

Introduction: Agreement Phenomena in Slavic Languages

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This special issue of the *Journal of Slavic linguistics* is dedicated to papers on agreement phenomena in Slavic languages. The studies presented in this issue were selected from the program of the Agreement Across Borders Conference 2015. The conference was held at the University of Zadar on 15–16 June 2015 as part of the project Coordinated Research of Experimental Morphosyntax of South Slavic Languages (EMSS) in collaboration with one of project partners, the Linguistics Department at the University of Zadar, Croatia. The topic of the conference was agreement as a grammatical phenomenon, covering a variety of languages (e.g., French, German, Greek, Neo-Aramaic, Polish, Russian, South Slavic), a number of categories (e.g., verbs, nouns, adjectives, pronouns, numerals), features, (person, number, and gender), and using a wide range of methodological approaches, reaching from elicited production, speed-accuracy trade off, ERP, and corpus analyses. One of the priorities of the conference was to initiate a discussion of methodological issues in the research of agreement, referring both to theoretical linguistics as well as to experimental psycholinguistics and neurolinguistics. The conference succeeded in crossing the traditional borders of research on agreement by bringing together linguists studying agreement and related phenomena theoretically and those with a particular focus on empirical and especially experimental work. Many contributions pointed to the great challenge in the study of morphosyntactic agreement that lies in the numerous observable instances of inter- and intraspeaker variation in agreement patterns. The conclusion from the meeting was that these can only be adequately accounted for on the basis of new and probably combined methods in empirical research into this phenomenon.

The EMSS project is led by Andrew Nevins and coordinated by Jana Willer-Gold at University College London. It studies agreement patterns in language varieties of Slovenian (Sln) and Bosnian/Croatian/Serbian (BCS) with a uniform psycholinguistic methodology in six locations: two in Serbia (University of Niš and University of Novi Sad), two in Croatia (University of Zadar and University of Zagreb), one in Bosnia and Herzegovina (University of Sarajevo), and one in Slovenia (University of Nova Gorica). The project has

both a scientific and social agenda. On the one hand, it investigates conjunct agreement in South Slavic languages and thus contributes to the currently debated topic (cf. Bošković 2009, Marušič, Nevins, and Badecker 2015) which revolves around the need for clearer descriptions of the respective data. On the other hand, the project uses a variety of experimental psycholinguistic methods to study selected varieties of South Slavic in a unified manner through cooperation between linguists across the borders of Bosnia, Croatia, Serbia, and Slovenia.

The guest editors of this issue are Andrew Nevins (University College London), who is the principal investigator, and Jana Willer-Gold (University College London), who is the coordinator of the EMSS Project, as well as the senior partners at the following research institutions: Boban Arsenjević (University of Niš), Marijana Kresić (University of Zadar), and Nedžad Leko (University of Sarajevo).

This issue focuses on research concerning agreement in South and West Slavic and includes two theoretical papers and six papers applying experimental methods. One of the theoretical papers analyses first-conjunct agreement in BCS, whereas the other paper discusses agreement of numeral phrases in Polish. The experimental papers apply elicited production methodology to conjunct agreement in gender and number in BCS and Sln, a comparison of oral and written production in BCS, the application of ERP methodology in research on conjunct and object-clitic agreement in Croatian, and an acceptability-judgment study on agreement with relative clauses headed by numerically quantified nouns in Polish.

In their paper Aljović and Begović define and analyze morphosyntactic properties of first-conjunct agreement (FCA) in verbal and adjectival configurations when the target is semantically and syntactically “shared” by the two conjuncts. The empirical domain of the investigation in this paper is confined to a postverbal Conjunct Phrase (ConjP) subject composed of two singular nouns of different genders in BCS. They argue for the syntactic operation Agree and a post-syntactic mechanism. However, they further specify that the latter acts as a filter on Vocabulary Insertion within the framework of Distributed Morphology. The newly introduced filter on Vocabulary Items, Feature Harmony, ensures (ϕ)-feature identity between Vocabulary Items. They go on to show that the filter can account for optionality of FCA, along with masculine plural, for inter- and intraspeaker variation and the gradient acceptability of FCA, and for “shared” interpretation.

Arsenjević and Mitić’s study is devoted to the question of whether single-conjunct agreement in number and gender with singular members of coordination is available in BCS. The results of an experiment encompassing coordinated singulars, disjunction, negative-concord conjunction, and conjoined plurals are presented. Single-conjunct agreement is found to occur in cases of coordinated singulars, particularly with respect to gender, and even

in instances of a lower production rate. Other important results of the study are that the production of preverbal FCA in gender and postverbal last-conjunct agreement (LCA) occurs quite often, that collective interpretations for the coordinated subject influence the acceptability of the various available agreement patterns, and that agreement in number and gender does not necessarily target the same constituent. It is assumed that number may attract gender, so that agreement with the whole conjunction is achieved, or that gender might attract number, resulting in agreement with a single conjunct.

