

## Specifier-head agreement versus Agree

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### 1. Outlining the two alternatives

- (1) Specifier-head agreement emerged as a way of unifying Case-assignment domains.
- (2) John likes **cookies**.
- (3) **The dog** chased the cat.
- (4) Mary proved [**him** wrong].
- (5) There is not a single phrasal source for these configurations involving accusative Case.
- (6) Chomsky (1993) suggests that we provide a single phrasal source: The object always moves to SpecAgr<sub>o</sub>P.
- (7) It is not just case that is checked in functional projections, but all agreement processes.
- (8) Spec-head agreement is a very local configuration for agreement (Chomsky 1986, 1993, Chung 1998).
- (9) In recent years, spec-head relations have been replaced with Agree, which is a dependency-creating operation between a Probe and a Goal followed by movement (Chomsky 2000, 2001).
- (10) A lot of the debate has centered on expletive constructions.
- (11) There are men in the room.

### 2. Spec-head agreement

- (12) Agr<sub>o</sub>P:
- (13) Quelle fille Jean a(-t-il) vu-e?  
 which girl Jean has-he seen-AGR.FEM  
 'Which girl did Jean see?' (Kayne 1989)
- (14) The picture is more interesting: displaced objects (cliticized, *wh*-moved, and passivized in the examples at hand.

- (15) a. Jean a vu-\*e la fille.  
 Jean has seen-AGR.FEM the girl  
 'Jean saw the girl'
- b. Jean l'a vu-e.  
 Jean her-has seen-AGR.FEM  
 'Jean saw her.'
- c. Quelle fille Jean a(-t-il) vu-e?  
 which girl Jean has-he seen-AGR.FEM  
 'Which girl did Jean see?'
- d. Cette fille a été vu-e.  
 this girl has been seen-AGR.FEM  
 'This girl was seen.'
- (Kayne 1989)

(16) Object shift in languages like Icelandic provides further evidence, if the shifting process is driven by structural Case.

(17) Nemandinn las bókina ekki.  
 student.the read book.the not  
 'The student didn't read the book.'

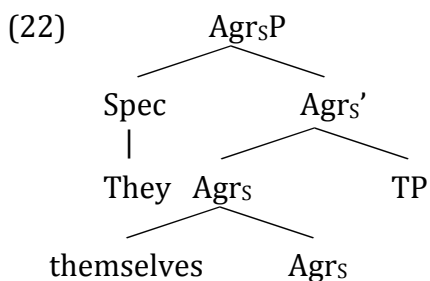
(18) \*Jón talaði [við Maríu] ekki.  
 Jon spoke with Maria not  
 'John didn't speak with Maria.'

(Boeckx 2008)

(19) Lasnik (1999: 37-38) gives another argument in favor of AgrOP.

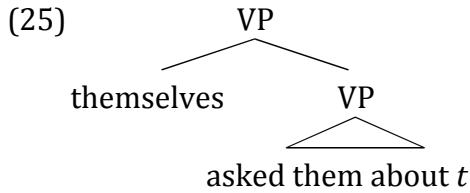
(20) LF movement of anaphors (Chomsky 1986).

(21) They injured themselves.



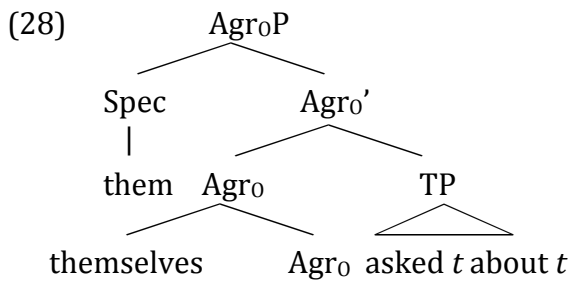
(23) Object-anaphors were more problematic:

(24) I asked them about themselves.



(26) Does this provide the appropriate structural relation? Why is it different from the one for subjects?

(27) The AgrO theory comes to the rescue:



(29) Other arguments concern raising-to-object.

### 3. Agree

(30) 'Since Agree is dependent on c-command, and c-command is not a primitive relation, Agree (if it exists at all) is not a primitive transformation, unlike Merge or Move' (Chandra 2007: 18).

(31) 'Second, having c-command derived from Move, we are also forced to ask if this relation is actually essential for agreement; i.e., if it is necessary that there must exist a c-command relation between two items for them to agree with each other. This is a relevant question especially in light of Hornstein's observations that in every domain where c-command applies, it is derived from movement or displacement of the 'c-commanding' item' (Chandra 2007: 19).

