Getting out of the way in Icelandic (and beyond): a sideward movement approach

Gary Thoms, NYU

This paper proposes a new analysis of what Anand and Nevins (2006) call <u>punting</u>, where movement of an intervener 'out of the way' alleviates an intervention problem. Consider the Icelandic contrast in (1)-(2): in (1), T fails to agree in number with a low nominative, seemingly because there is an intervening dative, and so we get 'default' 3S agreement; in (2), the dative is high and number agreement with the nominative is possible. Chomsky (2001) analyses this in terms of a two-step derivation where the experiencer is moved and then T probes past the trace to find the low nominative.

(1)   Það   virðist / *virðast einhverri konu   myndirnar   vera ljótar.
        EXPL seem.3S seem.3P some   woman.DAT paintings.the.NOM be   ugly
        'It seems to some woman that the paintings are ugly.'   (Sigurðsson and Holmberg 2008; S&H)

(2)   Einhverri konu   virðast myndirnar   vera ljótar.
        some   woman.DAT seem.3P paintings.the.NOM be   ugly   (= (1), S&H)

But there are theoretical problems. First, such derivations seem to be countercyclic (Preminger 2014, 107). Second, it requires that the foot of the chain formed by the punted DP is 'deficient' in some sense, as it doesn't intervene; this doesn't follow from a standard approach to the copy theory. Our proposal is that this 'deficiency' *does* follow from an alternative phrase structure for movement, and we show that it makes a set of welcome predictions that the standard move-then-Agree account does not.

Intervention and sideward movement. On a standard analysis, movement of an intervener 'out of the way' involves constructing the DP, merging it in its intervening thematic position (e.g. Spec,VP, simplifying) and then remerging it into its 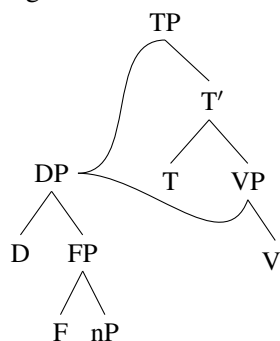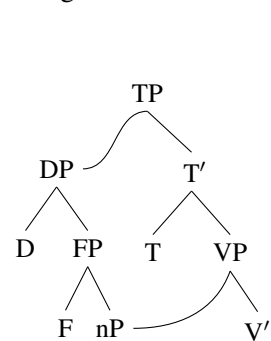surface position (e.g. Spec,T; see Fig.1). As noted above, all the DP's features should be present in that thematic position and they must intervene for probes looking down beyond that position. Building on ideas in Johnson (2012), who adopts a multidominance approach, we suggests an alternative: instead of always merging a fully constructed DP into the thematic position, in some cases it is possible to merge only a minimal subpart of the nominal (i.e. the *n*P) there and then merge the rest of the nominal's functional structure (D, whichever other FPs there may be) with the *n*P in a separate subroot, as an instance of sideward movement of the *n*P; the projection formed in this subroot is then

Fig.1   Fig.2

merged into Spec,TP in the main root. See Fig.2. A significant property of derivations like this, what we call *layering* derivations (cf. Riemsdijk 2006 on *grafting*), is that they derive distinct sets of c-command relations from standard movement derivations: in the standard derivation in Fig.1, D and F are c-commanded by and thus visible to T, whereas for a layered derivation as in Fig.2, they are not. Layering thus provides a way to <u>evade locality violations</u>: if the features that T is probing for are on D and F but not n, then T will be able to probe into V′ without violating locality in Fig.2 but not Fig.1.

This account makes a number of predictions, of which we discuss two here: (a) since the intervening position is not completely empty – it contains a minimal *n*P, which may interact with some probes – then we should see <u>partial agreement</u>; (b) since on the punting derivation there is an *n*P and not a DP in Spec,VP, there should be <u>scope effects</u>, i.e. the argument should not be able to take quantificational scope within the VP. Both are borne out, in Icelandic and beyond.

Partial agreement. Comparing (2) and (3)a indicates that punting salvages plural but not person agreement, as agreement with a 1/2 low nominative is ruled out; it seems, then, that traces intervene 'partially,' for person but not number agreement. We argue that intervention cannot be the right notion. True intervention typically results in a default 3S form form the verb; the 3S form is impossible with a 1/2 person nominative object in monoclausal cases like (3)a, and S&H argue that is only possible in biclausal cases (as in cases comparable to (1)) because the nominative has the option of staying low (and thus out of

reach of the probe) in the embedded small clause. Preminger (2011) claims that this obtains because the problem in (3)a is not agreement as such but rather licensing of the local person nominatives, building on the analysis in Béjar and Rezac (2003) where local person pronouns are subject to a person-specific licensing condition; thus, Preminger claims that (3)a is bad because intervention disrupts licensing of the pronouns. However this cannot be the whole story, since 1/2 person low nominatives *are* possible when the 1/2 and 3 inflections are syncretic, as in (3)b (Sigurðsson 1996).

(3)   a. *Henni {líkaðir / líkaði} ðú.   b. (?)Henni leiddist   ðú.
        her.DAT like.2S   like.3S you.S.NOM   her.DAT bored-at.3S/2S/1S you.S.NOM
        'She likes you.'   'She found you boring.'   (Schütze 2003)

The syncretism facts indicate that verbal agreement is the crucial factor, contra Preminger. Schütze (2003) proposes a Multiple Agree analysis of the syncretism effect: T Agrees with <u>both</u> the dative subject, getting a 3S value, and the nominative object for both person and number, and syncretism between the agreeing forms allows PF to realize this 'double agreement' with a single form; thus, (3)a is out because Agree provides PF with conflicting requirements. But this can't be the whole story, as agreement with the dative cannot result in instructions to realize the verb as third person *singular*: clearly plural agreement with a low nominative is possible without number syncretism, (2). Moreover S&H note that syncretism can 'permit' agreement with a 1/2 object *in the plural*, so long as the 3PL and 1/2 plural are syncretic, (4).

