

# Does defective intervention exist?\*

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## 1. Introduction: The problem

Chomsky (2000) claims that under certain circumstances (which will be made precise in Section 5) an Agree relation between a probe and a potential goal can be blocked by what he refers to as defective interveners, intervening potential goals that are inactive in the sense that all their features are valued. The claim is based on Icelandic, where agreement between the finite verb (i.e. the inflectional node I) and the nominative argument is sometimes blocked by an intervening dative argument, which must have its dative feature checked and therefore be inactive by the time that I is merged into the structure. This is illustrated by example (1) taken from Holmberg and Hróarsdóttir (2004); in this example the plural nominative phrase cannot trigger plural agreement on the finite verb, which must therefore appear with the default value singular.<sup>1</sup>

- (1) það virðist einhverjum manni hestarnir vera seinir.  
there seems<sub>sg</sub> some man<sub>dat</sub> the horses<sub>nom/pl</sub> be slow  
‘The horses seem to some man to be slow.’

It is, however, not a cross-linguistic property of dative phrases that they block this Agree relation. This is shown by the acceptability of Dutch examples like (2a), which is based on an actual occurring sentence found on the internet and in which the finite verb and the nominative argument do agree in number despite the presence of the intervening dative phrase *Jan/hem*. That Agree is not blocked by the dative phrase in Dutch is also clear from the fact that the nominative phrase can be moved across the dative phrase into the regular subject position of the clause, as in (2b); the Last Resort Condition on movement implies that, in order to license this movement of the subject, I must enter into an Agree relation with the nominative and, thus, that the dative phrase does not block this relation in Dutch.

- (2) a. Daarom lijken Jan/hem de grafieken niet te kloppen.  
therefore seem<sub>pl</sub> Jan/him<sub>dat</sub> the charts<sub>nom/pl</sub> not to be-correct  
‘Therefore, the charts seem to be wrong to Jan/him.’

- b. Daarom lijken de grafieken<sub>i</sub> Jan/hem  $t_i$  niet te kloppen.

This paper investigates the question what determines the difference between Icelandic and languages like Dutch: the answer will crucially take recourse to the fact that the dative phrase is a quirky subject in Icelandic, but not in Dutch. I will start, however, with a review of the development of locality theory within the *principles-and-parameters* (P&P) framework, which has ultimately led to the formulation of closeness that Chomsky (2000) uses in order to account for the relevant Icelandic data, and which I hope to improve such that we are also able to derive the acceptability of Dutch examples like (2). For convenience, I will generally use the current terminology as a result of which the discussion of earlier proposals may sometimes be slightly anachronistic.

## 2. Rizzi's (1990) Relativized Minimality

One of the main achievements of the P&P framework is probably Rizzi's Relativized Minimality (RM). Phrased in more modern terms, RM claims that an Agree relation between a probe P and a goal  $G_1$  cannot be established when there is an intervening potential goal  $G_2$  that c-commands  $G_1$ . Given the Last Resort Condition on movement, this implies that it is not possible to move  $G_1$  across the intervening potential goal  $G_2$  into the local domain of probe P:

- (3) Relativized Minimality:  $*[G_1 P [\dots G_2 \dots [\dots t_{G_1} \dots]]]$

This means that we can account for intervention effects by postulating that a probe attracts its closest potential goal, where *closeness* is defined as in (4) by taking recourse to the notion of c-command only.

- (4)  $\gamma$  is *closer to* probe P than  $\beta$  in  $[\dots P [\dots \gamma \dots \beta \dots]]$  iff  $\gamma$  c-commands  $\beta$

Unfortunately, other developments in the theory at the time Rizzi developed his RM strongly suggested that this maximally simple definition of closeness could not be maintained. The following subsections therefore review and discuss the subsequent definitions that have been proposed in Chomsky's minimalist work.

