PHASE UNLOCKING IN GEORGIAN
Sigwan Thivierge, University of Maryland

THESIS. Recent work has investigated whether Agree can neutralize phasal boundaries, thus widening the syntactic domain accessible for subsequent Agree operations (Rackowski & Richards 2005, Preminger 2011, Van Urk & Richards 2015, a.o.). This paper provides novel evidence for such a theory, based on inverse agreement in Georgian (Kartvelian).

DATA. Georgian inverse agreement is characterized as a ‘flip’ in agreement patterns compared to the basic (the default agreement paradigm). A set of prefixes mark the object in the basic, but the subject in the inverse; a set of suffixes mark the subject in the basic, but the object in the inverse. A separate -t suffix marks plurality in both—however, 1SG (and 2SG) inverse objects block 3PL agreement, as in (1). 3PL agreement is allowed if the object is also 3rd person, as in (2).

(1) 3PL.DAT 1SG.NOM 1-VER-love-I.PRES(-PL) 3PL.DAT 3SG.NOM VER-love-PL

‘They love me.’ (Okay as: ‘They love us.’) ‘They love him/her.’

Behaviour from binding and agreement patterns suggests that inverse subjects are introduced by Appl0, below vP (see McGinnis 1995, i.a.). Therefore, the structure is as follows with the ϕ-probe on v0, capturing its tendency to expe the object in the basic and the subject in the inverse.

(3) [#P #0 [πP π0 [iP DPsubj v0 [vP v0 DPobj ] ] ] ] ] BASIC

(4) [#P #0 [πP π0 [iP v0 [ApplP DPsubj Appl0 [vP v0 DPobj ] ] ] ] ] INVERSE

This paper focuses on the following question related to the inverse agreement paradigm: Why do 1SG and 2SG objects block 3PL subject agreement?

ANALYSIS. I propose that, in the inverse agreement paradigm, 1st/2nd person objects move to the vP phase edge in order to be licensed by a higher probe on π0 (Rezac 2008). Independent evidence for this licensing requirement comes from PCC effects in ditransitives, suggesting that 1st/2nd person arguments are subject to the PLC (Béjar & Rezac 2003). This movement blocks Agree relations with 3PL subjects, crucially with respect to the higher number probe, as in (5).

(5) [#P #0 [πP π0 [iP DP1PL/2PL v0 [ApplP DP3SG/PL Appl0 [vP v0 DP3PL/2PL ] ] ] ] ]

However, 3rd person objects do not require licensing and thus remain low. Since there is no argument in Spec,vP, and vP is a phase, π0 first encounters v in its entirety. The vP, however, does not carry the features π0 is seeking, and so this agreement relation has the effect of unlocking the interior of the phase for further searches (Van Urk & Richards 2015, a.o.). With no phasal boundary, 3PL inverse subjects in Spec,AapplP are now accessible to the number probe, which will spell-out as -t if it finds a plural feature, as in (6).

(6) [#P #0 [πP π0 [iP v0 [ApplP DP3PL Appl0 [vP v0 DP3SG/PL ] ] ] ] ]

CONCLUSION & IMPLICATIONS. I argue that licensing requirements on 1st/2nd person arguments (which are independently seen in Georgian PCC effects) force them to move to a high position when they appear as inverse objects, where they block number agreement for 3PL inverse subjects. This addresses the long-standing puzzle concerning the distribution of the Georgian plural marker -t, particularly in the oft-ignored inverse agreement paradigm. That is, the proposed analysis captures how 3PL inverse subjects can indeed be marked by -t just in case the object is also 3rd person. Crucially, part of the analysis argues that phasal boundaries may be unlocked when no phase-peripheral target was found, thus providing novel empirical support for this theory.
References


