On agreement restrictions

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Over the years, many different phonological, morphological and syntactic phenomena have been grouped under the label 'agreement restrictions'. Latin grammarians for instance, such as Marcus Terentius Varro in his *De lingua latina* (ca. 47-49 b.C.) listed environments where the verb could only show a 3rd person agreement ending. These cases, and all cases of defective verbal agreement, can certainly be subsumed under the wide definition of 'agreement restrictions'. However, in this volume our main focus lies on cases in which agreement between the verb and one of its arguments obtains only when the argument shows certain characteristics, such as when it is 3rd person, or when no other element of a specific kind is present. Moreover, we refer to all combinations of agreement markers which are banned from appearing together. The agreement restriction that we address in this volume concerns the interaction between syntactic elements and/or the features that characterise these elements. It needs to be said, in addition, that the common view has been so far that agreement (or AGREE) is part of narrow syntax, see, however, Chandra (2007) and Hornstein (to appear) for another view. We do not enter into this discussion, and consider Agree as a narrow-syntactic phenomenon.

In general, observations on agreement and agreement restrictions have played an important role in the development and design of generative syntactic theories. Specifically, they have influenced the way in which feature checking, locality, long distance agreement, case, and subjects are envisioned, and shaped the theories of syntax-morphology and syntax-semantics interfaces. That is why during these last years, agreement restrictions phenomena have received increasing attention in research. However, most of the relevant work that has been produced on agreement relations during the last decade is scattered in journals, conference proceedings, working papers and dissertation chapters, which are often quite difficult to obtain. The present collection of papers intends to fill the gap by offering a compendium of cutting edge research on the topic. In particular, it aims at contributing to the ongoing debate on agreement restrictions within a generative framework by presenting ten articles by the

major experts of the field collected in one volume. The articles give an extensive overview of the results that have been achieved so far but also underline the short-comings in the theory, and can therefore help indicate the path for future research.

It needs to be said that there is no consensus on the 'name' for agreement restriction phenomena. Agreement restrictions, or constraints, are in fact labeled in a number of different ways (*me/lui constraint, the I-II Constraint, the Person-Case Constraint, the Person Restriction on Nominative Objects, and lately the Person-Role Constraint). They have also received a number of different explanations: in terms of structural positions, markedness, alignment requirements, interaction of more general constraints, and so on.

The papers that appear in this volume can be grouped into three main sets: The Person-case constraint (PCC) set, which includes those papers which address the restriction on the co-occurrence of agreement markers and case markers, the Person/number-restriction set which addresses the restriction on agreement features of lexical item agreeing with a case-assigning head, and the Anti agreement or Lack of agreement set that treats the same restrictions with the surface result of no agreement or anti- agreement. These three groups are obviously not unrelated. In fact, for some authors (such as e.g. Boeckx 2000 and Anagnostopoulou 2003) restrictions like that of person on nominative objects in Icelandic quirky dative constructions descend from the same constraint on structural configurations, as does the lack of agreement in Basque, (Arregi & Nevins, this volume) and the anti-agreement in Berber (Ouali, this volume).

Since there is no consensus on whether these apparently different kinds of restrictions are indeed one and the same, we treat them separately in this introduction. We hence provide a short overview of the three constraints and give short summaries of the contributions, to provide the reader with a picture as clear as possible on what this volume is about.

In the first group belongs the article by Bonet, who gave the name to the Person-Case-Constraint, as well as the novel insightful paper by Anagnostopoulou on the PCC in Germanic. A modified version of this constraint is also found in Spanish and addressed by both Rivero and López.

The second set includes the papers by Sigurðsson and Holmberg, who discuss the person restriction on nominative objects in Icelandic, and Richards, who addresses the problem of quirky expletives in Germanic languages. Boeckx also addresses the PCC

but detaches methodologically from the rest of the group, since he aims at reducing this phenomenon to conditions on local domains rather than situations of intervention and multiple agreement.

The third set of papers groups those articles that address situations in which the clash of syntactic and morphological rules results in lack of agreement (Arregi and Nevins), arbitrary gaps (Wiltschko) or anti-agreement (Ouali).

