Different Kinds of "Agreement"

Some Concepts, Some Data, Some Theoretical Issues
Our Roadmap

- The relationship between case and agreement
  - Two sides of the same coin...kinda
  - “True” agreement and clitics
- A look at Choctaw
- Issues related to describing “agreement”
  - Some Icelandic agreement and concord facts

Sources

What is “agreement”?  
What kinds of words show agreement?  
What are the properties of agreement?  
What is the relationship between agreement and case?

“Canonical agreement is redundant rather than informative.” (Corbett 2006:26)
Case-Agreement Mismatches
(Woolford 2006)

“If agreement were entirely parasitic on case, then we would expect such matching in all languages; yet Case-agreement mismatches do occur…” [p.2]

We don’t always get this…
Nominative = Absolutive

In general...
- In nom-acc systems, verbs agree with the nominative
- In erg-abs systems, verbs agree with the absolutive/nominative

BUT...
- There are some ergative languages that have “subject agreement” in some contexts.
  - The verb agrees with the subject, even if it’s ergative

AND...
- The opposite pattern isn’t attested
- “No” languages with a nominative-accusative case pattern and an ergative agreement pattern.
WOOLFORD’S PROPOSAL

There is a difference between true verbal agreement and clitics

- No mismatches with clitics. They always show the abstract case of the argument they double.

A verb can agree with an ergative in the absence of a nom/abs DP

- If there is no nominative, languages pick a strategy:
  - Show default agreement on the verb (Icelandic, Hindi)
  - Agree with a non-nominative (Warlpiri)

PREDICTIONS:

- No language where ergative clitic doubles a nominative.
- No language with a nom-acc case system and an erg-abs/nom agreement system.
  - In transitive clauses, the verb has to agree with the nominative subject.
CASE THEORY IN A NUTSHELL

Two types of case:

- **Structural**: Assigned by a head to a DP that either:
  - Sits in the specifier, or
  - Is c-commanded by the head

- **Non-structural**
  - Lexical: assigned by particular verbs/prepositions
  - Inherent: more “regular” than lexical case:

The important point: Ergative is a non-structural case.
The dative is a blocker in Faroese and prevents T from assigning nominative.

**Defective Intervention Effect:**
A closer DP prevents a relationship between a head and a further DP even though the closer DP isn’t eligible to enter into a relationship with that head.

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Faroese is spoken by appr. 66,000 people in the Faroe Islands and Denmark.

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(4) Mær likar henda filmin. [Faroese]

me-DAT likes this film-ACC (*nom)

‘I like this film.’ (Barnes 1986 (12))

(5) Tað eru komnir nakrir gestir í gjár.

the-PL come-PL some guests-NOM.PL yesterday

‘Some guests came yesterday.’ (Jonas, pers.comm.)

C-command isn’t the problem. The dative is the problem (in Faroese).
THANGU ≠ HINDI

- Thangu doesn’t allow nom/abs with an ergative subject.

- Tripartite Case System
  - Nom: subject of intransitive
  - Erg: subject of transitive
  - Acc: object of transitive

Ergative blocks nominative assignment to the object (in Thangu).

(6) Taykka+0 rakkun’Tin.  
woman+NOM died  
‘Woman died.’ (Schebeck 1976 (11))

(7) Yūlŋu+Tu taykka+Nŋa pūyan.  
man+ERG woman+ACC hit  
‘Man hit woman.’ (Schebeck 1976 (15))

Thangu is spoken in Australia...maybe.
The AGREEMENT THEORY IN A NUTSHELL

- Two types of agreement:
  - Pronominal Clitics: Double overt or null arguments
    - The case matches the abstract case of the DP that is doubled.

- “True” Agreement (aka Inflection)
  - Mediated by a functional head that also potentially assigns structural case.
  - Like case, a “true” agreement relationship can hold via:
    - Spec-head
    - C-command

**Important**: Woolford argues that it’s possible to delete some features of a head while retaining others.

- Nom on T can be deleted, but the phi features can remain and need to be valued... by an ergative if no nominative is around.

