

3/4 of a monster: On mixed shifty agreement in Telugu

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Languages differ in the behavior of person morphology embedded in speech and attitude reports. Some languages use specialized logophoric pronouns to refer to the attitude holder in such constructions (Adesola 2005; Clements 1975; Koopman & Sportiche 1989; Pearson 2015). Other languages display so-called indexical shift, where first person pronouns can refer to the attitude holder in embedded environments (Anand & Nevins 2004; Anand 2006; Anvari to appear; Deal 2020; Schlenker 2003; Shklovsky & Sudo 2014) . A relatively new discovery in the typology of embedded pronouns is a set of languages that allow for non-first person pronouns to apparently control first person agreement morphology. A representative example is given in (1) from the Dravidian language Telugu. The agreement on the embedded verb is first person singular *-nu*, however, the embedded subject, which is typically the controller of agreement in the language, is a third person simplex anaphor *tanu*.

- (1) Raju [tanu parigett-ææ-nu ani] čepp-ææ-Du
Raju 3SG run-PST-1SG COMP say-PST-3MSG
'Raju said that he ran.'

(Messick 2021: ex. 1)

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How to account for such a feature mismatch between the apparent agreement controller and the agreement morphology itself is still a matter of debate (see Deal 2020; Ganenkov to appear; Messick 2021; Sundaresan 2018). One line of analysis posits that the controller has a (special kind of) first person feature that is hidden or obscured by the morphology, and this feature is what allows the subject to control first person agreement (Deal 2020; Messick 2016, 2021). This phenomenon is at least superficially similar to agreement with so-called hybrid nouns where the agreement controlled by a NP does not appear to match that NPs own morphological features (Corbett 1979, 2006, 1983; Hahm 2010; Wechsler & Zlatić 2000, 2003), and instead seem influenced by the NPs semantics in some way (hence the term: ‘semantic agreement’). A common analysis to this type of semantic agreement is to posit that the NP has the features found on the agreement target, but these features are not morphologically expressed on the controller itself. It has been suggested that this hidden first person feature is similar to hidden features found on hybrid nouns found cross-linguistically (see Messick 2016:151-152 and Messick 2021:3). Similar to the example in (1), when a hybrid noun controls agreement morphology, the features of controller can mismatch from the agreement morphology itself. Observe the Hebrew example in (2). The controller of agreement *be’alim* is overtly morphologically plural but controls singular agreement on the verb and adjective.¹

¹Another similar phenomenon involves agreement with polite plurals (Comrie 1975; Hahm 2010; Puškar 2018). Similar to the phenomena discussed here, polite plurals may control agreement that mismatches from the feature expressed on the pronoun itself, as shown in (i) for Czech where the predicate adjective shows singular agreement with a morphologically plural second person pronoun.

- (i) Vy jste čestný
you.PL be.PL honest.MASC.SG
'You (one formal male addressee) are honest.' (Hahm 2010:118)

Unlike the phenomena discussed in the main text however, whether a probe shows matching or mismatching agreement with a polite pronoun appears fixed in the languages, hence it does not show the optionality that we find in languages like Telugu. See also Wechsler & Zlatić 2003: 98-99

- (2) ha-be'al-im ha-kodem maxar et ha-makom lifney šana
 the-owner-PL the-previous.SG sold.3SG ACC the-place before year
 ‘The previous owner sold the place a year ago.’ (Landau 2016:984)

A well-known fact about hybrid nouns is that they display a characteristic 3/4 pattern in such constructions. Using Hebrew as an exemplar once again, if the hybrid noun controls agreement on the verb and an adjective in the same sentence, only three of the four possible combinations are grammatical: (2) demonstrates that both agreement targets can be singular, while (3a) shows that is also grammatical if both targets surface as plural. The example in (3b) shows that it is impossible for the adjective to show singular agreement and the verb to show plural. The other mismatch as shown in (3c) is possible.

