Girls, glasses, and you — The distribution of formal vs. semantic agreement

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This talk

❖ Empirical domain:
  ❖ Formal vs. semantic agreement: girls, glasses, and You
  ❖ Agreement in predicative contexts: APs vs. DPs
  ❖ German, Slovenian, Greek, Czech (preliminary)

❖ Theoretical direction:
  ❖ Dual feature system
  ❖ Consequences for the Agreement Hierarchy
  ❖ Choice between formal/semantic agreement: interaction of preference conditions, which can be overridden by certain factors

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Formal vs. semantic agreement

Gender mismatches

Mädchen ‘girl’

❖ Formal NEUT
❖ Semantic FEM

(\textbf{G}) Das \textbf{Mädchen} genießt \textbf{seinen} Urlaub
the.\textbf{NEUT} girl enjoys its vacation

Das \textbf{Mädchen} genießt \textbf{ihren} Urlaub
the.\textbf{NEUT} girl enjoys her vacation
Polite pronouns

You (polite)

❖ Formal PL

❖ Semantic SG (one addressee) or PL (group)

(G) Sie sind / *ist/*bist nett

ADDR.POL.3.PL be.3.PL / *be.3.SG/*2.SG nice.Ø

Number mismatches


(Cz) Vy jste čestný / čestná

2.PL be.2.PL honest.M.SG / honest.F.SG

‘You (one formal male/female addressee) are honest.’

Vy jste čestní / čestná

2.PL be.2.PL honest.M.PL / honest.F.PL

‘You (multiple addressees) are honest.’

Vy jste byla učitelka

2.PL AUX.PL been.SG teacher.SG

‘You (pol) have been the teacher.’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1 Agreement with polite 2PL pronouns (Comrie 1975; Corbett 1983)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PERSON agreement?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Romance:</td>
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<tr>
<td>French</td>
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<td>Romanian</td>
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<td>Italian dialects</td>
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<td>Modern Greek</td>
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<td>Czech</td>
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<td>Lower Sorbian</td>
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<td>Upper Sorbian</td>
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<td>Polish dialects</td>
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<td>South Slavic:</td>
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<td>Bulgarian</td>
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<td>Macedonian</td>
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<td>Serbian/Croatian</td>
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<td>Slovene</td>
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<td>East Slavic:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ukrainian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Belorussian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Russian</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Number mismatches)

(Gr) isasten evjenikos / evjeniki / *evjeniki

are.2.PL kind.MASC.SG / FEM.SG / *MASC.PL

(SIP) Vi ste bili dobri

ADDR.POL.2.PL AUX.PL been.PL kind.PL

(SIC) Vi ste bila dobra

ADDR.POL.2.PL AUX.PL been.SG kind.SG
Pluralia Tantum


❖ Formal PL
❖ Semantic SG (one item) or PL (several items)

(Cz) Tyto brýle jsou hezké / *hezká
these glasses. PL be. PL nice.FEM.PL / *nice.SG
‘These glasses (one or multiple pairs) are nice.’

(SI) Vilice so lepe / *lepa
fork.FEM.PL be. PL nice.FEM.PL / *nice.FEM.SG
‘This fork (one item) is nice.’

(Gr) Ta jaάa en akriva
the glasses. NEUT.PL be. 3.PL expensive.NEUT.PL
‘The glasses are expensive.’

* Ta jaάa en akrivo
the glasses. NEUT.PL be. 3.PL expensive.NEUT.SG
‘The glasses are expensive.’