## 3. Chomsky (1995:ch.2&3)

After Pollock (1989) introduced the split-INFL hypothesis, according to which the inflectional node INFL actually consists of two separate functional heads, T and AGR<sub>o</sub>, it became clear very soon that also an AGR<sub>o</sub> head had to be postulated

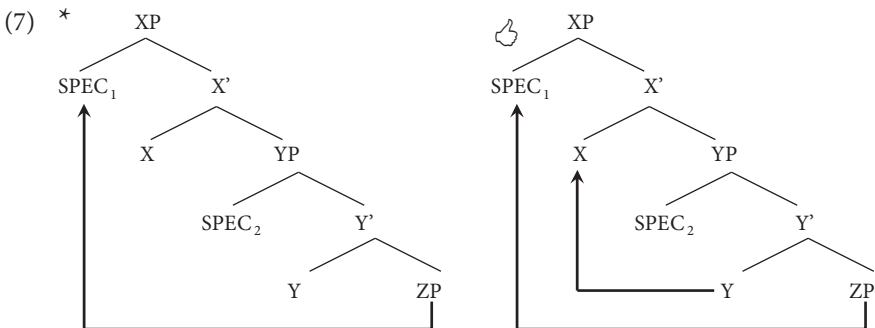
which could act as a probe for the accusative object; cf. (5a) adapted from Chomsky (1991). Assuming that the two AGR-projections each have an unvalued case feature that probes for a corresponding case feature on the arguments of the verb, it follows that Universal Grammar should allow derivations in which the subject and the object are moved into respectively SpecAGR<sub>S</sub>P and SpecAGR<sub>O</sub>P.

- (5) a.  $[_{\text{AGRS}} \dots \text{AGRS}_{\text{S}} [_{\text{TP}} \dots \text{T} [_{\text{AGRS}} \dots \text{AGRS}_{\text{O}} [_{\text{VP}} \text{S V O}]]]]$   
 b.  $[_{\text{AGRS}} \dots \text{AGRS}_{\text{S}} [_{\text{TP}} \dots \text{T} [_{\text{AGRS}} \text{O AGR}_{\text{O}} [_{\text{VP}} \text{S V } t_{\text{O}}]]]]$   
 c.  $[_{\text{AGRS}} \text{S AGR}_{\text{S}} [_{\text{TP}} (t'_{\text{S}}) \text{T} [_{\text{AGRS}} \text{O AGR}_{\text{O}} [_{\text{VP}} t_{\text{S}} \text{V } t_{\text{O}}]]]]$

However, the derivation in (5) violates RM in (3) twice: once by movement of the object into SpecAGR<sub>O</sub>P across the base position of the subject, and once by the subsequent movement of the subject into SpecTP/AGR<sub>S</sub>P across the shifted position of the object. Chomsky (1995:ch.3) tackled this problem by claiming that these violations of RM are allowed provided that one additional condition is met: the target position of the movement and the position of the intervener must be equidistant from the probe's goal, that is, they must be contained in the same minimal domain of some head or head chain. Chomsky thus adds clause (6b) to Rizzi's original definition of closeness in (4).

- (6)  $\gamma$  is *closer to* landing site  $\alpha$  than  $\beta$  in  $[\alpha \text{ P } [\dots \gamma \dots \beta]]$  iff:  
 a.  $\gamma$  c-commands  $\beta$ , and;  
 b.  $\alpha$  and  $\gamma$  are not in the same minimal domain.

The specifics of the definition of the notion minimal domain proposed in Chomsky (1995:ch.3) need not concern us here; for our present purposes it suffices to say that when the intervening element is the specifier of H, clause (6b) does not hold when H is moved up into the head position that has the target position of the movement as its specifier. This means that, if Spec<sub>2</sub> in (7) is a potential intervener, movement of ZP into Spec<sub>1</sub> is allowed provided that head Y undergoes head-movement into X, as in the right-hand structure.



From the definition of closeness in (6) it now follows that the derivation in (5) is ungrammatical; object movement is possible only if the verb *V* moves across the base position of the subject into  $\text{AGR}_O$ , and the subsequent movement of the subject is possible only if the  $\text{V}+\text{AGR}_O$  complex moves across the derived position of the object into *T* (or  $\text{AGR}_S$ ), as in (8).

