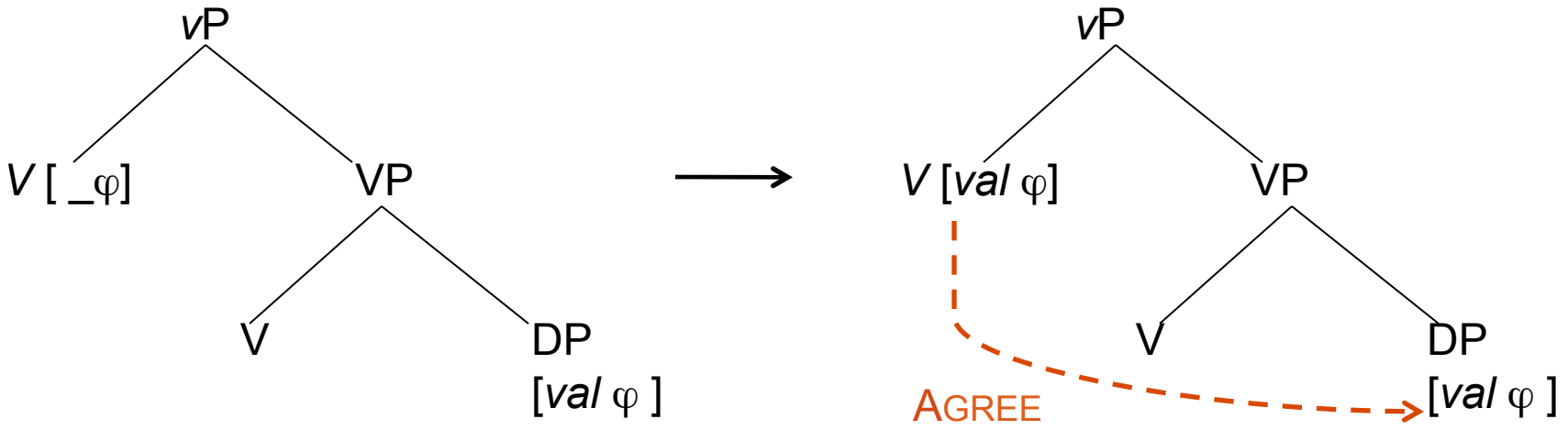

Ensuing questions

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- What happens when features do not get valued?

agreement features

Phi-features

- Well-established:
  - [person]
  - [number]
  - [gender]

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- Well-established:
  - [person]
  - [number]
  - [gender]
- Somewhat more tentative:
  - [status] (honorification)
  - [wh-agreement]

