

Verbal Classifiers (vCLSf) and AGREE/Agreement: a formal matter.

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1. Goal. This talk addresses the nature of verbal Classifiers (vCLSf) as a *potential agreement phenomenon* in SLs, and as *potential locus for a modality effect*.

Of the four components of agreement identified in Mathur-Rathman (2012) (controller, target, domain, features), the *controller* and the *target* constitute the main difference with vCLSf: in traditional agreement phenomena, the N/DP is the controller and the target is the dependent morphology (in either the verb or any other associated material such as A's and D's in (1)):

- (1) **ki-kapu** ki-kubwa ki-moja ki-li-anguka [Swahili]
 CL7-basket CL7-large CL7-one CL7-PAST-fall
 'One large basket fell' (Aikhenvald 2000:2.13 ap. Corbett 1991:117)

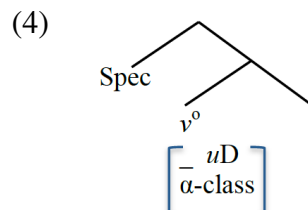
In (1), the class of the N *kapu* (*ki-*) determines and forces the use of certain markers on the A, D and V; if another marker is used, the output is ungrammatical. In cases of vCLSf, however, the situation is the opposite: the controller is not the N/DP but the vCLSf itself; the N/DP in this case becomes the target. We can see this because a change in the vCLSf (F+ or B+) results in a change of interpretation, not in ungrammaticality:

- (2) a. MONEY **F+BE_LOC** 'Coins of money are (there)'
 b. MONEY **B+BE_LOC** 'Bills of money are (there)'

A mismatch in agreement results in *ungrammaticality*; a mismatch in vCLSf results in an *alternative interpretation*.

2. We explore the following **Hypothesis**:

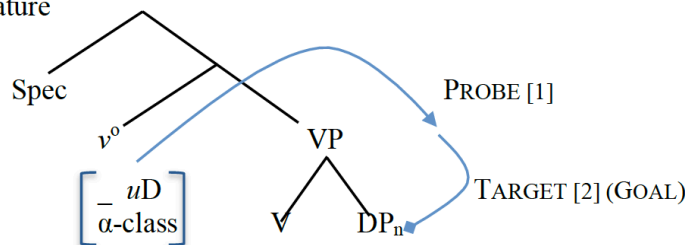
- (3) a vCLSf is the realization of an [α -CLASS] feature parasitically bundled up, together with a *uD*-feature, into a functional head forming a complex functional head:



The [α -class] feature is a CLASS feature whose paradigmatic range is α ; the relevant functional head in SLs is the one above VP, namely *v*/Voice. A series of operations take place:

- [1] the *uD* feature acts as a PROBE to find a suitable GOAL (an element with an intrinsically valued D element) in its c-command domain, whose D- values can be copied thereby valuing its unvalued uninterpretable D-feature ([1] in (5) below);
 [2] the PROBE finds and TARGETS such a potential GOAL in the internal argument DP_n selected by the V root ([2] IN (5) next):

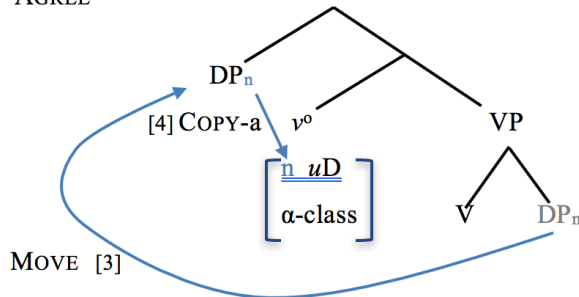
- (5) PROBE by *uD*-feature



- [3] the *uD* PROBE AGREES with the DP_n TARGET and, as part of it, ATTRACTS /MOVES it to its Spec ([3] in (6) below), where

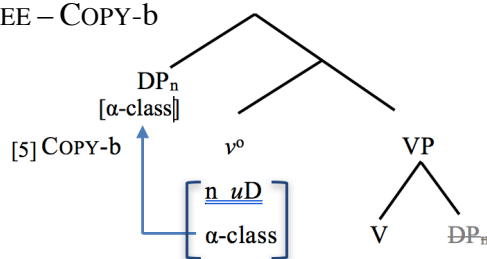
[4] the unvalued uD copies the D-value (n) of the DP_n now in the Spec of the $v/voice$ -head, thereby getting valued (COPY-a [4] in (6) next):

(6) AGREE



[5] as part of this AGREE operation, the $[\alpha\text{-class}]$ features are reciprocally transferred to the DP (COPY-b), assigning the intended classifier-related interpretation to the DP:

(7) AGREE – COPY-b



The operation AGREE, thus, includes two COPY operations: the forward-looking COPY-a of [4] in (6), copying the D-value n onto the uD in v ; and the backward-looking COPY-b in [5] in (7) that reciprocally copies the $[\alpha\text{-class}]$ value in v back to the DP in its Spec.

The first transfer of features (COPY-a, [4]) of the formal operation AGREE, initiated by the uninterpretable unvalued uD -feature is, we claim, common to both agreement and vCLSFS phenomena: it involves the copy of the n value of the D in DP onto the unvalued slot of the uD -feature in the corresponding functional head: T for subject verbal agreement; $v/voice$ for object verbal agreement; and $v/voice$ for vCLSFS structures, too.

The second transfer of features (COPY-b, [5]) involves a reciprocal or *backward* transfer of $[\alpha\text{-class}]$ features from the host head v back to the DP in the Spec. This is indeed the characterizing property of vCLSFSs: *the copy of the interpretive CLASS features onto the argumental DP*. This is the reason why a single DP may be associated with more than one CLSF: by virtue of its position in the Spec, a DP may receive the *backward* or reciprocal copy of whatever CLASS feature happens to be bundled in the corresponding host head.

Under this view, the argumental properties (unergative, unaccusative, ...) observed in previous work (e.g., Benedicto-Brentari, 2004) for Classifier predicates are the property of the functional head the vCLSFS is bundled with, but not a property of the vCLSFS itself.

3. Finally, the existence of similar patterns in Spoken Languages indicates that the vCLSFS phenomenon is not *per se* a locus for *modality effects*: see *kira* [CL:rd] and *nu* [CL:sp] next.

- (8) a. tatr_i **kira**_i-nu_k-sti terunukwa_k-rhu [P'orhépecha]
 bean_i CL:rd_i-CL:sp_k-PRS3S patio_k-P
 'the (grains of) beans are in the patio'
 b. xí **kira**-nu-ta-skan tatr_ini-n terunukwa-rhu
 PRN1s CL:rd_i-CL:sp_k-TR-PST1S bean_i-ACC patio_k-P
 'I put the (grains of) beans in the patio'