OR...

- The phi features on T are deleted when nom is deleted...leading to default on the verb.
Verbs agree with Nominatives in both nom-acc and erg-nom systems.

A language may allow agreement with an ergative in the absence of a nominative.
- Warlpiri

Nom-acc and erg-nom systems use clitics that match the case of the noun they double.
Warlpiri is spoken in Australia by appr. 2,500 people.

(1) Ngarrka-ngku ka yunpa-rni.
   man-ERG PRES sing-NONPAST
   ‘The man is singing.’
   (Levin 1983:149, (4.23b))

- Active Ergative for Bittner and Hale (1996).
  - Ergative only appears in the context of an object – overt or semantically incorporated.
- Things are more complicated.
  - It’s a Tripartite system.
Previous literature has argued that the case and agreement systems are independent in Warlpiri.

Woolford argues that case and agreement come apart only when there is no nominative.

The system is actually more constrained than previously believed.
Verbs can take nom or erg subjects.
- Nom is unmarked
- Erg is marked

‘Run’ takes nom, but ‘sing’ takes erg.
- The “active ergative” category can be quite non-intuitive.

Both kinds of verbs can have dative objects.

(12) Ngaju ka-ma parnka-mi.
I(nom) pres-1sg run-nonpast
‘I am running.’ (Hale 1982 (1b))

(13) Ngaju ka-ma-rla wangka karnta-ku.
I(nom) pres-1sg-3dat speak woman-dative
‘I am speaking to the woman.’ (Simpson 1991: 317)

(16) Nganka-ngku ka yunpa-mi.
man-erg pres sing-nonpast
‘The man is singing.’ (Hale 1982 (30a))

(17) Nganka-ngku ka-rla karli-ki warri-mi.
man-erg pres-3dat boomerang-dat seek-nonpast
‘A man is looking for a boomerang.’ (Hale 1982 (44a))
“...there are two distinct morphologically unmarked Cases that have been conflated under standard labeling.” [p.4]

» The case on the object may be unmarked.
» It has been traditionally mislabeled as Absolutive.
» **Nope, it’s Accusative!**

» The unmarked cases pattern differently.
» In non-finite clauses, the subject becomes dative = (20).
  » Non-finite T can’t assign Nom/Abs
» The object does not become dative.

(18) Ngajulu-rlu ka-rna marlu nya-nyi.
   I-erg    pres-1sg kangaroo(acc) see-nonpast
   ‘I see the kangaroo.’ (Hale 1982 (9c))

(19) Kamta-ngku ka-rla kurdu-ku miyi yi-nyi.
   woman-erg pres-3dat child-dat food(acc) give-nonpast
   ‘The woman is giving the child food.’ (Hale 1982 (87d))

(20) ... [ngaju-ku jarda-nguna-nja-rlami]
   ... I-dative sleep-lie-infin-obviative comp
   ... while I was asleep (Legate 2006 (19))

(21) ... [kamta-patu-rlu miyi purra-nja-puru]
   ... woman-paucal-erg food(acc) cook-infin-contemporary action comp
   ... while the women are cooking the food (Legate 2006 (20))
Agreement vs Clitics in Warlpiri

(23) Warlpiri Singular Agreement Morphemes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>True Agreement</th>
<th>Accusative Clitics</th>
<th>Dative Clitics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>ma</td>
<td>ju</td>
<td>ju</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>n(pa)</td>
<td>ngku</td>
<td>ngku</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>rla</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(24) Ngaju ka-ma wangka-mi.
I(nom) pres-1sgAgr speak-nonpast
‘I am speaking.’
Agreement with Nom subj.
(Hale 1982 (9a))

you(nom) pres-2sgAgr speak-nonpast
‘You are speaking.’
Agreement with Nom subj.
(Hale 1982 (9b))