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- [person] is probed first

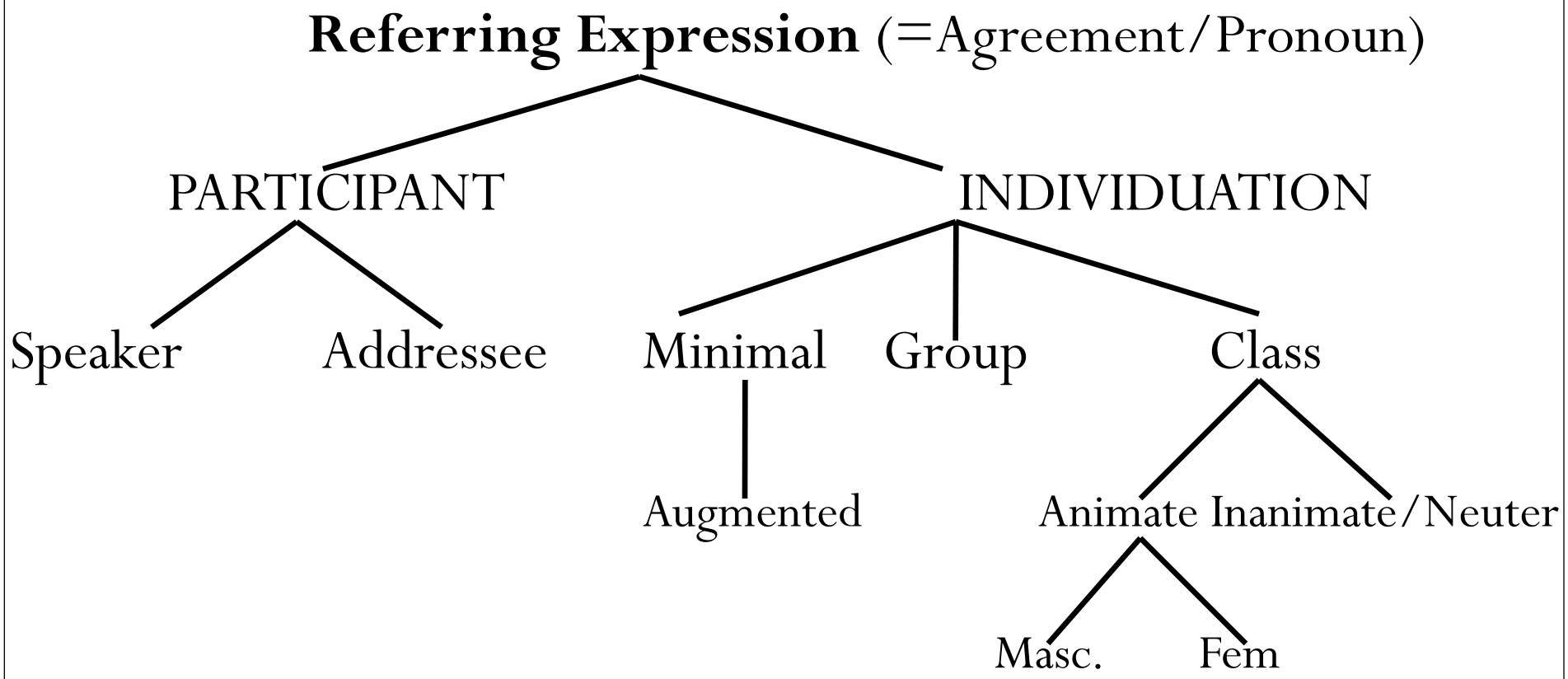
Not all phi-features are created equal

- phi-features are internally structured in a hierarchical way

  (Harley & Ritter 2002, McGinnis 2005, Béjar & Rezac 2009, Coon & Preminger 2010; Preminger 2011)

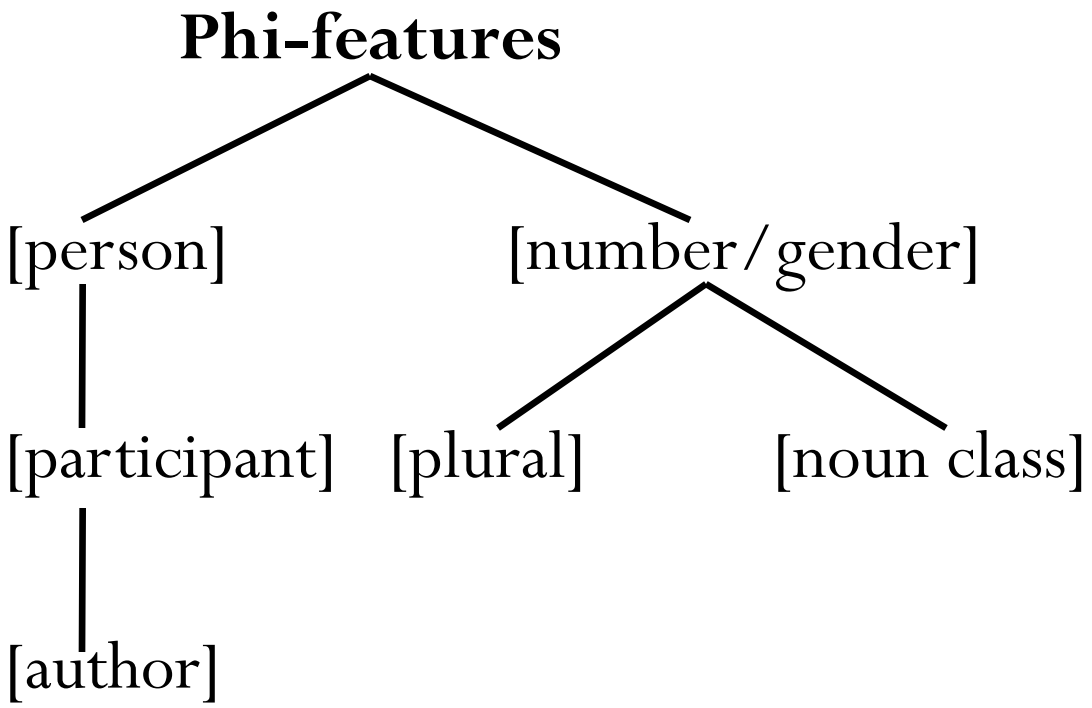
Hierarchies

Feature geometry (Harley & Ritter 2002)



Hierarchies

Phi-feature Hierarchy



What about 3 person?

