

When agreement is for number and gender but not person

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Abstract In many languages, adjectives agree with a noun phrase in number and gender, but not in person. In others, ditransitive verbs can agree with their theme argument in number and gender, but not in person (the Person Case Constraint). However, a unified account of these two similar patterns has rarely been attempted. In this article, I review how a single syntactic principle from Baker (2008)—the Structural Condition on Person Agreement (SCOPA)—can explain both phenomena, in contrast to other existing proposals. I then go on to show how the SCOPA also accounts for five other environments in which verbs agree in number and gender (if relevant) but not in person. Special attention is given to two entirely new cases: subject raising constructions in Sakha and agreement with direct objects in Ostyak. Along the way, I also discuss the consequences of partial agreement for case assignment, using this to explain why non-SCOPA-compliant configurations sometimes result in legitimate partial agreement with a first or second person pronoun, and sometimes result in a structure being ineffable.

Keywords Agreement · Person · Number · Phi-features · Adjectives · Person case constraint

1 Introduction: Some situations in which agreement is limited

Agreement is a fascinating topic, in part because it involves many different factors: syntax, morphology, semantics, and pragmatics all come into play, as well as issues about how all of these are processed in real time. Teasing out which observable phenomena are to be attributed to which of these factors is a challenging task. If all goes well, the study of agreement, though difficult, should offer the rewards of teaching

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