- (8) a.  $[_{\text{AGRS}} \dots \text{AGR}_S [_{\text{TP}} \dots \text{T} [_{\text{AGRS}} \dots \text{V}+\text{AGR}_O [_{\text{VP}} \text{S V O}]]]]$   
 b.  $[_{\text{AGRS}} \dots \text{AGR}_S [_{\text{TP}} \dots \text{T} [_{\text{AGRS}} \text{O V}+\text{AGR}_O [_{\text{VP}} \text{S } t_V t_O]]]]$   
 c.  $[_{\text{AGRS}} \text{S AGR}_S [_{\text{TP}} (t'_S) \text{T}+ \text{V}+\text{AGR}_O [_{\text{AGRS}} \text{O } t_{\text{V}+\text{AGRO}} [_{\text{VP}} t_S t_V t_O]]]]$

Chomsky's proposal considerably complicated Rizzi's original formulation of RM in (3), but it seemed that this complication paid off as it derived without further ado Holmberg's Generalization (henceforth: HG) in its original formulation, according to which object shift can take place only if the verb undergoes V-to-I movement.

#### 4. Chomsky (1995:Section 4.10)

In later work, Chomsky (1995:Section 4.10) argued that the postulation of the AGR-projections in (5) and (8) is problematic for conceptual reasons as they do not introduce interpretable features into the structure and are thus mainly postulated in order to make landing sites available for the shifted object and the subject. He therefore proposed to eliminate these AGR-projections and to attribute the accusative case features to a light verb  $\nu$ , which is also assumed to introduce the external argument of the verb. As a result the derivation of a transitive clause in the simple present/past tense is as given in (9): first the object is attracted by the case features on  $\nu$  and placed in an outer specifier of  $\nu\text{P}$ , and subsequently the subject is moved into SpecIP.

- (9) a.  $[_{\text{IP}} \dots \text{I} [_{\nu\text{P}} \text{S } \nu [_{\text{VP}} \text{V O}]]]$   
 b.  $[_{\text{IP}} \dots \text{I} [_{\nu\text{P}} \text{O} [_{\nu\text{P}} \text{S V}+\nu [_{\text{VP}} t_V t_O]]]]]$   
 c.  $[_{\text{IP}} \text{S I} [_{\nu\text{P}} \text{O} [_{\nu\text{P}} t_S \text{V}+\nu [_{\text{VP}} t_V t_O]]]]]$

In this derivation the movement of the object crosses the base position of the subject, and the subsequent movement of the subject into SpecIP crosses the object in its shifted position. However, the definition of closeness in (10) that Chomsky adopts at this stage of the theory does allow these movements. This definition differs from the one in (6) in that it has the additional clause in (10c).

- (10)  $\gamma$  is *closer* to landing site  $\alpha$  than  $\beta$  in  $[\alpha \text{ P } [\dots \gamma \dots \beta]]$  iff:  
 a.  $\gamma$  c-commands  $\beta$ , and;  
 b.  $\alpha$  and  $\gamma$  are not in the same minimal domain, or;  
 c.  $\gamma$  and  $\beta$  are not in the same minimal domain.

Consider again the derivation in (9). If V-to- $\nu$  applies, as in (9b), the object and the subject are both part of the minimal domain of the chain ( $V, t$ ) and, consequently, (10c) allows movement of the object across the subject into the outer specifier of  $\nu$ . Furthermore, on the plausible assumption that the inner and the outer specifier of  $\nu$  are part of the minimal domain of  $\nu$ , clause (10c) will also allow the movement of the subject into SpecIP across the shifted object in the outer specifier of  $\nu$ , as in (9c). From this it follows that V-to-I movement is not needed to license the movement of the subject in (9c), and Chomsky concluded from this that we cannot derive HG from locality theory in an AGR-less theory.

Perhaps, this conclusion that HG cannot be derived from locality theory was somewhat premature given that it follows from the newly introduced clause (10c), which was actually not independently motivated at the time. If we drop this clause, the subject movement in (9c) is excluded and HG would follow again, as was amply demonstrated by Kitahara (1997:2.3); cf. Broekhuis (2000) for a somewhat different proposal that has the same effect. However, important evidence in favor of clause (10c) is provided in Chomsky (2000), which will be reviewed in the next subsection.