- 3 person noun phrases are not empty or invisible: they simply lack the nodes labeled [author], [participant], [plural], [specified noun class]

Partial agreement

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  (Baker 2008, 2011, Bhatt & Walkow to appear)

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- Why person?

The Chicken-and-Egg (Probe-and-Goal) relationship

Which expression matters?

- **What matters (more)…**
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  the goal or the probe?
- More traditional view (Chomsky 1995, 2000)
  the probe is crucial, and the presence of overt phi-agreement licenses noun phrases
  - Makes agreement and Case more similar
  - Makes Agree reminiscent of spec-head agreement
  - Is more at odds with theory neutral approaches

Which expression matters?

- **What matters (more)…**
  the goal or the probe?
- Current view (Bittner & Hale 1996, Preminger 2011a, b)
  the presence of a noun phrase licenses phi-agreement with the appropriate probe
  - Makes agreement and Case more different
  - Much more consistent with theory neutral approaches
  - Allows agreement to be case-discriminating

Agreement and Case

The relationship between agreement and Case

- Two main views:
- Agreement and Case are tightly related (Baker 2008)
- Agreement and Case are separate and subject to different principles (Bobaljik 2007, a.o.)

Agreement and Case are linked

- Baker 2008: two main parameters in agreement:

  (1) Looking up or down in the structure

  (2) Linked to Case valuation or not

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- CDAP: Case-Dependency of Agreement Parameter
  - F agrees with DP/NP **in person** only if F values the Case feature of DP/NP or vice versa
  - CDAP can be on or off, hence parametric variation

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- CDAP "on": single agreement (as in IE lgs)
- CDAP "off": multiple agreement (e.g., Bantu)
- Only applies to agreement in [person]
  - May also apply to [wh] agreement for those languages where the [wh] feature is linked to [person]

    (Northwest Caucasian, see O'Herin 2002, Caponigro & Polinsky 2011)

Agreement and Case are unrelated

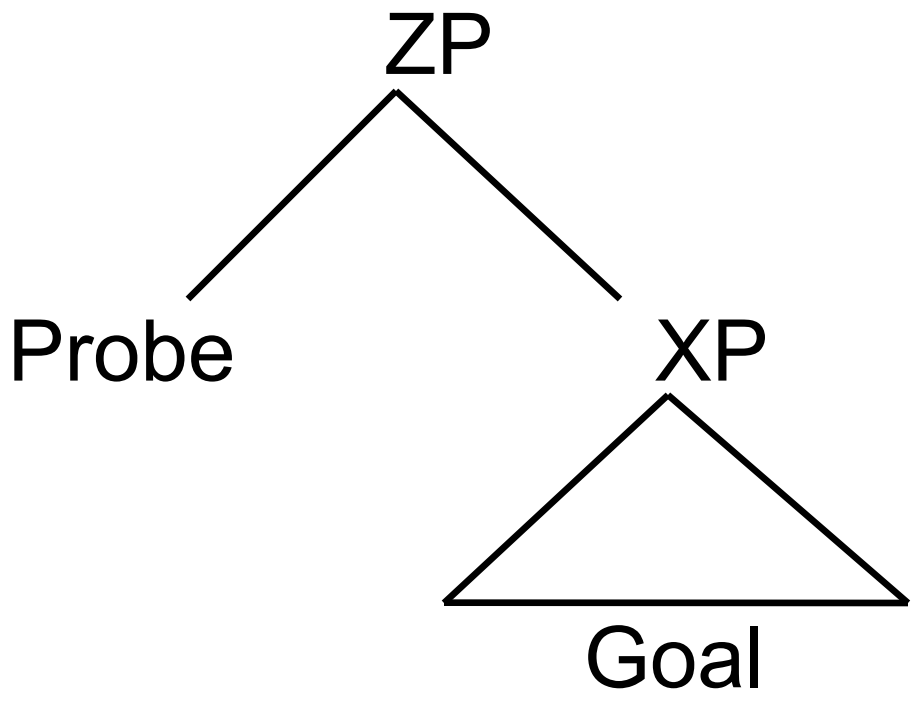
- More grounded empirically:
  - Accounts for languages with quirky case (e.g., Icelandic)
  - Explains why agreement is case-discriminating
    - Absence of accusative languages with ergative agreement (Corbett 2006, Bobaljik 2008)

Ways of implementing agreement in models

Structural Conditions and Mechanisms

- Agree (c-command)
- Covert or overt checking
- Locality

Agree



Typical cases

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- Long Distance Agreement (Tsez, Hindi)

General consensus

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- The output may be subject to morpho-phonological operations (PF) but PF's role is secondary (due to how the relevant features are spelled-out? or performance factors?)
  - Stay tuned for Closest Conjunct Agreement (CCA)

Phrasal accounts under Agree

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- Outstanding issue: what happens when a local relationship is disrupted (so called intervention)?

