Setting the Stage

Clause-Peripheral Agreements: Allocutivity,
Complementizer Agreement and the Theory of Agree, Meeting 1
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1 What this course is about

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In many colloquial varieties of Tamil, one commonly comes across utterances of the following kind:[1]

(1) Naan ʤaaŋgiri vaaŋg-in-een-ŋgæ.
I Jangri buy-PST-1SG.SBJ-ALLOC
'I bought Jangri.'[2]

(1) contains two different types of agreement:

1. *-een* marks agreement with with the 1sg subject.
2. *-ŋgæ* marks something far less common: so-called **allocutive agreement (AllAgr)**.

☞ Rather than telling us about one of the arguments of the verb, AllAgr provides information about the addressee of the utterance.

In other words, the form of AllAgr doesn't depend so much on what's going on inside the sentence. Instead, it depends on who the speaker is speaking to.

☞ The addition of *-ŋgæ* specifically indicates a plural addressee or a singular one who the speaker uses polite forms of address with.

☞ If the addressee is a single familiar person, the suffix is simply lacking, as in (2).

(2) Naan ʤaaŋgiri vaaŋg-in-een.
I Jangri buy-PST-1SG.SBJ
'I bought Jangri.'

This course will be about:

[1]Thanks to my initial informants, Jegan Murugesan, Champa Sundaresan, Subramania Sundaresan and Sandhya Sundaresan, as well as to the twelve speakers in the areas surrounding Pollachi and Thenur who shared their varieties with me during fieldwork in August 2018.

[2]Jangri is a delicious flower-shaped sweet made of deep-fried lentil batter soaked in sugar syrup.

- why AllAgr is surprising and fascinating from a theoretical perspective
- how it relates to things like complementizer agreement and switch reference (go to Karlos and Emily's class in the afternoon!)
- what these things can tell us about the syntactic representation of the speech act and its participants
- how they can inform the theory of agreement

Here's the rough plan for the week:

Monday (today!): the basics of agreement, how AllAgr fits in, and a first glimpse at why it's so interesting

Tuesday: an in depth, comparative look at AllAgr in Tamil and a few other languages

Wednesday: the syntactic representation of the speech act and its participants and what AllAgr can tell us about it

Thursday: comparisons with other types of clause-peripheral agreement and implications for the theory of agreement

Friday: towards a comprehensive theory?

2 The basics of agreement

The basics of agreement

What is agreement? Here's a workable general definition:

agreement: An asymmetric morphosyntactic dependency, whereby grammatical properties of one element are reflected in the form of a distinct element at some distance.

I'll break this down into three points that I'll discuss in turn:

- It is an asymmetric dependency.
- It involves the displaced expression of grammatical properties.
- It is morpho-syntactic.

First, agreement is an asymmetric dependency.

- I.e. it has to involve (at least) two distinct elements, which stand in a relationship with one another.

- For example in (2), repeated here as (3), we have the pronoun *naan* 'I' and the suffix *-een*.

  (3) Naan ʤaaŋgiri vaaŋg-in-een.
  I Jangri buy-PST-1SG.SBJ
  'I bought Jangri.'

- The relationship is asymmetric — in this case the suffix *-een* depends on or agrees with the pronoun *naan*, not the other way around.
- We will follow a useful terminological tradition in calling the dependent element the **target** (*-een*) and the one it agrees with the **controller** (*naan*).

Second, agreement involves the displaced expression of grammatical properties:

- There are lots of asymmetric dependencies in language.
- What characterizes agreement is that the dependent element, the target, reflects in its form one or more grammatical properties of the controller.
- So in our Tamil example *-een* reflects the person and number of *naan*, in this case 1sg.
- There is a series of other forms for the suffix in other person, number, gender combinations:

2sg	nii	vaaŋg-in-æ
3sgf	avæ(l̰)	vaaŋg-in-aa(l̰)
1pl.excl	naaŋgæ(l̰)	vaaŋg-in-oom
⋮		

Third, agreement is morpho-syntactic.

- For us to consider a dependency an instance of agreement, it must be established and expressed in the core grammatical systems.
- Typically, we would say that the dependency between controller and target obtains in the syntax, as a grammatical relationship between two distinct elements.
- And its realization is a matter for the morphology, as it concerns the form taken by the target, which is often an affix on some other word, like *-een* suffixed to the verb.

What does this mean concretely?

- Agreement reflects grammatical properties rather than purely semantic ones.

(4) das/*die Mädchen (German)
the.N/the.F girl.N

- It is subject to purely structural conditions, and is typically obligatory and deterministic.

(5) das/*die [die/*das Birne essende] Mädchen
the.N [the.F pear eating] girl

- It is realized in heavily restricted, morphosyntactically defined positions.
  - ◇ E.g. our friend *-een* always and only attaches to the highest verb in a finite clause without negation or modals, and has to come after the tense suffix.

This distinguishes agreement from similar looking phenomena involving semantic/pragmatic relationships, e.g. choice of pronouns co-referring across sentences:

(6) Das Mädchen isst Birnen. Es/sie mag sie.
the.N girl eats pears. It.N/she.F likes them

- The form of the pronoun in the second sentence reflects properties of the *Das Mädchen* in the first sentence, but in a different way, with different results.
- The dependency across sentences is not syntactic, but rather is based on co-reference.
- So the element it is dependent on is determined not by structural criteria, but by what the speaker means.
- And the gender reflected can be either the grammatical one (neuter) or the semantic one (feminine).

