When intensional subjects control agreement

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In binominal copular clauses (NP1 *be* NP2) agreement can be with NP1 or NP2 depending on details of clause-type (predicational, specificational, equative (Higgins 2015/1973)), with cross-linguistic variation in the mix (Moro 1997, Mikkelsen, den Dikken 2006). In previous work we have argued that NP2 agreement arises when a probe with an articulated feature structure does not find a match in NP1, rendering NP1 transparent and permitting Agree with the less local NP2. The challenge in such an approach rests in identifying the relevant feature structures. Φ-feature manipulations easily capture some patterns as a person-sensitivity, e.g. in Eastern Armenian in the context of a 3rd person NP1, a $1^{st}/2^{nd}$ person NP2 controls agreement, a pattern that falls out from positing a [participant] probe. However, there are languages where one and the same φ-configuration feeds 'less-local' agreement for some contexts, but not others. For example, in Persian a 3rd person NP1 is transparent to agreement in specificational clauses, but not in equatives. Here we have argued that this is the result of a probing feature structure which seeks a feature [d] which we take to be mnemonic for deixis or determination, not available on specficational NP1s (which are intensional and not extensional), but available in general elsewhere. We further posited that the special character of specificational NP1s arises from them being concealed/reduced CPs in which the usual φ-structure is cloaked by the CP structure. But Hartmann and Heycock (forthcoming) rightly point out that this makes incorrect predictions for languages like English, Icelandic for which NP1 agreement — specifically number agreement — with specificational/intensional subjects is clearly permitted (e.g. *The most likely winners are/*is John and Mary*). H&H argue against a system which derives NP2 agreement via a probe-goal system with an articulated phi-structure and suggest that an alternative analysis based on structural differences between the position of the two NPs at the point of agreement al a H&H (2016, 2017) fares better with the data. We argue in this talk that a closer attention to the feature structures available in concealed CPs is sufficient to bridge this gap, allowing to maintain the phi-sensitive probe-goal system which fares better with the clearly person-sensitive cases found in languages like Eastern Armenian. Our previous featural structure is shown in (1a). In the revised system, we suggest that [n] and [d] should be placed on separate axes as shown in (1b), with Number # as a dependent of [n]. As a result, when at the point of agreement, a minimal probe with [n] (as for instance is the case for English or the relevant examples in Icelandic) encounters an intensional NP1 with an [n] feature, number agreement follows. The difference between languages that agree with specificational NP1 and those that do not then rests again in the probe structure: [n] for NP1-agreeing languages and [n, d] for non-agreeing languages.

(1)   a.   [n]   b.   ⌃
             [d]   [n]   [d]
             [part]   [#]   [part]
             [speaker]   [speaker]

An implication of this proposal is that CP-derived nominals can be specified for [n] and its dependent [#] but not for [d] nor its dependents. This is consistent with what we know about CP-

derived nominals elsewhere, which are able to control number agreement, as H&H themselves point out, but never [d]-related agreement. We furthermore develop implications of this proposal relating to the broader differences between (and distribution of) determination ([d]-related) and quantification ([n]-related) functional structure.

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