

Tag questions and Richard: extraclausal access to finite subjects

Course on "Locality of grammatical relations"
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Two English constructions

- Tag questions: *You were waiting for me, weren't you?*
- Richard: *Robin sounds like she's not doing too well*

Major claims:

- Subjects of tags and Richard-sentences correlate with index properties of external constituents.
- An independently motivated head feature AGR will automatically encode the relevant information in a way that makes it accessible extraclausally.
- The potential nonidentity of AGR and INDEX accounts for both the tag subject correlation and the distribution of *there* dummy subjects in Richard sentences.

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Minor claims

- Tag questions are adjuncts which modify a preceding declarative clause.
- Tag question verbs are [INV -]
- Tag auxiliaries are linked to their associated main clause auxiliaries by the requirement of CONT|KEY type identity.
- Least oblique valents of yes/no question-clausal heads are COMPS elements, with the SUBJ list empty in such clauses.

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Tag data

(1) Sarah slept, didn't she/*Sara/*they/*I

(2) a. I'm still invited, $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{aren't} \\ \text{*amn't} \end{array} \right\}$ I?

b. I'm still invited, $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{aren't} \\ \text{*amn't} \end{array} \right\}$ I invited to that party?

(3) a. We needn't agree to this, need we?

b. Need we agree to this?

c. *We need agree to this.

- The class of auxiliaries in tag questions is exactly the class of inverted auxiliaries

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- This identity raises very serious questions about the basis for the claim that tag auxiliaries are [INV -]

(4) a. Sara is sleeping, isn't $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{she} \\ *her \\ *herself \\ *mine? \\ *there \\ *it \end{array} \right\} ?$

b. It's raining, isn't $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{it} \\ *there \end{array} \right\} ?$

c. There's a lion in the closet, isn't $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{there} \\ *it \end{array} \right\} ?$

- Tag subjects must match main clause subjects in INDEX values.

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(6) You $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{look} \\ \text{sound} \\ \text{seem} \end{array} \right\}$ like $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{you're} \\ *he's \\ *Melinda Sue's \\ *the twins're \\ *they're \\ *we're \end{array} \right\}$ in trouble.

(7) There $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{looks} \\ \text{sounds} \\ \text{seems} \end{array} \right\}$ like $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{there's} \\ *it's*he's \\ *Melinda Sue's \\ *the twins're \\ *they're \\ *we're \end{array} \right\}$ gonna be a problem.

- Conclusion: We find strict covariation between the INDEX values of the matrix subject and the complement clause.

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Richard data

The alignment of relevant between main and embedded clause subjects in Richard sentences is much tighter than B&F argue for, making their inclusion together as common manifestations of extracausal information linkage seem a natural research strategy. The discrepancy in judgments is explained shortly.

(5) Rocco $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{looks} \\ \text{sounds} \\ \text{seems} \end{array} \right\}$ like $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{he's} \\ *Melinda Sue's \\ *the twins're \\ *they're \\ *we're \end{array} \right\}$ in trouble.

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Relevance to the locality issue

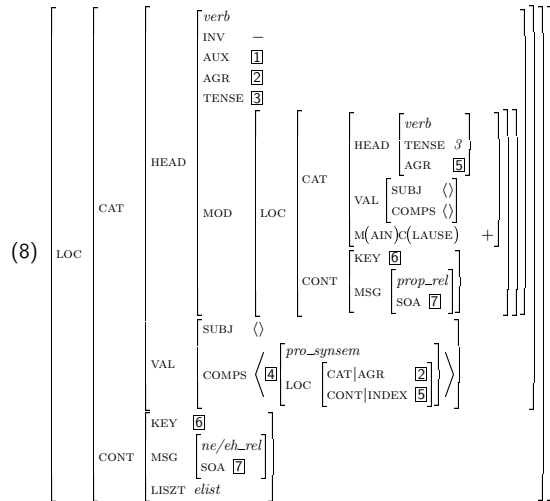
Problem: In a framework in which information about valents is systematically suppressed by saturation, how can information about properties of the subject of the tag or the complement clause be aligned with the subject of the main clause or Richard matrix clause, respectively?

Proposal: The head feature AGR proposed within HPSG in Kathol (2000) can be incorporated into the analysis of both constructions to allow a limited apparent nonlocality of extracausal information sharing.

Comment: The B&F proposal, though it does rely on the soundness of AK's arguments and incorporates the specific mechanism he proposes, does significantly modify his AGR feature and should be regarded as a somewhat distinct notion.

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The lexical description of tag auxiliaries



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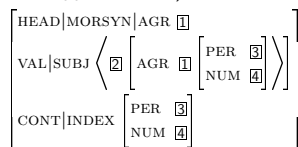
share specifications for AGR, allowing for the possibility that tags and main clauses will display different agreement patterns.

