

A theoretical account for mixed gender agreement in Ukrainian

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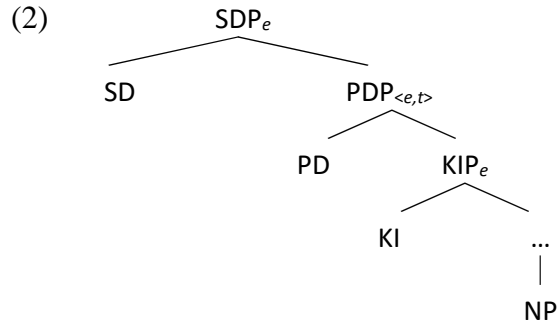
This study proposes a theoretical account for mixed gender agreement in Ukrainian, an important and drastically understudied topic in the Ukrainian linguistic research. This work will contribute to our understanding of mixed gender, as well as to some other important topics in the linguistic literature, such as “grammatical” vs. “semantic” gender agreement and the ϕ -feature valuation.

Ukrainian nouns that belong to the \emptyset -declension class and denote human professions consistently show masculine gender agreement when they refer to males. However, when they refer to females, they can show different kinds of gender agreement: (i) masculine agreement, as in (1a); (ii) feminine agreement, as in (1b); and (iii) mixed agreement, as in (1c). Such profession-denoting nouns (e.g., *khirurg* ‘surgeon’, *kirivnyk* ‘supervisor’, *fotohraf* ‘photographer’) are referred to as “hybrid nouns”, as they can take more than one set of gender agreements. Gender agreement in Ukrainian occurs with predicative and attributive adjectives, demonstrative and relative pronouns, as well as verbs in the past tense (Horpynych 2004, Vykhoanets & Horodenska 2004).

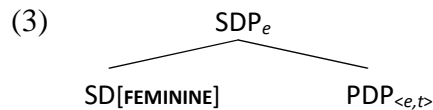
- (1) a. Raionn-**yi** khirurg zroby-v operatsyiu.
district-MASC surgeon make-PAST.SG.M surgery
“The district surgeon conducted a surgery.”
- b. Raionn-**a** khirurg zroby-l-a operatsyiu.
district-FEM surgeon make-PAST-SG.F surgery
“The district surgeon conducted a surgery.” (referring to a female).
- c. Raionn-**yi** khirurg zroby-l-a operatsyiu.
district-MASC surgeon make-PAST-SG.F surgery
“The district surgeon conducted a surgery.” (referring to a female).

This work surveys some recent and well-known approaches to mixed gender agreement and shows that all these approaches are problematic in various ways. I propose a possible solution based on the multiple-layer DP-hypothesis, as in Zamparelli (1995) and the contextually driven feature valuation, as in Kučerová (2018).

According to Zamparelli (1995), the DP is a layered structure in which the three topmost layers correspond to referential, predicative, and kind interpretation. The two topmost projections of the structure constitute the determiner system of a language: *Strong Determiner Phrase* (SDP) and *Predicative Determiner Phrase* (PDP), as in (2). *Kind Phrase* (KIP) is a third projection containing the NP proper, which includes the noun and some attributive adjectives.



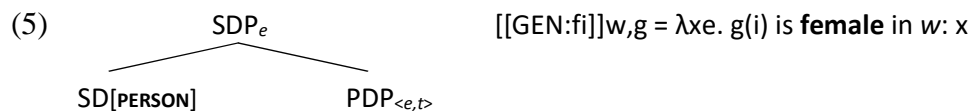
Zamperalli (1995: 262) argues that only elements in the head of SD (the topmost layer of the DP) can get a referential interpretation. I propose that the “semantic” (referring to a female referent) gender feature [FEMININE] in Ukrainian hybrid nouns is introduced in this particular position, (3).



The structure in (3) makes certain predictions concerning hybrid nouns in Ukrainian. For example, according to Zamparelli (1995: 259), only the PDP position is associated with the predicative reading; thus, hybrid nouns in this position should not be able to take semantic gender (i.e., feminine) agreement, because the feature [FEMININE] is introduced higher in the structure (on the SD layer). This prediction is borne out in the data (4b), where feminine agreement is ungrammatical.

- (4) a. Ivanenko, Mariia – tse harn-yi khirurh.
 Ivanenko, Maria (is) this good-MASC surgeon
 “Ivanenko, Maria (FEM) is a good (MASC) surgeon.” (referring to a female)
- b. * Ivanenko, Mariia – tse harn-a khirurh.
 Ivanenko, Maria (is) this good-FEM surgeon
 “Ivanenko, Maria (FEM) is a good (FEM) surgeon.” (referring to a female)

Based on Kučerová’s (2018) proposal that the ϕ -feature valuation can be determined from the context and that contextually determined gender is dependent on the feature [PERSON] on *D* (on the SD layer in the current proposal), I argue that semantic (feminine) agreement in hybrid nouns, as in (1b) above, can arise as a result of the contextually driven feature valuation, as shown in (5).



I argue that we can account for mixed gender agreement in hybrid nouns, as in (1c), by assuming a cyclicity approach to derivations (Marantz 2001; Embick 2010), in which there are different syntactic cycles: (i) the lower cycle, where agreement in gender occurs with the [MASCULINE] feature of *n*; and (ii) the higher cycle, where agreement occurs with the contextual [FEMININE] feature of *D*.

This proposal makes a range of predictions: (i) mixed gender agreement is only possible with human or anthropomorphic referents because of the feature [PERSON]; (ii) only a higher element (on SD or higher) can have contextually determined gender; and (iii) the Agreement Hierarchy (Corbett 1991), as in (6) below, must be accounted for. According to this hierarchy, elements to the right on the scale are more likely to show semantic gender agreement than elements to the left that show grammatical gender agreement. I illustrate that all these predictions are borne out in Ukrainian. (6) [formal] ← attributive — predicate — relative — personal PRON → [semantic]

References

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