In what follows, we provide a short introduction of the basic facts concerning the core phenomena addressed in this volume: the person-case constraint, the person/number restriction and the anti-agreement effects. We believe that the discussion of these effects can serve as a starting point for those who wish to follow the argumentation in the book but have no previous background on the topic.

1. The Person Case Constraint

Since Meyer Lübke (1899), who documented the fact for Romance, it has been well known that languages show restrictions on specific combinations of morphological features. Such constraints have in the meantime been described for many languages, most extensively for the Germanic and Romance languages. Below, we see two Catalan examples from Bonet's (1991) dissertation. The examples illustrate that the combination of weak elements of a specific kind (a direct and an indirect object) is subject to restrictions on the person of the direct object.

(1)   *Me   li   ha recomanat   la   senyora   B.
         acc.1sg   dat.3sg   has recommended   the   Mrs.   B.
         'Mrs. Bofill has recommended me to him/her.'

(1') In a combination of a weak direct object and an indirect object [clitic, agreement marker, weak pronoun], the direct object has to be 3rd person (Bonet 1991: 182)

(2)   #Te   me   recomendaron.
         acc.2nd dat.1st   recommended
         'They recommended you to me.'

(2') In a combination of a weak direct object and an indirect object [clitic, agreement marker, weak pronoun], if there is a third person it has to be the direct object. (Bonet 1991: 182)

The PCC thus results in the impossibility of certain clitic combinations, such as 1st person clitic combinations which are possible in the singular but not in the plural. Some authors maintain the restrictions on the combination of clitics or weak elements or agreement markers are determined by structural constraints on agreement or on feature combinations. According to others, the PCC is seen in some cases as the result of multiple agreement with the case-assigning head, which constitutes a bridge between the sets (for an analysis on the person restriction in impersonal *si* constructions in Italian in these terms, see D' Alessandro 2007).

Up to present, it has been uncontroversial that in many languages clitics and agreement markers are subject to the PCC. However, with respect to Germanic weak pronouns, different opinions have been discussed in the literature. Whereas Bonet (1991) sees the PCC as operative in English and Swiss German, Haspelmath (2004) and Cardinaletti (1999) claim that the PCC is not operative in Dutch and Standard German. Anagnostopoulou in her present article investigates constraints on weak-pronoun combinations in Germanic, with a special focus on German. The primary goal of her article is to determine that Germanic weak pronouns are actually subject to the Person Case Constraint. She provides a set of data that clearly shows that clusters of weak pronouns in German and in Dutch are subject to the PCC, more precisely to the weak version of the PCC as proposed by Bonet (1991). In German, the PCC is additionally connected to another constraint on weak pronouns, which was observed by Wackernagel (1892) and is known as Wackernagel's law. The data presented in Anagnostopoulou's paper show that the PCC in Modern German only applies when the weak pronouns appear in the Wackernagel position (the second position in a clause) preceding the subject. After discussing the data, Anagnostopoulou shows how the analysis of the PCC outlined in Anagostopoulou (2005) can be extended to German.

Bonet focuses in her contribution on the repair strategies that can be used in Catalan in order to avoid the PCC. The observed strategies involve replacing the third person dative clitic, *li* (singular) and *(e)lzi* (plural) with the clitic *hi*, a clitic which is described in "traditional" Catalan grammars as a locative clitic. Bonet convincingly

argues that the clitic *hi /i/* is the morph corresponding to dative case, i.e. the indirect object. Bonet's conclusion is that the indirect object is sensitive to animacy (*contra* Ormazábal and Romero 2007). The Catalan repair strategy thus challenges the common view that the PCC can be formulated considering only the features of the direct object.

López's paper addresses the person restriction phenomenon in Spanish in contrast to Icelandic. The central claim is that the person restriction emerges when the external argument, T, and the internal argument are bound together in what he calls a complex dependency. A complex dependency arises when two elements, which are in a Match relation of unvalued features, enter Agree with a third element, which values their unvalued features together. Starting from the assumption that external arguments need to be licensed by finiteness, Lopez argues that a person restriction arises in Spanish and Icelandic whenever the two conditions: external argument licensed by finiteness and complex dependency relation between T, external argument and internal argument, are met. Spanish oblique subjects are then shown not to undergo a person restriction precisely because one of these two conditions, namely licensing of the external argument by finiteness, fails to apply.