- B&F require the type of AGR's value to be the same as that of INDEX's value, so that subtype information (e.g., *ref* vs. *it* vs. *there*) can be reflected in the AGR VALUE to account for dummy subjects in tags.
- Nouns either identify their AGR and INDEX values or they do not, but the index of the tag subject and the agreement value of the main clause verb are identified.
 - When AGR = INDEX, then [2] = [5], and the agreement morphology on the tag auxiliary matches that on the main verb (*Robin has lost her keys again, hasn't she?*).
 - When AGR ≠ INDEX, then [2] neq [5], and the agreement morphology on the tag auxiliary differs from that on the main verb (*Everyone gets invited back, don't they?*, where *they* has a description in which its AGR value specifies third person plural values, but its INDEX is third person singular).

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Main aspects of the analysis in (8)

- Tags are clause-level adjuncts identifying their targets of modification via MOD.
- The feature AGR is a HEAD feature, hence visible at the top of the main clause.
- Within each clause, verbs and subjects structure-share their AGR values; specifically, the lexical description for a finite verb in English will contain the subdescription (Kathol, 1999, pp. 236–237)

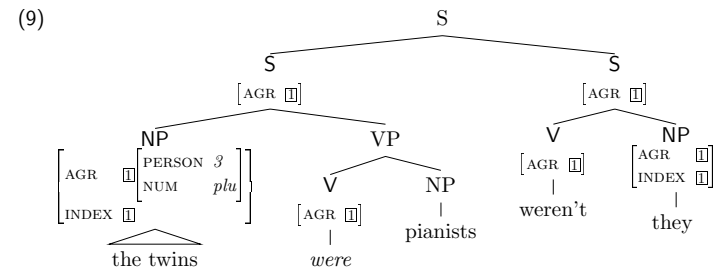


reflecting a coincidence between the V's AGR and the subjects' INDEX values. Flickinger and Bender adapt this description to a subjectless analysis of inversion.

- Crucially, however, the tags and the main clauses they modify do not systematically

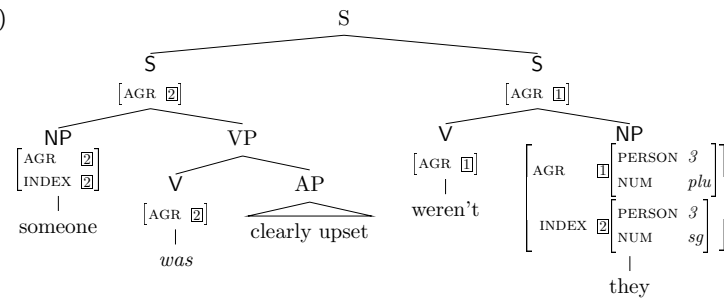
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Two examples



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(10)



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- Cases where verbs bear agreement morphology without a correlation with any selected element:

(14) a. An jenem Abend wurde viel gelacht
b. 'There was[3rd-sing] much laughter that evening.'

- Mismatches in agreement where different parts of a complex structure appear to be agreeing with different properties of the same head:

(15) a. Su Majestad suprema está contento
b. 'Your supreme[FEM] majesty is happy[MASC]

(16) a. Vous êtes belle.
b. 'You are[PL] beautiful[SG-FEM]

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Why AGR?

Kathol's (1999) arguments:

- Morphological resemblances between selector and selected categories:

(11) **illarum duarum bonarum feminarum**

'of these two good women'

(12) **kikapu kikubwa kimoja kilianguka**

'One large basket fell.'

(13) **vikapu vikubwa vimoja vilianguka**

'Three large baskets fell.'

- Expression of generalizations about features eligible to participate in agreement phenomena.

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AK's proposal: both AGR and INDEX

- As AK puts it, 'except for case concord, P&S treat agreement essentially as government' (p.232). On his alternative account, both the selected category and the selector bear AGR, which if spelled out phonologically in a uniform way entails the parallels in form in (11)–(13).
- Specifying the feature values which must be included in the specification of AGR immediately identifies what features are available to manifest agreement.
- Since heads may bear and AGR feature independently of any valence properties they have, the German impersonal cases such as (14) can be accommodated unproblematically.
- Mismatches can now be understood as the simultaneous satisfaction of constraints involving matches with two different feature specifications, i.e., AGR and INDEX.
 - In French, verbs agree with AGR number specifications as in Pollard and Sag (1994);
 - predicate adjectives however agree with the INDEX feature value for number on the NP;
 - verbs agree with the INDEX value for person.

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- In order for AGR to work as intended, it must be visible both on the subject NP (which is what is visible to the selecting head that imposes the match between its own AGR features and those of the subject) and the lexical head of that NP (which is what bears the relevant inflectional morphology); hence AGR must be a head feature. Therefore, . . .

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B&F's answers to the guiding questions

Q: Which properties need to be accessible/visible?