(26) Ngaju-rlu ka-ma-ngku nyuntu nya-nyi.
I-ergative pres-1sgAgr-2sgCL you(acc) sec-nonpast
‘I see you.’
No Nom., so agreement with Erg subj. Clitic matches Acc obj.
(Hale 1982 (9f))

(27) Kurdu-ngku ka-ju nya-nyi ngaju.
child-erg pres-1sgCL sec-nonpast me(acc)
‘The child sees me.’
No agreement marker for 3sg subj. Clitic matches Acc obj.
(Simpson 1991: 99)

(28) Ngaju-ku ka-ju karli jamnti-mi.
I-dative pres-1sgCL boomerang(acc) trim-nonpast
‘He’s making me a boomerang.’
(Simpson 1991: 150)

Pro-drop. No agreement marker for 3sg subj. Clitic matches Dat obj.
RESTRICTIONS ON CLITICS, AND NOT ON AGREEMENT

- A 1st or 2nd person accusative clitic cannot co-occur with a 1st or 2nd person dative clitic...in Warlpiri or French.

- Known as the Person Case Constraint (we’ll see more of this).

- A 1/2 agreement marker can co-occur with a 1/2 clitic.

(29) a. *Il me te donne. [French]
   He 1sgCL 2sgCL give.
   ‘He is giving you/me to me/you.’

   man-erg pres-1sgCL-2sgCL take-away-nonpast
   ‘The man is taking you/me away from you/me.’ (Simpson 1991:149)

(30) Kuyu ka-ma-ngku ka-nyi.
    meat pres-1sgAgr-2sgCL carry-nonpast
    ‘I am carrying meat for you.’ (Simpson 1991:149)
Zooming in on agreement with ergative subjects

Case on T is deleted.
Phi features remain.
Ergative DP values the phi features on T.

(26) Ngajulu-rlu ka-ma-ngku nyuntu nya-nyi.
I-ergative pres-1sgAgr-2sgCL you(ace) see-nonpast
‘I see you.’

(Hale 1982 (9f))

Ergative case assigned by v-erg
(38)/(39): If there is a nominative, the verb agrees with it.
- No agreement with ergative subjects.
(36)/(37): In the absence of a nominative, a marked object controls agreement.
- The object is marked if definite/specific.
- If no nominative or marked object, verb is in the default.

(36) Ramesh-e Sudha-ne dhəmkawy-i [Gujarati]
Ramesh(masc)-erg Sudha(fem)-dat/acc scold-fem

‘Ramesh scolded Sudha.’
(Mistry 1976 (14a))

(37) Sudha-e Ramesh-ne dhəmkawy-o [Gujarati]
Sudha(fem)-erg Ramesh(masc)-dat/acc scold-masc

‘Sudha scolded Ramesh.’
(Mistry 1976 (14b))
The relationship between case and agreement is tightly woven.

If a clause has a nominative/absolutive, the verb agrees with it.

If a clause does not have a nom/abs DP, the verb can agree with another DP or with nothing.
A Look at Choctaw

Spoken by appr. 10,400 people in Louisiana, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and Tennessee
Is agreement really independent of Case in Choctaw? [Woolford 2008]

**NO**

- Case and agreement are linked.
- Agreement follows the pattern observed in nominative-accusative systems.
- The verb agrees with the nominative.

**YES**

- Yes: A verb can agree with a nominative in more than one way.
- The choice between using “true” agreement and using a clitic depends on an active-stative distinction ...maybe.
  - The agreement morpheme is used with more active/volitional activities.
  - The clitic is used with less active/volitional activities.
  - This division is very tentative...
Davies 1986: “In Choctaw, ‘the agreement system and the case marking system function independently…”

Broadwell 2006: case system is nominative-accusative

Mithun 1991: Agreement system is active-stative

- All subjects are nominative.
- The more agentive subjects are “cross-referenced” with Series I forms.
- The less agentive subjects are “cross-referenced” with Series II/III forms, which also cross-reference objects and possessors.
There is a distinction between “true” agreement and clitics.

