

Predicate agreement with pronominal conjuncts in Russian: experimental approach

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Introduction

Three strategies of predicate agreement with coordinated subject:

- Resolution (i.e. **personal hierarchy** [Zwicky 1997])
 - Number is plural, person/gender/noun class is computed based on what values the conjuncts have
- Partial agreement (PA, i.e. **Closest Conjunct Agreement, CCA**)
 - One of the conjuncts is ignored
 - Widely attested in VS-languages (Welsh, [Harbert & Bahloul 2002]) and in particular contexts in languages whose primary strategy is the resolution
- Default agreement
 - Last Resort option [Nevins & Weisser 2018]

Experimental researches find variability both between speakers and within one idiolect:

- [Timmermans et al. 2004]: speech production experiment on German and Dutch material, person agreement
 - Conjuncts «you and he» / «you and N»
 - 2pl / 3pl verb form
 - 3pl is even more frequent, no CCA observed
- [Marušič et al 2015]: speech production experiment on Slovenian, gender agreement
 - Three possible strategies: CCA, highest conjunct agreement, default
 - Very high variability

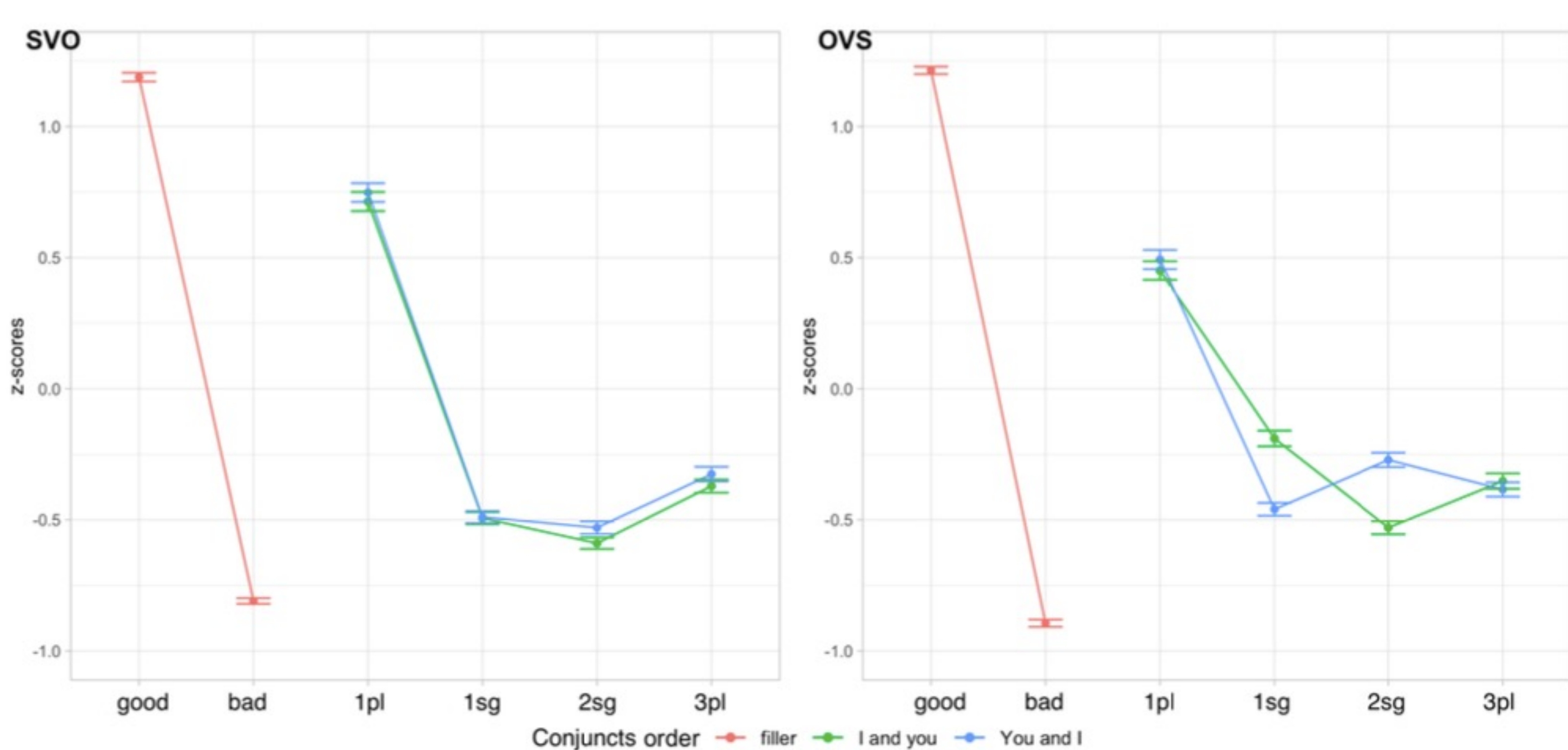
Russian data

- Russian prescriptive grammars: only the personal hierarchy
- Corpus-based evidence of the CCA in person and gender
 - [Corbett 1985]: literary and dialectal Russian corpus, the resolution strategy is preferred, but the PA is found in both text types and both word orders
 - [Pekelis 2013]: corpus research of double conjunction constructions, VS word order is included to the list of factors «facilitating the PA»
- No previous experimental research on person agreement variability
- Russian (quasi-)free word order allows measuring the degree to which the VS favors other agreement strategies than the resolution (if so)
- The contexts with 1sg and 2sg conjuncts but 3pl verb form allow checking whether the default person is a thing in Russian

Experimental design

- Hypothesis: OVS-word order would facilitate the non-resolution agreement strategies, especially the CCA
 - Two 4x2 AJ experiments with the same lexicalizations differing in the word order: SVO (1) / OVS (2)
 - verb form: 1pl (resolution) / 1sg, 2sg (PA) / 3pl (default)
 - conjunct order: 1sg and 2sg (*ja i ty*) / 2sg and 1sg (*ty i ja*)
 - Likert scale 1 (very bad) – 7 (very good)
 - Eight experimental lists
 - 32 target stimuli + 16 grammatical fillers + 16 ungrammatical ones
- (1) [*Ja i ty / ty i ja*] [*stroim / stroju / stroiš / strojat*] *krepost' iz sn'ega*.
I and you you and I build.1pl build.1sg build.2sg build.3pl fortress from snow
- (2) *Krepost' iz sn'ega* [*stroim / stroju / stroiš / strojat*] [*ja i ty / ty i ja*].
fortress from snow build.1pl build.1sg build.2sg build.3pl I and you you and I