- (3) a. ha-be'al-im ha-kodem-im maxru et ha-makom lifney šana
 the-owner-PL the-previous-PL sold.3PL ACC the-place before year
 ‘The previous owners sold the place a year ago.’
- b. *ha-be'al-im ha-kodem maxru et ha-makom lifney šana
 the-owner-PL the-previous.SG sold.3PL ACC the-place before year
 Intended: ‘The previous owner(s) sold the place a year ago.’
- c. ?ha-be'al-im ha-kodem-im maxar et ha-makom lifney šana
 the-owner-PL the-previous-PL sold.3SG ACC the-place before year
 ‘The previous owner sold the place a year ago.’ (Landau 2016:984-985)

This type of paradigm is found with hybrid agreement with Russian (Pesetsky 2013), British English (Smith 2017), and Icelandic Wood & Sigurdsson (2014) to name just a few.² I present a novel paradigm from Telugu that a similar 3/4 pattern emerges when the embedded *tanu* controls agreement on two separate elements. I sketch for discussion.

²As a reviewer notes, we find 3/4 patterns in other areas of the syntax-semantics interface, such as in scope ambiguity in sentences with multiple quantificational elements (Bobaljik & Wurmbrand 2012).

an analysis of this new paradigm by combining the idea that monstrous agreement involves a “hidden” feature on the agreement goal with recent approaches to capturing the 3/4 pattern that we see in Hebrew and other languages.

1 Agreement in Telugu and the 3/4 pattern

Telugu is an SOV language and displays verbal agreement morphology with unmarked (nominative) arguments in person and number, as well as gender in the third person.³ Illustrative examples are given in (4), and the entire paradigm of verbal agreement morphemes is organized in the table below.

- (4) neenu/nuvvu/vaaDu parigett-ææ-nu/vu/Du
 1SG/2SG/3MSG run-PAST-1SG/2SG/3MSG
 ‘I/you/he ran.’

| | 1 | 2 | 3m | 3f | 3nt |
|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| SG | -nu | -vu | -Du | -di | -di |
| PL | -mu | -ru | -ru | -ru | -yi |

Table 1: Telugu verbal agreement morphology

In addition to verbal agreement, we find a different set of agreement markers on predicate nouns and adjectives. This type of agreement is only overtly realized for first singular and plural and second person singular. It is null throughout the rest of the paradigm. Relevant examples are given below in (5).

- (5) neenu/nuvvu/vaaDu vidyaardhi-ni/-wi/-∅
 1SG/2SG/3MSG student-1SG/2SG/3SG
 ‘I am/you are/he is a student.’

³Telugu data not attributed to other sources was collected through consultation with three native Telugu speakers.

This is summarized in the table below.

| | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|----|-----|-----|---|
| SG | -ni | -wi | Ø |
| PL | -mu | Ø | Ø |

Table 2: Agreement markers for predicate nominals and adjectives

Note that agreement markers on predicate nouns and adjectives must be seen as a distinct agreement probe from the probe found on T. This distinguishes it from the superficially similar pattern found in Sakha as described in Baker (2011). In Sakha, predicate nouns and adjectives appear to host person agreement affixes just like in Telugu. This is shown in (6).

Baker analyzes these agreement markers as instances of T agreement. The agreement only appears on the adjective as a result of a morphological merger like operation. Evidence for this comes from the fact that when an auxiliary is present, agreement no longer appears on the predicate, but rather solely on the auxiliary.

Telugu, on the other hand, shows a different pattern. In the simple present tense, the copular verb does not appear with predicate nouns and adjectives, however, it does show up in non-simple present contexts. When it does appear, it hosts both tense and agreement morphology. The agreement marker on the predicate element exists alongside it. If the agreement marker on the noun or adjective is dropped, the

sentence is judged unacceptable, as shown in (8) (see also Raghotham 2020).

- (8) neenu adhjaapakudi-*⁽ⁿⁱ⁾ avu-taa-nu
1SG teacher-*^(1SG) be-FUT-1SG
'I will become a teacher.'

Following Balusu (2014), I place the probe for the Telugu predicate nouns and adjectives on the PRED head. One piece of evidence in favor of this analysis comes from the fact that this agreement morphology is in complementary distribution with the morpheme *-gaa*, which Balusu (2016) independently argues is an eventive PRED head (see also Abramovitz 2021, where it is argued that a similar agreement morpheme found in Koryak non-verbal predication is located on PRED).

- (9) a. neenu president-gaa-(*ni) unnaanu
1SG president-GAA COP.PRES.1SG
'I am (temporarily) president.'

b. neenu president-(*gaa)-ni
1SG president-1SG
'I am the president.'