- “True agreement” is Woolford’s term and refers to verbal agreement with nominatives.
- A nominative can be cross-referenced with either a true agreement morpheme or a pronominal clitic.
  - Woolford doesn’t commit to the exact distinction [active vs stative/external argument vs internal argument, or something else]
- An accusative can only be cross-referenced with a clitic.
  - Verbs don’t agree with accusatives
- The nominative and accusative clitics look the same. The morphological expression does not necessarily match the abstract Case.
Overview of C/case in Choctaw

Choctaw is SOV  Subjects are nominative  Objects are accusative

(2): Accusative is optionally marked if the object is adjacent to the verb.

(3): Accusative is obligatorily marked if the object moves.
  Condition on morphological realization of case

(4): No (morphological) dative. In ditransitives, the accusative marker is optional for the argument adjacent to the verb.

(5): Free (unbound) pronouns are marked for nominative and accusative, but they only appear when focused and contrastive.
Agreement vs clitics in Choctaw

(8) Agreement+NEG+CL+CL+applicative+CL+V+Agreement(1st sg only)+Tense

(7) Cross-referencing Forms in Choctaw

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Series I</th>
<th>Series II [pronominal clitics]</th>
<th>Series III [Series II+applicative]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st sg li</td>
<td>sa/si</td>
<td>(s)am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st sg pl il</td>
<td>pi</td>
<td>pim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd sg is(h)</td>
<td>chi</td>
<td>chim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd sg pl has(h)</td>
<td>hachi</td>
<td>hachim</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd sg</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>im</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd sg pl</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>im</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Series 1: cross-references **only, but not all**, nominatives

Occur at left edge, except for 1sg form, which precedes the tense suffix

(When we look at Dakota, we’ll see that the distribution of pronouns varies within the verbal complex.)
- Clitics always have abstract Case that matches the abstract Case of the noun they cross-reference.
- Series II has both nominative and accusative clitics that are syncretic.
- But...the nominative clitic is closer to the verb than the accusative clitic.
- A clitic that cross-references a subject is closer to the verb than any other clitic.

(22): The clitic for the “less agentive” subject looks like the possessive marker.

There is no 3rd person clitic, so the 2nd person object clitic is closest to the verb in (23).
Aspect, agreement, and clitics in Yucatec Maya

(25) K-in meyah. [imperfective aspect]
incompl-1 AGRA GR work
‘I am working.’ (Krämer and Wunderluch 1999 (1c), reglossed)

(26) H meyah-n-ah-en [perfective aspect]
compl work-N-PERF-1 CL
‘I have worked.’ (Krämer and Wunderluch 1999 (1d), reglossed)

(27) Tán uy-il -ik -en [imperfective aspect]
DUR 3 AGR-see-imperf -1 CL
‘He is seeing me.’ (Bricker 1981 (1), reglossed9)

The nominative subject of an intransitive is cross-referenced by agreement when the aspect is imperfective, but by a clitic when the aspect is perfective.

And, the clitics aren’t distinguished for case. The accusative form in the transitive sentence in (27) is the same as the nominative form in the intransitive sentence in (26).
The Case vs case distinction is very important in syntactic and morphological theory.

- Sometimes there’s an alignment between Case and case, but sometimes not.

- Agreement is argued to be sensitive to Case in Choctaw.
More on...

What agrees with what under what circumstances?

