

AGREE to Control: Case Optionality in Icelandic

1. Overview of Phenomenon. This paper explores the relationship between PRO and its controller. I illustrate that this relationship is not purely semantic (contra Jackendoff and Culicover 2006) and argue for an analysis of control in which PRO optionally inherits the case of its controller. In most Icelandic control constructions, PRO can bear either Nominative or the case of the controller. Since predicate adjectives in Icelandic agree with their subjects in case, gender, and number, we can see the features of PRO by looking at the adjective in the lower clause, as shown in (1). Agreement patterns between subjects and other clause internal items have been employed in the literature to argue that PRO bears case (e.g., Andrews 1981, 1982; Sigurðsson 1989, 1991; and Landau 2000, 2004, 2006). However, constructions such as (1) have been less researched. Here there is optionality with respect to the case of PRO: PRO can bear either the Dative case of the controller *honum* ‘him’ or Nominative. In contrast, there is no optionality with respect to phi features: PRO necessarily bears the masculine singular phi features of the controller. Presently, no account in the literature divorces this obligatory phi feature agreement from the optional case agreement.

2. The Nature of Agree. I demonstrate that the traditional conception of Agree cannot adequately account for control. I adopt Landau’s (2004, 2006) proposal that PRO must establish an agreement relation with the controller in order to refer. However, I propose a more general operation of AGREE, defined in (2), which has the innovation of removing the probe-goal asymmetry. The structurally higher item is not restricted to heads, nor is the structurally higher item necessarily responsible for triggering the relationship: AGREE relations can be triggered by structurally lower items, in this case PRO. Crucially, AGREE forces all of the features that are licensed on the controller at the point when the relationship is established to also be licensed on PRO.

3. Analysis. We can account for the optionality in (1) using a derivational approach: AGREE between the controller and PRO can be established either before or after the controller is case-licensed. In (3), AGREE is established when the controller is merged. Since the controller enters the derivation with fixed phi features, PRO inherits these features. However, because the controller is not case-licensed at this point, PRO does not inherit case and PRO bears Nominative by default. In (4), however, AGREE is established after the controller is case-licensed. Therefore, PRO inherits both the phi features and the case of the controller, Dative in (1). This approach allows us to account for long-distance agreement in constructions in which the lower clause is a full CP; control clauses in Icelandic necessarily have the complementizer *að*. In restructuring accounts, it is argued that we see long distance agreement only when the lower clause is smaller than a CP (Wurmbrand 2001, 2004).

4. Control with ‘Promise’. Evidence for this “timing effect” is found with the matrix verb ‘promise’. The optionality illustrated in (1) is blocked. As shown in (5), PRO is necessarily Nominative. ‘Promise’ is unique because it forces subject control across an object. Other control verbs with objects force object control. This latter fact follows from (2): AGREE is licensed when the controller c-commands PRO and there is no intervening DP. This condition delivers the long-held observation that the antecedent for PRO is the closest c-commanding DP. Building on Larson’s (1988) analysis which distinguishes the structure of ‘promise’ from other ditransitive control predicates, I propose that the subject of ‘promise’ is merged below the object. In order to be case-licensed, the subject moves past the object. Since the object intervenes between the case-licensed copy of the controller and PRO, in (6) AGREE is necessarily established with the non-case-licensed copy and the derivation in (7) is blocked. Therefore, the proposed derivational analysis provides a systematic way to account for both the asymmetry between case and phi features shown in (1) and the exceptionality of ‘promise’ shown in (5).

- (1) hún skipaði honum_i(**Dat.m.sg.**) að PRO_i(**Nom/Dat.m.sg.**) vera
 she ordered him to to-be
 góður(**Nom.m.sg.**)/góður(**Dat.m.sg.**)
 good
 ‘She ordered him to be good.’ (Andrews 1981:451)
- (2) AGREE holds between two items in a c-command relation and which are phase-mates. A structurally higher X°/XP enters into a relation with a structurally lower Y°/YP such that all features licensed on X°/XP are also licensed on Y°/YP and all features licensed on Y°/YP are also licensed on X°/XP. AGREE holds between X°/XP and Y°/YP when there is no Z°/ZP that is c-commanded by X°/XP and which c-commands Y°/YP and which could also AGREE with X°/XP or Y°/YP.
- (3)
$$[\alpha P \overbrace{DP_{i(\text{non-case-licensed controller})} \dots [IP \text{ PRO}_{i[\text{default Nom}] \dots VP}]}^{\text{AGREE}}]$$
- (4)
$$[FP F [\alpha P \overbrace{DP_{i(\text{case-licensed controller})} \dots [IP \text{ PRO}_{i[\text{case of controller}] \dots VP}]}^{\text{AGREE}}]]]$$
- (5) peir telja hana_i(**Acc.f.sg.**) hafa lofað honum að PRO_i(**Nom.f.sg./*Acc**)
 they believe her to-have promised him to
 vera góð(**Nom.f.sg.**)/*góða(**Acc**)
 to-be good
 ‘They believe her to have promised him to be good.’ (Andrews 1981:453)
- (6)
$$[FP \overbrace{DP_{i(\text{case-licensed controller})} [\alpha P \text{ DP}_{\text{object}} \dots [VP \overbrace{DP_{i(\text{non-case-licensed controller})} \dots [IP \text{ PRO}_i \dots VP}]}^{\text{AGREE}}]]]}^{\text{AGREE}}]$$
- (7)*
$$[FP \overbrace{DP_{i(\text{case-licensed controller})} [\alpha P \text{ DP}_{\text{object}} \dots [VP \overbrace{DP_{i(\text{non-case-licensed controller})} \dots [IP \text{ PRO}_i \dots VP}]}^{\text{AGREE}}]]]}^{\text{AGREE}}]$$

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