The various types of agreement that we see across languages differ primarily along two dimensions:

1. the identity of target and controller
2. the properties of the controller reflected on the target

As for target and controller:

- Perhaps most common is a target on the main predicate or some functional element in the clause, with the controller being an argument DP (we'll call this **argument agreement** or **ArgAgr**).
- This yields the kind of classic subject-verb agreement we saw in our Tamil examples, but depending on the details may also yield object agreement or some combination.

- Also reasonably common is a noun controller with targerts on its modifiers, especially adjectives. This type of agreement is often termed **concord**.

  (7) klug-es Mädchen
  smart-N.SG girl

As for the properties reflected:

- We typically refer to these as **features**.
- Typical features of agreement with nouns and DPs are person, number and gender (so-called ϕ-features), as well as case.
- There are also phenomena that can be analyzed as agreement for things like negation, tense and more.

3 An Introduction to Allocutive Agreement

Let's consider AllAgr against this background. First of all, it really does look like agreement:

- You're going to have to temporarily take my word on this, until we can cover the evidence in detail tomorrow.
- For now, note that it is obligatory in many (but not all) languages that have it.
- And it is fully grammaticalized, with a fixed place in the morpho-syntactic functional sequence. Our friend *-ŋgæ* e.g. has to follow ArgAgr and precede suffixal complementizers.

Second, what distinguishes AllAgr from other types of agreement is the nature of the controller:

(8) Naan ʤaaŋgiri vaaŋg-in-een-ŋgæ.
I Jangri buy-PST-1SG.SBJ-ALLOC
'I bought Jangri.' (plural or polite addressee)

- Typical verbal agreement is controlled by an argument. In (8) this is again *-een*, agreeing with the subject *naan*.
- But the controller of AllAgr is the addressee of the speech act — the person to whom the speaker addresses what they say.
- Indeed, AllAgr is often marginal or impossible when the addressee is also an argument, e.g. in Tamil when we have a second person subject:

(9) * Niiŋgæ ʤaaŋgiri vaaŋg-in-iiŋgæ-ŋgæ.
You.PL Jangri buy-PST-2SG.SBJ-ALLOC
intended: 'You guys bought Jangri.'

The target of AllAgr is usually also clearly distinct from the target of ArgAgr:

- When they're expressed simultaneously, AllAgr tends to show up close to, but (as far as I'm aware) always **outside** of ArgAgr.
- So in Tamil *-ŋgæ* always comes after subject agreement, and in Basque it comes after agreement with subjects, objects and indirect objects.
- For this and other reasons that we'll talk about, it is often thought that while ArgAgr targets are in or around T, allocutive targets are in or around C.

Finally, the properties of the addressee controller expressed are a bit like with ArgAgr, but also a bit special:

- Number contrasts are quite common.
- Politeness contrasts are also quite common, probably more so than with ArgAgr, maybe because showing politeness is especially important with addressees.
- Gender contrasts are also more common than with ArgAgr, even though 2nd person forms tend **not** to distinguish gender.
- Person contrasts are essentially unheard of, though they are extremely common for ArgAgr, presumably because the addressee is always 2nd person by definition.
- As with ArgAgr, the details here are subject to extensive cross-linguistic variation.

4 Why this is so interesting

Why this is so interesting

Well, as we've seen, both the target and the controller with AllAgr are different than what we find with ArgAgr.

☞ There's another type of agreement with similar targets, so-called **complementizer agreement (CompAgr)**. Here's an example from Bavarian:

(10) I moan, dass-ts es des guat tea-ts.
I think that-2PL you.PL that good do-2PL
'I think you guys do that well.'

☞ We have in (10) an agreement target directly on the complementizer *dass* 'that', in addition to the one that shows up on the verb.

☞ The controller for both targets is the embedded subject.

There's a lot more to say about CompAgr:

- The languages that have it show several different patterns, most importantly in whether the controller is the subject of the embedded or the matrix clause.
- And there is evidence that switch reference in some languages is actually a kind of CompAgr controlled by both simultaneously — go to Emily and Karlos's class!
- We'll discuss these issues on Thursday. What matters for now is that CompAgr is similar to AllAgr in its target, but like ArgAgr in its controller.

So again, what really sets AllAgr apart is its controller:

☞ It is controlled not by the addressee of the speech act.

This has a super interesting theoretical consequence:

➪ Speech act participants must be represented (morpho)syntactically!

Here's the logic (with some premises pending empirical justification until later this week):

1. AllAgr is agreement.
2. Its controller is the addressee of the speech act.
3. Agreement as defined here is a morphosyntactic dependency between the target and the controller.
4. Thus both target and controller must be accessible to the morphosyntax.
5. Thus speech act participants (or at least addressees) must be represented in the (morpho)syntax.

There are more narrow but still super interesting consequences for the theoretical treatment of agreement:

- There's another type of agreement to deal with!
- This presents both challenges and opportunities for developing a unified theory that derives all observed agreement patterns from a limited set of assumptions.

- The comparison with the different types of CompAgr will be crucial for figuring out how we can derive the difference between AllAgr and ArgAgr.
- Can it be reduced to the position of the target, or do we have to build in explicit sensitivity to the type of controller?