

# A note on parallels between agreement and intervention\*

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*“Adriana, muitos parabéns/tanti auguri! É um grande prazer poder associar-me a esta homenagem pelo testemunho que dás do que é ser linguista e fazer linguística. Um exemplo para todos!”*

Adriana Belletti’s contributions to our knowledge on the details of how the syntax of natural languages functions are hard to list, because they are many and come from different sources (comparative syntax, L1 acquisition, L2 acquisition, studies with different types of language impairment). She plays a major role in determining the abstract configurations underlying many different phenomena in different languages. This paper addresses two of the topics she developed work on: agreement and intervention effects in acquisition. In a very exploratory way, I show that most of the constraints operating on agreement configurations are found in intervention effects in acquisition. If the parallelism is true, this opens up the question of whether the two phenomena may be explained in similar terms.

In the first part of the paper, I recall some properties of a case of subject-verb agreement in European Portuguese studied in Costa and Pereira (2013): agreement with the pronoun *a gente*. This pronoun is particularly interesting since it has 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular grammatical features, although it refers to a 1<sup>st</sup> person plural semantically. It will be shown that this pronoun provides very clear evidence for a featural approach to agreement, and for the syntactic locality constraints operating on agreement relations.

The second part of the paper summarizes results on intervention effects in acquisition. Intervention effects are found whenever children experience difficulties in the production or comprehension of a syntactic dependency because of an intervening constituent with a (partly) similar feature constituency (Grillo 2007, Friedmann, Belletti and Rizzi 2009), as illustrated in (1)

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(4)DP<sub>i</sub> ..... DP ..... ec<sub>i</sub>

A configuration like (1) emerges, for instances, in a headed object relative clause, as in (2):

(4)Show me the girl that grandma kisses.

In this sentence, a dependency is established between the DP *the girl* and the empty object position after the verb. The complication with this type of structure appears because of the presence of the intervening DP *the grandma*, which shares features with the antecedent. In the second part of the paper, I show that these intervention contexts share most properties of agreement configurations, drawing a parallelism between agreement and intervention.

In the conclusions, I illustrate the potential of the exploration of these similarities between agreement and intervention effects.

## References

- Costa, J., and Pereira S. (2013) A gente: pronominal status and agreement revisited. *The Linguistic Review* 30, 2: 161 - 184.
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- Friedmann, N., Belletti, A., and Rizzi, L. (2009) Relativized relatives: Types of intervention in the acquisition of A-bar dependencies, *Lingua* 119 (1), 67-88.