

On Sentential Agreement with Numeral Phrase Subjects in 15th-17th c. Polish

The paper addresses sentential agreement with numeral phrase subjects (hence NPS) including numerals ≥ 5 in 15th-17th c. Polish, and argues that the issues presented by them shed light on the nature of syntactic agreement, in particular its connection to NOM case. It has been argued that numeral expressions with ≥ 5 in Polish are intrinsically accusative which is why they trigger default (3.SG.N) sentential agreement like all non-nominative subjects (Przepiórkowski 2004, Franks 2002). While this approach is plausible wrt evidence dating from 17th c. onwards (in connection to the spreading ACC/GEN syncretism), it cannot be applied to earlier data. In the historical texts I have examined (i.a., *Biblia Królowej Zofii* (1455), *Kodeks Świętosławów* (1449), *Rozmyślanie Przemyskie* (ca. 1500), *Biblia Brzeska* (1563), and *Biblia Gdańska* (1632), we find three types of sentential agreement with NPS containing ≥ 5 :

- (i) *syntactic agreement* (available only with an adjectival/pronominal attribute bearing NOM case (1a));
- (ii) *default agreement* ((1b), (2a));
- (iii) *semantic agreement* (with GEN.PL complement, the counted noun) (2b).

- (1) a. gdy ony siedm dni wynidą
when these_{NOM.PL} seven days_{GEN.PL} pass_{3PL.FUT}
b. onych siedm Aniołów [...] nagotowało się, aby trąbili.
these_{GEN.PL} seven Angels_{GEN.PL} readied_{3SG.N} self to blow_{3PL.V}
- (2) a. było siedm braciej
was_{3SG.N} seven brothers_{GEN.PL}
b. Byli tedy siedm braciej
was_{3PL.V} then seven brothers_{GEN.PL}

Agreement with NPS containing ≥ 5 does not seem to follow Corbett's Agreement Hierarchy (Corbett 1979: 204), i.e. syntactic sentential agreement with them is contingent on the presence of a NOM-bearing attribute, and when such an attribute is missing (2) or when it is not NOM, but GEN (agreeing with the GEN complement (1b)), the only options are semantic or default agreement. The only potential item to bear NOM in the NPS without attributes would be the numeral itself, but the evidence suggests that this cannot be the case. The crucial question here is: why would the numeral itself not trigger syntactic agreement in examples such as (2)? Especially that in the relevant period numerals ≥ 5 were unquestionably nominal (usually feminine nouns; Łoś & Szober 1928, Siuciak 2008), and therefore such an option is expected, but surprisingly unavailable (I found a single example in two different texts). To account for this problem, I argue that before 17th c. these nominal numerals in direct/structural case contexts are not NOM/ACC but rather **caseless** (indeclinable) forms and that this is responsible for the missing syntactic agreement with NPS they head (one can also find undeclined forms in oblique contexts). Syntactic agreement becomes available only in the presence of potential NOM-case-bearers, and I show the numerals are not such categories. Additional evidence from related languages is given in support of these proposals (Fryšćák 1970, Mayer 1978, Bošković 2006). Later (17th c. onwards), with the spread of the ACC/GEN syncretism numerals ≥ 5 are reanalyzed as functional heads (Author, in press) and take on exclusively ACC forms in direct case contexts (Łoś & Szober 1928, Małecki 1863, Krasnowolski 1897, Przepiórkowski 2004); this coincides with the complete disappearance of syntactic sentential agreement with them (expected if they are intrinsically accusative).

Primary sources

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- Biblia Brzeska* (1563) available at: <http://www.pt.maranatha.pl/brzeska/brzeska.html>
- Biblia Gdańska* (1632) available at: <http://www.bibliagdanska.pl/>
- Rozmyślanie przemyskie* (ca. 1500) available at: <http://www.ijp-pan.krakow.pl/pl/publikacje-elektroniczne/korpus-tekstow-staropolskich>

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