

## **Semantic agreement and the Dual model of language: evidence from Swedish**

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Semantic agreement has been a puzzling phenomenon for the Y-model, as described in Chomsky (2000 et seq.). The Y-model assumes that language in the narrow sense consists of three components: a narrow-syntactic, a semantic and a phonological one. The narrow-syntactic component generates the structure and then transfer it to the semantic and phonological components, where it is interpreted and spelled out. In this model, subject-predicate agreement is seen as uninterpretable person-number-gender-features on the predicate that must be eliminated by co-indexing them with the PNG-features of the subject DP, for which they are interpretable. Only after this formal operation has taken place, the derivation can be transferred to the semantic and phonological components.

As shown in Nordström (2018), the problem with semantic agreement is that the predicate does not agree formally with the subject DP, but with its lexical semantics and in conflict with the formal features of the DP. This suggest that agreement must have access to the semantic component and cannot be an elimination of uninterpretable features in the narrow-syntactic component. Previous accounts of semantic agreement such as Smith (2017) and Pesetsky (2013) have been forced to introduce a set of additional premises to account for the phenomenon, such as the presence of null elements, that agreement can go in different directions, and that it can take place either before or after the derivation has been transferred to the semantic and phonological components. All these assumptions are departures from the minimalistic methodology needed in a theory of language which is built on rational assumptions and whose underlying premises have not been independently substantiated. One should not introduce additional premises that are impossible to verify only in order to save the theory.

According to the Strongest Minimalist Thesis, the faculty of language only contains features motivated by the linking of sound and meaning, and this linking process should function as simply as possible (Chomsky 2007: 4). In Nordström (2014), (2017) and (2018), I explored this hypothesis to its ultimate conclusion by showing (1) that language cannot be a recursive embedding system if it should be able to accommodate discrete infinity and specifiers, but must merely be a discrete combinatorial system, and (2) that the narrow-syntactic operations take place in the semantic and phonological components.

This Dual model of language offers a systematic explanation for semantic agreement without introducing additional premises, namely that agreement is a phonological realisation of either a set of functional categories (grammatical agreement) or a set of lexical-semantic features (semantic agreement) pertaining to the subject. The notion that PNG-features on predicates represent uninterpretable features that must be deleted cannot be correct. In most subject-predicate agreement systems in the languages of the world, the PNG-affixes on the predicate function as pronouns (Siewierska 1999). Furthermore, in the case of semantic agreement, they contribute with meanings not conveyed by the co-referential DP.

Data on semantic agreement has previously focussed on English and the Slavonic languages. In this talk, I will present data from Swedish. In Swedish, there can be semantic agreement in passive, predicative and generic constructions. In these cases, it is not possible to reconstruct null elements. Furthermore, some of these semantic agreement constructions are more or less obligatory, in conflict with the PNG-features of the co-referential DP.

## References

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