Balusu (2016: ex. 24-25)

Telugu additionally has monstrous agreement when pronouns and anaphors control agreement in attitude environments when the pronoun receives a *de se* interpretation (Messick 2016, 2021). The element *tanu* itself is 3rd person, as shown by the fact it cannot take first or second person elements as antecedents (10).⁴

- (10) *nuvvu/neenu [tanu parigett-ææ-nu ani] čepp-ææ-vu/nu
2SG/1SG 3SG run-PAST-1SG COMP say-PAST-2SG/1SG
Intended: 'you/I said that you/I ran.'

⁴Outside of Dravidian, this type of monstrous agreement is found in Nakh-Dagestanian (Forker 2019; Ganenkov to appear), Dogon (Culy 1994; Heath 2014) and Nilo-Saharan (Curnow 2002; Messick & Monich 2016) languages .

Although third person, *tanu* can control first person agreement on the verb and predicate nouns/adjectives, as shown in (11). (11a) shows monstrous agreement with embedded verbal agreement morphology. (11b) shows monstrous agreement with a predicate noun.⁵

Note that monstrous agreement is optional in both cases, the same examples with third person agreement are also grammatical.

Similarly, when the second person pronoun *nuvvu* is construed *de se* in an embedded speech or attitude report, it can control first person agreement morphology or second person agreement on verbs (12a) and predicate nouns (12b).

- (12) a. nuvvu Rani too [nuvvu parigett-ææ-nu/-vu ani] čepp-ææ-vu
 2SG Rani with 2SG run-PST-1SG/-2SG COMP say-PST-2SG
 ‘You told Rani that you ran.’

b. nuvvu Rani too [nuvvu vidyaardhi-ni/-wi ani] čepp-ææ-vu
 2SG Rani with 2SG student-1SG/-2SG COMP say-PST2SG
 ‘You told Rani that you are a student.’

⁵Though very similar, monstrous agreement is a distinct phenomena from so-called indexical shift (see Deal 2020 for a recent overview of indexical shift). With monstrous agreement, it is possible for agreement morphology to shift and surface as first person. In languages with indexical shift, indexical pronouns themselves shift. In Telugu, pronouns never shift. This is shown in (i). The pronoun *neenu* must refer to the current speaker and cannot refer to the attitude holder Raju.

- (i) Raju [neenu eemi tinn-aa-nu ani] čepp-ææ-Du?
 Raju_i 1SG_{*i/s} what eat-PST-1SG COMP say-PST-M.MSG
 'What did Raju say that I ate?' (Messick 2021: ex. 18)

We have seen individually that the agreement markers on both verbs and predicate nouns and adjectives can optionally shift and surface as first person in Telugu. We have also seen in (8) that both agreement markers can co-occur in the same clause. When we embed a clause that has both agreement morphology on the copular verb and on the predicate noun, we see a 3/4 pattern emerge. It is possible that both the elements shift (13a), or that neither shift (13b). Of the two potential cases where only one agreement markers shifts, only one case is grammatical. It is possible that the agreement marker on the copular verb shifts and surfaces as first person while the agreement marker on the predicate noun does not shift and surfaces as third person (i.e., null). The inverse where the predicate noun agreement marker shifts and surfaces as first person, while the agreement marker on the copula verb does not shift and surfaces as third person is ungrammatical.

- (13) a. Raju [tanu adhjaapakudi-ni ava-taa-nu ani] čepp-ææ-Du
 Raju 3SG teacher-1SG be-FUT-1SG COMP say-PST-3MSG
 ‘Raju said that he will become a teacher.’
- b. Raju [tanu adhjaapakudi-Ø ava-taa-Du ani] čepp-ææ-Du
 Raju 3SG teacher-3SG be-FUT-3MSG COMP say-PST-3MSG
 ‘Raju said that he will become a teacher.’
- c. Raju [tanu adhjaapakudi-Ø ava-taa-nu ani] čepp-ææ-Du
 Raju 3SG teacher-3SG be-FUT-1SG COMP say-PST-3MSG
 ‘Raju said that he will become a teacher.’
- d. *Raju [tanu adhjaapakudi-ni ava-taa-Du ani] čepp-ææ-Du
 Raju 3SG teacher-1SG be-FUT-3MSG COMP say-PST-3MSG
 ‘Raju said that he will become a teacher.’

