

GRAMMATICAL AGREEMENT

Edith Moravcsik

University of Wisconsin-
Milwaukee

edith@uwm.edu

1. INTRODUCTION

GOALS OF THE URALIC TYPOLOGY DATABASE PROJECT

Cataloguing grammatical structures of Uralic languages in a database and assessing them relative to other languages of the world

TASKS

- 1/ Cataloguing grammatical structures of Uralic languages in a database
- 2/ Surveying crosslinguistic generalizations about grammars
- 3/ Assessing Uralic features in the context of relevant crosslinguistic generalizations; noting similarities and differences in occurrence and frequency

GOALS OF THIS PAPER

1/ Re the task of cataloguing grammatical structures of Uralic languages:

PROVIDE

(a) A DEFINITION OF AGREEMENT

and

(b) A LIST OF PARAMETERS OF VARIATION

(SECTION 2)

2/ Re the task of surveying crosslinguistic generalizations:

PROVIDE A SAMPLE OF CROSSLINGUISTIC

GENERALIZATIONS ABOUT AGREEMENT

(SECTION 3)

2. A DEFINITION OF AGEEMENT AND PARAMETERS OF VARIATION

SELECTIONAL DEPENDENCY

[If A, then B /W] M

In context W, if syntactic constituent A has been selected, syntactic constituent B must or may also be selected.

GOVERNMENT

[If A.X and B, then B-c /W] M

In context W, if constituents A and B have been selected and A is of subtype X, B must or may have the case marker c.

AGREEMENT

[If A.X1 and B, then B-x1 /W] M

In context W, if constituents A and B have been selected and A has a given value of the feature X, then B must or may have a marker representing the same value of X.

PARAMETERS OF VARIATION IN AGREEMENT CONSTRUCTIONS

- **A: controller**
- **B: target**
- **X: feature**
- **W: context**
- **M: modality**

SAMPLE DATABASE ENTRIES FOR HUNGARIAN

1/ NOUN-DEMONSTRATIVE AGREEMENT

- controller: noun
- target: demonstrative pronoun
- feature: number, case
- context: within the noun phrase
- modality: must

Example:

ez-ek-et *a kez-ek-et*
this-PLU-ACC the hand-PLU-ACC
'these hands (ACC)'

2/ SUBJECT-VERB AGREEMENT

- controller: subject
- target: verb
- feature: person, number
- context: within the clause
- modality: must

Example:

ti *olvas-tok*
you (PL) read-P2
'you (PL) read'

3. A SAMPLE OF CROSSLINGUISTIC GENERALIZATIONS ABOUT AGREEMENT

Generalizations about

(A) INDIVIDUAL TERMS

(B) SYNTAGMATIC COOCCURRENCE:

the distribution of individual terms
relative to each other in an agreement
construction

(C) PARADIGMATIC COOCCURRENCE - 1:

the distribution of agreement patterns
relative to each other in a language

(D) PARADIGMATIC COOCCURRENCE - 2:

the distribution of agreement patterns
relative to other grammatical features
in a language

(A) GENERALIZATIONS ABOUT INDIVIDUAL TERMS

G-1. If a language has an agreement pattern, its terms must be from among those in the crosslinguistic inventory of agreement terms.

A crosslinguistic inventory of individual terms of agreement:

(a) Controllers:

- nominal (noun or pronoun)
- noun phrase
 - subject
 - direct object
 - indirect object
- possessive adjective
- qualitative adjective
- verb
- finite clause
- infinitive

- (b) **Targets:**
- **article**
 - **demonstrative**
 - **quantifier**
 - **adjective**
 - **verb**
 - **predicate complement**
 - **pronoun**
 - **adverb**
 - **adposition**
 - **possessor noun**
 - **possessed noun**
 - **apposition**
 - **complementizer**
 - **coordinating conjunction**
 - **particle**

(c) Features :

- gender
- number
- person
- case
- definiteness
- respect
- tense, aspect

(d) Contexts:

- domains: noun phrase
clause
sentence
discourse
- conditions: precedence
adjacence

(e) Modalities:

- must
- may

(B) GENERALIZATIONS ABOUT THE DISTRIBUTION
OF INDIVIDUAL TERMS RELATIVE TO EACH OTHER

G-2. If a language has an agreement pattern, the combination of the terms must be from among those in the crosslinguistic inventory of term combinations.

A crosslinguistic inventory
of combinations of terms of
agreement:

(a) Controllers and
targets ...

(b) Controllers, targets
and features ...

(c) Controllers, targets,
features, and contexts ...

(d) Controllers, targets,
features, contexts,
and modalities ...

etc.

For example:

Controllers, targets, features, and contexts ((c))

1/ Within the noun phrase:

- article agrees with noun in gender
 - demonstrative agrees with noun in number
- etc.

2/ Within the clause:

- verb agrees with subject in person
 - verb agrees with direct object in gender
- etc.

