

## THE AGREEMENT OF ADJECTIVES WITH THE HONORIFIC PRONOUN IN SERBO-CROATIAN

The paper is a reply to Wechsler (2011) developed into an extension of the model presented in Alsina & Arsenijević (2012c). It starts by setting straight some of the empirical errors and shortcomings of Wechsler, with a special accent on the behavior of adnominal adjectives pre- and postnominally, and continues into a fine-tuning of an approach based on only two sets of features and a case hierarchy, in order to account for the presented data. It is shown that such an analysis is sufficient, and that the introduction of a third set of features (a second set of syntactic features) is superfluous.

*Key words:* honorific pronouns, hybrid agreement, Serbo-Croatian, one set of agreement features hypothesis

### 1. Introduction

In his overview of the variation in the behavior of honorific pronouns across a number of (mostly Indo-European) languages, Wechsler (2011, henceforth W11) describes Serbo-Croatian (or Serbian/Croatian as he refers to it – in this paper abbreviated as S-C) as a language in which both predicates and adjectives agree with the honorific pronoun targeting what is commonly referred to as the morpho-syntactically specified features (Wechsler's concord features), thus showing a plural morphology. He points out that an exception occurs when the honorific pronoun is in a non-nominative case, and triggers a singular morphology on the adjective, as in (1b).

- (1) a. [Jadni/\*jadna                      vi]                      nikog                      ne                      poštuje.  
          poor.NomMPI/NomFSg    you.NomPI    nobody.Acc    Neg    respect.2PI  
          'Poor you don't respect anyone.' (one female addressee)

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- b. [Vas           jadnu/\*jadne]   niko    ne    poštuje.  
 you.AccPl   poor.AccFSg/Pl   nobody   Neg   respect.3Sg  
 ‘Nobody respects poor you.’ (one female addressee)

He also gives the example reproduced in (2) (Wechsler’s (35)), arguing that non-nominative secondary predicates as well strictly follow what is traditionally referred to as semantic agreement (targeting the syntactic features leads to a plural rather than honorific interpretation). The example is faithfully cited here, although it includes several empirical inaccuracies, as discussed in section 2 where this example is repeated as (4).

- (2) a. Očekivao   sam       vas               veselu.  
 expect.MSG   Aux1Sg   you.AccPl   happy.AccFSg  
 ‘I expected you (formal, one female addressee) to be happy.’
- b. Očekivao   sam       vas               veseli.  
 expect.MSG   Aux1Sg   you.AccPl   happy.AccMPI  
 ‘I expected you (more than one; male or mixed gender) to be happy.’
- c. Očekivao   sam       vas               vesele.  
 expect.MSG   Aux1Sg   you.AccPl   happy.AccFPI  
 ‘I expected you (multiple female addressees) to be happy.’

Wechsler and Zlatić (2000, 2003) argue that the agreement facts in S-C can only be accounted for by a system involving three sets of features relevant for agreement for each (hybrid) noun. They refer to them as the concord features (matching the traditional syntactic features), index features (also syntactic by nature, but often closer to the semantic features in value) and the semantic features (determined by the properties of the denotation of the agreement trigger). Their main arguments are based on a set of hybrid agreement nouns, such as *braća* ‘brothers’, for which they argue to agree in three different sets of features (FSg, NPI and MPI).

Alsina and Arsenijević (2012a, henceforth AA12a) show that the analysis empirically identifying three different sets of agreement features for one single noun is incorrect<sup>2</sup>, and argue that the three feature sets approach a)

<sup>2</sup> Wechsler and Zlatić (2000) argue that the S-C collective noun *braća* empirically displays three different sets of agreement features (FSg on *starija*, MPI on the pronoun *oni* and NPI on *stroga* in (i)), which – assuming one set corresponds to the semantic agreement – would indeed require minimally two sets of syntactic features to be properly modeled.

- (i) Starija       braća   su       stroga.       Oni   puno   viču.  
 old.FSg/NPI   brothers   Aux.Pl   strict.FSg/NPI   they.MPI   much   shout.Pl  
 ‘Older brothers are strict. They shout a lot.’

Alsina and Arsenijević (2012a, 2012b) show that the NPI features on the adjective *stroga* in (i), homomorphous between NPI and FSg, are misanalyzed – and that the form actually shows the FSg agreement with the noun. This eliminates the most direct empirical argument for having the two sets of syntactic features.

overgenerates, b) does not have any broader empirical coverage than a simpler system involving only two sets of features and c) makes some wrong empirical predictions. AA12a formulate an analysis of these nouns based only on one set of semantic and one set of syntactic features. One of the generalizations constituting the analysis is stated in (3).

