

## Two-Tiered Agree: A Case Study of Degree Adverbs

In this talk I examine the phrase structure status and certain A'-dependency properties of scope-taking degree adverbs (SDAs), and propose an analysis under the Agree framework (Chomsky 2000 *et seq*). My study is motivated by the following facts: (i) it is controversial whether SDAs are adjuncts, heads, or specifiers; (ii) there has been little discussion of A'-dependency properties of SDAs beyond interrogative and comparative SDAs; (iii) SDAs, as well as other quantificational expressions, have not been treated in enough detail in the Agree framework.

My proposal is that SDAs are agreement markers/feature realizers, adjoined to a silent degree argument. The *probe* is a set of features on a clausal functional head, and the *goal* is a corresponding set of features, one feature is on the silent degree argument, while another is on the focus argument/restriction argument of the degree operator (i.e. *too big a car* in the sentence *He bought too big a car*). At LF, the silent degree argument is transformed into a variable, and the focus argument/restriction argument also gets transformed into a variable in the sense of Shimoyama (2006). This two-tiered Agree analysis can straightforwardly account for both the structural position of the SDAs and the various A'-dependency properties of SDAs.

Arguments for my proposal are as follows. I begin by introducing and reinventing Johnson's (2007) proposal that quantificational determiners are agreement markers, and that they are associated with a silent definite determiner. I then show that from considerations of thematic discharge function, operator-variable binding function, and position of degree expressions relative to other arguments of gradable predicates in Chinese, it is natural to assume that a gradable predicate has a silent degree argument. I show that from the considerations of definiteness/quantifier restriction in English degree inversion, the high structure position of question particles, and the weak possessive NP constraint, we have a strong case for the analysis where the gradable predicate as well as the NP that contains it are the focus argument of the degree operator. Finally, in order to argue that SDAs do undergo covert movement to a clausal scope position, I show that weak island/intervention effects used to diagnose covert movement in Beck (2006) and Szabolcsi (2006) can be detected with a certain Chinese SDA; in addition, I also show that SDAs are generally clause-bound in terms of their scope, and are subject to other familiar islands such as the Complex NP island.

In addition to being able to derive the theta-related properties and the A'-dependency properties of SDAs, the main consequence of this proposal is that it identifies yet another case of two-tiered Agree, in addition to the better-known cases like the *focus phrase* in which the position of focus determines the alternatives to the focus phrase (Krifka 2006), the inner position of Finnish focusing particles (Holmberg 2014), and the outer position of Tlingit question particles (Cable 2007).