One Probe - Two Goals: Aspects of agreement in Dutch dialects

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Introduction

The goal of this thesis is to show that agreement is the result of a complex interplay between the syntactic and the phonological component. More in particular, the main claim is that Syntax establishes agreement relations on the basis of hierarchy and the phonological component subsequently translates these relations into agreement morphology. I show that the configuration can arise in which Syntax relates a Probe for agreement to two Goals instead of one: the Probe entertains two agreement relations. I show that in this case the phonological component spells out just one of these two relations, namely the one that results in the most specific agreement morphology on the Probe.

Introductory remarks on agreement

I assume, following Chomsky (1995:277-279), that agreement relations are inherently asymmetric[1]: nouns define the agreement on adjectives and determiners and the subject determines the agreement on the finite verb. I refer to the element that seeks to be determined in the agreement relation as the *Probe* (following Chomsky 2000). The element that determines the features of the *Probe* I call the *Goal* (again following Chomsky 2000). Consider the example in (1).

(1) **De poez-en** **slap-en** op het bed.
the cat-$_{PL}$ sleep-$_{PL}$ on the bed
'The cats are sleeping on the bed.'

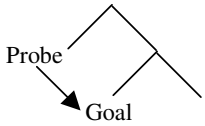
[standard Dutch]

In this example the finite verb *slapen* 'to sleep' appears in the plural, just like the subject *de poezen* 'the cats'. In this case, the finite verb *slapen* 'to sleep' is the Probe, as its phi-features are defined by those of the subject *de poezen* 'the cats'. The subject is the Goal in this example, it defines the phi-features of the Probe. Put

[1] Cf. HPSG-accounts of agreement as provided by amongst others Barlow (1992), Pollard & Sag (1994) and Kathol (1999) for a different view. In this framework it is assumed that both the controller for agreement (i.e. the subject) and the target (i.e. the finite verb) are specified for certain features. The feature bundles of the controller and the target have to correspond (cf also Chung 1998 for such an account). The crucial difference between an HPSG-account of agreement and the account discussed in the main text is that in the HPSG-account agreement is not directional (cf. Corbett 2001:192): the features of the controller are not copied onto the target, but the controller's feature bundle and the target's feature bundle match.

differently, the fact that the Probe carries a plural affix is the result of the Goal being plural. I assume that the Probe and the Goal enter into an agreement relation in the syntactic component.[2] This crucially means that the relation between Probe and Goal is established on the basis of hierarchical considerations. This is schematically represented in (2).

(2)



There are varieties of Dutch in which there are two clausal Probes for agreement, rather than just one. In these varieties, not only the finite verb but also the complementizer agrees with the subject. This latter phenomenon is known as Complementizer Agreement (henceforth CA) (see amongst others Van Haeringen 1939, 1958; Haegeman 1992; Zwart 1993; Goeman 1997; Van Craenenbroeck & Van Koppen 2002b; Carstens 2003). This is exemplified for the dialect of Tegelen in (3a) and for the dialect of Lapscheure in (3b) (from Haegeman 1992:61).

(3) a. Ich dink **de-s** doow **kum-s**.
I think that-$_{2P.SG}$ you$_{SG}$ come-$_{2P.SG}$
'I think that you will come.'
[Tegelen Dutch]

b. Kpeinzen **da-n** zunder **goa-n** kommen.
I.think that-$_{PL}$ they go-$_{PL}$ come
'I think that they are going to come.'
[Lapscheure Dutch]

In these examples, both the inflection on the verb and the inflection on the complementizer are dependent on the phi-feature specification of the subject. This means that there are two clausal Probes for agreement, the finite verb and the complementizer, and one Goal, the subject.

The topic of this thesis

In this thesis, the configuration is explored in which a Probe for agreement (either the finite verb or the complementizer) encounters not one but two Goals. I show that this configuration arises when these two Goals are hierarchically equally local with respect to the Probe. I show that this situation arises when the complementizer or the finite verb agrees with a coordinated subject or with a pronominal subject. Consider the examples in (4), in which the complementizer agrees with a coordinated subject.