Continuing on the subject of conjunct agreement in South Slavic languages, Čordalija, Bešić, Jovović, Marijanović, Perković, Šaljić, Telalagić, and Leko report on an experimental study comprising oral and written elicited production and an acceptability-judgment experiment, with the underlying aim to confirm the availability of three conjunct-agreement grammars, default (masculine), highest-conjunct agreement (HCA), and closest-conjunct agreement (CCA), in native speakers of BCS. The authors conclude that in line with Marušič, Nevins, and Badecker (2015) HCA is a legitimate agreement strategy in BCS. A conclusion is derived based on a comparative measure comparing the frequency of preverbal HCA to the frequency of postverbal LCA, the sole ungrammatical agreement strategy. Further support is provided by acceptability-judgment ratings. The special contribution of the paper lies in the detailed comparison of oral and written responses showing dominance of CCA in oral and default in written production. A detailed analysis and classification of performance errors suggests the possibility of gender mismatches in preverbal order and number mismatches in postverbal order.

Łęska provides an overview of the agreement patterns available to the verb in the relative clause, in cases when the relative clause modifies a numerically quantified noun. Two types of relative clauses are examined: those introduced by the complementizer-like item *co* and those introduced by the relative pronoun *który*, which displays number, gender, and case features. The data from an acceptability-judgment experiment show that while relative clauses introduced by *co* are quite unrestricted with respect to agreement patterns, those introduced by the relative pronoun allow only for one type of agreement, referred to as full agreement, while the other option, default agreement, is only licensed when the case assigned to the relative pronoun is identical to the case assigned to the head of the relative clause. The paper discusses the theoretical consequences of these findings with respect to the mechanisms of case assignment and relativization.

Palmović and Willer-Gold conducted an ERP experiment comparing closest-conjunct agreement, distant-conjunct agreement, and default agreement in preverbal-subject configurations with Croatian speakers. They find a higher P300 amplitude for distant-conjunct agreement than for closest-conjunct agreement. The difference between these conditions is found to change in the presence of a third option—default agreement. In the pres-

ence of default agreement, distant-conjunct agreement displays two other language-related negative waveform components reflecting its more difficult processing cost. Behaviorally, they find a higher acceptance rate and a faster reaction time for neuter agreement as opposed to feminine agreement, which is consistent with the results of the production study in Willer-Gold et al. (this volume). They finally indicate a theory-predicted tendency for distant- (also hierarchically highest) but not closest-conjunct agreement to be sensitive to gender value.

In their paper Pavlinušić and Palmović report the results of an EEG study of anaphora resolution focused on object clitics in Croatian. They investigate ERP effects of case and gender violations on the pronominal clitic regarding its agreement with the antecedent. Their aim is to detect functional and temporal differences in processing of local syntactic relations compared to the long-distance anaphoric dependencies found in similar studies on other languages (e.g., Barber and Carreiras 2005). The results confirm the expected differences, showing the appearance of early processing of case violations and late processing of gender violations at the clitic site, as well as the components related to syntactic reanalysis and repair. The results provide further reinforcement for findings that show fast local syntactic processing compared to the slower processing of long-distance anaphoric dependencies.

Willer-Gold, Arsenijević, Batinić, Čordalija, Kresić, Leko, Marušić, Milićev, Milićević, Mitić, Nevins, Peti-Stantić, Stanković, Šuligoj, and Tušek (EMSS project) report on two large-scale elicited-production experiments with native speakers of BCS and Sln ($n = 180$) conducted at six comparatively distant locations in the regions. With a special focus on gender agreement, Experiment 1 investigates preverbal-conjunct agreement, while Experiment 2 investigates conjunct agreement when the same ConjP is placed in postverbal position. The study establishes a baseline data set against which it evaluates two theoretical accounts standing in maximal contrast with respect to locus of conjunct agreement—purely syntactic versus distributed approach. With the dominance of CCA and instances of preverbal HCA, the results favor distributed approaches to conjunct agreement. Additionally, the results raise three issues pertinent to any theory of conjunct agreement and/or gender system: the contribution of a conjunct's gender value in boosting or decreasing the potential of an agreement option, the decrease in masculine plural in postverbal condition, and the preference for neuter over feminine. In order to account for these observations, the authors offer a comprehensive theory based on the differentiation of default versus resolved agreement for this subgroup of South Slavic languages.

Related issues pertaining to case agreement with numerically quantified nominal expressions in Polish are discussed in the paper by Witkoś and Dziubała-Szrejbrowska. Polish nominal expressions involving numerals five and up, like in several other Slavic languages, allow for two types of agree-

ment: default neuter-singular agreement and full agreement where the features of the nominal head are copied onto the agreeing constituents. An in-depth description of the data is provided and a syntactic analysis in terms of the theory of nanosyntax. The analysis shows that the observed facts are well explained given a fine structure of the projection of case, KP, and a series of movements within its functional sequence, in combination with an explicit and detailed mapping of locality relations.

In sum, the studies presented here are rich in empirically obtained data and offer theoretical groundwork for further theoretical advancements in modeling the architecture of agreement. At the same time they reveal the advantages of empirical and especially experimental research on agreement phenomena in South Slavic languages.

References

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