We see the exact same pattern when the controller of agreement is second person.

- (14) a. nuvvu Rani too [nuvvu adhjaapakudi-ni ava-taa-nu/*-vu ani]
 2SG Rani with 2SG teacher-1SG be-FUT-1SG/*-2SG COMP

- čepp-ææ-vu
say-PST-2SG
‘You told Rani that you will become a teacher.’
- b. nuuvu Rani too [nuvvu adhjaapakudi-wi ava-taa-nu/-vu ani]
2SG Rani with 2SG teacher-2SG be-FUT-1SG/-2SG COMP
čepp-ææ-vu
say-PST-2SG
‘You told Rani that you will become a teacher.’

Agreement in Telugu only allows for three out of four possible combinations of monstrous and regular agreement in embedded clauses making it similar to the 3/4 pattern for agreement with hybrid nouns discussed in the introduction. The utterances ruled out in (13d) and (14a) also follow a pattern that we see from hybrid nouns: if the probe that agrees first mismatches from the morphological features of the goal, then the utterance is ungrammatical if the subsequent probe matches the morphological features of the goal. Assuming bottom up structure building, the probe on PRED is merged first and undergoes Agree. If that agreement relation results in a mismatch with the goal’s morphological features (1st person agreement), then when T is merged and undergoes agree, the result of that agreement relation cannot be a match with the morphological features of the goal (2nd or 3rd person agreement). Compare this to the ungrammatical Hebrew example from the introduction (3b). If the agreement relation between the probe on the DP-internal adjective and the goal results in mismatching agreement (SG), then the subsequent probe on T cannot result in morphological matching agreement with the goal (PL).

2 Accounting for 3/4 with monstrous agreement

A common first step in accounting for 3/4 patterns with hybrid nouns is to posit that the goal in such constructions has two distinct feature values: one expressed by

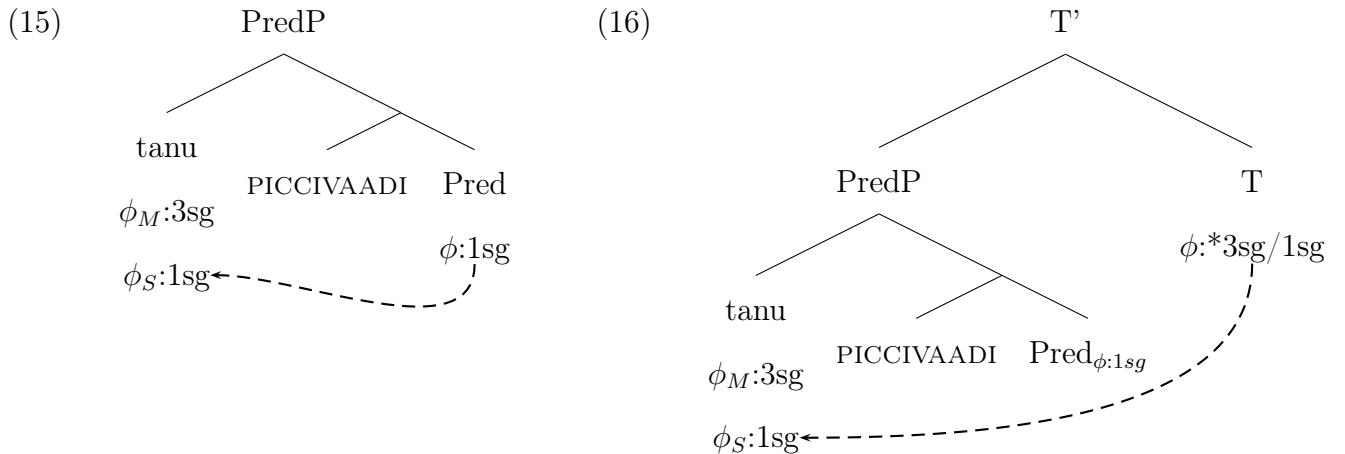
the morphology of the goal and one that goes unexpressed by the morphology, but is nonetheless available for syntactic operations such as agreement. Using *be’al-im* as an example, it has both a morphologically expressed plural feature, but also a morphologically unexpressed but syntactically active singular feature as well. Similarly, the goal that controls monstrous agreement has a kind of first person feature that goes unexpressed by the morphology in addition to a person feature that is morphologically expressed on the pronoun.