[2] I refine this statement in section 2.1.3 of chapter 1. There, I put forward the assumption that the operation Agree takes place at the Spell-Out point to PF.

(4) a. Ich dink **de-s** **doow** en ich ôs kenne treffe.
I think that-$_{2P.SG}$ [you$_{SG}$ and I]$_{1P.PL}$ each.other$_{1P.PL}$ can-$_{PL}$ meet
'I think that you and I can meet.'

[Tegelen Dutch]

b. Kpeinzen **da-n** **Valère** **en** **Pol** morgen goa-n.
I.think that-$_{PL}$ [Valère and Pol]$_{3P.PL}$ tomorrow go-$_{PL}$
'I think that Valère and Pol will go tomorrow.'

[Lapscheure Dutch]

There is a significant difference between the example in (4a) from Tegelen Dutch and the one in (4b) from Lapscheure Dutch. The complementizer in Tegelen Dutch agrees with the first conjunct *doow* 'you$_{SG}$' of the coordinated subject. The complementizer in Lapscheure Dutch on the other hand, agrees with the coordinated subject as a whole.[3] Apparently, there are two possible Goals for the complementizer: its feature specification is either determined by the coordination as a whole (as in Lapscheure Dutch) or by the first conjunct of the coordinated subject (as in Tegelen Dutch). Moreover, I show that a similar situation appears in agreement relations between the complementizer and pronominal subjects: when an agreeing complementizer is confronted with a pronominal subject, there are also two equally local Goals for it. More specifically, I show that pronouns are internally complex. For instance, the pronoun *we* can be split in a part that denotes that the pronoun has the speech participant role of speaker and a part that signals that the pronoun is plural. The feature specification of the pronoun as a whole is [SPEAKER, PLURAL]. I show that a Probe can either agree with the part of the pronoun that denotes its speech particpant role, or the part that contains the feature specification of the pronoun as a whole. Consider the examples in (5).

(5) a. … **daβ-st** **du** komst.
that-$_{HEARER.SG}$ you$_{SG}$ come
'…that you will come.'

[Bavarian]

b. … **darr-e** **wiej** komt.
that-$_{SPEAKER}$ we come
'…that we will come.'

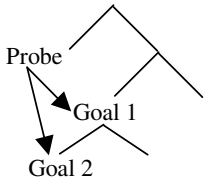
[Hellendoorn Dutch]

Although it is not as straightforward as the examples concerning coordination in (4), I show that the *st*-affix on the complementizer in the a-example from Bavarian reflects a relation with this complete set of features. In other words, it signals both

[3] A potential way to analyse these data is to assume that agreement with the first conjunct of a coordinated subject is related to linear adjacency: whenever a Probe is linearly adjacent to the first conjunct of a coordinated subject, FCA can appear. In the chapters to follow, I argue that FCA cannot be analysed this way. I show that a Probe can only agree with the first conjunct of a coordinated subject when it is HIERARCHICALLY local enough to the Probe. In particular, I refer the reader to section 4.3 of chapter 4.

the fact that the second person singular subject has the speech participant role of hearer and that it is singular. I argue that the schwa-affix on the complementizer in Hellendoorn Dutch, on the other hand, does not spell out the feature specification of the pronoun as a whole, [SPEAKER, PLURAL]. Rather, it just spells out the relation with the part of the pronoun that signals its speech participant role, in this case [SPEAKER]. This means that also in these examples, there are two potential Goals for the complementizer: the feature set of the pronoun as a whole, and the set of speech participant features. More generally, the configuration in which there is one Probe with two equally local Goals can be schematically represented as in (6).[4]