(3) Adjectives agree with hybrid agreement triggers in syntactic features only.

In a reply, Wechsler and Zlatić (2012) point to the empirical observations from W11 illustrated in (1) and (2), which display exactly the inverse pattern: the adjective, when non-nominative, agrees exactly, and only, in the semantic features of the agreement trigger. Put this way, this argument seriously undermines the particular analysis proposed in AA12a, and hence brings to question the possibility of (elegantly) accounting for the S-C data using only two, rather than three different feature sets (i.e. only one rather than two sets of syntactic features).

Wechsler and Zlatić (2012)'s point in respect of the honorific *vi* not only points to a problem for AA12's analysis of the particular data. It involves a potential justification for having three agreement types. If indeed there are triggers with effects inverse to those covered in AA12, then a theory based on two types of agreement would at the very least also need to introduce some additional complexity. Namely, it would be in danger of having to make the choice of agreement type sensitive not only to the properties of the syntactic position of the target (which the alternative also needs to do), but also to the properties of the particular agreement trigger.

This paper:

- a) shows that W11's analysis of the agreement behavior of the S-C honorific *vi* is based on empirical data that are incomplete and at some points either false or misinterpreted, leading to false generalizations,
- b) offers more accurate data and generalizations and
- c) shows how a more sophisticated version of the analysis in AA12a, offered in Alsina and Arsenijević (2012b: AA12b), still properly captures the agreement behavior of the S-C honorific second person pronoun *vi*, while still employing only two agreement feature sets.

The paper is organized according to the theses outlined above: section 2 corrects some empirical inaccuracies in W11 and refines the empirical picture, section 3 offers better generalizations, in a model dealing with only one syntactic and only one semantic feature set of the AA12a type. Section 4 concludes the paper.

## 2. The data

W11's example (35), here introduced in (2) and repeated as (4), involves serious empirical inaccuracies.

- (4) a. Očekivao sam vas veselu.  
 expect.MSg Aux1Sg you.AccPl happy.AccFSg  
 'I expected you (formal, one female addressee) to be happy.'
- b. Očekivao sam vas veseli.  
 expect.MSg Aux1Sg you.AccPl happy.AccMPl  
 'I expected you (more than one; male or mixed gender) to be happy.'
- c. Očekivao sam vas vesele.  
 expect.MSg Aux1Sg you.AccPl happy.AccFPl (should be just AccPl!)  
 'I expected you (multiple female addressees) to be happy.'<sup>3</sup>

First, the example in (2b) is wrongly glossed.<sup>4</sup> The adjective *veseli* 'cheerful' (rather than 'happy'), used as a secondary predicate, is in the NomMPl and not, as specified by W11, in the AccMPl form. This immediately makes the entire sentence ungrammatical, contrary to W11's marking, since its agreeing with an accusative marked expression requires that the secondary predicate also bear the accusative case. Similarly, the example in (2c) is wrongly glossed in specifying a feminine gender for the secondary predicate. Generally in S-C, plural forms of adjectives and personal pronouns in cases other than nominative do not show any gender marking – one form fits all genders. The form *vesele* in (2c) thus shows no gender, but only the features of accusative and plural. Finally, it is not marked that the honorific pronoun is a clitic, which turns out to be relevant, as discussed in respect of the examples in (10) below.

The point of the example in (4) is to show that a syntactic agreement (inducing a plural feature on the adjective) is as impossible in the default masculine gender as it is in the feminine plural form. Due to the underspecification for gender in non-nominative forms, no such argument can be made. Moreover, a wrong image of the feature marking in cased plural forms is indicated, bringing about a confusion in respect of other examples.

Second, translations given for these examples ('I expected you to be

<sup>3</sup> Wechsler's explanation of these facts is that S-C honorific pronouns bear both the concord and the index in nominative, but are underspecified for some of the concord features in other cases. Their targets then take the default values, i.e. singular for the underspecified number of an oblique case form of the honorifically used pronoun *vi*.

<sup>4</sup> I thank an anonymous reviewer for pointing out that I forgot to mention that in addition to the problems specified – this sentence is simply ungrammatical in Serbian.

happy’) suggest that the adjective is a predicate in a copular construction. This is a wrong interpretation. Their meaning in a neutral intonation involves a presupposition that the collocutor is arriving, and an entailment that the speaker expects her to be cheerful at arrival (or in a set of intervals left-adjacent to the moment of arrival).