## 5. Chomsky (2000)

The fact that we did not invoke clause (10b) in our discussion of the derivation in (9) suggests that this clause is superfluous. Furthermore this clause refers to the landing site of movement, which is rather unnatural in the Agree-based theory developed in Chomsky's (2000), in which movement is merely an epiphenomenon of Agree, because Agree only involves the relation between a probe and its potential goal(s). It therefore does not come as a big surprise that Chomsky (2000) drops this clause. He maintains, however, that clause (10c) *is* part of the definition of closeness, and what is more, unlike in his earlier work, he provides important empirical evidence in favor of this claim. The core of the argument in favor of (10c) is constituted by a set of complex agreement facts in Icelandic quirky subject constructions, which have received a lot of attention in the more recent literature; some important contributions are Jónsson (1996), Sigurðsson (1996), Schütze (1997), Chomsky (2000), and Holmberg and Hróarsdóttir (2004). First consider the examples in (11), taken from Jónsson (1996:153).

- (11) a. það líkuðu einhverjum þessir sokkar.  
           there liked<sub>pl</sub> somebody<sub>dative</sub> these socks<sub>nom/pl</sub>  
           'Somebody liked these socks.'

- b. það voru einhverjum gefnir þessir sokkar.  
 there were<sub>pl</sub> somebody given these socks<sub>nom/pl</sub>  
 'Somebody was given the socks.'

The examples in (11) show that the finite verb may agree with the nominative argument in quirky subject constructions when the dative and nominative are co-arguments, that is, arguments of the same verb. These examples contrast sharply with those in (12), taken from Holmberg and Hróarsdóttir (2004:654), which show that agreement is blocked when the dative and the nominative are *not* co-arguments: in these quirky subject constructions, the dative argument is selected by the matrix verb, while the nominative is the subject of respectively a predicatively used adjectival phrase and an infinitival clause.

- (12) a. það finnst/\*finnast einhverjum stúdent tölvurnar ljótar.  
 there find<sub>sg</sub>/find<sub>pl</sub> some student<sub>dat</sub> the computers<sub>nom/pl</sub> ugly  
 'Some student considers the computers ugly.'  
 b. það virðist/\*virðast einhverjum manni hestarnir vera seínir.  
 there seem<sub>sg</sub>/seem<sub>pl</sub> some man<sub>dative</sub> the horses<sub>nom/pl</sub> be slow  
 'The horses seem to some man to be slow.'

The judgments on the examples in (12) are, of course, exactly what we expect when we assume that Agree is only possible under 'closest' c-command: the dative argument asymmetrically c-commands the nominative argument and is therefore a closer potential goal for the number feature on I. The examples in (11), on the other hand, show that the MLC cannot be fully reduced to 'closest' c-command since this would incorrectly predict agreement between the finite verb and the nominative argument also to be blocked in these examples. The facts in (11) therefore support some version of clause (10c).

Finally, consider the examples in (13) from Holmberg and Hróarsdóttir (2004:653/5). These examples show that the situation is even more complex as the intervention effect observed in (12) disappears when the dative argument is moved into clause-initial position (Schütze 1997): in (13) agreement between the finite verb and the nominative argument is possible.

- (13) a. Mér finnst/finnast  $t_{mér}$  tölvurnar ljótar.  
 me<sub>dat</sub> find<sub>sg</sub>/find<sub>pl</sub> the computers<sub>nom/pl</sub> ugly  
 'I consider the computers ugly.'  
 b. Mér virðist/virðast  $t_{mér}$  hestarnir vera seínir.  
 me<sub>dat</sub> seem<sub>sg</sub>/seem<sub>pl</sub> the horses<sub>nom/pl</sub> be slow  
 'It seems to me that the horses are slow.'

Chomsky accounts for the data in (11) to (13) by adopting the two assumptions in (14). Statement (14a), which was motivated earlier in Jónsson (1996:146), expresses

that quirky (dative) subjects have an additional structural case feature; this makes them into a potential goal for the nominal features on I, as a result of which it can act as an intervener for agreement and move into SpecIP without violating the Last Resort Condition. Since Chomsky claims that the movement of the dative phrase into clause-initial position is A-movement, the acceptability of (13) follows from assumption (14b).

- (14) a. Quirky Case is ( $\theta$ -related) inherent Case with an additional structural Case feature (Chomsky 2000:127).
- b. A-movement traces are “invisible” to the probe-associate relation (Chomsky 2000:131).

