On The Implications of the Anaphor Agreement Effect
Matthew A. Tucker – LASC 2010

Introduction: Many researchers have noted the cross-linguistic rarity of bound anaphors in positions which control agreement ([3], [5], [6], [7]), a phenomenon called the ANAPHOR AGREEMENT EFFECT by [6] (AAE, henceforth). This talk revisits this phenomenon in light of recent proposals which argue that anaphoric binding (“binding,” henceforth) is between verbal inflectional heads and anaphors ([5], [3]) or simply just syntactic agreement ([2]). We argue that the AAE is indicative of the fundamental mechanics of agreement-binding interactions because of its attestation in a wide variety of unrelated languages. Furthermore, we propose an understanding of the AAE in the framework of [2] which takes anaphors to be featurally context-sensitive, using the system proposed in [4]. A welcome result is that the proposal unifies the syntactic explanation of the various ways in which languages avoid AAE-violating configurations.

The Data: The prototypical case of the AAE is the Italian (1); reflexives are ungrammatical in the post-verbal nominative position of psych verbs when agreement is present (1a). However, when agreement is absent (1b) or the nominative position is not filled by an anaphor (1c), the result is grammatical. One can be sure that these facts are about agreement and not parochial facts about Italian psych predicates by observing that languages without syntactic agreement allow nominative anaphors and that languages with object agreement bar anaphors from positions which control such agreement ([7]; not shown here).

There are, however, two more instances in which the activity of the AAE can be felt, and these come from strategies for verb-anaphor agreement which avoid the need for direct control of verbal agreement by anaphors. Firstly, languages such as Swahili allow anaphors to control object agreement, but only if that agreement is of a special anaphoric form. Thus in Swahili the normal object marker -m- seen in (2a) is replaced by the special anaphoric marker -ji- which does not inflect for \( \varphi \)-features (2b). Secondly, languages such as Modern Greek and Selayarese embed their anaphors as possessors of complex DPs which themselves control agreement, thus obviating the need for the anaphor to control agreement directly. This can be seen in the Modern Greek (3a–3b), where the anaphor \([dp DET eafion POSS]\) triggers 3\(^{rd}\) singular agreement regardless of the \( \varphi \)-features of its antecedent.

This talk argues that the typological picture which emerges is best understood as one in which direct agreement relations between anaphors and verbs are always devoid of \( \varphi \)-features. If a language makes available additional means for expressing anaphors (as Modern Greek does), then verbal agreement expresses \( \varphi \)-features, but never those of the anaphor. Furthermore, no matter what the \( \varphi \)-values of the verbal agreement are, agreement between the antecedent and anaphor always proceeds unhindered by the AAE.

We thus seek an explanation which allows for two agreement relations, (1) regular verbal agreement and (2) antecedent-anaphor agreement, which can coexist in a single derivation.

Proposal: We propose that the AAE can be understood if (1) AGREE applies whenever features match, regardless of directionality ([5]) and (2) anaphors have features which do not have values but which need not acquire them for syntactic convergence (the “interpretable unvalued” features of [4]). In the simple anaphoric agreement case (2b), the verb agrees with the anaphor, but this relationship does not value the anaphor’s features, only check those of the verb. When the antecedent subject is merged, a second operation of agree proceeds “backwards” and values the anaphor’s \(i\varphi[\ ]\), resulting in the derivation in (4). In the case of the complex possessors from Modern Greek, verbal agreement can find a valued goal, the 3\(^{rd}\) singular complex DP \([dp DET eafion POSS]\) which needs Case. This AGREE relation proceeds as “normal” ([1]). When the antecedent is merged, the antecedent and anaphor are free to AGREE, as in Swahili (5). The result in both cases is a verb with no \( \varphi \) values, but with antecedent-anaphor matching. We thus have two separate AGREE relations, one between verb and anaphor which checks but does not value features, and another between antecedent and anaphor which values but does not check features.

In this framework where binding is two instances of AGREE, the AAE and its avoidance strategies are differential morphological realization of \( v_\lambda^0 \), each with the same underlying syntactic representation (4). The resulting system also makes understandable the historical arguments that the constraints on A-movement are the same as those on coreference, and that Principle A can apply “anywhere” Finally, it becomes possible to simplify greatly the domain of Principle A’s application to the domain of AGREE, namely, the phase.
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(1) a. *a loro interessano solo se stessi
   to them(DAT) interest.3.PL only themselves(NOM)
   “They are interested only in themselves.” ([6]; Italian)
b. (?)a loro interessano solo se stessi
   to them(DAT) interest.3.SG only themselves(NOM)
   “They are interested only in themselves.” ([6]; Italian)
c. a me interessano solo loro
   to me(DAT) interest.3.PL only they(NOM)
   “I am interested only in them.” ([7]; Italian)

(2) a. ahmed a-na-m-penda halima
   Ahmed 3.sg.subj-PRES-3.SG.OBJ-love Halima
   “Ahmed loves Halima” ([7]; Swahili)
b. ahmed a-na-ji-penda mwenyewe
   Ahmed 3.sg.subj-PRES-REFL-love himself
   “Ahmed loves himself” ([7]; Swahili)

(3) a. thelo [DP ton eafton mu] na petixi
   want(1.SG) the(ACC) SELF my succeed(3.SG)
   “I want myself to succeed.” ([7]; Modern Greek)
b. o giannis pisteuei oti [DP o eautos tou] einai philos mou
   the Giannis thinks that the(NOM) SELF(NOM) of.3.MASC.SG is friend of.mine
   “Giannis thinks that himself is my friend” ([7]; Modern Greek)

(4) vP
   DP a
   iφ[val]
   v′
   v0
   uφ[ ]
   VP
   R0
   iφ[ ]
   uCase[ ]
   iφ[ ]

(5) vP
   DP a
   iφ[ ]
   v′
   v0
   uφ[ ]
   VP
   R0
   iφ[ ]
   uCase[ ]
   iφ[ ]
   D0
   iφ[ ]
   uCase[ ]
   nP iφ[ ]
   ... iφ[ ]...