(4)   Henni   virtust   þið   eittvað   einkennilegir.
        her.DAT seemed.2P/3P you.NOM.P somewhat strange
        'You seemed somewhat strange to her.' (S&H)

Fig.3

Schütze's Multiple Agree account can be salvaged if it turns out that finding the intervener gets a third person value, with no number specification. The layering account gives us this with only a few well-motivated assumptions: (a) the ϕ-features of a nominal are merged in functional projections in the extended nominal domain, above the core nP; (b) PersonP hosts the privative [participant] and [number] features; (c) NumberP is minimally a binary feature [$\pm$ SG] (e.g. Harbour 2011, 2014, 2016, Nevins 2007). The key outcome of these assumptions is that if a ϕ-probe finds an nP with no D, NumberP or PersonP (since these are layered onto the nominal, see Fig.2), it will acquire a third person value from the nP *but no value for number*, since number has no unmarked value as far as the syntax is concerned. This is in effect an instance of partial agreement, since T acquires a third person specification from the nP but no local person or number value. Since it has not found a number value, T probes further and finds the object and its ϕ-features, and thus we will have the double agreement configuration required to make Schütze's account work for the whole dataset.

Scopal deficiency. An additional prediction of the layering analysis is that in punting configurations such as Fig.2, which is required for (2), the punted argument (i.e. the dative) should be scopally deficient with respect to its base position, since the lowest c-command position for its quantificational D-layer is Spec,TP; thus, the DP should not be able to take scope in a lower position such as Spec,VP. This is borne out: the dative scopes below the raising predicate in (1) but not in (2). Looking beyond Icelandic, we propose that the layering approach to punting allows us to explain a number of other cases where movement of an intervener leads to frozen scope, in particular the data covered by Nevins & Anand's (2003) *PEPPER* ("<u>P</u>urely <u>EPP</u> <u>E</u>liminates <u>R</u>econstruction") generalization, which says that A-movement to Spec,TP which is driven only by the EPP, thus with no agreement with T, is unable to reconstruct.

The poster child is Hindi-Urdu ergative subjects (5): these don't control agreement, as T agrees with the absolutive object, and the ergatives don't reconstruct (as required for inverse scope, Hornstein 1995).

(5)   kisii   šaayer-ne har   ghazal   lik^{h}ii
        some poet-ERG every song-NOM write.f-PERF
        "Some poet wrote every song." ($\exists > \forall$, *$\forall > \exists$)

Following Nevins & Anand, we propose the non-local agreement with the absolutive object requires punting of the ergative subject, and since punting requires layering in order

to obey locality, a derivation like Fig.2 is required and thus the D may not scope within VP.

References

Anand, Pranav and Nevins, Andrew. 2006. The locus of Ergative case assignment: Evidence from scope. In Alana Johns, Diane Massam, and Juvénal Ndayiragije, eds., *Ergativity: Emerging Issues*, 3–25, Springer.

Béjar, Susana and Rezac, Milan. 2003. Person licensing and the derivation of PCC effects. In Ana Teresa Perez-Leroux and Yves Roberge, eds., *Romance linguistics: theory and acquisition*, 49–62, Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Chomsky, Noam. 2001. Derivation by phase. In Michael Kenstowicz, ed., *Ken Hale: A Life in Linguistics*, 1–52, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press.

Harbour, Daniel. 2011. Valence and atomic number. *Linguistic Inquiry* 42:561–594.

Harbour, Daniel. 2014. Paucity, abundance and the theory of number. *Language* 90:185–229.

Harbour, Daniel. 2016. *Impossible persons*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Hornstein, Norbert. 1995. *Logical Form: from GB to Minimalism*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Basil Blackwell.

Nevins, Andrew. 2007. The representation of third person and it consequences for person-case effects. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 25:273–313.

Nevins, Andrew and Anand, Pranav. 2003. Some AGREEment matters. In M. Tsujimura, ed., *Proceedings of the West Coast Conference on Formal Linguistics 22*, 370–383, Somerville, Massachusetts: Cascadilla Press.

Preminger, Omer. 2011. Asymmetries between person and number: a commentary on baker's SCOPA. *Natural Language and Linguistic Theory* 29:917–937.

Preminger, Omer. 2014. *Agreement and its failures*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Riemsdijk, Henk van. 2006. Grafts follow from merge. In Mara Frascarelli, ed., *Phases of interpretation*, Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Schütze, Carson. 2003. Syncretism and double agreement with Icelandic nominative objects. In Lars-Olof Delsing, Cecilia Falk, Gunlög Josefsson, and Halldór Ármann Sigurðsson, eds., *Grammar in focus: festschrift in honour of Christer Platzack*, volume 2, 295–303, Lund: Department of Scandinavian Languages.

Sigurðsson, Halldór Ármann. 1996. Icelandic finite verb agreement. *Working Papers in Scandinavian Syntax* 57:1–46.

Sigurðsson, Halldór Ármann and Holmberg, Anders. 2008. Icelandic dative intervention. In Roberta D'Alessandro, Susann Fischer, and Gunnar Hrafn Hrafnbjargarson, eds., *Agreement restrictions*, 251–279, Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.