snippets

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The anaphor agreement effect in Tamil

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The Anaphor Agreement Effect (AAE) in (1), formulated by Rizzi (1990), captures the fact that anaphors in many languages are barred from positions that trigger agreement, as in (2).

    (1) Anaphors do not occur in syntactic positions construed with agreement.

    (2) *They think that each other are happy.

    Woolford (1999) considers agreeing anaphors in a few languages that appear to constitute counterexamples to the AAE. She categorizes them into three types illustrated by the configurations in (3).

    (3) Type 1: [$_{\text{MATRIX CLAUSE}}$ [$_{\text{EMBEDDED CLAUSE}}$ ANAP.   V-*default Agr*]]
              Type 2: [$_{\text{MATRIX CLAUSE}}$ [$_{\text{EMBEDDED CLAUSE}}$ ANAP.   V-*anaphoric Agr*]]
              Type 3: [$_{\text{MATRIX CLAUSE}}$ [$_{\text{EMBEDDED CLAUSE}}$ [$_{\text{N}}$ ANAP. [$_{\text{N}}$ X]] V-*Agr*]]

In the first two configurations, agreement on V is atypical. It is either default agreement that does not match the phi-features of ANAP, or a special form of anaphoric agreement. In the third configuration, ANAP is embedded inside the subject as possessor and it is the whole NP that triggers agreement on V. Since there is no canonical agreement relationship between ANAP and V in all three cases, Woolford concludes that they do not constitute real counterexamples to AAE.

    It has been noted in passing that Dravidian anaphors pose a genuine challenge to AAE (Kayne 1994). However, as far as we are aware of, no explicit discussion of the relevant data has been offered in the literature. We provide a relevant set of data from Tamil and note some of its implications for the AAE. Tamil anaphor *taan* can appear in (embedded) subject position and trigger agreement on V, as shown in (4):

    (4) a. [*taan   varugir-aan/*-aal*   enru]   Murukeecan conn-aan
               self   come-3sgm/3sgf   comp   Murugesan say-3sgm
               'Murugesan said he is coming.'
          b. [*taan   varugir-aal/*-aan*   enru]   Mala   conn-aal
               self   come-3sgf/3sgm   comp   Mala   say-3sgf
               'Mala said she is coming.'

(5) a. *avan   varugir-aan/*-aal.*
       he   come-3sgm/3sgf
       'He is coming.'
    b. *aval   varugir-aal/*-aan.*
       she   come-3sgf/3sgm
       'She is coming.'

The agreement on the embedded verb, *varu* 'come', in (4) must match the features of *taan* and its antecedent, ruling out the Type 1 possibility that this is default agreement. Pronoun *avan* in (5) triggers the same agreement marking on *varu* as *taan*. This excludes the Type 2 possibility that the agreement marking in (4) is something reserved just for agreeing anaphors. The mere fact that *taan* is a simple lexical item does not rule out the Type 3 possibility of positing a complex structure for it, i.e., [NP *taan* [N *ec*]], but, if this structure cannot be motivated on independent grounds, a revision of the AAE seems necessary.

It is worth noting that Woolford also discusses Tamil sentences with *taan* which do *not* counterexemplify the AAE. (6) contains a finite embedded clause with subject agreement and here the agreement is atypically first person. There is something special about the first person agreement here: first person agreement may be used in a marked situation in which the embedded clause more or less sounds like a quotation. The natural choice of agreement when we have a finite embedded clause is third person, as in our (4). (Woolford claims that finite embedded clauses that show agreement are exceptional, and that normally embedded verbs are nonfinite and do not show agreement. We disagree. Finite embedded clauses, which are introduced by a complementizer as in (4) and (6) and must show agreement, are more frequently used than nonfinite embedded clauses, which are nominalized, cf. (7), also cited by Woolford.)

(6) *Murukeecan taan   varreen-͞u   connaaru.*
    Murugesan   self   come(pres.*1sg*)-quot./comp   say (past.3sg.hon.)
    'Murugesan said he (himself) was coming.' (Asher 1985:(5))

(7) *Taan   varrataa   Murukeecan   connaaru.*
    self   come (pres.nom.adv suff.) Murugesan   say (past.3sg.hon.)
    'Murugesan said he (himself) was coming.' (Asher 1985:(13a))

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