

Strong and weak adjectival inflection in Germanic as a consequence of parasitic Agree

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1. The strong-weak distinction: In Swedish (Sw), as in most Germanic languages, Attributive Adjectives (AAs) inflect differently depending on whether they occur in a definite DP as in (1), or in an indefinite DP, as in (2)

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| <p>(1) <i>det stor-a hus-et</i>
 the big-WK house-the
 ‘the big house’</p> | <p>(2) <i>ett stor-t hus</i>
 a big-STR house
 ‘a big house’</p> |
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The inflection of AAs is called weak (WK) in definite DPs and strong (STR) in indefinite DPs. The strong inflection expresses number and gender agreement with the head noun, while the weak adjectival inflection displays gender and number syncretism.

(3) INFLECTION ON AAS IN SWEDISH

	SG, NEUT	SG-NONNEUT	PL
STRONG	-t	- ∅	-a
WEAK	-a	-a	-a

The distribution of strong and weak adjectival inflection is not the only difference between definite and indefinite DPs in Sw. Another difference is article doubling. In definite DPs, the definite article occurs twice; once as a freestanding article and once as a suffix on the noun (see (1)). In indefinite DPs, the article is not doubled (see (2)). I claim that the syntactic process that gives rise to the doubling of the definite article also is the cause of the syncretism in the weak adjectival inflection.

2. Assumptions: a) Adjectival agreement is syntactically licensed via Agree b) Agree requires c-command between the Probe, the element that displays agreement, and the Goal, the element that determines agreement (Chomsky 2000). c) Agree is feature sharing (Frampton & Gutmann 2000).

3. A non-solution: I first would like to exclude an obvious solution for inflection on AAs in Swedish. It could be claimed that the inflection on AAs is the result of direct Agree between A and N. However, AAs take complements in Sw, like in (4).

- (4) *en över sin insats stol-t försvarsadvokat*
a over his accomplishment proud-STR attorney-for-the -defense
‘a lawyer that is proud of his accomplishment’ (Delsing 1993: 82)

Heads only c-command their sister. In (4), the sister of A is the adjectival complement. N is not included in this complement. It is therefore not c-commanded by A. However, strong inflection is licensed on the adjective. This shows that the licensing of adjectival agreement does not require c-command between A and N. Given the c-command requirement on Agree, this shows that adjectival agreement is not the result of a direct Agree-relation between A and N. Instead, I propose that it is the result of parasitic Agree (cf. Bhatt 2005).

4. Strong adjectival inflection and parasitic Agree: Under the feature sharing view of Agree, Agree can be established between two unvalued features (Frampton & Gutmann 2000). I argue that this accounts for strong adjectival inflection. After A fails to establish Agree with N because it does not c-command N, the indefinite D is merged. D is a gender and number Probe. It therefore searches its c-command domain for gender and number features. The first gender and number features it finds are on A. Even though these features are unvalued, Agree is established between D and A. This results in the sharing of unvalued gender and number features between D and A, as is illustrated in (5a) for the DP in (2). However, this sharing does not deactivate D as a Probe, because its probing features remain unvalued. D will therefore search further down its c-command domain. It then finds gender and number features on N, triggering Agree between D and N. The features on N are valued. Hence, Agree leads to the sharing of valued gender and number features between D and N. This sharing replaces the unvalued features of D with the valued features of N. However, as they were already shared with A, replacing the unvalued features of D also associates A with the valued features of N, as in (5b).

