

Unifying species of C-agreement

Thomas McFadden (ZAS, Berlin) & Sandhya Sundaesan (U. of Göttingen)
Leiden Comparative Syntax series, March 4, 2021

In this talk, we will undertake one of the first detailed comparisons of clause-peripheral complementizer agreement (“C-agreement”) and argue that it is *splintered* across distinct heads which stand in agreement with dedicated extra-clausal arguments. In this, the heterogeneity of C-agreement parallels that of clause-internal agreement, which is also typically understood to involve distinct functional heads (e.g. T or ν) in agreement with (often distinct) nominal arguments (e.g. a subject or object). “C-agreement” is thus a misnomer, masking a slew of disparate agreement phenomena that are rarely discussed in unison or compared (but see Baker, To Appear).

We will compare and contrast three distinct types of agreement on C: (i) downward complementizer agreement (DCA) with an embedded subject, as seen in many West Germanic languages (van Koppen, 2017); (ii) upward complementizer agreement (UCA) with a matrix subject as in many Bantu languages (Diercks, 2013; Carstens, 2016, a.o.); and (iii) allocutive agreement (AA) with an extra-argumental Addressee, as seen e.g./ in Basque and Tamil (Oyharçabal, 1993; Miyagawa, 2017; McFadden, 2020). We will show that these patterns differ along distinct parameters which do not straightforwardly facilitate a unified analysis. Instead, we will propose that the heterogeneity of C-agreement is merely epiphenomenal of the CP itself being articulated across a *sequence* of C-heads in a rigid, monotonic order (cf. the functional sequence in Cinque, 1999, a.o.) — again paralleling the standard notion of a functional sequence within the TP (minimally, T > ν > V). Differences in C-agreement, we will argue, fall out solely from differences, parametrized across individual structures and languages, wrt.: (i) the presence vs. absence of a probe; (ii) the height of a probe relative to the embedded CP phase; and (iii) the structure of the CP which, in turn, influences the availability of certain goals. We will conclude by showing that our model makes the right empirical predictions wrt. the distribution and typology of C-agreement, both across languages and across individual structures.

References

- Baker, Mark. To Appear. Toward a shared syntax for shifted indexicals and logophoric pronouns. In *Volume to honor Lisa Travis*, ed. Jessica Coon et al. McGill Working Papers in Linguistics.
- Carstens, Vicki. 2016. Delayed valuation: A reanalysis of goal features, “upward” complementizer agreement, and the mechanics of case. *Syntax* 19:1–42. URL <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/synt.12116>.
- Cinque, Guglielmo. 1999. *Adverbs and functional heads: a cross-linguistic perspective*. Oxford Studies in Comparative Syntax. OUP.
- Diercks, Michael. 2013. Indirect Agree in Lubukusu complementizer agreement. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 31:357–407.
- van Koppen, Marjo. 2017. Complementizer agreement. In *The wiley-blackwell companion to syntax – second edition*, ed. Martin Everaert and Henk van Riemsdijk, 923–962. London: Wiley-Blackwell.
- McFadden, Thomas. 2020. The morphosyntax of allocutive agreement in Tamil. In *Agree to Agree: Agreement in the Minimalist Programme*, ed. Peter W. Smith, Johannes Mursell, and Katharina Hartmann, 391–424. Berlin: Language Science Press.
- Miyagawa, Shigeru. 2017. *Agreement Beyond Phi*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- Oyharçabal, Beñat. 1993. Verb agreement with non arguments: On allocutive agreement. In *Generative studies in basque linguistics*, ed. José Ignacio Hualde and Jon Ortiz de Urbina. Amsterdam: Benjamins.