

Getting out of the way in Icelandic: a sideward movement approach Gary Thoms, NYU

We propose a new analysis of what Anand & Nevins (2006) call *punting*, where moving 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 a dative defective intervener in the way, and so we get ‘default’ 3S agreement; in (2), the dative is high and number agreement is possible. Chomsky (2001) proposes a two-step derivation where the dative moves to Spec,TP and then T probes past the trace to find the low nominative.

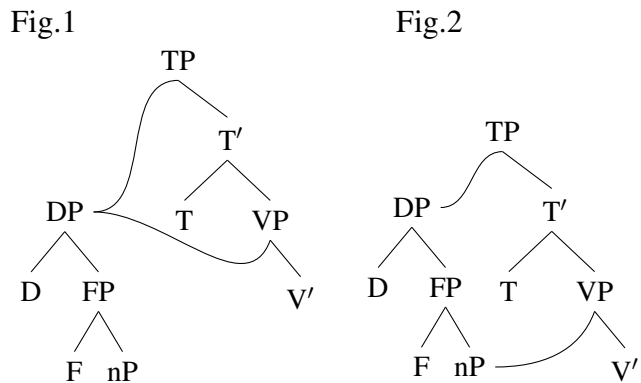
- (1) Það virðist / *virðast einhverri konu myndirnar vera ljótar.
EXPL seem.3S seem.3P some woman.DAT paintings.the.NOM be ugly

‘It seems to some woman that the paintings are ugly.’ (Sigurðsson & Holmberg 2008; S&H)

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

But there are theoretical problems: such derivations are countercyclic (Preminger 2014, 107), and they require that the trace left by the punted DP is **deficient**, even moreso than a regular ‘defective’ intervener, as it doesn’t intervene at all; this doesn’t follow from the standard copy theory. We show that this ‘deficiency’ *does* follow from our alternative phrase structure for movement, and that it makes welcome predictions that the move-then-Agree account doesn’t.

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 re-



merging 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 suggest 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 *nP*) there and then merge the rest of the nominal’s functional structure (D, whichever other FPs there may be) with the *nP* in a separate subroot, as an instance of sideward movement of the *nP*; the projection formed in this subroot is then merged into Spec,TP in the main root. See Fig.2. A significant property of derivations like this, what we call *layering* derivations (cf. van 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 evade locality violations: 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.

This analysis makes predictions which we show to be correct: (a) since the intervening position isn’t completely empty – it contains an *nP*, which may interact with probes – then we should see partial agreement; (b) since on the punting derivation there is an *nP* and not a DP in Spec,VP, there should be scope effects, i.e. the argument should not take scope within the VP.

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. Preminger (2011) claims the problem in (3)a is not verbal agreement but rather licensing of the local person nominatives, building on Bejar & Rezac (2003) where local person pronouns are subject to a person-specific licens-

ing 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).

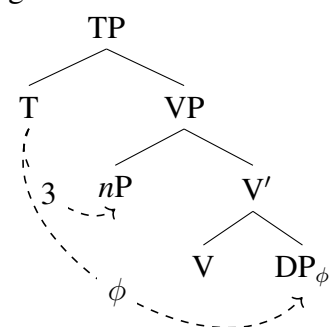
- (3) a. *Henni {líkaðir / líkaði} þú. b. (?)Henni leiddist þú.
 her.DAT like.2S like.3S you.S.NOM her.DAT bored-at.3S/2S/1S you.S.NOM
 ‘She likes you.’ ‘She found you boring.’ (Schütze 2003)

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 both 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 over a dative trace is possible without number syncretism, (2). (The same problem befalls Coon & Keine 2020: on their account, T would necessarily find person *and* number features on the dative.) 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)

Schütze’s Multiple Agree account can be salvaged if combined with an analysis where T, upon encountering the trace of the dative intervener, gets just a third person value and no number specification. The layering account gives us this with a few well-motivated assumptions: (a) the ϕ -features of a nominal are merged in functional projections in the extended nominal, above the core nP; (b) PersonP hosts the privative [participant] and [author] features; (c) third person is the absence of person, and T acquires such a specification when it finds a nominal which lacks person; (d) NumberP is minimally a binary feature [$\pm$ SG] (e.g. Harbour 2011 et seq, Nevins 2007). The outcome is that if a ϕ -probe finds an nP with no D, NumberP or PersonP (since these are layered onto the nominal like the FPs in Fig.2), it will acquire a third person value from nP *but no value for number*, since number has no unmarked value as far as the syntax is concerned.

Fig.3



Scopal deficiency. Another prediction is that in punting configurations such as Fig.2, which is required for (2), the punted argument (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 (Thoms 2019). This is borne out in Icelandic: the dative scopes below the raising predicate in (1) but cannot do so in (2).

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Variation with interveners. We show that the proposal can provide an account of further phenomena: (i) the variation between Icelandic A/B/C noted in S&H wrt the effects in (1)-(2) (the data above represent Icelandic B; Icelandic A is more restricted, Icelandic C more liberal); (ii) the difference, within Icelandic B, between different quantifiers in configurations like (1) wrt whether they intervene for plural agreement (recasting the insight in Kučerová 2016).

Refs: HARBOUR 2016. *Impossible persons*. MIT Press. – KUČEROVÁ 2016. Long distance agreement in Icelandic: locality restored. *JCGL*. – SCHÜTZE 2003. Syncretism and double agreement with Icelandic nominative objects. In Platzack festschrift, Benjamins. – SIGURÐSSON AND HOLMBERG 2008. Icelandic dative intervention. In *Agreement restrictions*, Mouton. – THOMS 2019. Antireconstruction as layering. *NELS* 49.