

The impact of morphology on change in agreement systems

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Agreement is a syntactic mechanism involving morphosyntactic categories such as person, number, gender. Quite trivially, it is morphology that has to provide the formal means for this syntactic mechanism to result in surface contrasts: thus, the signalling of agreement stays and falls with (the contrast between cells of) the morphological paradigms whose cells are defined in terms of distinct values of the morphosyntactic category/categories at issue.

Interestingly, however, it also happens, if more rarely, that pure morphology (e.g. [contrasts in] inflectional classes) conditions change in (syntactic) agreement rules and/or in morphosyntactic properties of the language such as, say, the number of genders occurring in the system.

In the present paper, I will review some such cases drawing on evidence from the Romance language family. Those cases are mostly not very widely known because they do not occur in any of the major standard languages but, rather, are confined to non-standard local dialects.