Rivero, in her contribution, develops a morphological account of person restrictions that arise in Spanish unaccusative constructions with "quirky" subjects and objects. She discusses different clitic combinations and mainly offers three new ideas. Her first proposal concerns the fact that *se* does not trigger any person restriction. For this empirical fact she proposes that *se* is unspecified for person, following Adger and Harbour (2005) and Anagnostopoulou (2003, this volume). Her second proposal concerns 1p/1p clitic combinations that are grammatical in the singular but not in the plural. The plural combinations are deviant because these clitics have too rich a content, which poses problems when they appear in adjacent positions in the clitic cluster because of markedness. Markedness leads in fact to ungrammaticality. The third proposal pertains experiencers / involuntary causer clitics. She proposes that these clitics must be marked in the syntax with a mental state feature.

2. The person restriction on nominative objects

Unlike many languages where nominative arguments are unrestricted agreement controllers, Icelandic exhibits a *Person Restriction* on nominative objects first discussed

by Sigurðsson (1990-91, 1992, 1996). The Person Restriction bans the agreement of a verb with a first or second person nominative object, as shown in examples (3) and (4), whereas agreement with third person objects is not affected, as shown in (5).

(3) a. *Ykkur   líkaði   ég.   (verb: 1/3sg   object:1sg)
        you.pl.dat liked.1/3sgI.nom

     b. *Þér   líkuðum   við.   (verb: 1pl   object:1pl)
        you.sg.dat liked.1pl   we.nom

(4) a. *Okkur   líkaðir   þú.   (verb:2sg   object:2sg)
        us.dat   liked.2sg you.sg.nom

     b. *Mér   líkuðuð   þið.   (verb:2pl   object:2pl)
        me.dat   liked.2pl you.pl.nom

(5) a. Okkur líkaði   hann.   (verb:3sg   object:3sg)
        us.dat liked.3sg he.nom

     b. Mér   líkuðu   þau.   (verb:3pl   object:3pl)
        me.dat liked.3pl they.nom

As Sigurðsson (1996) points out, not all speakers of Icelandic disallow first and second person pronouns from surfacing as nominative objects. Instead, for these speakers, the morpho-phonological realisation of agreement is not possible in case the nominative object is first or second person. Based on these observations, Sigurðsson and Holmberg (this volume) formulate the *Person Restriction* as follows:

(6)   In DAT-NOM constructions, *only 3rd person* NOM may control
        agreement.

The *Person Restriction* is also found in passives of ditransitives, illustrated in (7).

(7) a. *Þú   sýndir   þeim   mig.*
        You.sg.nom   showed   them.dat   me.acc

     b. * *Þeim   var   sýndur   ég.*
           them.dat   was.1/3sg shown.masc.sg   I.nom

   c.   * *Þeim*   *var*   *sýnt*   *ég.*

         them.dat was.1/3sg shown.neut.sg   I.nom

   d.   *Ég*   *var*   *sýndur*   *þeim.*

         I.nom   was.1/3sg shown.masc.sg   them.dat

Apart from the above mono-clausal constructions, the *Person Restriction* regulates the agreement of the verb with a nominative element of an infinitival clause (in the so-called *dativus/nominativus cum infinitivo* (D/NcI) constructions), see e.g. Sigurðsson (1989, 1996), and Hrafnbjargarson (2001, 2004). The example in (8) illustrates a DcI-construction. The grammaticality judgments of these differ from those of the mono-clausal constructions as all speakers accept the occurence of first and second person nominative in the former. The di-clausal constructions share the ban on visible agreement with the mono-clausal constructions; if the verb shows agreement, it only shows agreement in number with third person plural.

(8)   a. *Þér*   *þótti*   *ég / við*   *koma of seint.*

         you.dat thought.3sg I.nom we.nom come too late

     b. *Okkur* *þótti*   *þú / *   *þið*   *koma of seint.*

         us.dat thought.3sg   you.sg.nom you.pl.nom come too late

     c. *Mér*   *þótti / * *þóttu*   *þau*   *koma of seint.*

         me.dat thought.3sg thought.3pl they.nom come too late

The issue on whether person agreement is local is still under much debate. According to Hrafnbjargarson (2004), person agreement is local, i.e. it requires a spec-head relation (see also Koopman 2006) as verbs only show person agreement with nominative elements, which are positioned in the canonical subject position. Sigurðsson and Holmberg (this volume), on the other hand, argue for the opposite.

