

Skewed AGREE: accounting for a closest-conjunct effect with semantic implications

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1 Fixing AGREE for Ambiguous Domains

The AGREE operation as defined in Chomsky (2000) can't unequivocally determine a match when probes have Ambiguous Domains (AD, 1). For a ϕ -feature probe, for instance, (2) is an AD.

- (1) A probe has an **Ambiguous Domain** if
- its domain contains **multiple SGs** (Suitable Goals),
 - the **PIC** doesn't make all but one of the SGs invisible to probing,
 - none of the SGs** asymmetrically **c-commands** all others.
- (2) IP coordination is an **AD** for a ϕ -probe: $[\&_P [IP DP I'] [\&' \& [IP DP I']]]$ (=9)

I will present data in which ϕ -probes with ADs always end up matching the linearly closest SG. As this matching has both morphological and semantic effects—unlike other closest-conjunct phenomena—it motivates an addendum to AGREE: **Skewed AGREE** (3).

- (3) **Skewed AGREE**: If a probe has an AD, match the linearly closest SG.

As a precondition for (3), word-order must be defined early (Travis 1989), maybe at Merge. Early determination of word order is also assumed, for instance, in Bruening's (2014) theory of binding and Khalaf's (2015) account of inter-conjunct asymmetries.

2 Switch-reference marking

Kĩsêdjê (Northern Jê, Brazil) marks switch-reference (SR, Jacobsen 1967) on **clausal coordinating conjunctions (CCC)**. In simple cases, each CCC tells whether the clauses it connects have the same subject (SS) or different subjects (DS):

- (4) $[\emptyset \quad khw\bar{a} \quad tho \quad th\bar{e} \quad] =nhy_1 [\emptyset \quad \emptyset\text{-nd\bar{a}t} \quad] =ne_2$
 3.NOM 3.to 3.with go.SG =&.DS 3.NOM 3-get.PL =&.SS
- $[\emptyset \quad s\text{-}\bar{o}mu \quad] =n_3 [\emptyset \quad khu\text{-}ru \quad ro \quad no. \quad]$
 3.NOM 3-see =&.SS 3.NOM 3.eat.SG-NMLZ with lay.SG

'He_i brought them to him_j, he_j took them, he_j looked at them and he_j lay down eating them.'

3 Modeling SR

Syntax

- Each SR-marking CCC (&) bears two ϕ -probes, with domains [Compl,&] and [Spec,&].
- The DPs matched by a CCC's probes are linked with the CCC for later interpretation at CI.
- Linking is implemented here by copying the CCC's numeration onto the matched DPs.

Semantics

- The DPs linked with a **ss** CCC are interpreted as **coreferent**.
- The DPs linked with a **ds** CCC are interpreted as **disjoint**.

Baseline: no ADs (5) clearly shows that SR is sensitive to hierarchy (tree in 10). No domains are ADs, so (3) isn't necessary. **Derivation: (i.)** the specifier probe in the CCC =*ka* matches the highest DP in [Spec,&]—'me and your daughter', the subject of IP_a—rather than the linearly closest DP—'you', the subject of IP_b; **(ii.)** the complement probe matches the highest DP in IP_c; **(iii.)** the matched DPs are linked with the DS CCC and correctly interpreted as disjoint.

- (5) Hên $[\&_P [IP_a [wa \quad a\text{-kat}\bar{o}t \quad me \quad aj]_{\{1\}} [IP_b a\text{-mb}\bar{a}r\bar{a}\text{-}\emptyset] \quad mba\text{-}j \quad to \quad ta]$
 NFUT 1.NOM 2-daughter with PL 2-cry-NMLZ hear-NMLZ with stand
- $[\&' =ka_1 [IP_c a_{\{1\}}\text{-mb}\bar{a}r\bar{a} \quad ra! \quad]]$
 =&.DS.2 2-cry indeed

'Me and your daughter were hearing you crying and you were crying indeed!'

With ADs Assuming that recursive coordination expands at *Compl* (Johannessen 1998), the structure of (4) is (11). Since [Compl,&'₁] and [Compl,&'₂] are ADs, we need Skewed AGREE (3). Probing and linking happens in the syntax, and at CI the DPs linked with a SS CCC are interpreted as coreferent and those linked with a DS CCC are interpreted as disjoint.

4 Skewed to the left, skewed to the right

Kĩsêdjê marks clausal embedding very clearly

- Main verbs are underived and mark their arguments as nominative-accusative.
- Embedded verbs are nominalized and mark their arguments as ergative-absolutive.
- In embedded clausal coordination, each clausal conjunct shows the marks of embedding.

