Reflexivity without reflexives

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Background: What prevents pronominals from being locally bound? Does this a) reflect an intrinsic property of pronominals (Chomsky 1981), is it b) a relative (economy) effect, that only shows up where there is a more dedicated competitor (see from different perspectives, Safir 2004, Boeckx, Hornstein and Nunes 2007, Levinson 2000), does it c) have a semantic basis as in Schlenker (2005), or does it d) follow from general conditions on agree based chains, and reflexive predicates (Reuland 2011)? To resolve this issue, it is important to study languages that are reported to allow locally bound pronominals, and assess whether they in fact do have them, and, which factors come into play when local binding obtains. Khanty (Uralic, spoken in Northwest Siberia) is such a language (Nikolaeva 1995). In this talk we review data collected on a field trip in July 2012, and show that these support option d).

A first set of facts and their consequences: *łuveł* in object position can be bound by a co-argument subject. It can also receive a value from discourse, showing that *łuveł* is a true pronominal (1a). (1b) with a quantificational antecedent shows that the local dependency is one of binding, not coreference.

(1) a. UtltiteXo$_i$ łuveł$_{i/k}$ išək-s-əłłe.
teacher he.ACC praise-PST-SG.3SG *The teacher praised him(self).*
b. NemXojat$_i$ łuveł$_{i/k}$ ănt išək-ł-əłłe.
no.one he.ACC NEG praise-NPST-SG.3SG *No one praises himself / him.*

This fact rules out both the approaches in a) and c). But it is **compatible** with the approaches in b) – there is no competitor – and **prima facie problematic** for the approach in d). If *nemXojat* 'no one' binds *łuveł* 'him', this is potentially a violation of the chain condition in Reuland (2011) since *łuveł* is fully specified for phi-features. Furthermore, this approach faces the fact that logical syntax representations as in (2) with two identical variables in the coargument domain are ruled out (Reuland 2011).

(2) *DP (V x x)

A second set of facts and their consequences: i) Khanty has two types of verbal agreement: obligatory subject agreement and optional object agreement (OAgr), as illustrated in (3).

(3) UtltiteXo poXlen'ki išək-s-əłłe / išək-s.
teacher boy praise-PST-SG.3SG / praise-PST.3SG *The teacher praised the boy.*

The following condition applies: a personal pronoun can be locally bound – yielding a reflexive predicate – only if the verb carries object agreement, cf. the ill-formedness of (4).

(4) *UtltiteXo$_i$ łuveł$_i$ išək-s.
teacher he.ACC praise-PST.3SG *The teacher praised him / *himself.*

ii) The presence of object agreement facilitates object drop, as in (5).

(5) TămXătł ma c'ăta van-s-em.
today I there see-PST-SG.1SG
{LC: Yesterday my son went to Beryozovo.} *Today I saw (him /*myself) there.*

But a **zero object is incompatible with local binding**. The predicate in (5) cannot be interpreted as reflexive.

These facts are incompatible with any straightforward version of the no-competitor approaches in b). That is, even with object agreement the pronoun "is" not a reflexive; nothing in the competition theories would lead us to expect that *łuveł* + OAgr would be a winner against bare *łuveł* or bare OAgr (assuming we can compare them, although they reflect different numerations). How does option d) fare?

Analysis: The object agreement marker occupies a position after the tense marker, preceding the subject agreement marker (table 2). Thus, given Baker's Mirror Principle subject agreement is higher on the verbal spine than object agreement. Assuming agree-based chains (Pesetsky and Torrego 2004, implemented as in Reuland 2011) object agreement will block the formation of a syntactic dependency between the T-system and the object pronoun by minimality. At the stage when subject agreement comes into play object agreement will already have checked any syntactic property of pronoun (e.g. structural Case) that would make it visible for probing. Thus, the pre-conditions for the formation of a chain – which would be ill-formed – are not met. Hence, cancellation of the derivation does not ensue (Chomsky 1995, Reuland 2011) and the pronoun can be variable bound at the C-I interface.
The second issue is the prohibition in (2). Object drop in isolation does not license reflexivity (see (5)). In order to avoid the configuration in (2), the object argument should be complex. It is, since OAgr licenses a null object. Overt *łuveł* forms a constituent with the null object. This analysis is further supported since *łuveł* is also used as an intensifier (note that in this capacity it cannot be null):

(6) Jełp škola puš-s-ə(t) Komarova łuv joXt-əs.
new school open-PST-3PL Komarova he come-PST.3SG
Komarova {the governor} herself came for the opening of the new school.

Thus, the structure of (1) under its reflexive interpretation is (7), with ⌀ licensed by OAgr.

(7) UtltiteXo$_i$ [łuveł$_i$ ⌀] išək-s-əlle.
teacher he.ACC ⌀ praise-PST-SG.3SG *The teacher praised himself.*

Conclusion: We tested various current approaches to binding against the facts from Khanty. It turns out that only an approach as in d) can adequately account to the use of locally bound personal pronouns in Khanty. The key factor here is object agreement: it prevents the configuration for chain-formation and licenses a complex structure to avoid identical variables in a local domain.

	Number		
Person	SG	DU	PL
1	išak-s-əm	išak-s-əmən	išak-s-uv
2	išak-s-ən	išak-s-ətən	išak-s-əti
3	išak-s	išak-s-əŋən	išak-s-ət

Table 1: Subject agreement, past tense

		Object	
Subject		SG	PL
SG	1	išak-s-em	išak-s-əł-am
	2	išak-s-en	išak-s-əł-ən
	3	išak-s-əłłi	išak-s-əłłi
DU	1	išak-s-emən	išak-s-əł-amən
	2	išak-s-ələn	išak-s-əł-łən
	3	išak-s-əŋən	išak-s-əłłən
PL	1	išak-s-ev	išak-s-əł-əv
	2	išak-s-ələn	išak-s-əł-łən
	3	išak-s-əł	išak-s-əł-əł

Table 2: Object agreement, past tense

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