(6) **One Probe – Two Goals**



In the configuration in (6), it is not immediately clear which Goal will define the feature specification of the Probe. There are several logical possibilities: (i) the features of Goal 1 are spelled out on the Probe, (ii) the features of Goal 2 are spelled out on the Probe, (iii) a combination of the features of Goal 1 and Goal 2 are spelled out on the Probe, (iv) both the features of Goal 1 and the features of Goal 2 determine the feature specification of the Probe or (v) no features are spelled out on the Probe.[5] The answer to this question is of an empirical nature. I demonstrate that – at least in the dialects and languages I discuss in this thesis – either the features of Goal 1 or the features of Goal 2 are spelled out on the Probe. The configuration in (6) raises two important questions: (i) What component of the grammar decides which one of these two Goals eventually determines the feature specification of the Probe? (ii) How does this component decide which Goal determines the feature specification of the Probe?

I propose that although the configuration in which a Probe enters into a relation with two Goals arises during the syntactic derivation, Morphology determines which one of these two relations results in an affix on the Probe.[6] Put differently, the syntactic component provides the configuration in which two Goals are available,

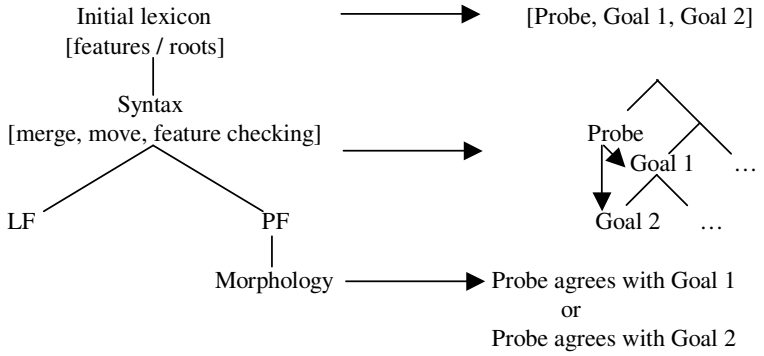
[4] I come back in detail to the tree structures in (2) and (6) in the first chapter. Here, they only serve to show the difference between the unmarked situation, in which there is one Probe and one Goal, and the one discussed in this thesis, in which there is one Probe and two equally local Goals.

[5] At this point, one might wonder how the agreement between a Probe and two Goals is related to the frequently discussed agreement patterns of coordinated subjects (cf. Corbett 1983): in this case too, the agreement on the Probe can reflect the features of Goal 1, Goal 2 or a combination of both. I will not go into this issue here, but I return to it in detail in section 1 of chapter 2.

[6] I assume Morphology to be a subcomponent of the PF-branch (cf. Halle & Marantz 1993, Harley & Noyer 1999). At the level of Morphology feature bundles are replaced with Vocabulary Items. Agreement features are replaced with affixes. I come back to this in detail in section 2 of chapter 1.

and Morphology chooses which one of these Goals eventually defines the agreement morphology on the Probe. This interaction between the syntactic component and the morphological component is schematically represented in (7).

(7) **Interaction between the syntactic and the morphological component**

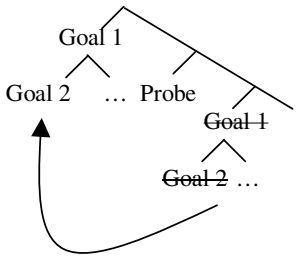


The schematic representation in (7) should be interpreted as follows. The initial lexicon contains the Probe, Goal 1 and Goal 2. The syntactic component establishes a hierarchical ordering between these feature bundles. When the derivation is completed, the Probe finds itself in a configuration in which it has two equally local Goals (as indicated by the arrows). The morphological component decides whether Goal 1 or Goal 2 determines the feature specification on the Probe. I show that Morphology systematically chooses to spell out the relation with that Goal that results in the most specific agreement morphology on the Probe. More concretely, I show that if, for example, the features of Goal 1 result in no agreement morphology on the Probe, whereas the features of Goal 2 do result in agreement morphology, the features of the latter will be spelled out on the Probe. If, on the other hand, the situation is reversed and Goal 1 results in an agreement affix on the Probe, whereas Goal 2 does not, the features of the former will be spelled out as an agreement affix on the Probe.[7] Several other possible situations will be discussed in chapter 1.