A: AGR is the crucial feature which must be visible to effect the necessary alignment of subjects across clause boundaries.

Q: For which elements is a particular property visible?

A: Only for subjects, although in principle any grammatical relation for which an analogue of AGR could be defined.

Q: How far is a particular property visible?

A: As high as the maximal projection of a particular head specified for AGR.

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A problem for B&F: tags for locative inversion main clauses

(17) In the garden are many statues, AREN'T there?! (based on data in Bowers (1976))

- According to (8), the tag subject INDEX is identical to main clause AGR;
- but in (17), the possibilities are few: either the preposed PP is the subject, as argued in much of the literature (Stowell (1981), Bresnan (1994), Culicover and Levine (2001)) or the postverb NP is.
- Neither the PP nor the NP in the main clause are [INDEX there] (Note in particular: *Into the room strode Robin(*, didn't there?)*; **Down the altar steps rolled the statue(*, didn't there?)*)

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Guiding questions (cont.)

Q: When does the property become visible in which of the domains?

A: At the point at which the main clause is modified by the tag question.

Q: Which representations and percolation principles should be used to make these properties visible?

A: The Head Feature Principle is responsible for making AGR appropriately visible.

Q: How is AGR used once it's visible?

A: AGR is used, via the tag question's MOD specification, to identify the tag head's subject index description with the main clause's AGR description, entailing a specific pattern of covariation between the main clause and tag subject.

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The lexical description of Richard verbs

B&F's data

- (18) a. Sara seems as if she could win.
b. *Sara seems as if I could win.
c. Sara sounds like she's tired
d. *Sara sounds like I'm tired.

However, this coindexing with the subject is not obligatory, showing that there is not a simple control relation holding between the higher verb and the *as if* complement. (Bender and Flickinger, 1999, p. 17)

- (19) a. They look like someone just died.

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- (ii) verbs which assign to their subjects a semantic role as the source of an auditory or visual cue suggesting the truth of the proposition denoted by the complement clause. These are the cases that B&F cite as evidence for the possibility of divergence between the matrix and complement clause subjects in the examples given.

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- b. You sound as if I never mentioned this to you.
c. He acts like the whole world is against him.

- This paradigm shows that B&F are conflating two quite different classes of lexical items.

- (20) a. Speaker 1: I was going to get a low-interest loan from my pal John at the bank, which I really need—but then it turned out that the bank may be downsizing his job away, and the auditors are a bit suspicious of some transfers of funds he authorized.

- b. Speaker 2: John sounds to me like $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{he's} \\ \text{*you're} \end{array} \right\}$ in trouble.

- Conclusion: *sound*, *look* have descriptions as

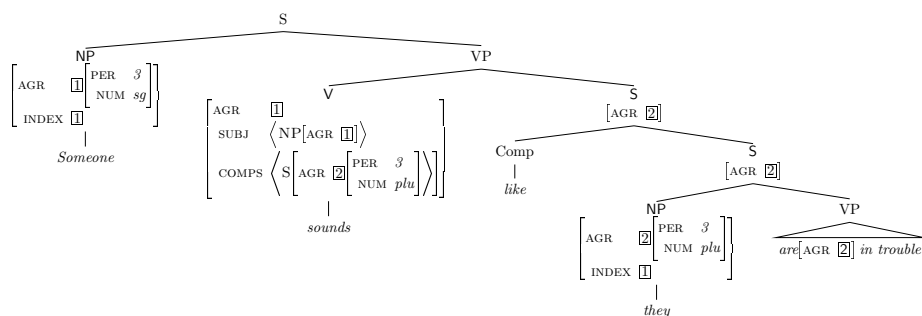
- (i) raising verbs, taking a finite *as if* or *like* clausal complement whose subject must match the index specifications of the matrix subject, and where the verb takes a proposition as its argument and identifies that proposition as having the appearance of being true, as in the case of (20); and

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The problem

In spite of the apparent strict parallelism between the main and secondary clause subjects in the tag and Richard constructions, it turns out that B&F's proposal based on the percolation of AGR cannot account for the Richard phenomenon.

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(21) Someone sounds like they are trouble.

The only equality that could be enforced here is that of the INDEX/AGR value of the matrix subject with the [AGR] value of the embedded clause, which would give the wrong result. There is no way to equate the [AGR] value of the matrix subject with the index of the embedded subject, which is what is necessary to license (21), because the index of the

Access through CONT?

- It appears that one could achieve the necessary identity by equating the matrix subject's AGR value with the value of ARG1 in the CONT value of the embedded clause, which will be the index of the subject.
- But this will give the wrong results in the case of

(22) Rocco sounds like he's always getting shafted by the police.

embedded subject is inaccessible to the matrix verb. But as (21) shows, the lower subject index must be equatable with the higher subject AGR or INDEX feature.

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