

Interaction and satisfaction in phi-agreement

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The operation Agree may be decomposed into three more primitive steps:

Search: A probe initiates a search for an element with matching features (a goal).

Copy: Features are copied from the goal to the probe.

Valuation: The probe's features are valued, and the search is halted.

The usual assumption is that the features involved in each step are the same. I argue that the usual assumption is incorrect, and offer an alternative that draws on two influential recent ideas about Agree(ment). First, probes may be specified for particular phi-features, such as [PL] or [SPKR] (Bejar 2003, Nevins 2007, Bejar & Rezac 2009, Preminger 2011, i.a.). Second, the component steps of Agree are subject to at least partially distinct conditions, so that (e.g.) Search is obligatory, but Valuation is not (Preminger 2011). Let us recast this idea in terms of conditions on a probe's INTERACTION vs. its SATISFACTION. Interaction with F means that the probe's domain is assessed (Search) and that, if F is located, F is copied to the probe (Copy). Satisfaction by G means that the probe's [uG] is valued and the search is halted (Valuation). Drawing on a case study of complementizer agreement in Nez Perce, I show that interaction and satisfaction conditions on probes may be differentiated in featural terms. In particular:

A probe may interact with F even if it may only be satisfied by G, where F and G are distinct subsets of the phi set.

In Nez Perce complementizer agreement, the C probe is satisfied only by [ADDR], but interacts with all phi-features it encounters until the point of satisfaction. Interaction with non-satisfying features proves to be possible regardless of feature-geometric relations and regardless of whether Agree results in clitic doubling (pace Bejar & Rezac 2009; Preminger 2011).