(32) Arguments in favor of Agree could have the following shape:

(33) situations where it is clear that the agreeing DP has not moved anywhere close to the domain of the agreeing functional head,

(34) situations where it is clear that movement relations may feed agreement relations that are in fact not possible,

(35) situations where a given functional head favors agreement with its complement over agreement with its specifier.

3.1. *Agreement in the absence of movement*

- (36) Wurmbrand (2004) shows that Case and agreement licensing with T occurs in contexts where overt movement to SpecTP does not occur and covert movement of the nominative agreeing DP is blocked for independent reasons.
- (37) The crux of the argument: There are configurations in which a DP can be shown to overtly occupy a low VP projection, and in which it can be shown that covert movement out of that VP is independently excluded. In such configurations, the DP nevertheless bears nominative case and triggers agreement on the finite verb. Assuming that these properties indicate feature checking with T, that checking must occur in the Agree configuration.
- (38) Consider the examples in (35), involving unaccusatives taking a dative indirect object in addition to a nominative theme.
- (39) a. weil mindestens einem Kritiker jeder Film gefallen sollte  
 since at.least one.DAT critic every.NOM film please should  
 since at least one critic should like every movie  $\exists \gg \forall / ? \forall \gg \exists$
- b. weil mindestens einem Kind jede Übung gelungen ist  
 since at.least one.DAT child every.NOM exercise managed AUX  
 since at least one child managed to do every exercise  $\exists \gg \forall / ? \forall \gg \exists$
- (40) The examples illustrate that these sentences displace scope ambiguity between the two arguments. This indicates that covert movement of the nominative in principle is possible.
- (41) In VP-fronting contexts where the nominative is contained in the fronted/topicalized VP and the dative stays in situ, the ambiguity disappears.
- (42) a. ?[Jeder Film gefallen]<sub>VP</sub> sollte mindestens einem Kritiker.  
 every. NOM film please should at.least one.DAT critic  
 At least one critic should like every movie.  $\exists \gg \forall$ ; \* $\forall \gg \exists$
- b. ?[Jede Übung gelungen]<sub>VP</sub> ist mindestens einem Kind.  
 every.NOM exercise managed AUX at.least one.DAT child  
 At least one child (has) managed to do every exercise.  $\exists \gg \forall$ ; \* $\forall \gg \exists$
- (43) The loss of inverse scope is a well-known instance of scope freezing under VP-fronting.
- (44) Nominative on the argument inside the fronted VP cannot be the result of any movement - otherwise, we would expect the sentence to be scopally ambiguous.

### 3.2. Agreement prior to movement

(45) Consider the following argument based on object honorification, from Boeckx and Niinuma (2004).

(46) Taro-ga Tanaka sensei-o o-tasuke-si-ta  
Taro-Nom Prof.Tanaka-Acc help-OH-past  
'Taro helped Prof. Tanaka'

(47) Hanako-ga Tanaka Sensei-ni Mary-o go-syookai-si-ta  
Hanako-Nom Prof. Tanaka-Dat Mary-Acc introduce-OH-past  
'Hanako introduced Mary to Prof. Tanaka'

(48) #Hanako-ga Mary-ni Tanaka Sensei-o go-syookai-si-ta  
Hanako-Nom Mary-Dat Prof. Tanaka-Acc introduce-OH-past  
'Hanako introduced Prof. Tanaka to Mary'

(49) If the verb is ditransitive, the verb agrees in honorification with the indirect object.

(50) The direct object is inaccessible for such agreement even if the appropriate social rank is fulfilled (# shows that it is an incongruous utterance (Taro respects Mary), since if honorific agreement obtains it is necessarily associated with *Mary*) (Harada 1976).

(51) Boeckx and Niinuma (2004) argue that the latter restriction immediately follows as an intervention/minimality effect under Agree.

(52) [<sub>VP</sub> V [<sub>VP</sub> IO [<sub>V'</sub> DO V]]]  
|\_\_X\_\_| \*Agree

(53) Switching the surface order of the direct object and the indirect object does not affect agreement marking:

(54) \*Hanako-ga Tanaka Sensei-o Mary-ni go-syookai-si-ta  
Hanako-Nom Prof. Tanaka-Acc Mary-Dat introduce-OH-past  
'Hanako introduced Prof. Tanaka to Mary'

(55) Boeckx and Niinuma argue that object agreement takes place prior to scrambling.

(56) Since scrambling can be of a local A-type, the last example suggests that agreement has to take place as soon as the Probe has been merged.

### 3.3 Long-distance agreement (LDA)

(57) Abstractly:

(58) [... V $\phi_i$  ... [<sub>XP</sub> ... DP $\phi_i$  ...]]

