On Agreeing with the Object to Create an Anaphoric Relation: Relating Clitic Doubling to Switch-reference

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This talk discusses two noncanonical instances of object agreement in which Agree creates a referential dependency rather than copying phi-features. The leading idea is to borrow a theoretical innovation proposed for one to arrive at a more complete analysis of the other.

One of the constructions of interest is object clitic doubling (OCD), as found in, for example, Amharic ((1))—but also probably Bulgarian, Greek, Bantu languages like Haya, etc.

(1) Lämma **wiʃʃa-w-in** ayy-ä-**(w).** (Amharic)
Lemma.M dog-DEF.M-ACC see.PF-3MS.S-(3MS.O)
'Lemma saw the dog.'

OCD is known to be like object agreement in many respects, such that the boundary line between the two phenomena is contested, or even denied. In particular, it obeys the same formal/structural conditions as simple object agreement: it is restricted by intervention effects and phase boundaries, and it can be sensitive to the case of the doubled object. However, OCD differs from true/simple agreement (like subject agreement in Amharic) in that it is not possible with nonreferentially quantified objects or with anaphoric objects, as shown in (2).

(2) Lämma hullu-n-ɨmm säw/ ras-u-n ayy-ä-(*w) (Amharic)
Lemma.M every-ACC-FOC person/ self-his-ACC see.PF-3MS.S-(3MS.O)
'Lemma saw everyone/himself.'

Baker and Kramer (2018) argue that this distribution follows if the object clitic in Amharic counts as a pronoun in the syntax and LF—a referentially active element, which is referentially dependent on the object. Then the badness of 'everyone' in (2) can be derived from the Weak Crossover Condition, and the badness 'himself' in (2b) can be derived from Binding theory. But there is some remaining tension in this account: if *–w* really counts as a pronoun, one might think that (2) with 'everyone' should really be a case of strong crossover (so categorically bad and insensitive to the type of quantifier) and (1) should violate Condition C of the Binding theory. The simple solution to these problems is to say that the clitic is adjoined to v, such that it doesn't c-command the direct object. But this creates a bit of a paradox for standard theories, since it is a case of strong/obligatory referential dependence in the absence of a c-command relation. It is also not clear what role Agree plays in the construction, such that OCD has the same locality properties that simple instances of Agree have.

These questions can receive new and improved answers if we make a connection to an even less canonical instance of object agreement: the object-equals-subject (O=S) switch reference construction found in Shipibo and other Panoan languages, seen in (3). Here the suffix *–a* on the adjunct clause expresses that the object in the adjunct clause—which can be a full NP or a pronoun, null or overt—is referentially dependent on the subject of the matrix clause.

(3) [Jose-kan Rosa/*pro* noko-**a**]-ra, *pro*/Rosa sai i-ke. (Shipibo)
José-ERG Rosa/her find-O=S-EV she/Rosa yell do.INTR-PFV
`When José found Rosa/her, she/Rosa yelled.'

This construction also has the structural/formal properties of object agreement: *-a* only equates an NP X with the matrix subject if X is the highest NP inside VP, X is not contained in any phase smaller than VP, and X does not bear inherent case. Baker and Camargo Souza (2019) analyze *-a* as being a special form of v that Agrees with an NP in its domain, and then moves to C where it fuses with a C that Agrees with the matrix subject. However, these instances of Agree involve only the first step of Agree, Agree-Link but not Agree-Copy in the sense of Arregi and Nevins (2012) and related work. The idea, then, is that if a functional head (here the fused v+C) bears links to two different NPs as a result of Agree-Link applying (but not Agree-Copy, which erases the links), then LF interprets the links as referential dependency holding between the two linked NPs (cf. Higginbotham 1983, Safir 2004). This analysis is sketched in (4).

(4) . [[[$_{vP}$ José [$_{VP}$ Rosa fis] v] T] v+C][$_{TP}$ pro$_i$ [[$_{VP}$ yell] v]]
Agree-Link LHM Agree-Link $v_{[D]} + C_{[D]}$ = *-a (O=S) at PF*

Now at an abstract level, the object=subject switch reference construction has many of the same properties as the clitic doubling construction. In both cases, there is obligatory referential dependency between two NPs, one of which is the object of the clause. In both cases, there is no c-command relationship between the two NPs, so there is no Condition C violation when one is a pronoun and the other a referential NP. In both cases, there is reason to say that the relationship is mediated through a v head. And in both cases there is evidence of an Agree relationship at work between the mediating v head and the object of the clause; indeed, this is what defines what counts as the "object". Therefore, I propose to use Baker and Camargo Souza's technology for object=subject switch reference (and also for more common "same subject" marking) to complete the analysis of object clitic doubling in languages like Amharic. In particular, the object clitic is adjoined to v, whereas the doubled object is inside the VP complement of v. Neither c-commands the other, so a direct syntactic relationship cannot be established between the two. However, v is in a position to enter into Agree-Link with both the object inside VP and the D adjoined to v. When it does this, the links from v to both D and NP are interpreted at LF as referential dependency between the D and NP, as sketched in (5). This supplies the missing piece in the Baker-Kramer analysis of clitic doubling.

(5) . [Lemma T [$_{vP}$ [D+v] [$_{VP}$ see [$_{DP}$ the dog]]]]
Agree-Link Agree-Link

I close the talk by pointing out a couple of apparent differences in how Agree works in the two constructions, arguing that they do not pose a problem for this unified analysis, but follow for independent reasons. (For example, D in (5) is in a non-theta position, whereas both linked NPs in (4) are in theta-positions.) Time permitting, I will also discuss an extension of these ideas to reflexive voice constructions, as found in Shipibo and Bantu languages like Lubukusu (among many others), arguing that this is another case of Agree creating a referential dependency between two NPs. In reflexive voice, a Voice head enters into Agree-Link with the subject in Spec VoiceP and the highest object inside the vP complement of Voice, subject to the usual conditions on Agree. The result is that the highest object in VP is referentially dependent on the subject of the same clause (not on the subject of the higher clause, as in the object=subject switch reference construction).