Furthermore, I show that movement of Goal 1 to a position c-commanding the Probe affects the possibilities of the Probe with respect to agreement: when Goal 1 in the structure in (6) moves past the Probe as in (8), the Probe can no longer agree with Goal 2, which is part of the internal structure of Goal 1.

[7] Note that I assume that there are zero-affixes. This means that 'no agreement morphology' should literally be taken to mean 'no agreement morphology' and not the absence of overt agreement morphology.

(8)



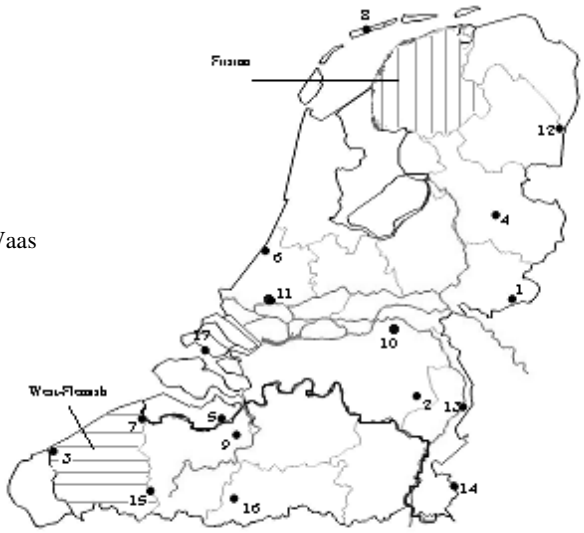
In the configuration in (8), the constituent Goal 1 which contains Goal 2, has moved past the Probe. I show that in this case the affix on the Probe is obligatorily dependent on the feature specification of Goal 1 and cannot be determined by Goal 2. This has already been observed in the literature on agreement with coordinated subjects by among others Aoun, Benmamoun & Sportiche (1994), Munn (1999) and Doron (2000) (for a more complete overview of this literature, see section 4 of chapter 2). They show that when a coordinated subject moves to a position c-commanding the Probe, the Probe can no longer agree with the first conjunct of a coordinated subject. I show that this generalisation does not only hold for agreement with coordinated subjects but also for agreement with pronominal subjects.

The empirical focus of this thesis

Agreement phenomena in Dutch dialects form the empirical focus of this thesis. It should be clear that it is not the objective of this thesis to describe the full range of variation concerning agreement in Dutch dialects. Rather, I show that certain instances of variation provide a tool to gain insight into both syntactic and morphological agreement and into the interaction between Syntax and Morphology. Furthermore, I show that an indepth investigation of certain agreement phenomena in these closely related languages confirms once more the idea that the locus of microparametric variation is the lexicon (cf. Chomsky 1995). The geographic distribution of the Dutch dialects (spoken in the Netherlands and Flanders/Belgium) under discussion in this thesis is represented in the map in (9).

(9) Dialects discussed in this thesis

1 Aalten
2 Asten
3 De Panne
4 Hellendoorn
5 Hulst
6 Katwijk
7 Lapscheure
8 Lies
9 Nieuwkerken-Waas
10 Oss
11 Rotterdam
12 Roswinkel
13 Tegelen
14 Waubach
15 Waregem
16 Wambeek
17 Zierikzee



The research reported in this thesis is part of a larger project investigating syntactic variation in dialects of Dutch, i.e the SAND-project (Syntactische Atlas van de Nederlandse Dialecten – Syntactic Atlas of Dutch Dialects)[8]. This project started in January 2000, with the objective to map syntactic variation concerning pronominal reference, negation and quantification and the left and right periphery of the clause. The SAND-project resulted in two databases for microparametric research. The first one provides an overview of the literature on variation in Dutch dialects. The second one contains data of the fieldwork conducted for this project in 266 Dutch dialect communities in the Netherlands and Flanders (Belgium).

