

Rehabilitating the Rich Agreement Hypothesis

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The generalization that V-to-I movement is conditioned by rich subject agreement on the finite verb, generally referred to as the Rich Agreement Hypothesis, has since the 1980s been taken as an indication for a tight connection between syntax and morphology. In recent years, the Rich Agreement Hypothesis received a lot of bad press, both on empirical and theoretical grounds. In this talk, we demonstrate that all the empirical arguments against this hypothesis are incorrect and that it therefore must be rehabilitated in its strongest form. Moreover, theoretically, we argue that the correlation between syntax and morphology is not direct (morphology does not drive syntax) but follows from principles of language acquisition: only if language learners are confronted with particular morphological contrasts do they postulate the presence of corresponding formal features that in turn drive syntactic operations. More concretely, we demonstrate that only if language learners can infer that argumenthood is formalized in their target language are they able to postulate a particular functional projection in the extended vP to which the finite verb must move.