	Unembedded	Embedded
Case of arguments	Nom-Acc	Erg-Abs
Form of verb	Underived	Nominalized

Some monoargumental verbs in Kĩsêdjê embed clauses. One such verb is the negative existential *khêrê* 'not.be'. In (6) and (7) (tree in 12), the clause headed by *khêrê* (IP_a) is coordinated with a simple clause (IP_d). The argument of *khêrê* (&₁P) is the coordination of two simple clauses, (IP_b) and (IP_c). The specifier probe of CCC₂ (=nhy₂ in 6, =ne₂ in 7) has an AD. IP_a is an AD because, within it, neither of the DP subjects of IP_b or IP_c (the SGs) is made inaccessible to probing by the PIC nor asymmetrically c-commands the other (1). Skewed AGREE is therefore activated and the SG linearly closest to the probe is matched, namely, the DP subject of IP_c.

Note the lack of resolution in (6-7): the system isn't treating IP_b + IP_c as the subject.

- (6) $[IP_a [\&_1P [IP_b P\bar{a}m_{\{1\}} =nda \quad kh\text{-}w\bar{a} \quad h\bar{y} \quad nhy\text{-}r\bar{y} \quad] =nhy_1 [IP_c \emptyset_{\{1,2\}}\text{-th}\bar{e}\text{-}m \quad]] \quad kh\bar{e}t \quad]$
 father =ERG 3-to yes say-NMLZ =&.DS 3-go-NMLZ not.be
- =nhy₂ $[IP_d \emptyset_{\{2\}} \quad mb\bar{a}r\bar{a}\text{-}\emptyset \quad ro \quad nhy. \quad]$
 =&.DS 3.NOM cry-NMLZ with sit

'Her father didn't allow her to go and a person sat crying (not her).'
 (lit. 'It was not the case that he said yes to her and she went, and then a person sat crying.')

- (7) $[IP_a [\&_1P [IP_b P\bar{a}m_{\{1\}} =nda \quad kh\text{-}w\bar{a} \quad h\bar{y} \quad nhy\text{-}r\bar{y} \quad] =nhy_1 [IP_c \emptyset_{\{1,2\}}\text{-th}\bar{e}\text{-}m \quad]] \quad kh\bar{e}t \quad]$
 father =ERG 3-to yes say-NMLZ =&.DS 3-go-NMLZ not.be
- =ne₂ $[IP_d \emptyset_{\{2\}} \quad mb\bar{a}r\bar{a}\text{-}\emptyset \quad ro \quad nhy. \quad]$
 =&.SS 3.NOM cry-NMLZ with sit

'Her father didn't allow her to go and she sat crying.'
 (lit. 'It was not the case that he said yes to her and she went, and then she sat crying.')

In (6-7) a CCC's specifier probe has an AD, and since [Spec,&] is to the left of &, linearly closest means *rightmost*. The converse point is shown by (8) below (tree in 13), in which the *complement probe* of CCC₃ has an AD (IP_b, headed by *mā* 'be.imminent'). Since [Compl,&₃] is to the right of &₃, linearly closest now means *leftmost*. IP_b is an AD because, within it, none of the DP subjects of IP_c, IP_d or IP_e is made inaccessible to probing by the PIC or asymmetrically c-commands the others (1). Skewed AGREE (3) is activated and the DP subject of IP_c is matched by the complement probe on CCC₃ since it is the linearly closest SG.

- (8) $[I\text{-}kandikhw\bar{a}j_{\{1\}} =ta \quad banheiro \quad m\bar{a} \quad at\bar{a} \quad] =n_1 [s_{\{1,2\}}\text{-}w\bar{a}\text{-}r\bar{a} \quad ro \quad ta \quad] =wa_2$
 1-sister =NOM bathroom into enter &.SS 3-bathe-NMLZ with stand &.DS.1
- $[\&_3P [IP_a wa_{\{2,3\}} \quad khuth\bar{e}p \quad ta \quad] =nhy_3 [IP_b [\&_1P [IP_c \emptyset_{\{3,4\}}\text{-}khatho\text{-}ro \quad]$
 1.NOM 3-waiting.for stand &.DS 3-exit-NMLZ
- =nhy₄ $[\&_5P [IP_e kh.w\bar{a} \quad i_{\{4,5\}}\text{-}t\bar{a}\text{-}r\bar{a} \quad] =ne_5 [IP_f i_{\{5\}}\text{-}tw\bar{a}\text{-}r\bar{a} \quad]]] \quad m\bar{a} \quad]]$
 &.DS 3-into 1-enter-NMLZ &.SS 1-bathe-NMLZ be.imminent

'My sister entered the bathroom, is taking a shower and I am waiting, and it is imminent that she leave, I enter the bathroom and take a shower.'