Trigger & relation matter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trigger = you.pol</th>
<th>T-agreement</th>
<th>Predicative A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>formal</td>
<td>—</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenian (preser.)</td>
<td>formal</td>
<td>—</td>
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<tr>
<td>Slovenian (coll.), Czech, Greek</td>
<td>formal</td>
<td>formal</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trigger = pluralia tantum</th>
<th>T-agreement</th>
<th>Predicative A</th>
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<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>formal</td>
<td>—</td>
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<td>formal</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Two types of nominal ellipsis

- N(P) ellipsis: deletion of a specific antecedent N(P)
- Deep ellipsis: abstract null n/N specified for [+ANIMATE]

| (G)   | Dieser **Bub** ist der einzige **Bub** der traurig ist
|       | this boy is the only boy who sad is
| Der   | **Bub** ist der einzige **Ø[+ANIM]** der einen Löffel hat
|       | the boy is the only ONE who a spoon has

Agreement in ellipsis

| **NPE** | Dieser **Bub** ist der einzige **Bub** der traurig ist
|         | this boy is the only boy who sad is
| **Ø**  | Der **Bub** ist der einzige **Ø[+ANIM]** der einen Löffel hat
|         | the boy is the only ONE who a spoon has
| *      | Der **Bub** ist die einzige **Ø[+ANIM]** die einen Löffel hat
|         | the boy is the only one who a spoon has
| **MM** | Der **Bub** ist die einzige **Person** die einen Löffel hat
|         | the boy is the only person who a spoon has

Deep ellipsis in mismatch cases

| (G)   | Das **Mädchen** ist die einzige **Ø[+ANIM]** die ... 'is dressed in blue'
|       | the girl.**NEUT** is the.**FEM** only ONE who.**FEM** ...
| *     | Das **Mädchen** ist das einzige **Ø[+ANIM]** das ...
|       | the girl.**NEUT** is the.**NEUT** only ONE who.**NEUT** ...

boys:
N(P) ellipsis in mismatch cases

(G) Das 2. Mädchen ist [ die einzige Ø [+ANIM] ] [ die ... ]
the 2nd girl. NEUT is [ the.FEM only ONE ] [ who.FEM ... ]

Das 2. Mädchen ist [ das einzige Mädchen ] [ das ... ]
the 2nd girl. NEUT is [ the.NEUT only girl ] [ who.NEUT ... ]

blau angezogen ist ‘is dressed in blue’

Girls:

Generalization

❖ In German predicate constructions, formal agreement between the subject and the ellipsis remnant is only possible when the interpretation is compatible with N(P) ellipsis.

[the N].f as is [ the only N.formal who ].formal
[the N].f as is [ the only Ø [+ANIM] who ].*formal/
✓ semantic

Further evidence

(G) Die Gabel ist [ das einzige Ø[−ANIM] ] [ das/was ... ]
the fork. FEM is [ the.NEUT only ONE ] [ that.NEUT ... ]

* Die Gabel ist [ die einzige Ø[−ANIM] ] [ die ... ]
the fork. FEM is [ the.FEM only ONE ] [ that.FEM ... ]
niemand vergessen hat ‘nobody forgot’

niemand erkannt hat ‘nobody recognized’

Further evidence

(G) Die Kuchengabel ist [ die einzige Gabel ] [ die ... ]
the cake.fork. FEM is [ the.FEM only fork ] [ that.FEM ... ]
niemand erkannt hat ‘nobody recognized’

✓ ✓ ❌ ✓ ✓ ✓
Polite pronouns

(G) Sie sind die einzige Ø die ...
POL.3.PL be.3.PL the.FEM only.SG ONE who.FEM(SG) ...

Sie sind der einzige Ø der ...
POL.3.PL be.3.PL the.MASC.SG only.SG ONE who.MASC.SG ...

* Sie sind die einzigen Ø die ...
POL.3.PL be.3.PL the.FEM only.PL ONE who.FEM(PL) ...

Pluralia tantum

(G) Die Pommes waren das einzige Ø das ...
the fries.PL were the.NEUT.SG only ONE that.NEUT.SG ...