Note in passing that Holmberg and Hróarsdóttir (2004) claim that when the intervening dative argument is a *wh*-trace, the intervention effect holds for Agree but not for movement. This is of course surprising if Agree is a prerequisite for movement. Their claim is weakened, however, by the fact that agreement *is* possible in the crucial example; cf. their fn.8 and the appendix to their article.

The discussion above clearly shows that the definition of closeness cannot be fully reduced to ‘closest’ c-command: it must take recourse to the notion of minimal domain, as in (15b), and also include an additional restriction on the intervening element, as in (15c). Observe that (15b) and (15c) are coordinated by means of the disjunction *or*, because (15b) accounts for the acceptability of agreement in (11), and (15c) for the acceptability of agreement in (13); agreement between the finite verb and the nominative argument is only blocked in quirky subject constructions when both clauses apply.

- (15)  $\gamma$  is *closer to* probe P than  $\beta$  in [... P [...  $\gamma$  ...  $\beta$ ]] iff:
  - a.  $\gamma$  c-commands  $\beta$ , and;
  - b.  $\gamma$  and  $\beta$  are not in the same minimal domain, or;
  - c.  $\gamma$  is not an A-movement trace.

The conclusion that we need clause (15b) (= (10c)) is important as it implies that Chomsky (1995:Section 4.10) was right after all in claiming that HG cannot be derived from locality theory and that we have to find some account for it by taking recourse to factors external to the computational system.<sup>2</sup>

## 6. Defective intervention and the proper definitions of *closeness*

Chomsky (2000) has proposed that a noun phrase must be active in the sense that it has at least one unvalued formal feature in order to act as a potential goal for some higher probe. Since the shifted object in (9b) is attracted by the case feature

on  $v$ , it has its case feature valued by definition so that we would expect that it can no longer enter into an Agree relation with  $I$ . The null hypothesis therefore should be that it does not block the Agree relation between  $I$  and the subject either. If so, clause (15c) should be replaced by the clause (16c). The notion *active* in this clause is defined as in (17).

- (16)  $\gamma$  is *closer to probe*  $P$  than  $\beta$  in [...  $P$  [...  $\gamma$  ...  $\beta$ ]] iff:
- $\gamma$  c-commands  $\beta$ , and;
  - $\gamma$  and  $\beta$  are not in the same minimal domain, and;
  - $\gamma$  is active.
- (17) A goal  $\gamma$  is active, iff:
- $\gamma$  is the head of a (possibly singleton) A-chain, and;
  - $\gamma$  has an unvalued formal feature.

It is important to note that (16) makes use of conjunctions only, which should be considered a considerable improvement, as Rizzi (1990: 76–77) has argued that the disjunction *or* should be avoided in formalizations for conceptual reasons. Nevertheless, Chomsky (2000:123, 127–8) explicitly denies clause (16c) by referring to Icelandic examples like (12), where a quirky subject blocks agreement with the lower nominative argument. This blocking effect is, however, a typical property of the quirky subject construction, and does not occur in comparable examples in Dutch and German. First consider the examples in (18). Since the dative argument *Peter* is preceded by adverbial material we may safely conclude that it is not in subject position, and hence occupies some position intervening  $I$  and the nominative argument. The fact that the verb and the nominative phrase agree in person and number illustrates clause (16b): when the dative and the nominative argument are co-arguments, the former cannot block agreement with the latter. These examples are therefore completely parallel to the Icelandic ones in (11).

- (18) a. Daarom bevallen waarschijnlijk Jan die sokken beter.  
 therefore please<sub>pl</sub> probably Jan<sub>dat</sub> those socks<sub>pl</sub> better  
 ‘Therefore, those socks will probably please Jan more.’
- b. Straks worden waarschijnlijk Jan die sokken aangeboden.  
 later are<sub>pl</sub> probably Jan<sub>dat</sub> those socks<sub>pl</sub> prt-offered  
 ‘Those socks will probably be offered to Jan later.’

That agreement between  $I$  and the nominative argument is possible when the nominative argument and the dative phrase are co-arguments is also evident from the fact illustrated by (19) that the nominative argument can be moved across the dative argument into the regular subject position (SpecIP); cf. e.g. Lenerz (1977), Den Besten (1985) and Broekhuis (1992) for extensive discussions of the word order alternations in these examples.

