

Discontinuous agreement in Eastern Sudanic: A reprojection-based approach

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Overview – Discontinuous agreement constitutes an instance of extended exponence where agreement features which are assumed to be bundled on a *single* syntactic head surface with *two* morphemes on the verb. In this talk, I present data from Eastern Sudanic (ES), a language family which has mostly been neglected in the theoretical literature on discontinuous agreement, even though ES exhibits a variety of different manifestations of the phenomenon. Based on ES data, I sketch a novel syntactic approach to discontinuous agreement, where discontinuity arises through reprojection in order to achieve full agreement. Thereby, the typological space observed in the data translates into different orders of probe features. The approach revives the syntactic perspective on discontinuous agreement and explores an analysis of the phenomenon which does not resort to an additional morphological operation like Fission (e.g. Noyer 1992; Halle 1997).

Data – One aspect in which ES allows us to catch a more detailed glimpse at the possibilities of discontinuous agreement is the type of extended exponence and its context. Turkana (see (1)), exhibits *coreferential* exponence in the 2PL and 3PL, where the prefix realizes person while the suffix realizes number. In contrast, Didinga in (2), where discontinuous agreement appears in every first person, distributes person features across both affixes. [author] is realized on the prefix while the suffix realizes number together with the remaining person features. This constitutes a rare case of *combinatorial* exponence (for the exponence terminology see Campbell 2012).

(1) Turkana (Eastern Nilotic/Kenya)

(Dimmendaal 1983: 122)

- a. \boxed{i} -los-e- $\boxed{tè}$ eèsi
2-go-ASP-PL you.NOM
'you (pl) will go'
b. $\boxed{è}$ -lòs-e- $\boxed{tè}$ kèci
3-go-ASP-PL they.NOM
'they will go'

(2) Didinga (Surmic/South Sudan)

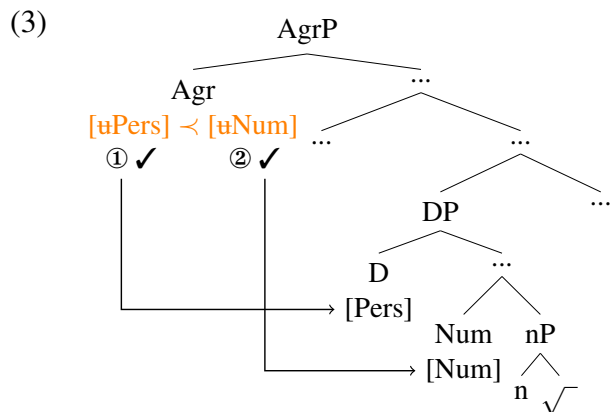
(own fieldwork)

- a. \boxed{h} -à-ìrìt- \boxed{i}
1-ASP-cough-1SG
'I am coughing'
b. \boxed{h} -à-ìrìt- $\boxed{tá}$
1-ASP-cough-1PL.EXCL
'We (excl.) are coughing'
c. \boxed{h} -à-ìrìt- \boxed{i}
1-ASP-cough-1PL.INCL
'We (incl.) are coughing'

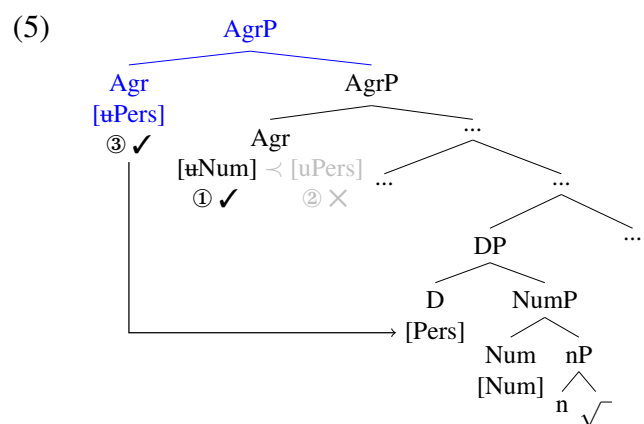
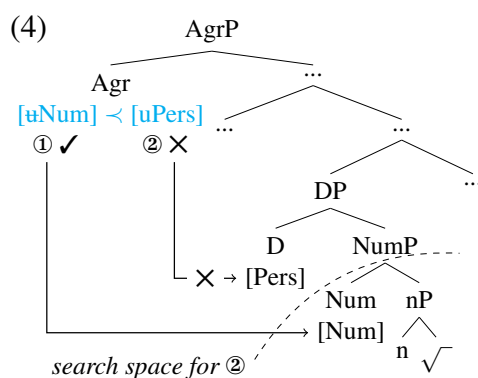
A novel syntactic account – In a nutshell, the account consists of two parts: (i) reprojection as an independently proposed syntactic concept (see e.g. Fanselow 2004; Georgi & Müller 2010; Martinović 2022) in order to derive a second agreement node; and (ii) its connection to Agree.

I adopt from Danon (2011) among others that person features are located on D and number features on Num in the DP. Hence, person appears higher than number on a goal. Moreover, I assume that φ -features probe separately (see e.g. Béjar 2003) and appear in a language-specific order (see e.g. Georgi 2014 for language-specific feature ordering). For the interaction

of multiple probes on the same head, I adopt the principle of Nested Agree proposed in Amato (2023) which says that the search space of a probe starts at the point where the previous probe has carried out Agree. If a language exhibits an order of probes where [uPers] precedes [uNum] (see (3)), Agree works smoothly and all φ -features are gathered on a single syntactic agreement head (= languages without discontinuous agreement).



Discontinuous agreement arises if there is a mismatch between the order of probes and the φ -features in the DP, i.e. if number probes before person (see (4) and (5)). While the number probe can agree in the first step, Nested Agree prohibits subsequent Agree of the person probe with the D head (② in (4)). As a repair, [uPers] reprojects (shown in blue in (5)), starts a new cycle of Agree and can finally find person features on D. This derivation results in a distribution of φ -features across two terminal nodes (= languages with discontinuous agreement).



Different contexts of discontinuous agreement and types of exponence are derived through a more fine-grained ordering of probe features (see (6) and (7)). For reasons of space, I cannot elaborate on the details of the mechanics in this abstract. However, the crucial point is that in (6) the mismatch (\Rightarrow reprojection) arises only in the case of second and third person while in (7) the mismatch (\Rightarrow reprojection) arises only in the case of a first person.

(6) Order of probes in Turkana: [uPers:Auth] \prec [uNum:Pl] \prec [uPers:Part], [uPers:Re]

(7) Order of probes in Didinga: [uPers:Re], [uPers:Part] \prec [uNum:□] \prec [uPers:Auth]

Selected References • Amato, Irene (2023). *Auxiliary Selection in Italo-Romance: A Nested-Agree Approach*. John Benjamins Publishing Company • Georgi, Doreen (2014). *Opaque interactions of Merge and Agree: On the nature and order of elementary operations*: Universität Leipzig dissertation.