In the light of the agreement pattern shown in the examples in (8), i.e. that verbs may show agreement in number with third person plural but not with first and second person, Hrafnbjargarson (2001, 2004) interprets the *Person Restriction* in Icelandic in terms of interacting constraints on agreement dependencies. This is based on the assumption that verbs cannot show partial agreement in Icelandic. The controlled verb shows agreement in number if and only if it has the same value for the feature [per-

son] as its controller, which in the relevant case happens to be a third person nomina-tive object or a third person nominative subject of an infinitival clause.

Under the above view, the *Person Restriction* is not directly related to the *Person Case Constraint*, the scope of which the *Person Restriction* was later brought under (see e.g. Boeckx 2000, Anagnostopoulou 2003), neither does it arise from intervention effects or constraints on multiple agreement with the nominative-assigning head (see D'Alessandro 2007): While the *Person Case Constraint* requires that the direct object is third person, the *Person Restriction* states that verbs may only show agreement with third person. In other words, the *Person Case Constraint* restricts the occurence and structural position of interpretable features (person on object), whereas the *Person Restriction* restricts the checking of uninterpretable features (person/number on verb).

One of the papers in the present volume retains the idea that the *Person Restriction* and the *Person Case Constraint* are unrelated. In their contribution, Sigurðsson and Holmberg discuss intervention facts and show that we can distinguish between three varieties of Icelandic as regards the strength of the *Person Restriction* and to which extent the verb shows number agreement with a third person nominative object. Their conclusion is that the absence of number agreement is in fact caused by the interven-tion of a dative argument, and that it, furthermore, is caused by ordinary dative inter-vention rather than being related to some special property of the Icelandic dative. In the most restrictive variety, number agreement is possible because the dative moves out of the intervening position but whenever the dative is prevented from moving, number agreement is excluded.

Richards continues along the lines of Boeckx (2000) and Anagnostopoulou (2003) in pursuing the unification of the Icelandic *Person Restriction* and the *Person Case Constraint*. In essence, Richards agues that the partial agreement effects with nomina-tive objects in Icelandic are the same phenomeneon as definiteness effects in English existential constructions and Russian *Genitive of Negation*; they all reduce to Case Filter violations under incomplete matching. Richards gives a thorough explanation of the long-observed, but previously poorly understood, similarities in behaviour be-tween quirky subjects and expletives introducing the term *minimal unit of activeness* – a cased default φ-set, dubbed 'quirky expletive', which serves to reactivate an inher-ently case-marked, syntactically-inert DP for Agree with a higher probe.

In a slightly different direction, Boeckx aims at making the *Person Restriction* (which he also unifies with the *Person Case Constraint*) less construction specific,

connecting it to a wider range of conditions that apply within local domains (projections, phases, or chains) such as the Anti-locality ban on vacuous movement (cf. Chomsky 1973 where this was first discussed), Grohmann's (2003) condition on Domain Exclusivity, and Kayne's (1984) Binary Branching Requirement, and so on. He argues that the *Person Case Constraint* is not about restricted situations of interference involving quirky datives, or situations where both goals find themselves in the c-command path of the probe. Rather, Boeckx argues, the *Person Case Constraint* should be seen as a reflex of a more general ban on symmetric structures, imposed at the interfaces; i.e. a condition that regulates the output of multiple agree situations.

3.   Anti-agreement and lack of agreement

In languages that present anti-agreement, the canonical subject-verb marker is replaced by another marker or is dropped in contexts of subject wh-extraction. Anti-agreement hence belongs to the set of restrictions targeting the agreement between the verb and one of its arguments. Berber is one of the languages most often cited as prototipically showing anti-agreement effects. In Berber, the subject agreement inflectional morphology that is found in a declarative matrix clause is suppressed when the subject is A-bar moved (Ouhalla 1993).