3/ Within the sentence and discourse:

- anaphoric pronoun agrees with antecedent in gender and number

(C) GENERALIZATIONS ABOUT THE DISTRIBUTION OF AGREEMENT PATTERNS RELATIVE TO EACH OTHER IN A LANGUAGE

1/ PREDICTING CONTROLLERS

IF: a language has a controller of person agreement along one of the hierarchies of G-3 through G-07,
THEN: it also has all controllers of person agreement to the left.
(Siewierska 2004: 149)

G-3. The person hierarchy
1st > 2nd > 3rd

G-4. The nominal hierarchy
pronoun > noun

G-5. The animacy hierarchy

human > animate > inanimate >
abstract

G-6. The referential hierarchy

definite > indefinite specific >
non-specific

G-7. The focus hierarchy

non-focused > focused

G-8. IF: in a language, the verb agrees with
the direct object in person,
THEN: it also agrees with the subject
in person.

(Siewierska and Bakker 1996: 121-123)

G-9. Agreement with both the Theme and
the Recipient by ditransitive verbs
occurs but it is infrequent.

(Siewierska 2004: 135)

2/ PREDICTING TARGETS

G-10. IF: a language has person agreement with the possessor by alienable nouns,
THEN: it also has person agreement with the possessor by inalienable nouns.

(Siewierska 2004: 138)

G-11. IF: a language has person agreement with the possessor by inalienable nouns,
THEN: this agreement will at least be used with possessed body part and/or kin terms.

(Stassen 1997: 38)

G-12. IF: a language has person agreement by intransitive predicates,
THEN: it also has person agreement by transitive predicates.
(Siewierska 2004: 133)

G-13. event > property > class, locational

IF: a language has person agreement in intransitive main clauses by verbs of any of the three types listed in the hierarchy,
THEN: it also has person agreement by all verb types to the left.
(Siewierska 2004: 131-132; cf. also Stassen 1997: 38)

G-14. (statistical)

predicates > possessed nouns > adpositions

IF: a language has person agreement by any of
the three targets listed in the hierarchy,
THEN: it will have person agreement by all targets
to the left.

(Siewierska 2004: 128)

G-15. IF: a language has verb agreement either
with the subject or with the object
in gender,
THEN: the adjective also agrees with its noun
in gender.

(Greenberg 1963: #31)

3/ PREDICTING AGREEMENT FEATURES

- G-16. IF: the verb agrees with the nominal subject or nominal object in gender,
THEN: it also agrees in number.
(Greenberg 1963: #32)
- G-17. IF: number agreement between the noun and the verb is suspended and the rule is based on order,
THEN: the verb is in the singular.
(Greenberg 1963: #33)
- G-18. IF: the adjective follows the noun,
THEN: the adjective agrees with the noun in all of the noun's inflectional categories.
(Greenberg 1963: #40)

G-20. The predicate hierarchy (statistical)

verb > participle > adjective > noun

IF: a controller listed in the hierarchy
requires semantic agreement,

THEN: the controller immediately to the right
also requires semantic agreement.

(Comrie 1975; Corbett 2006: 230)

(D) THE DISTRIBUTION OF AGREEMENT PATTERNS
RELATIVE TO OTHER GRAMMATICAL PROPERTIES IN A
LANGUAGE

G-21. IMPLICANS: ALIGNMENT (statistical)

(a)

IF: a language has accusative alignment and transitive predicates exhibit person agreement only with one or the other of the monotransitive arguments,

THEN: the controller chosen is the Agent.

(b)

IF: a language has ergative alignment and transitive predicates exhibit person agreement only with one or the other of the monotransitive arguments,

THEN: the controller chosen is the Patient.

(Siewierska 2004: 133)

G-22. IMPLICANS: ALIGNMENT

(statistical)

IF: a language has active alignment,
THEN: verb agreement with Agent, Patient,
and intransitive subject is more
likely than in languages with
accusative or ergative alignment.

(Siewierska 2004: 135)

G-23. IMPLICANS: WORD ORDER

IF: a language has free major
constituent order,

THEN: the verb always agrees with both
subject and direct object.

(Siewierska and Bakker 1996: 125; cf. also
Steele 1978: 610)

G-24. IMPLICANS: WORD ORDER (statistical)

IF: a language has verb-initial or verb-final order,

THEN: it is more likely that it has verb agreement with subject and particularly with direct object than that verb-middle languages do.

(Siewierska and Bakker 1996: 125)

G-25. IMPLICANS: AFFIX ORDER (statistical)

IF: a verb has a person agreement marker with intransitive subject or Agent and also tense, aspect or modality markers,

THEN: the person agreement marker is further away from the stem than the tense, aspect, and modality markers.

(Siewierska 2004: 171)

4. CONCLUSIONS

The hoped-for utility of this survey for the Uralic database is as follows:

- A/ The definition of agreement should help us determine which facts should be listed in the Uralic database as instances of agreement.
- B/ The list of parameters should tell us how agreement patterns should be entered in the database.
- C/ The crosslinguistic generalizations can be tested for Uralic languages to assess Uralic agreement patterns among the languages of the world in terms of both occurrence and frequency.

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