* Die Pommes waren die einzigen Ø die ...
the fries.PL were the.PL only.PL ONE die.PL ...

geschmeckt hat/haben ‘tasted good’

Slovenian (with Marko Hladnik)

(SI) Dekle je edina Ø ki je oblečena modro.
the girl.NEUT is only.FEM ONE C.REL is dressed.FEM blue

* Dekle je edino Ø ki je oblečeno modro.
the girl.NEUT is only.NEUT ONE C.REL is dressed.NEUT blue

Slovenian forks (PT)

(SI) Vilice so edino Ø česar
fork.FEM.PL be.PL only.NEUT.SG ONE which.NEUT

* Vilice so edino Ø katerih
the girl.NEUT is only.NEUT ONE which.FEM.PL

ni nihče pozabil ‘nobody forgot’

3/6 5/6 6/6 4/6 2/6 candle.FEM napkin.FEM fork.FEM vase.FEM bottle.FEM
Slovenian forks (NPE)

(SI) Desertne vilice so edino vilice dessert fork.FEM.PL be.PL only
katerih ni nihče prepoznal which.FEM.PL AUX.NEG no-one recognized

✓ ✓ ✗ ✓ ✓

menu fork   oyster fork   cake fork   fish fork   carving fork

Slovenian You

(SI) Vi ste edine Ø ki ste prijazne.
desert fork.FEM.PL be.PL only.Ø be.PL only
‘You (pol) are the only ones (group >2) who are nice.’
* ‘You (pol) are the only one (female) who is nice.’

Vi ste tá Ø ki ... single addr.
desert fork.FEM.PL that.FEM/MASC.SG ONE.C.REL ...
‘You (pol) are the ones/*one (group >2) of females) who...’

Vi ste tí Ø ki ... *single addr.
desert fork.FEM.PL that.MASC.PL ONE.C.REL ...
‘You (pol) are the ones/*one (group >2) of females) who...’

Slovenian You: a glitch

(SI) Vi ste edini Ø ki ste prijazni.
desert fork.FEM.PL be.PL only.Ø be.PL only
‘You (pol) are the only ones (group >2) who are nice.’
‘You (pol) are the only one who is nice.’

-i: MASC.SG.DEF and MASC.PL are syncretic (note that the above
cannot refer to a group of exactly 2 people)

Agreement on embedded predicative AP? Possibly with matrix
subject directly as in fake indexical contexts:

I am the only one who takes care of my son.

Greek (with Christos Christopoulos)

(Gr) to koritsin en i moni Ø pu fori mble ruxa.
the girl.NEUT is only.FEM ONE that wears blue clothes

to koritsin en to monon Ø pu fori mble ruxa.
the girl.NEUT is only.NEUT ONE that wears blue clothes

‘The girl is the only one wearing blue clothes.’
### Summary of distribution

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T-agreement</th>
<th>Predicative A</th>
<th>Predicative D/N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>formal</td>
<td>semantic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenian (prescr.)</td>
<td>formal</td>
<td>formal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovenian (coll.) Czech #1</td>
<td>formal</td>
<td>formal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek, Czech #2</td>
<td>formal</td>
<td>formal</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Nature (features) of the trigger (polite 2.PL vs. other targets)
- Relation underlying agreement (T-agreement vs. predication)
- Nature (features) of the target (predicative AP vs. DP)

### Predicate D/N always allow (often require) semantic agreement

- If a predicative D/N allows formal agreement with a trigger, that trigger (obligatorily?) triggers formal agreement on predicative A targets
Russian long/short form As


(R) Vy byli ugrjumy
2.PL were.PL morose.SHORT.PL

Vy byli [DP/NP ugrjumoj ]
2.PL were.PL [DP/NP morose.LONG.SG ]

Two types of features

Dual feature system


• Dual φ-feature system: formal uφ (≈ Concord; relevant for morphology) and semantic iφ (≈ Index; relevant for interpretation)

Feature distribution

Lexicon, numeration

Syntax: uφ or iφ

PF: only uφ
LF: only iφ
**Formal vs. semantic agreement**

- Inertness of one of the feature types on the controller
- Based on: features of the target, trigger, and certain preference settings

**Formal agreement:**

controller \([\text{val}, \text{val}] \xrightarrow{\text{Agree}} \text{target [\_]}\)