Anti-agreement constitutes a problem for all those approaches which consider morphology and syntax as unrelated units. In this volume, Ouali offers a novel analysis of anti-agreement effects in Tamazight Berber and in Berber. According to this author, anti-agreement effects are the by-product of the application of one of the logical possibilities that characterise Chomsky's (2004) feature inheritance. Specifically, Ouali argues that there are three logically possible options for feature inheritance: the first one, that he calls DONATE, which states that C must transfer all its φ-features to T; the second, KEEP, states that C does not transfer the φ-features to T and the third, named SHARE, states that C transfers the φ-features to T but also keeps a copy.

These possibilities are organised 'hierarchically', meaning that they take place one after the other. If DONATE fails, then KEEP is applied as a repair strategy. If KEEP fails, then SHARE takes place. Ouali shows that each of these three options is in fact attested in Berber. The case of DONATE is that of simple declarative sentences in Berber, when C does not bear a wh- feature. When C does bear a wh- feature, DONATE causes a crash of the derivation, and therefore KEEP is at work to repair the

derivation. This results in Anti-Agreement effects. Finally, in long distance extraction clauses, SHARE applies as last resort. The different nature of C in these different contexts is nothing else that the instantiation of these logical possibilities at work in Tamazight Berber and in Berber in general.

Ouali's paper offers a sensible contribution to the ongoingdebate on feature inheritance (see e.g. Chomsky (2007, to appear), Richards (2007)).

As stated above, anti-agreement effects constitute straightforward evidence for the interaction of the morphological and syntactic component of language. However, anti-agreement is not the only phenomenon that involves the interaction of these two components. Arregi & Nevins (this volume) examine agreement in the Biskaian variety of Zamudio, spoken in the Basque Country, which exhibits the clitic combination and restriction on agreement endings in this variety. The main claim of their paper is that these clitic combinations and agreement restrictions cannot be analysed as purely syntactic or purely morphological, but they rather need to be addressed by considering both hierarchical structure and linear order, as well as morpho-phonological sensitivity and deletion of featural combinations.

Arregi & Nevins argue that the morphemes targeting the auxiliary, usually considered to be agreement morphemes, are in fact pronominal clitics, which double arguments, and this explains their invariability with respect to tense. Agreement restrictions in Basque may thus be reanalysed in terms of the PCC. This is however not intended as a constraint on morpho-syntactic feature combination, but as a result of the fact that a head can only host one auxiliary, and therefore a combination of two clitics (like ergative and dative) targeting the same head is never possible. Syntactic and post-syntactic rules, which apply prior to Vocabulaty Insertion, determine the order of the clitics with respect to T. Finally, Arregi & Nevins examine a case of true Agree involving the auxiliary and the absolutive argument. This Agree operation may be subject to defective intervention in the context of dative arguments, leading to lack of agreement.

Gaps in the transitive agreement paradigm are instead the topic of Wiltschko's paper (this volume). In Halkomelem and other dialects of Salish, these gaps were traditionally analysed as reminiscent of inverse systems, and hence as determined by a person hierarchy. Wiltshko shows however that these gaps are simply the result of morphemes competing for the same position, and that therefore a person hierarchy is not a primitive part of the grammar of Halkomelem. She hence shows that apparent

person-hierarchy effects can be derived without reference to a person hierarchy, but can be a by-product of syntax. This idea provides a new and different approach and constitutes an interesting alternative to the idea of a functionally-based hierarchy directly encoded in the grammar.

4. Closing words

In this short overview we have only touched upon the many facets and problems concerning agreement restrictions. We hope that it has revealed helpful for the readers who were not familiar with the phenomena. We also hope that it constitutes an advantage for a volume that presents a state-of-the-art picture of the ongoing discussion, rendering this discussion clearer for those who are familiar with it but at the same time introducing it to those who had never taken part in it before.

We have selected the contributions of this volume for their uniformity as regards the theoretical background used, namely Chomsky's Minimalist Program, and because of the combination of empirical data and theoretical insights which have developed during the last few years. All of the contributors have been active in the debate. We find it challenging and inspiring to gather their different views in one book.

A volume on agreement restrictions, as the present one, will obviously have a preponderance of Romance and Germanic data, since these language families have played the most prominent role in the discussion of agreement restrictions. Nonetheless, the volume provides both novel theoretical discussions and excellent empirical overviews of agreement restriction phenomena that take place also in other languages, such as Basque, Berber, and Salish. Enjoy!

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