

What the PCC tells us about “abstract” agreement, head movement, and locality

The starting point for this talk is an argument that there can be no agreement in phi-features (person, number, gender/noun-class) that systematically lacks a morpho-phonological footprint. In other words, there is no such thing as “abstract” phi-agreement, that is null across the entire paradigm.

The argument for this rests on the cross-linguistic and intra-linguistic distribution of Person Case Constraint (PCC) effects, and in particular, the fact that they disappear in the absence of overtly expressed phi-agreement. I start with arguments by Albizu (1997) and Rezac (2008) that the PCC must operate in syntax proper (rather than in morphology), and that it is a side-effect of a certain kind of agreement configuration. Since the PCC is syntactic, it cannot be made sensitive to the overtness of agreement morphology; but it *can* be made sensitive to whether or not agreement is syntactically there, in the first place. Since there is no PCC where there is no overt agreement morphology, there must not be syntactic agreement in those cases, either—furnishing the argument against the existence of “abstract” agreement.

There is, however, one important caveat: PCC effects arise not only with overt phi-agreement, but also with clitic doubling. This cannot be because clitic doubling *is* agreement; it behaves like movement (and unlike agreement) in a variety of respects, including binding, and interactions with dative intervention. But the aforementioned generalization concerning the distribution of PCC effects can be salvaged if clitic doubling is contingent on a previously established agreement relation, and it is this prior agreement relation that is responsible for PCC effects showing up.

It is tempting to derive this from the claim that *all* movement is contingent on a previously established agreement relation (see, e.g., Chomsky 2000). But there is, by now, ample evidence that this claim is false in the general case. So there must be something else about clitic doubling that, unlike movement in general, requires the establishment of a prior agreement relation. Building on ideas by Hornstein (2009) and Roberts (2010), I propose that head movement of X^0 to Y^0 requires a prior syntactic relationship between Y^0 and XP. In cases of maximally local head movement (à la Travis 1984), this requirement is trivially satisfied by (c-)selection. But clitic doubling, *qua* non-local head movement, requires some other relationship between its landing spot (e.g. v^0) and its phrase of origin (the DP in [Compl,V]), which crucially do not stand in a direct (c-)selection relation. I argue that it is agreement that, in this case, fills this requirement.

I then show that the same restriction on head movement (that it requires a prior head-phrase relation) can derive both the *anti-locality* restriction on phrasal movement (Abels 2003) and the (violable) tendency of the *Head Movement Constraint* to hold.

Time permitting, I will discuss some acquisition-related properties of the proposal, and show how the generalization barring abstract agreement arises from a conservative acquisition strategy with respect to the distribution of phi-features.

— Omer Preminger