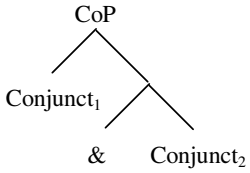
Outline of the thesis

In chapter 1, I provide a detailed discussion of the configuration discussed above in which a Probe has two equally local Goals to agree with. I show how this configuration comes about in the syntactic component and how the morphological component deals with it. In this chapter, I also make explicit my assumptions about the syntactic and the morphological component.

[8] For more information concerning the SAND-project, the reader is referred to the website of this project: http://www.meertens.knaw.nl/projecten/sand/sandeng.html

Chapter 2 contains the first case study of a Probe encountering two Goals, namely agreement with coordinated subjects.[9] I assume that coordinated phrases have the structure in (10) (for argumentation in favour of this structure cf. among others Munn 1993, Kayne 1994, Johannessen 1998, Progovac 1998). The conjunction constitutes the head of the coordination phrase. The second conjunct forms the complement of the conjunction. The first conjunct is situated in its specifier.

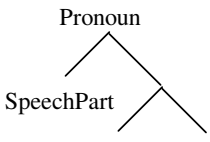
(10) **Structure of coordination**



I show that during the syntactic derivation the configuration arises in which CoP and the conjunct in Spec,CoP are equally local with respect to the Probe, and that they are both suitable Goals for the Probe. At the level of Morphology, one of these two agreement relations has to be spelled out as an agreement affix on the Probe. Either the features of CoP are spelled out on the Probe, resulting in agreement either with the coordinated subject as a whole, henceforth referred to as Full Agreement (FA) or with those of the first conjunct in Spec,CoP, resulting in First Conjunct Agreement (FCA) on the Probe. Both situations are attested in Dutch dialects, as was already shown in the examples in (4). Furthermore, I show that when the coordinated subject moves out of the c-command domain of the Probe, the Probe can no longer agree with the first conjunct of the coordinated subject.

Chapter 3 contains the second case study of a Probe with two Goals, namely agreement with pronominal subjects. I assume that pronouns are internally complex (cf. among others Haegeman 1993; Cardinaletti & Starke 1994; Rooryck 1999, to appear; Déchaine & Wiltschko 2002). I argue that the specifier of the pronominal projection contains the speech participant features of the pronoun. This is illustrated in (11).

(11) **Internal structure of pronouns**



[9] Another potential case study of the configuration in (6), is agreement with a DP which contains a possessor. This possessor could be assumed to be in Spec,DP. The Probe could then be expected to agree with either the possessor or the DP as a whole. I return to this case in detail in section 2.4 of chapter 5.

I show that during the syntactic derivation the configuration arises in which both the maximal projection of this pronominal structure and the speech participant features (SpeechPart) of the pronominal structure are equally local Goals with respect to the Probe. The Probe enters into an agreement relation with both these Goals simulataneously. At the level of Morphology, the relation resulting in the most specific agreement morphology is spelled out as an affix on the Probe. I demonstrate that the situation in which there is agreement with the speech participant features of a pronoun arises in the dialect of Hellendoorn. In other varieties of Dutch, for instance in Tegelen Dutch, the relation between the Probe and the pronoun as a whole is spelled out. Once again, I show that movement of the pronominal projection out of the c-command domain of the Probe results in a situation in which agreement with SpeechPart, the Goal internal to the pronominal projection, is impossible.

In Chapter 4, I discuss the implications of the data and analysis provided in chapters 2 and 3 for previous analyses of Complementizer Agreement, Double Agreement and First Conjunct Agreement. Finally, chapter 5 highlights the most important conclusions of this thesis and suggests avenues for future research.