

Lectures on agreement.

One of the most striking and still poorly understood topics in the study of natural language is agreement. Agreement refers to the systematic covariation between a semantic or formal property of one element and a formal property of another. Since Chomsky (1995) agreement is generally analysed as a feature checking relation between one element carrying an interpretable and one (or more) element(s) carrying a matching uninterpretable feature, established by the operation Agree. Feature checking has ever since been considered one of the central triggers for syntactic operations. At the same time, many questions are still open: how do we determine and acquire which element carries what kinds of (un)interpretable features? How do the semantic effects of formal features (especially of interpretable features) come about? Are interpretable features semantic features themselves, or is the mapping more indirect? What is the exact configuration under which Agree can take place? How do uninterpretable features trigger movement (if they do at all)? How do interpretable and uninterpretable features relate to categorial and selectional features? Are they the same or different? These and other questions will be addressed in this lecture series.

Preliminary setup:

1. Agreement (overview of different types of features and agreement phenomena, including atypical agreement phenomena involving tense, modality and negation).
2. Uninterpretable vs interpretable features: what is their grammatical status (syntactic, semantic, both)? Why do uninterpretable features have to be checked?
3. Upward vs Downward Agree: what is the direction of Agree, and how does it relate to the morphological realization of those features?
4. Features as triggers for movement (incl. in other cognitive domains, such as music).
5. Agreement, selection and labeling.

Even though the program seems fixed, modifications can be made upon students' requests.