And more Icelandic 😊
The ingredients for a successful agreement relationship

- **Controller**: The item that determines what another word will look like.
- **Target**: The item whose form is determined by the controller.
- **Features**: The pieces of “information” of the controller that are displayed on the target.
- **Domain**: The syntactic environment in which the controller-target relationship is established.
- **Conditions**: The particular factors that induce or fail to induce an agreement relationship.
The agreement controller may be a syntactic dependent." [Corbett 2001:192]

- The nouns are syntactic dependents of the verb and preposition.
- But in the noun-adjective relationship, the noun is the controller.
- Person, gender, number are "direct" features of a noun/noun phrase. [Corbett 2001:194]
- Case is "imposed" on a noun/NP by some other element. [Corbett 2001:195]

- Verbs tend to agree with some set of direct features.
- Adjectives, quantifiers, participles, etc. tend to agree with some set of both imposed and direct features.

Sigurðsson 2006, ex 29

The verbs are all 3pl.
Agreement vs Concord in Icelandic

**Relationship 1**

**Controller:**
- subject

**Target:**
- verb

**Features:**
- person, number

**Conditions:**
- the verb is finite

**Domain:**
- the subject and verb are clausemates

a. Strákarnir vonast til að komast allir í skóla.
   boys.the.nom hope.3pl for that to get all.nom.pl.masc to school.acc.m.sg
   ‘The boys all hope to get to school.’

b. Strákarnir vonast til að vanta ekki alla í skólann.
   boys.the.nom hope.3pl for that to lack not all.acc.pl.masc in school.the.dat.m.sg
   ‘The boys all hope not to be absent from school.’

c. Strákarnir vonast til að leiðast ekki öllum í skóla.
   boys.the.nom hope.3pl for that to bore not all.dat.pl.masc in school.acc.m.sg
   ‘The boys all hope not to be bored in school.’

d. Strákarnir vonast til að verða allra getið í ræðunni.
   boys.the.nom hope.3pl for that to be all.gen.pl.masc mentioned in speech.the
   ‘The boys all hope to be mentioned in the speech.’ (Sigurðsson 1991: 332)

**Relationship 2**

**Controller:**
- subject

**Target:**
- quantifier

**Features:**
- case, gender, number

**Conditions:**
- ---

**Domain:**
- the subject and quantifier are clausemates
Not all verbs behave the same

a. Konunginum voru gefnar ambáttir
   king.the.Dat was.3pl given.Nom.fem.pl maidservants.Nom.fem.pl
   ‘The king was given maidservants.’

b. Ambáttin var gefin konunginum.
   maidservant.the.Nom.fem.sg was.3sg given.Nom.fem.sg king.the.Dat
   ‘The maidservant was given to the king.’ (ZMT, EX 44)

Relationship 1
Controller: nominative DP
Target: auxiliary
Features: person, number
Conditions: ---
Domain: the nominative and the auxiliary are clausemates

Relationship 2
Controller: nominative DP
Target: participle
Features: case, gender, number
Conditions: ---
Domain: the nominative and the participle are clausemates
Different items have different conditions

- Verbs (the aux here) and participles agree with structurally case-assigned DPs, even though verbs and participles show different features.
- Quantifiers (and adjectives) show concord with any DP.

a. Bræðurnir voru báðir kosnir í stjórnina.
   brothers.the.nom.masc.pl were.3pl both.nom.masc.pl elected.nom.masc.pl to board.the
   ‘The brothers were both elected to the board.’

b. Bræðrunum var báðum boðið á fundinn.
   brothers.the.dat.m.pl was.3sg both.dat.masc.pl invited.nom.neut.sg to meeting.the
   ‘The brothers were both invited to the meeting.’

(Sigurðsson 2008, ex17)

No nominative controller for the target participle. Default!
There are different kinds of agreement!

- **“True” agreement**
  - Auxiliaries and tensed verbs show the direct features nominative/absolutive DPs, if there is one. Otherwise, the verb may agree with another DP.
  - Sensitive to structural Case

- **Clitics**
  - Tiny things that copy the underlying Case of whichever DP they co-reference.
  - Insensitive to structural Case

- **Concord**
  - Quantifiers, adjectives, participles show direct and imposed features of DPs.
  - Sometimes sensitive to structural case
  - Other times insensitive to structural case