AGREE to Control: Case Optionality in Icelandic

This paper argues for an analysis of control in which case is optionally transmitted from the controller to PRO. Following previous accounts which argue that PRO bears case (e.g., Andrews 1981, 1982; Sigurðsson 1989; and Landau 2004, 2005), I expand on Landau's (2000, 2004) proposal that control is an AGREE relation. Evidence from Icelandic suggests that while PRO necessarily inherits the controller's phi features, PRO optionally inherits the controller's case feature. I argue that this optionality is derived from the "timing" of the controller-PRO AGREE relation. AGREE may hold either before or after the controller has been case-marked by a functional head.

In most control constructions, PRO can bear either Nominative or the case of the controller, reflected overtly on the predicate adjective. The example in (1) is object control and the same pattern generally holds for subject control.

(1) hún skipaði honum$_i$(**Dat.m.sg.**) að PRO$_i$(**Nom/Dat.m.sg.**) vera góður(**Nom.m.sg.**)/góðum(**Dat.m.sg.**)
she ordered him to to-be good
'She ordered him to be good.' (Andrews 1981:451)

Presently, no account in the literature divorces the obligatory transmission of phi features from the optional transmission of the case feature in (1). I propose that at the point when AGREE is established, all of the features that are licensed on the controller are also licensed on PRO. If PRO bears the Dative case of the controller *honum* 'him', I argue that AGREE is established after the controller has been case-marked. Conversely, if PRO bears Nominative, I argue that AGREE is established before the controller has been case-marked and PRO bears Nominative by default. The operating assumption is that the controller enters the derivation with fixed phi features, but is assigned case by a functional head.

Evidence for this "timing effect" is found with the matrix verb 'promise'. A puzzle noted by Andrews (1981,1982) is that the optionality illustrated in (1) does not apply to control with 'promise', shown in (2).

(2) peir telja hana$_i$(**Acc.f.sg.**) hafa lofað honum að PRO$_i$(**Nomf.sg./*Acc**) vera góð(**Nom.f.sg.**)/*góða(**Acc**)
they believe her to-have promised him to to-be good
'They believe her to have promised him to be good.' (Andrews 1981:453)

In (2), PRO and the adjective *góð* 'good' are necessarily Nominative. 'Promise' is unique because it forces subject control across an object. Building on Larson's (1988) analysis which distinguishes the control structures of 'promise' and 'order', I argue that the subject of 'promise' is merged below the object. To get case, the subject moves past the object. Because PRO must find the closest c-commanding DP as its controller, AGREE is established between the subject and PRO before the subject moves, shown in (3).

(3) $[_{FP}\ DP_{i(\text{case-marked controller})}\ [_{\alpha P}\ DP_{\text{object}} \ldots [_{vP}\ \overbrace{DP_{i(\text{non-case-marked controller})} \ldots\ [_{IP}\ PRO_i \ldots VP]}^{\text{AGREE}}]]]]$

Since the controller is not case-marked when it AGREEs with PRO, PRO cannot inherit Accusative from the controller and necessarily bears default Nominative. Conversely, in (1) the object controller is merged lower than the subject and does not move past the subject to get case. Therefore, in (1) AGREE can hold either before or after the controller has been case-marked.

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