Third, and most importantly, the examples such as (1) and (2)/(4) are taken to imply a generalization that (adnominally used) adjectives agree with hybrid nouns in W11’s index features only. But these examples are special in many respects, hence non-representative of the general picture.

Prosodically, examples of a postnominal use of bare adjectives (i.e. adjectives without modifiers or complements) with neutral prosodic patterns are judged strongly degraded in S-C.<sup>5</sup> A certain prosodic heaviness is required to license a postnominal use of an adjectival expression.

- |        |                      |                       |                      |                        |
|--------|----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|------------------------|
| (5) a. | pohabana<br>worn-out | cipela<br>shoe        |                      |                        |
| b.     | ??cipela<br>shoe     | pohabana<br>worn-out  |                      |                        |
| c.     | cipela<br>shoe       | pohabana<br>worn-out  | od<br>from           | poliranja<br>polishing |
| d.     | cipela,<br>shoe      | pohabana<br>worn-out  | i<br>and             | stara<br>old           |
| e.     | cipela,<br>shoe      | potpuno<br>completely | pohabana<br>worn-out |                        |

It is hence very suspicious that the example in (1) disobeys this rule and tolerates a bare adjective in the postnominal position (see Progovac 1998 for a discussion of the postnominal use of adjectives with pronouns).

Semantically, pronouns normally do not combine with (restrictive) adjectives, unless shifted into properties. As no shift of that kind occurs in W11’s examples, this indicates that the adjectives both in (1) and in (2) are either non-restrictive or used secondary predicates.

Pragmatically, both the example in (1) and the honorific interpretation of that in (2) involve predications that are highly marked when used in respect of someone addressed by the honorific pronoun. The adjective *jadan* ‘poor, pitiful, sorry’ in relation to someone who we address honorifically

<sup>5</sup> When the noun is heavily stressed: *CIPELA pohabana*, it is acceptable with a contrastive interpretation of the noun (a shoe and not a boot), or with a rhythmic effect in poetic style. Note, however, that while a postnominal adjective in a prosodically neutral NP cannot have a restrictive interpretation (must be non-restrictive or predicative), an adjective following a stressed noun can have a restrictive interpretation as well.

has a strong implicature of disrespect, and even irony, in respect of both the honorific addressing and the sympathy expressed. Similarly, the adjective *veseo* ‘cheerful’ speaks about the addressee’s emotions and features of her personality, which is again not a perfectly salient content in a formal situation requiring the honorific use of the pronoun.

Finally – as shown in Arsenijević and Gračanin (2012) – the accusative form of an adjective used non-restrictively or as a secondary predicate shows special properties in combination with hybrid agreement triggers, leaning quite generally towards ungrammaticality.

More natural examples of postnominally used adjectives – those with a heavier prosody and salient adjectives – disconfirm the description of the facts in W11. Nominative forms indeed accept only syntactic agreement, but syntactic agreement is fully available also in non-nominative forms of (non-restrictively used!) adjectives agreeing with the honorific *vi*, on a par with the semantic agreement (also confirmed to be grammatical in the questioner).

- (6) Vama        zadubljenim    u neki izveštaj, puno toga        je  
                   promaklo.  
                   you.DatPl drowned.DatPl in some report much that.Gen Aux3Sg  
                   escaped    ‘A lot has escaped your (multiple addressees or a formal single  
                   addressee, male or female) attention, while (you were) drowned into some  
                   report.’

Moreover, most S-C speakers link the singular adjective as in (4a) to a slightly less formal relation between the interlocutors.<sup>6</sup> This partially explains the effects in W11’s examples, where the semantics and pragmatics of the adjective pull towards a lesser degree of formality among the interlocutors, matching the effect of the singular agreement.

<sup>6</sup> The empirical insights reported are based on the data gathered from 27 speakers who filled in a questioner. The questioner consisted of 30 contextualized sentences (10 with the singular agreement and 10 with the plural agreement on a non-restrictive or predicative adjective, with 10 controls; the pronoun *vi* was represented only by strong, stressed forms), such as the following:

- (i) Pomenuo sam vam to prošle srede, ali možda me niste čuli. Ali Vama, zadubljenim u neki izveštaj, to je sigurno promaklo. Rado ću vam sada ponoviti o čemu je reč.  
                   ‘I mentioned it to you last Wednesday, but maybe you did not hear me. You being drowned into some report, it might have escaped your attention. I would be glad to tell you again what it was about.’