- (59) Icelandic exhibits famous instances of this pattern:
- (60) a. Mér virðast [ þeir vera skemmtilegir ]  
 Me.Dat seem3pl they.Nom be interesting  
 'It seems to me that they are interesting'  
 b. Mér virðast [ hafa verið seldir margir hestar ]  
 Me.Dat seem3pl have been sold many horses.Nom  
 'It seems to me that many horses have been sold'
- (61) In the literature, the 'XP' above has been argued to have the values VP, vP or TP, but not CP.
- (62) Boeckx (2009) points out these recurrent themes:
- (63) a. LDA is typically optional  
 b. LDA seems to interact with (non)-finiteness  
 c. The nominal triggering LDA may agree and/or have its Case-feature checked inside the embedded clause  
 d. LDA is subject to intervention effects (typically, the highest nominal in the embedded clause controls LDA).
- (64) Hindi has constructions where the object of an embedded non-finite clause can agree in gender and number with a verb in the main clause (Mahajan 1990) (the summary below is taken from Boeckx 2009).
- (65) Boeckx (2004) and Bhatt (2005) argue that the agreeing DP has not moved into a specifier position where local agreement could take place.
- (66) A typical example:
- (67) Vivek-ne [kitaab parh-nii] chaah-ii  
 Vivek-erg book.f read-inf.f want-pfv.f  
 'Vivek wants to read the book'
- (68) The matrix verb *chaah-ii* does not agree with the matrix subject.
- (69) This conforms to the general rule of agreement in Hindi according to which a subject triggers agreement on a verb if and only if the subject is not overtly Case-marked (see, for instance, (70a)).
- (70) a. Rahul kitaab parh-taa thaa  
 Rahul.M book.f read-hab.msg be.pst.msg  
 'Rahul used to read (a/the) book'  
 b. Rahul-ne kitaab parh-ii thii  
 Rahul.erg book.f read-hab.pfv.f be.pst.msg  
 'Rahul had read the book'

- c.     Rahul-ne kitaab-ko parh-aa     thaa  
         Rahul-erg book-Acc read-pfv.msg be.pst.msg  
         'Rahul had read the book'
- (71) If the subject is overtly Case-marked, the object may trigger agreement on the verb (70b). If both arguments are overtly Case-marked, the verb bears default inflection (70c).
- (72) LDA is only possible with arguments of non-finite complements.
- (73) Firoz-ne soch-aa/\*-ii             ki [Mona ghazal gaa-tii     hai]  
       Firoz-erg think-pfv.3msg/3fsg that Mona ghazal.f sing-hab.f be.prs  
       'Firoz thought that Mona sings ghazals'
- (74) LDA is not possible if the infinitival clause contains an overt subject:
- (75) a.     Firoz-ne [Shabnam-kaa rotii    khaa-nii] chaah-ii  
           Firoz-erg Shabnam-gen bread.f eat-inf    want-pfv.3fsg  
           'Firoz wanted Shabnam to eat bread'  
       b.     Firoz-ne [rotii    khaa-nii] chaah-ii  
           Firoz-erg bread.f eat-inf    want-pfv.3fsg  
           'Firoz wanted to eat bread'
- (76) LDA is optional:
- (77) Firoz-ne [rotii    khaa-naa] chaah-aa  
       Firoz-erg bread.f eat-inf.M    want-pfv.M  
       'Firoz wanted to eat bread'
- (78) No instances of LDA in Hindi where an argument of a matrix predicate triggers agreement on an embedded predicate:
- (79) \*Mona peR-ko        dekh-nii    chah-tii    thii  
       Mona tree.masc.acc. see-inf-f.sg want-hab.f. be-pst.f  
       'Mona wanted to see the cat'
- (80) For many speakers, agreement on the infinitival predicate is 'parasitic' on agreement with the embedding predicate: Agreement with the infinitival verb fails if LDA fails (81b), and agreement with the infinitival verb must obtain if LDA obtains (81c).