5 Discussion

Given the formulation of AGREE in Chomsky (2000), ADs are a reality. The closest-conjunct evidence we reviewed indicates that in such domains the SG linearly closest to the probe is matched. The closest-conjunct evidence from SR is stronger than other closest-conjunct effects discussed in the literature because its effects aren't only morphological, but also semantic, and therefore can't be ascribed to a "split" view of AGREE, in which AGREE in narrow syntax doesn't have access to linear order, and the linear effects are obtained in the morphological component (Bhatt and Walkow 2005; Marušič, Nevins, and Badecker 2015). I borrow Marušič, Nevins, and Badecker's idea that Agree produces a link between the matched goal and the probe.

To the extent that the data presented here make us reevaluate the nature of AGREE and our view of where linear order information enters the derivation, the same account could be extended (if we consider *minimal domains* and a multiple specifier account of DP coordination) to more classical closest-conjunct effect, allowing us to dispense with the split view of AGREE.

References

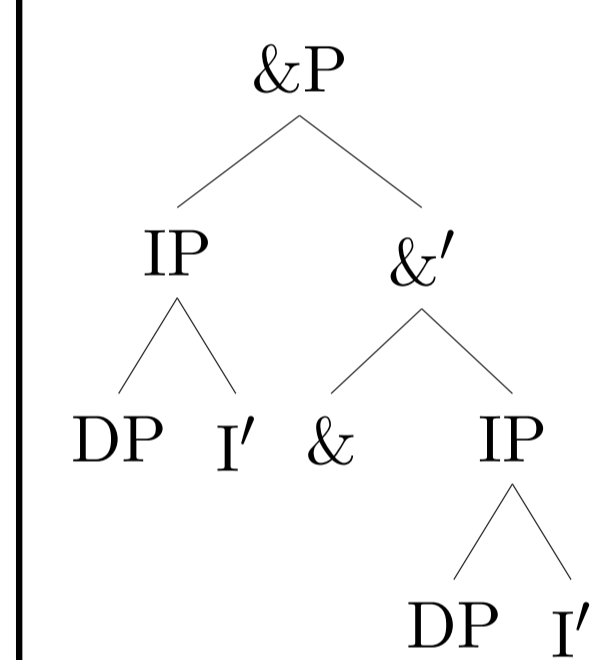
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Glossing conventions