'You and I are building a snow fort',

Results



The ratings were z-transformed and processed with the use of the linear mixed modeling (respondent ID and sentence ID were used as random slopes) and a posteriori Tukey's HSD comparison

- SVO: 107 respondents
 - No significant difference between two conjunct orders (blue and green lines)
 - Statistically significant differences between all four verb forms
 - 1pl > 3pl > 1sg > 2sg
- VSO: 126 respondents
 - Conjunct order is significant for 1sg and 2sg verb forms but not for 1pl and 3pl

- The overall low level of the target ratings with regard to the grammatical fillers – pragmatically unusual context of the stimuli
- All four strategies are rated significantly higher than the ungrammatical fillers => **all four are possible**
- Besides the obvious superiority of the 1pl (resolution), no signs of the CCA in the SVO order, but the **clear CCA in the OVS**
- Unlike previous experimental research in other languages, our Russian data shows **different levels of acceptability** of different agreement strategies
- The gap between 1pl and 1sg/2sg in OVS may be explained by the feature
 - Person mismatches are less likely to induce the PA than gender/noun class mismatches [Nevins & Weisser 2018].
 - The personal hierarchy seems to be universal => always gives a way to compute a person value
- However, the 3pl ratings are still higher than expected as there is no 3rd person conjunct
 - In German, the 3pl form is considered to be the default because of the 1/3 syncretism [Frampton 2002]
 - In Russian there is no such syncretism => the 3pl form is used much less frequent
 - A default insertion or a proper person value of a &P? Probably the former, otherwise there would be no need in the CCA
 - The «defaultness» of the 3rd person needs to be investigated further

References Corbett (1985) "Hierarchies, Targets and Controllers. Agreement Patterns in Slavic". London & Canberra: Croom Helm. Frampton (2002) "Syncretism, Impoverishment, and the Structure of Person Features". In: Papers from the Chicago Linguistics Society Meeting 38, 207-222. Harbert & Bahloul (2002) "Postverbal subjects in Arabic and the theory of agreement". In: Themes in Arabic and Hebrew Syntax, 45-75. Marušič et al. (2015) "The grammars of conjunction agreement in Slovenian". In: Syntax 18(1), 39-77. Pekelis (2013) "Частичное согласование в конструкции с повторяющимся союзом: корпусное исследование основных закономерностей". In: Вопросы языкознания 4, 55-86. Timmermans et al. (2004) "Disagreement on agreement". In: Linguistics 42, 905-929. Zwicky (1997) "Hierarchies of Person". In: Papers from the Chicago Linguistics Society Meeting, 714-733.

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