- (81) a. Shahrukh-ne tehniī kaat-nii chaah-ii  
 Shahrukh-erg branch.f cut-inf.f want-pfv.f  
 b. \*Shahrukh-ne tehniī kaat-nii chaah-aa  
 Shahrukh-erg branch.f cut-inf.f want-pfv.M  
 c. \*Shahrukh-ne tehniī kaat-naa chaah-ii  
 Shahrukh-erg branch.f cut-inf.M want-pfv.f  
 'Shahruck wanted to cut the branch'
- (82) Many of the above characteristics are also found in existential constructions.
- (83) a. \*There seem that three men are in the room  
 b. There seems to a woman to be three men in the room  
 c. \*?There seem to a woman to be three men in the room  
 d. There seem to be three men in the room.  
 e. \*? There seems to be three men in the room.
- (84) An Agree-analysis allows for agreeing nominals to move. In Hindi, we can see this for scrambling:
- (85) Kitaabi Vivek-ne [t parh-nii] chaah-ii  
 Book.f Vivek-erg read-inf.f want-pfv.f  
 'Vivek wants to read the book'
- (86) The three men that there seem to be *t* in the garden are dressed in black
- (87) Boeckx (2004) took the existence of the following data to suggest that the agreeing nominal can establish agreement without movement:
- (88) Vivek-ne [jaldise kitaab andhereme parh-nii] chaah-ii  
 Vivek-erg quickly book.f in-the-dark read-inf.f want-pfv.f  
 'Vivek wanted to read the book quickly in the dark'
- (89) The presence of adverbs modifying the lower clause and placed on either side of the agreeing nominal suggests that the latter need not have to move out of the embedded clause to establish overt agreement.
- (90) Boeckx (2004) suggests a Multiple Agree analysis:
- (91) [ v [V [VP V Obj]]]  
 |———↑———↑
- (92) LDA is made possible by restructuring: the complement clause does not contain a proper licenser for the Case of the object (Wurmbrand 2001).
- (93) Bhatt (2005) offers a slightly different Agree-based analysis, and Chandra (2007) argues against both Boeckx and Bhatt.



- (94) Chandra observes that LDA has interpretive consequences that are not predicted under either Agree story.
- (95) Agreeing embedded objects, unlike non-agreeing ones, can scope over matrix predicates:
- (96) a. Naimne har kitaab parhnii chaah-ii.  
 Naim-erg. every book-acc.sg.fem. read-inf.sg.fem. want.sg.fem.perf.  
 ‘Naim wanted to read every book’  
 want > every book; every book > want
- b. Naimne har kitaab parhnaa chaah-aa.  
 Naim-erg. every book-acc.sg.fem. read-inf.def. want.def.perf.  
 ‘Naim wanted to read every book’  
 want > every book; \*every book > want
- (97) Chandra argues that the scope reversal possibility can be captured if the object raises to the matrix clause and establishes agreement via a Spec-head relation.
- (98) ‘Chandra follows Hornstein in taking control/restructuring clauses to involve movement of the controller. She also follows Bhatt (and Mahajan) in assuming that the object is case marked in the embedded clause, and raises solely for agreement purposes. In this she departs from Chomsky’s activity condition even more than Bhatt did, as she does not assume that case-marking prevents further (A)movement’ (Boeckx 2009: 10).
- (99) [OBJ [Subject [<sub>VP-2</sub> V [ V [<Subj> [<sub>VP-1</sub> v[ V <OBJ>]]]]]]] (Chandra, 2007)
- (100) Regarding the adverb data, Chandra argues that the adverbs have been scrambled into the matrix clause alongside movement of the object. Alternatively, a low copy of the agreeing nominal is pronounced.
- (101) ‘Although Chandra is right in stressing the relevance of the scope facts, she is wrong in taking them to argue against an Agree analysis. High scope of the agreeing object may be achieved independently of agreement, via a late (covert) QR process (as Bhatt points out in his 2005 paper)’ (Boeckx 2009: 11).
- (102) LDA data from German and Itelmen show that, unlike in Hindi, the agreeing element has to take wide scope over the matrix material:
- (103) weil nur deutsche Autos zu reparieren versucht wurden (German)  
 since only German cars-nom to repair tried were  
 ‘since they only tried to repair German cars’  
 \*‘since they tried to only repair German cars’

only > try; \*try > only

- (104) Bobaljik and Wurmbrand (2005) argue that the agreeing element in German and Itelmen obligatorily moves overtly into the matrix clause.
- (105) *Case-Scope correlation*  
A DP may not be interpreted (for binding and scope) in a position lower than in the domain in which it undergoes Case/agreement-checking
- (106) The complement clause in German, Itelmen, and Japanese lacks a case-checking functional head, which forces movement and high scope of the agreeing element.
- (107) This would support Bhatt's analysis over Boeckx's, as Boeckx (2009) points out.
- (108) 'Summing up, the Hindi data remain inconclusive when it comes to the superiority of Agree. All the known facts are compatible with an Agree analysis, but it is hard to exclude a local agreement/Spec-head alternative of the sort explored by Chandra' (Boeckx 2009: 12).
- (109) Icelandic presents another case of LDA.
- (110) a. Henni voru gefnar bækurnar.  
she.DAT were.PL given.PL books.NOM.PL  
'She was given the books.'
- b. Við kusum \*hún/hana.  
we.NOM elected she.NOM/her.ACC  
'We elected her.'
- c. Mér virðast þeir vera skemmtilegir.  
me.DAT seem.3PL they.NOM be interesting  
'It seems to me that they are interesting.'
- (111) Quirky subjects don't trigger morphological agreement on the finite verb.
- (112) Stelpunum var hjálpað  
The girls.Dat.pl.fem was.3sg helped.sg  
'The girls were helped'
- (113) \*Henni leiddumst við  
Her.Dat bored.1pl us.Nom  
'They were bored with us'