Broadly, there are two ways that researchers have treated the features that are not morphologically expressed. On some accounts, it is argued that lexical items come with two sets of features. One set corresponds to the items morphology while the other corresponds to the items semantics (Bruening 2020; Smith 2017; Wechsler & Zlatić 2000, 2003). What makes hybrid nouns special is their morphological and semantic features mismatch from one another. On this *lexical view*, when the agreement morphology appears to mismatch from the goals morphological feature it is because the probe targeted the semantic features of the goal. The other *structuralist view* posits that the two features are merged into the derivation at different points in the nominal structure (Kučerová 2018; Landau 2016; Pesetsky 2013; Puškar 2018). Both accounts then restrict access to certain features in principled ways that result in the observed 3/4 pattern.⁶ Below, I outline how the Telugu data may be integrated into these two types of theories.

Under a lexical analysis of monstrous agreement, there must be variants of third person *tanu* and second person *nuvvu* that come with a semantic first person feature.

⁶A reviewer wonders whether such analyses can account for the observation in Sauerland & Elbourne (2002) that semantic agreement is only possible with wide scope in raising constructions. Smith (2017, 2021) attempts to account for this fact (along with several other pieces of data) with his “LF-visability” condition on semantic agreement in British English, which restricts access to semantic features in a principled way, hence approaches that argue for dual features are compatible with these facts as well.

Following Bruening (2020), we can assume that both the morphological features and the semantic feature are possible targets for an agreement probe, however, when a probe targets the semantic features, those semantic features must be targeted for subsequent probes (see Bruening 2020:9). This is what Norris (to appear) calls *The Principle of Semantic Preference*. This system correctly predicts the Telugu pattern. Using the example with *tanu*, the pronoun would be merged into the structure with both a grammatical/morphological third person feature ($\phi_M:3\text{sg}$), but a semantic first person feature ($\phi_S:1\text{sg}$). Assuming bottom up structure building, the probe on PRED would be merged and undergo search. If this probe targets the semantic first person feature (15), then via *The Principle of Semantic Preference*, the later probe on T must also target the semantic feature (16). Hence the ungrammatical mismatch in (13d) is correctly ruled out while the derivation where both probes are valued first person is ruled in (13a).



If the probe on PRED instead targeted the morphological features of *tanu*, then the probe on T could target either the the morphological or semantic features, hence both (13b) and (13c) are correctly predicted to be grammatical.

Under a structural account to hybrid agreement, both the first person and third

person feature would be syntactic features, but would be merged in different points in the nominal structure. It is typically the case that the ‘hidden’ feature is merged into a position higher than the morphologically expressed feature (see e.g., Landau 2016: 996 and Pesetsky 2013: 40). In the case at hand, that would mean the first person feature is merged into a higher position that c-commands the third person feature. In order to account for 3/4 pattern, one must assume that once a feature that has been the target of an agreement probe, all features that the feature c-commands are blocked from entering in subsequent agreement operations. This is similar to the *Condition on Agree Domains* of Puškar (2018), but generalized so that it limits probes on potentially different heads. These assumptions have the same affect of the *The Principle of Semantic Preference*: once the higher first person feature has entered into an agreement relation with the probe on the PRED head, that blocks the subsequent probe on T from accessing the lower third person feature.

While deciding between lexical and structural approaches lies beyond the scope of the squib, it should be noted that most structural approaches were first created to account for the 3/4 where either one or both of the agreement probes occur inside the DP. This differs from the data discussed here where both the probe on T and PRED occur outside the DP. Hence, these analyses do not account for the these facts as straight fowardly as lexical approaches that were created to account for 3/4 patterns with two DP external agreement probes (see Smith 2021: Section 4.4.1 for discussion).

2.1 Licensing shifty agreement

Monstrous agreement does differ from other semantic agreement phenomena in that it has a more limited distribution. In Telugu, monstrous agreement is only possible in embedded clauses, and is not possible in matrix clauses. *Nuvvu* and *tanu* cannot

control first person agreement in matrix clauses.

- (17) a. *nuvvu parigett-ææ-nu
2SG run-PST-1SG
Intended: ‘You ran.’
- b. *tanu parigett-ææ-nu
3SG run-PST-1SG
Intended: ‘He ran.’