**Semantic agreement:**

controller \([\text{val}, \text{val}] \xrightarrow{\text{Agree}} \text{target [\_]}\)

**Agreement Hierarchy**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T</th>
<th>Predicative A</th>
<th>Pronoun</th>
<th>Ø.N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>formal ((u\phi))</td>
<td>(u\phi)</td>
<td>(u\phi) and (i\phi)</td>
<td>(i\phi)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>semantic ((i\phi))</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Controller feature choice **PREFERENCE:** Match the feature type \((u\phi/i\phi)\) of the target with the feature type of the trigger controller \([\text{val}, \text{val}] \xrightarrow{\text{Agree}} \text{target [\_]}\)

**Match feature type**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>T</th>
<th>Predicative A</th>
<th>Pronoun</th>
<th>Ø.N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>German</td>
<td>formal</td>
<td>formal</td>
<td>semantic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slo (P)</td>
<td>formal</td>
<td>formal or semantic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slo (C), Cz #1</td>
<td>formal</td>
<td>formal or semantic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek, Czech #2</td>
<td>formal</td>
<td>formal or semantic</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Deficient \((u\phi)\) feature structure of \textit{You}

Tension between Match feature type \((i\phi)\) & \(u\phi\) preference

**Feature choice = preference**

- All languages: Use the preferred feature type whenever you can, otherwise use the other feature type.
- Greek, Cz #2: Use Concord feature / \(u\phi\) whenever you can, otherwise use the Index feature / \(i\phi\).

Agreement Marking Principle (Wechsler 2011, Wechsler & Hahm 2011): An agreement target checks the trigger for a syntactic phi feature, assigning that feature’s semantic interpretation to the trigger denotation if no syntactic feature is found.
Deficient feature structure

Wechsler 2011, Wechsler & Hahm 2011

- Polite pronouns (in mixed agreement languages): not specified for Concord features (but assumed to have a plural Index feature)

More transparent feature ≈ PF/semantic mapping:

\( \text{i}_\phi \): [\text{ADDRESS.POLITE}; #; \text{♀}]  

\( \text{u}_\phi \): [\( \pi = 2 \text{ or } 3 \); PL] ← no gender, possibly due to markedness constraints (Calabrese 2011)

Best matches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trigger</th>
<th>( \text{i}_\phi )</th>
<th>( \text{u}_\phi )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘You’</td>
<td>[ADDRESS.POLITE; #; \text{♀}]</td>
<td>[( \pi = 2 \text{ or } 3 ); PL]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Targets:  

- \( \text{A} \text{u}_\phi \): [ # ___ \text{♀} ___ ]  
- \( \text{T} \text{u}_\phi \): [\( \pi ___ \# ___ \) ]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Features of target</th>
<th>T</th>
<th>Predicative A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>girl, PT</td>
<td>formal</td>
<td>formal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You Type 1: ( \text{i}_\phi ) ☂</td>
<td>formal</td>
<td>formal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You Type 2: only ( \text{i}_\phi ) ☂</td>
<td>formal</td>
<td>semantic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Going forward

Wechsler 2011: 1002

- The Polite Plural Generalization: A polite plural pronoun agreement controller determines plural number (i.e. formal rather than semantic agreement) on any agreement targets marked for person (and number).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Trigger: Polite ‘you’</th>
<th>T with ( \pi )</th>
<th>T without ( \pi )</th>
<th>A without ( \pi )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Features of target</td>
<td>formal</td>
<td>formal or semantic</td>
<td>formal or semantic</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions

❖ Refined Agreement Hierarchy (predicative NPs/DPs)
❖ Ellipsis:
   ❖ 2 types: Ø (one) cannot always be an elided actual N
   ❖ Semantic agreement is always an option in predicate contexts (even in preferred formal agreement languages), in many the only option
❖ Choice between formal and semantic agreement depends on the properties of the target (preferred $i\phi/u\phi$ match), the trigger (underspecification, markedness), and possibly other languages specific preferences for agreement (e.g., formal » semantic)