- (114) Boeckx (2000) argues that Quirky subjects trigger covert person agreement on T, which only leaves number agreement available for nominative objects. Put differently, nominative objects are licensed by finite T.
- (115) This approach accounts for intervention effects:
- (116) Mér fannst/\*fundust [henni leiðast þeir].  
 me.DAT seemed.3SG/3PL her.DAT bore they.NOM  
 'I thought she was bored with them.'
- (117) However, this approach does not have anything to say about how nominative Case is licensed.
- (118) Furthermore, it does not address why agreement between the finite verb and the nominative object is obligatory in mono-clausal contexts, but optional across clausal boundaries:
- (119) a. Henni leiddust strákar­nir.  
 her.DAT bored.3PL the.boys.NOM  
 'She found the boys boring.'  
 b. ??\*Henni leiddist strákar­nir.  
 her.DAT bored.3SG the.boys.NOM  
 'She found the boys boring.'  
 c. Mér virðist/virðast þeir vera skemmtilegir.  
 me.DAT seem.3SG/3PL they.NOM be interesting  
 'It seems to me that they are interesting.'
- (120) A non-nominative (ECM) object can be 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> person if agreement doesn't obtain with the finite verb, unless in cases where the embedded clause also contains a dative subject:
- (121) Þeim hefur/\*höfum/\*hafa alltaf fundist [við vinna vel]  
 Them.Dat have3sg/1pl/3pl always found we.Nom work well  
 'They have always thought that we worked well'
- (122) \*Jóni virtist [Bjarna hafa líkað ég/við/þið]  
 John.Dat seemed Bjarni.Dat have liked I.Nom/we.Nom/you.Nom  
 'It seems to John that Bjarni likes me/us/you'
- (123) 'The very last example clearly indicates that whatever PCC effects obtain in Icelandic, they must be dissociated from Agreement with finite T' (Boeckx 2009: 24).
- (124) Boeckx (2008) argues that nominative objects are licensed by *v* (see Alexiadou 2002 for a similar proposal).

- (125) He argued that the number restriction on agreement follow from restrictions on object agreement in general.
- (126) Við virðumst hafa verið kosnar  
 We seemed.1pl have been elected.Nom.pl  
 'We seemed to have been elected'
- (127) 'I would like to propose that a verbal head  $v^0$  is endowed with the option of nominative Case licensing only if it assigns a theta-role realized as Quirky Case to an NP in its specifier' (Boeckx 2009: 25).
- (128) By hypothesis,  $v^0$ , especially  $v^0$ [*non-agentive*], lacks person phi-features.
- (129) Koopman (2006) and Bobaljik (2008) discuss data where intervention effects do not arise, namely in sentences with simple experiencer verbs:
- (130) a. Það líkuðu mörgum þessir tómatar.  
 Expl liked.3pl many.dat these.nom tomatoes.nom  
 'Many liked these tomatoes.'  
 b. Það leiddust sumum þessar ræður.  
 Expl found.boring.3pl some.dat these.nom speeches.nom  
 'Some people found these speeches boring.'
- (131) The same holds for passives (Zaenen, Maling and Thráinsson 1985: 113):
- (132) Það voru konungi gefnar ambáttir í vetur.  
 Expl were.3pl king.dat given.nom.pl slaves.nom in winter  
 'There was a king given maidservants in winter'
- (133) And for auxiliary constructions:
- (134) Það hafa sumu leist þessar ræður.  
 Expl have.3pl some.dat bore these speeches.nom  
 'Some people have found these speeches boring.'
- (135) Koopman (2006: 178) provides the following generalizations:
- (136) a. monoclausal dative nominative structures do not show intervention effects.  
 b. auxiliary constructions/passive constructions do not show intervention effects  
 c. raising constructions show intervention effects; these are subject to interspeaker variability
- (137) Boeckx' story can account for the nominative Case on the object.

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