Locality

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- Agreement has to take place in a local domain
- Local domains for agreement, case, scope and movement do not match
- Agreement domain: the (verbal) complement to a lexical verb

(Bobaljik & Wurmbrand 2005)

Locality

- English: Anaphors exhibiting agreement must have a local antecedent:

The student believed [himself/*myself is clever]

- Intervention can lead to the loss of locality, hence disruption of agreement

Special cases

Long-distance agreement

- Agreement appears to cross a clausal domain (true LDA occurs in bi-clausal structures)

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- The goal is at the left edge of the lower clause
  - e.g., as topic or focus/wh-element

LDA illustrated: Tsez

enir	[uža:	magalu	ba:c’ ruɬi]	b-iyxo
mother	[boy	bread.III.ABS	ate].IV	III-know

‘The mother knows (that) the boy ate the bread’

LDA illustrated: Tsez

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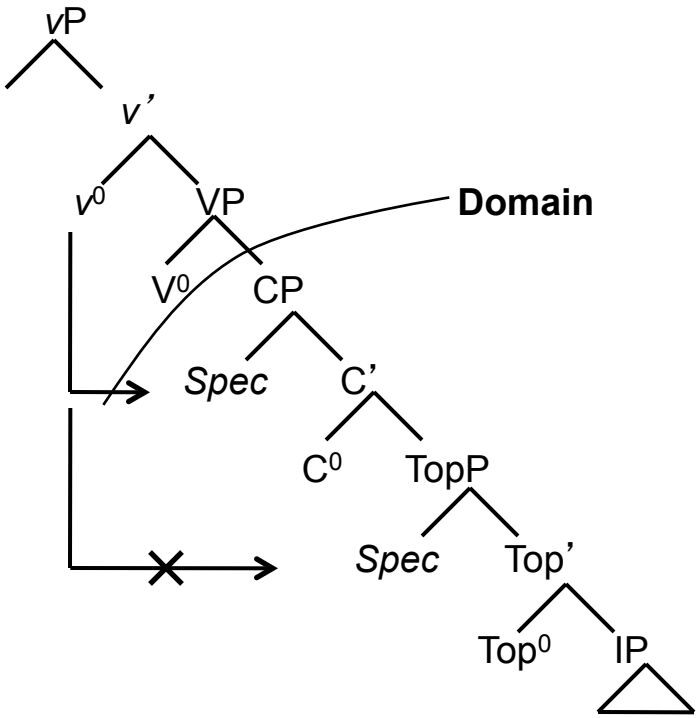
‘The mother knows (that) the boy ate the bread’

- LDA can occur only with the absolutive DP
- No interveners
- No crossing of clauses
- The LDA goal is Topic

(Polinsky & Potsdam 2001; Polinsky 2003)

How LDA works



Agreement with SpecCP/*SpecTopP

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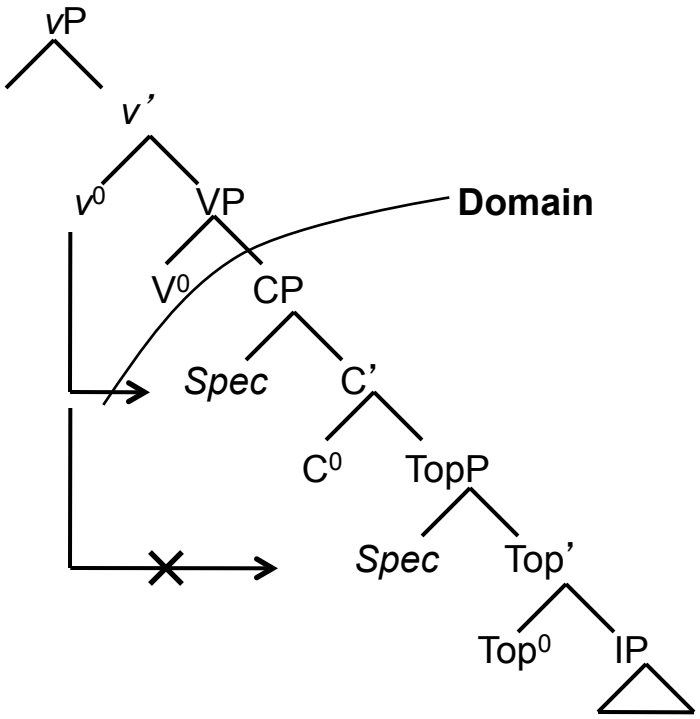