- (19) a. Daarom bevallen <die sokken> Jan <die sokken> beter.  
 therefore please those socks Jan<sub>dat</sub> better  
 'Therefore, those socks please Jan more.'  
 b. Straks worden <die sokken> Jan <die sokken> aangeboden.  
 later are those socks Jan<sub>dat</sub> prt-offered  
 'Those socks will be offered to Jan later.'

Now consider the examples in (20), in which the dative argument is selected by the raising verb *lijken* 'to seem', whereas the nominative argument is generated as the subject of, respectively, the more deeply embedded adjectival predicative phrase *snel genoeg* 'fast enough' and the infinitival clause *te veel te drinken* 'to drink too much'. These examples show that the dative does not block the Agree relation that establishes number agreement between the verb and the nominative, which is also clear from the fact that the nominative may be moved across the dative into the regular subject position of the clause.

- (20) a. Daarom leken niemand die computers snel genoeg.  
 therefore seemed<sub>pl</sub> nobody<sub>dat</sub> those computers fast enough  
 'Therefore those computers seemed fast enough to nobody.'  
 a'. Daarom leken die computers niemand snel genoeg.  
 b. Soms lijken mij die jongens te veel te drinken.  
 sometimes seem<sub>pl</sub> me<sub>dat</sub> those boys too much to drink  
 'Sometimes those boys seem to me to drink too much.'  
 b'. Soms lijken die jongens mij te veel te drinken.

The Dutch examples in (20) are similar to the Icelandic ones in (12) in that the dative argument and the nominative argument are not co-arguments. If Chomsky is correct in claiming that in such configurations the dative phrase blocks agreement between I and the nominative argument, we wrongly predict (i) that the finite verb does not agree with the nominative argument in person and number features, and (ii) that the movement of the nominative into SpecIP across the dative argument is blocked. We must therefore conclude that Icelandic and Dutch differ in that the dative phrases can only invoke intervention effects in the former language.

The difference between the Icelandic examples in (12) and the Dutch examples in (20) can be readily accounted for by taking recourse to the c-clause of the definition of closeness in (16). First consider Dutch. By the time that I is merged, the unvalued case feature of the dative argument is already valued, and, consequently, this argument is not active when I probes for a goal. Since the dative argument is not active, the closest potential goal of I is the nominative argument, which accounts for the fact that the finite verb agrees with the nominative argument and that the latter can be moved into SpecIP. Icelandic crucially differs from Dutch in having a dative argument that functions as a quirky subject. According to (14a)

quirky subjects have a structural case feature that is accessible to I, so that we must conclude that the dative argument is still active by the time that I is merged. This makes the dative into a closer goal for I than the nominative argument, and it is therefore predicted that it will block agreement between I and the nominative phrase, unless it is moved into SpecIP.

## 7. A timing problem

The discussion above is slightly complicated by the following timing problem: since the *in-situ* quirky subject remains to block agreement between I and the lower nominative argument after its structural case feature is valued by I, we must assume that it is not inactivated before I has become inactivated as well. Similar timing issues arise in the Minimalist Inquiry framework where it is explicitly claimed that “[t]he probe-goal relation must be evaluated for the Minimal Link Condition at the strong-phase level [...]” (Chomsky 2001:27). However, this solution does not work for the Dutch constructions in (18) to (20) since the verbs involved in these constructions are unaccusative, and the light verb associated with unaccusative verbs is assumed not to induce a strong phase: consequently, the dative argument would still be active when I is merged to the structure and thus expected to block agreement between I and the nominative argument. An alternative possibility would be to assume that features valued by a probe P are inactivated at the moment that P’s features are all valued and P is consequently inactivated itself. Following Chomsky (2000:132, (53)), we may assume that inactivation of P must take place before the structure headed by P is merged with some higher head. This would imply that the valued case feature on the internal arguments is inactivated before  $\nu$ P is merged with I, so that also the dative arguments in the Dutch examples in (18) to (20) is inactive when I starts probing for a goal.