In order to account for this fact, we must restrict access to the ‘hidden’ first person feature in some way. A number of works have reached the conclusion that first and second person features require special additional licensing when compared to other ϕ -features (see Béjar & Rezac 2003; Baker 2008; Portner et al. 2019 among others). Following these works, it has been suggested that the hidden first person feature also requires special licensing. In this vein, Messick (2021) puts forth following condition on the hidden first person feature (which he calls $\langle +\text{author} \ -C \rangle$). The condition is given in (18) (cf. Deal 2020: Section 5.4 on the distribution/requirements of the *author-i* feature in her theory).

- (18) *[$\langle +\text{author}, -C \rangle$] if occurs on a pronoun X such that X is not locally bound by *Op_{ani}*.
- a. Local binding between *Op_{ani}* and a pronoun occurs iff *Op_{ani}* c-commands the pronoun and there is no other *Op_{ani}* that intervenes between the operator and the pronoun
- b. An element X intervenes between elements Y and Z iff X c-commands Y and does not c-command Z. (Messick 2021: ex. 83)

The element *Op_{ani}* can occur in clauses introduced by the complementizer-like element *ani* which can occur under nearly all attitude verbs. Note that the attitude verb itself is not a necessary component, as shifted agreement is possible in purpose clauses introduced by *ani*. Compare the examples in (19). In (19a), the purpose clause is

introduced by *ani* and the shifted agreement is grammatical. In (19b), the purpose clause is introduced not be *ani*, but by *kaabati*, and shifted agreement is not possible. Suggesting a tight relationship between *ani* and the licensing of shifted agreement.

This suggests that the hidden feature that underlies shifted agreement has a more restrictive distribution because it has more stringent licensing requirements than other hidden features previously studied. Due to space, I do not delve deeper into the details of the licensing condition here, and point the interested reader to Messick 2021.

3 Discussion and Conclusion

Before concluding, let's consider whether other approaches to monstrous agreement could potentially account for the 3/4 pattern. A prominent approach is given in Sundaresan (2018) for the Dravidian language Tamil. Under this analysis, the goal of the embedded agreement probe is ultimately a null pronoun in the left periphery that represents the perspective holder of the clause and has undergone indexical shift.⁷

This is schematized in (20).

- $$(20) \quad [_{PerP} \underset{\phi:1st}{pro} [_{Per'} [_{TP} \text{taan/nii} [_{T'} [_{vP...} \text{T}_\phi : _]]] \text{Per}]]$$

⁷While null pronouns have also been used to account for agreement with hybrid nouns (e.g., den Dikken 2001), further research is required to deduce whether such approaches can account for the 3/4 pattern generally (Smith 2017: 852).

Under this analysis, the embedded subject *taan* (for third person) and *nii* (for second person) cannot control agreement due to the Anaphor Agreement Effect, hence the only accessible potential goal for a ϕ -probe is the *pro*. Whether or not a clause exhibits indexical shift, is thought to be due to the presence of a shift operator in the left periphery of the embedded clause (following Anand & Nevins 2004; Anand 2006; Anvari to appear; Deal 2020; Shklovsky & Sudo 2014). Since the operator can either be present in the structure or not, we can account for cases of agreement where either agreement is entirely 1st person (shifted) or entirely 3rd person (non-shifted), but it is unclear how to generate mixed agreement example since it requires both 1st person features and 2nd/3rd person features to be accessible to the ϕ -probes, but it is unclear how to make both features simultaneously accessible given the assumptions of the analysis, hence this type of analysis does not appear able to account for the mixed agreement examples as it currently stands. Another recent approach to monstrous agreement is given in Ganenkov (to appear) for the Nakh-Daghestanian language Aqusha Dargwa. Under this approach, the embedded pronoun has a special ATTITUDE HOLDER feature that allows it to control first person agreement morphology. It maybe the case that the ATTITUDE HOLDER feature is just a different name for the hidden first person feature, if that is the case, then it may also account for the 3/4 patterns, but I leave further investigation of the this feature for future research.

This squib has aided in our understanding of monstrous agreement. It presented a novel paradigm that showed monstrous agreement, like hybrid agreement, shows a 3/4 pattern when there are two agreement probes. This suggests that the relatively little known phenomenon of monstrous agreement can analyzed with the same tools used for hybrid agreement.

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