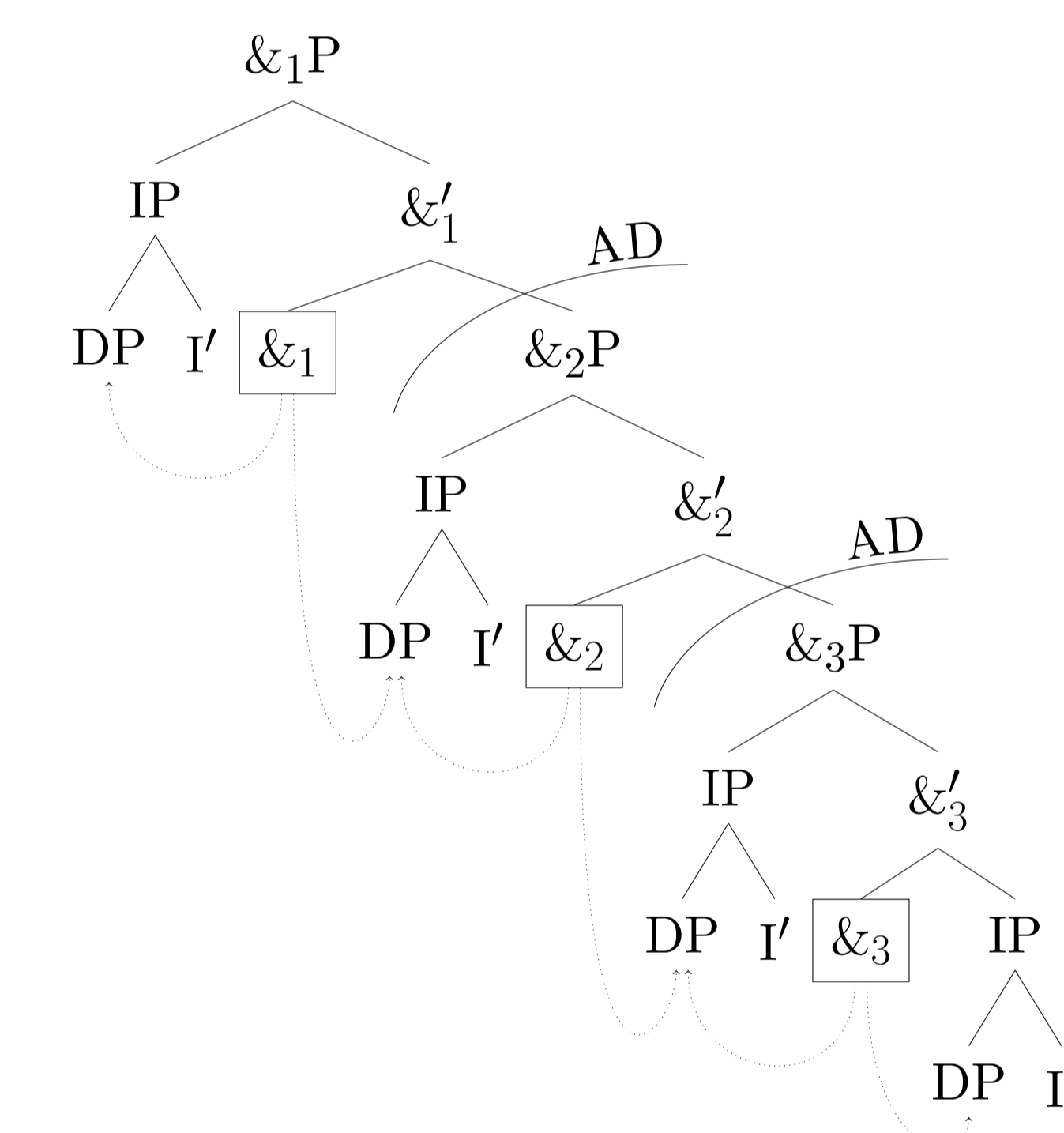
& = coordinating conjunction, 1 = first person, 2 = second person, 3 = third person, DS = different subject, ERG = ergative, NFUT = non-future, NMLZ = nominalizer, NOM = nominative, PL = plural, SG = singular, SS = same subject.

6 Trees in long-form notation

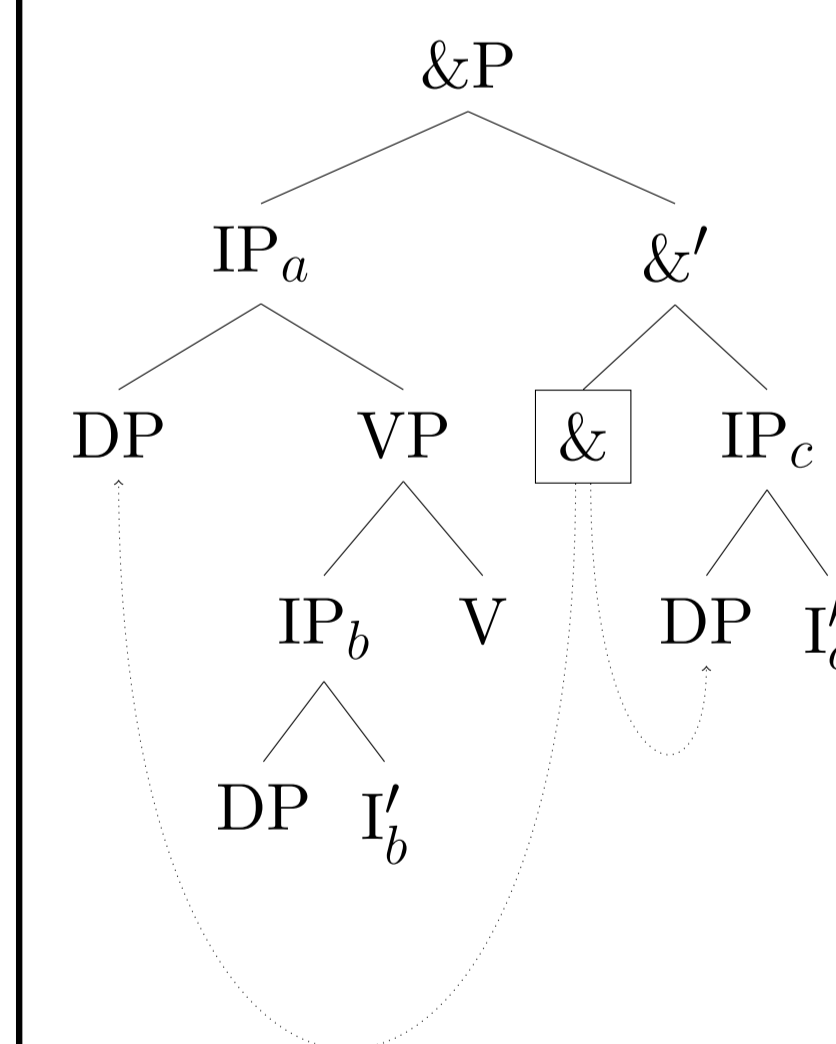
(9) (=2)



