Agreement theory, number features and inclusory plural in Marori

This paper will discuss inclusory dual/plural in Marori exemplified in (1b-c) in the context of agreement theory. Inclusory constructions have been reported in the descriptive and typological linguistics, typically in complex (possibly discontinuous) NPs with coordination/modification strategies such as ['PRON.DUAL (X) VERB (X)] to mean '(s)he with/and X did something' (see Lichtenberk 2000, Moravcsik 2003 among others). While inclusory constructions exploit agreement (NUMBER) features, a precise theoretical account in agreement theory is surprisingly lacking. This is perhaps due to the unusual nature of inclusory constructions, which appear to work against the general agreement principle of feature compatibility; that is, the agreement principle in agreement theory typically operates on the constraint that agreeing units must have the same values. Inclusory constructions, in contrast, may involve apparent feature incompatibility. This is, for example, seen in (1c) for inclusory plural in Marori where the subject NP *John* carries a SG number feature whereas the verb carries PL subject agreement. Note that inclusory dual is achieved by combining singular (SG) on the NP (*John*) with NPL (nonplural) on the verb (*-ra-m*), (1b). The 3SGM agreement as seen in (1a) can, of course, be easily handled by any theory of agreement.

1	a.	John	abon	nggo-ri-m	b.	John	abon	nggo-ra-m
		John	steal	AUX-3SGM.PLURAC-3NPL.NrPST.DUR		John	steal	AUX-3NSG.PLURAC-3NPL. NrPST.DUR
		'John was stealing (things).'				'John and his associate ('i.e. they two') were stealing (things).'		

c. John abon nggo-ra-b John steal AUX-3NSG.PLURAC-3PL. NrPST.DUR 'John and his associates ('i.e. three or more') were stealing (things).'

The important point to learn from Marori is that the 'controller' in the nominal number agreement is actually the verbal element, not the free NP, John. This is clearly the case in (1b-c) where verbal morphology dictates the number interpretation of the 'target' subject NP. Any agreement theory therefore must be able to handle not only the canonical agreement pattern of the type shown in (1a) but also the exploitation of agreement resources for inclusory dual and plural as in (1b-c). I will demonstrate that agreement theory in LFG with its formalism (Bresnan et al. 2015, Dalrymple 2001) is sophisticated enough to capture the facts in Marori. The proposed LGF-based analysis has two key points. Firstly, in terms of NUM agreement, the verbal element is the 'source' or 'head', whereas the free subject NP is a modifier. Formally this is represented by having $\downarrow \in (\uparrow SUBI)$ annotation to the NP as seen in (2a). In effect, the value of SUBI becomes part of a set represented by { } as shown by the partial functional (f-)structure in (2b) and (2c). (The same mechanism is used for coordination/adjunct structures in LFG.) Secondly, syntactic number (different from morphological and semantic number) is analysed as consisting of +/-CUM(mulative) and +/-SING features, as shown in (3)(Arka and Dalrymple 2014). The [+CUM] feature is only relevant for plural, with referents in aggregate of more than three, represented as an unlimited set of indices $\{i, j, k\}$...} in (2c). [-CUM] is for non-plural; i.e. either singular or dual, represented as {*i*, (*j*)} in (2b). Thus, for sentence (1b), the verbal exponence -*ra-m* introduces [NUM –CUM:{*i*, (*j*)}] to syntax, and the subject NP John introduces [NUM +SG:i], resulting in the structure shown in (2b). This is interpreted as 'John as part of a set of two referents'. Combining *John* and plural-*ra-b* (1c) results in the structure shown in (2c), meaning 'John as part of set of referents of three or more'.



References

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