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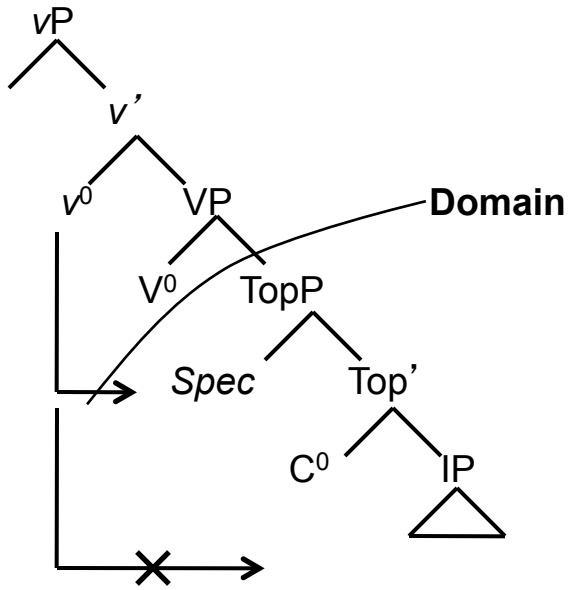

Agreement with SpecTopP

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- LDA found in several Nakh-Dagestanian languages
  - Tsez, Khwarshi, Avar
- LDA should be distinguished from restructuring: two verbs form a complex predicate (can be discontinuous) & there is only one clausal domain

Haspelmath 1996 for Godoberi and Bhatt 2005 for Hindi

Agreement and Coordination
Moroccan Arabic:

- ža Omar w Karim
  came.3MS Omar & Karim
  'Omar and Karim came.'

- *Omar w Karim ža
  Omar & Karim came.3MS
  'Omar and Karim came.'

- [Omar w Karim] žaw
  Omar & Karim came.3P
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•Preverbal Goal: agreement has to be with the entire NP

•Postverbal Goal: agreement can be with the entire NP or with the closest conjunct

Closest conjunct agreement in Tsez

No Arabic-style positional asymmetry

- uži-ya kid-ya: y-ik’ is
  boy.cl1-or girl.cl2-or cl2-went
- ∅-ik’ is uži-ya: kid-ya:
  cl1-went boy.cl1-or girl.cl2-or
- [uži-ya: kid-ya:] b-ik’ is
  boy.cl1-or girl.cl2-or 1.pl-went
- b-ik’ is [uži-ya: kid-ya:]
  1.pl-went boy.cl1-or girl.cl2-or

‘A boy or a girl left’

Conditions on closest conjunct agreement (CCA)

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- No CCA in person

Background observations

- Coordination is asymmetric

  $[_{ConjP}\ DP_1\ [_{Conj'}\ [_{Conj}\ \&]\ [_{DP}\ DP_2]]]$

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- Coordination is asymmetric

  $[_{ConjP}\ DP_1\ [_{Conj'}\ [_{Conj}\ \&]\ [_{DP}\ DP_2]]]$

- Evidence: binding from DP_1 into DP_2

  *John and his father / *his father and John*

Possible solutions

- AGREE has access to ConjP and the highest conjunct; PF chooses which one's features to express (e.g., based on the one which will give a more specific morphology)

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- Agreement happens twice: first, all features are checked in syntax, second the PF chooses which features to pronounce based on adjacency

  (Franck et al. 2007, Bemamoun et al. 2009, Lorimor 2008)

Thank you!

References

EXTRAS

What happens when Valuation does not occur?

Traditional view

- Looking for the result: valuation of phi-features must happen
- Agreement is obligatory, and in its absence the derivation crashes

More nuanced view

- Looking for the process: agreement is an obligatory operation but it may not need to find the appropriate target, the main requirement is that search for this target