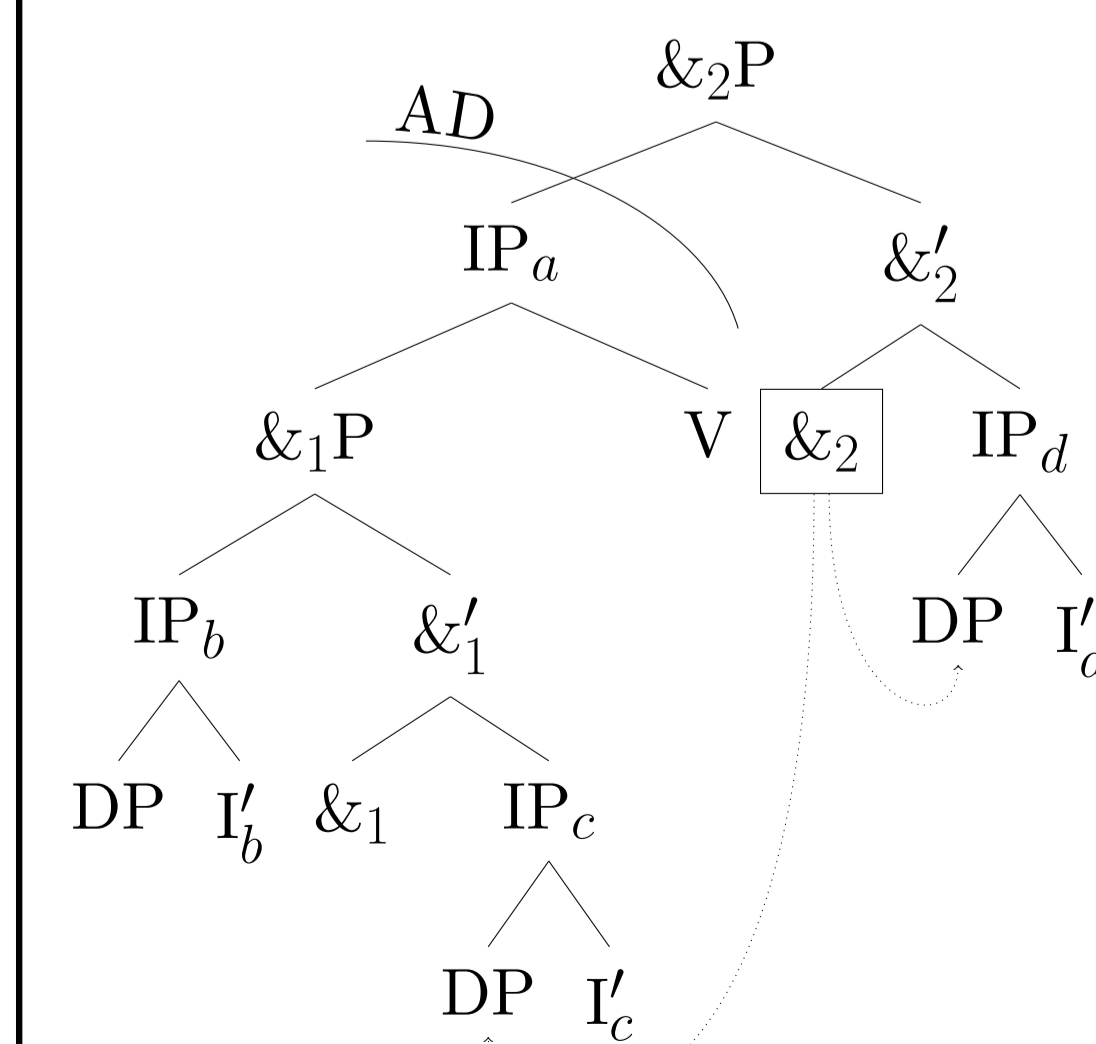
(11) Structure of (4)



(10) Structure of the &P in (5)



(12) Structure of (6) and (7)



(13) Structure of &3P in (8)

