

Puzzles and clues from shifty agreement in Tamil

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In this talk, I will focus on a pesky puzzle involving certain types of "shifty" agreement in my dialect of Tamil. These involve 1sg agreement being triggered by a 3sg and 2sg anaphor/logophor that is marked in the nominative case. In Sundaresan (2012), I analyzed this 1sg form as the result of agreement due to a silent 1st person shifted indexical in the clausal periphery. I am no longer convinced this is the right way to analyze these facts. The syntactic properties of agreement leave distinct morphological reflexes in Tamil; furthermore, agreement and case interact in telling ways. I propose that, together, these facts simultaneously restrict the possibility space of logical solutions while also paving the way for a distinct analysis of the complex agreement facts.

I will propose that shifty agreement results from the idea that the logophors in these constructions bear hybrid person features: 1st- and 2nd- in one case, and 1st- and 3rd-, in the other. I will also propose that person agreement may be implemented through a distinct probe-goal relation than gender and number agreement. Taken together, these entail that "shifty" person agreement is a kind of hybrid agreement, along the lines of what has been reported for hybrid gender agreement phenomena in languages like Russian and Bosnian-Serbo-Croatian.

There are two natural extensions to this idea. The first is that certain types of logophor (and, indeed, the kind of shifty agreement I report for Tamil has been reported for other languages, like Telugu (also Dravidian), and Aqusha Dargwa (Nakh-Dagestanian) and Mutki Zazaki (Indo-Iranian)) are *defined* by their unique blend of person features arranged in a particular syntactic hierarchy. The second is that the distinct properties of pro-forms -- locally-bound anaphors, unshifty logophors, shifty logophors, shifted indexicals, and unshifted indexicals & deictic pronouns -- can be made to fall out of incremental differences in the size and shape of their nominal projections.