

(In)Definiteness-driven Agreement Patterns in Ukrainian Numeral Phrases

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Overview. Slavic numeral phrases present tangled agreement relations of twofold nature: numeral-complement noun and numeral phrase-verb agreement. We argue that verb morphology agreeing with Ukrainian numeral phrases can be used for definiteness marking.

Approach. Discussing genitive of quantification (Franks1994) and genitive override, we show that cardinal-noun complexes have identical structure, without differences in phrasehood (contra Bailyn2004), syntactic category or height (contra Bošković2006). While these approaches capture adjective-noun graduality, we argue that these distinctions mirror morpho-syntactic correspondences of semantic distinction of (generalized) quantification (phrase, DP) and predication (head, AP). Semantic type difference is syntactically captured in agreement based on (in)definiteness and semantically attributed to strong/weak quantification.

Having established this, we show that in Ukrainian, cardinal-noun constructions in subject D positions are furnished with the (in)definiteness feature.

Claim: Based on the results concerning GenQ and genitive override, we claim that the (in)definiteness feature in D correlates with the number marking on V: plural for definites, and default (3s.neut) for indefinites.

Method. After discussing paucal and general patterns of cardinal weak quantification, we present diminutive (“*dvijka*”), collective (“*dvoje*”), and collective diminutive numerals (CDNs, “*dvijko*”), each agreeing differently with verbs. CDNs, ostensibly unique to Ukrainian in that they strongly prefer plural agreement and only combine with small social collectives, have not been suitably described.

We proceed to account for optional and forced agreement through the (in)definiteness feature, explaining transition of relevant features in three steps: (i) DP-internal case and number distribution, (ii) preference setting of number feature by (in)definiteness feature in D, (iii) correspondence between (in)definiteness feature and number marking on V.

Data and results. Having implemented the feature preference mechanism, we present four cases of forced agreement (approximative inversion, demonstratives, reciprocals and reflexives, CDNs). We show that the definiteness feature in D determines the number feature on V:

a) *Approximative inversion:*

Studentiv sim bačy{-lo/*-ly} veselku
students.pl.gen seven saw{neut.3s/3pl} rainbow.acc
“Around seven students saw the rainbow.”

b) *Reciprocals:*

Sim studentiv zna{* -lo/-ly} odyn odnogo
seven students.pl.gen knew{neut.sing/3pl} one one.gen
“Seven students knew each other.”

Based on our assumption that CDN-verb agreement is semantic (Wechsler2011), we claim that the semantic definiteness effect can be extended to other cases.

Our analysis is typologically compatible with research on definiteness and plurality in Western Armenian (Sigler1997), plurality and animacy in Turkish (Alexiadou2019), languages marking verbs for definiteness (Ortmann2000), and the relationship between specificity, definiteness, and referentiality (Ionin2006), contributing to the study of morphological economy and pragmatic effects on agreement (Danon2010; Corbett2023).

(400 words)

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