

The Source for Singular Agreement between Quantified NPs and Predicates in Slavic

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In many languages, there are morphological and syntactic differences within individual semantic classes of numerical expressions that define the boundary between lexemes denoting numerical values lower, so the lower numerals 2-4 and higher, from 5 onwards. This especially applies to the cardinal numerals. Noun phrases containing higher numerals exhibit a characteristic pattern in Polish in which the predicate takes the third person singular inflection as exemplified in (1b) whereas noun phrases containing lower numerals trigger number and gender agreement on the following verb which is shown in (1a) below:

- 1) a *Dwie* *kobiety* *przyszły.*
two-NOM-Fem women-NOM-Fem-pl come-pastPRT,Fem,pl
'Two women came.'
- b *Pięć* *kobiet* *przyszło.*
five-NOM-Fem women-GEN-Fem-pl come-pastPRT,3sg,Neu
'Five women came.'

The previous solutions to the Polish numerals puzzle, for instance Klockmann (2012), Matushansky (2016), were based on gender and case issues as the main reasons for the agreement mismatch. In the present study, I argue that it is the number feature on the numeral itself which is responsible for the singular neuter agreement on the following verb. Diachronically, there were two patterns which competed in Old Polish (15th century in particular). One of them accounted for the formal agreement with the verb which took the third person singular feminine inflection, as the numerals were originally feminine nouns. This is still true for some of the Czech numerals, such as *jedna* 'one.fem', *dvě* 'two.fem' and also in Arabic (Fassi Fehri 2018). In Proto-Slavic, adjectives and pronouns in combinations with numerals 5-10 were originally always in the form required by the numeral. They therefore took the form of the third person singular feminine. This state is continued in Old Polish, especially when the group appears in the nominative and accusative. The other pattern exhibited the need for a semantic agreement between the verb and a plural noun phrase which allowed the verb to take plural inflectional ending with the feminine gender (Słoboda 2012:61-65). In Old Polish and Present-day Polish, the gender feature is not morphologically marked on verbs in present and future tense. Only the past tense inflection expresses gender distinctions. Historically, the gender agreement between numeral expression and the past tense verb forms shifted from feminine to neuter, however, the numeral kept its singular number features in the present-day language as it agrees with the singular demonstrative pronoun in (2a) and does not agree with a plural feminine demonstrative in (2b):

- 2) a To siedem kotów biegało po ulicy.
this-neut,sg seven-nom-FEM cats-GEN run-past-3.sg.neut after street-LOC
'These seven cats were running on the street.'
- b * Te siedem kotów biegało po ulicy.
this-fem.pl seven-nom-FEM cats-GEN run-past-3.sg.neut after street-LOC

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