## 8. The definition of closeness

The previous section concluded that the difference between Icelandic and Dutch is due to the fact that the quirky subject is not defective in the sense intended by Chomsky (2000); the quirky subject, but not the corresponding dative phrase in Dutch, still has an active feature by the time that I is merged. In the end, therefore, it turns out that defective intervention does not exist. This leads to the definition of closeness in (16). This definition is, however, incompatible with the claim in Sigurðsson (2003) that quirky subjects categorically block person agreement between the finite verb and the nominative argument, from which he derives

the fact that the nominative argument can never be first or second person. The argument goes roughly as follows. Adopting some version of the split-INFL hypothesis with separate Person, Number and T heads (in that order), it is proposed that the Person head enters into an Agree relation with and triggers movement of the dative argument. After this movement, the lower Number head may enter into an Agree relation with the nominative DP. This proposal is incompatible with the definition of closeness in (16) since it implies that the dative also acts as an intervener for a co-argument.

There are at least two additional problems with this proposal. First, the proposed derivation is countercyclic: the dative moves into SpecPersonP before the lower Number head enters into an Agree relation with the nominative phrase. This is an undesirable property and it is actually not clear whether it holds true given that we have seen earlier that the quirky subject need not move into subject position to license number agreement when it is a co-argument of the nominative; cf. (11). This considerably weakens the claim that quirky subjects act as interveners in this case: if so, they are interveners for the person agreement relation only.

Secondly, and more importantly, Sigurðsson does not make fully explicit how the default person agreement on the verb forces the nominative argument to be third person. He claims that it follows “if, first, 3rd person is not ‘true’ person [...] and, second, if the finite verb has to enter into a (3rd person) ‘defective agreement’ relation with the subject and is thus blocked from agreeing in person with the nominative object” (p.260–1). Of course, it is plausible that the person feature of the verb cannot enter into an Agree relation with the nominative argument after it has been valued by the dative. However, it does not automatically follow from this that the nominative must be third person: since the person feature on the nominative is inherently valued/interpretable, it need not enter in any Agree relation at all, so there is no reason to expect it to be restricted to the ‘spurious’ third person.

From this I conclude that Sigurdsson’s proposal actually does not have the intended result, so that we have to find some other explanation for the person constraint (cf. e.g. Boeckx 2000 for an alternative proposal). The person constraint does not provide evidence against the definition of closeness in (16).

## Notes

\* I like to thank the audience of the TIN-dag and the two anonymous reviewers for their useful remarks. This research is supported by the Netherlands Organisation of Scientific Research (NWO).

1. Chomsky does not discuss the question how nominative case is licensed on the DP *hestarnir*. I refer to Sigurðsson (2003) and Woolford (to appear) for interesting proposals concerning case

assignment in quirky subject constructions in Icelandic and Faroese, which differ in that in the former the non-dative argument is assigned nominative case whereas in the latter it is assigned accusative case.

2. There are several proposals of this type around: Holmberg (1999) proposes that object shift is a post-syntactic operation; Chomsky (2001) postulates context-sensitive semantic restrictions on object shift, Müller (2000/2001) postulates output constraints on the resulting chains, and Fox and Pesetsky (2005) take recourse to conditions on linearization; see Broekhuis (to appear:ch.2) for extensive discussion. There are also proposals that account for HG by taking recourse to narrow syntax, but these are either notational variants of the proposal mentioned above or abandon object shift as a movement operation. An anonymous reviewer suggested, for example to follow Starke (2001) and postulate conditions on the resulting chains, which, in effect, comes close to Müller's approach. HG also follows from William's (2003) Representation Theory, but object shift is not the result of movement; it involves a (mis)representation of relations between two syntactic levels. Nilsen (2003:ch.3) also abandons object shift as a movement rule: weak pronouns, for example, are claimed to be displaced by virtue of being pied piped by movement of a  $\Sigma$ -phrase that also contains the verb; lexical DPs that are part of the focus of the clause may move out of the  $\Sigma$ -phrase but the reordering of the verb and the object that results from this is repaired by remnant movement of the  $\Sigma$ -phrase: given the extension condition on movement, remnant movement will restore the original order VO order. Since the goal of this article is to evaluate Chomsky's claim concerning defective intervention, I will not evaluate the proposals by Williams and Nilsen any further here.

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