The subjects did show a slightly lower overall degree of acceptance for the plural agreement of the adjective with the honorific pronoun, but the difference was far from significant.

Taking all this into consideration, W11's generalization about the honorific pronoun in S-C, namely that it triggers plural agreement on adjectives when in nominative, and singular in other cases, cannot be correct. Consequently, his account, stipulating that the pronoun is underspecified in its concord features in cases other than nominative, fails to account for the data. While case clearly matters, what also matters, as I argue in the remaining part of this section, is whether the adjective is used restrictively, and when the trigger is a pronoun – whether it is a strong pronoun or a clitic, dimensions W11 does not take into account.

In neutral intonation and word order sentences, restrictively used adjectives are always adnominal and preposed, and they behave exactly as stated in AA12a: they take syntactic agreement only, irrespective of the case.

- (7) a. Ljubazna/\*ljubazni gospoda su prijatnije društvo.  
 kind.NomFSg/MPi gentlemen are pleasant.Cmpr company  
 'Kind gentlemen make a more pleasant company [than the less kind ones].'
- b. \*Gospoda ljubazna/ljubazni su prijatnije društvo.  
 gentlemen kind.NomFSg/MPi are pleasant.Cmpr company
- c. Ljubaznoj/\*ljubaznim gospodi se svi smeše.  
 kind.DatFSg/PI gentlemen.Dat Refl everyone smiles  
 'Everyone smiles to (the) kind gentlemen.'
- b. \*Gospodi ljubaznoj/ljubaznim se svi smeše.  
 gentlemen.Dat kind.DatFSg/PI Refl everyone smiles

Restrictively used adjectives do not combine with pronouns (unless pronouns semantically shift), hence none of the examples with adjectives and a honorific *vi* in W11 involves restrictive modification.

Non-restrictive adjectives are also adnominal, but typically postpositive. Being non-restrictive licenses them to also take semantic agreement. They can take semantic agreement in any case form, except that it is somewhat degraded in nominative and accusative (the latter displaying some special properties, as mentioned in section 2).

- (8) a. Moja braća, uvek spremna/??spremni da pomognu,  
 dolaze sutra.  
 my.NomFSg brothers always ready.NomFSg/MPi to help  
 come tomorrow  
 'My brothers, always ready to help, are coming tomorrow.'
- b. Moj braći, uvek spremnoj/spremnim da  
 pomognu, stigao je novi poziv.  
 my.DatFSg brothers.Dat always ready.DatFSg/PI to  
 help come Aux new call  
 'My brothers, who are always ready to help, received a new call.'

- c. Ako vi, tako dobro obrazovani/??obrazovana, ne znate odgovor...  
 if you so well educated.NomMPI/FSg not know answer  
 ‘If you (single female), who are so well educated, do not know the answer...’
- d. Ko vama, uvek spremnoj da pomogne/ spremnim da pomognete, može da prigovori?  
 Who you.Dat always ready.DatFSg Comp help.3Sg ready.DatPl Comp help.3Pl can Comp rejoin.3Sg  
 ‘Who can rejoin to you (single female), who are always ready to help?’

Predicatively used adjectives take only syntactic agreement with a hybrid noun or a honorific pronoun when in nominative, but allow for both types of agreement in instrumental.

- (9) a. Gospoda su umorna/\*umorni.  
 gentlemen Aux tired.NomFSg/MPI  
 ‘The gentlemen are tired.’
- b. Tu gospodu sam smatrao zlonamernom/zlonamernim.  
 that.Acc gentlemen.Acc Aux1Sg considered malicious.InstFSg/Pl  
 ‘I considered those gentlemen malicious.’
- c. Vi ste umorni/\*umorna.  
 you are tired.NomMPI/FSg  
 ‘You (single female) are tired.’
- b. Vas sam smatrao zlonamernom/zlonamernim.  
 you Aux1Sg considered malicious.InstFSg/Pl  
 ‘I considered you (single female) malicious.’

In cases when the agreeing adjective is a secondary predicate, the local pronoun may as well be a clitic (and S-C clitics may only bear genitive, dative or accusative). In such examples, the syntactic agreement is never available, while the semantic agreement is fine in accusative and somewhat degraded in dative and genitive.

- (10) a. Ja sam vas zapamtio nasmejanu/\*nasmejane.  
 I Aux1Sg you.CIAcc remembered smiling.AccFSg/Pl  
 ‘I remembered you (single female) smiling (object-oriented).’
- b. ...da smo vam se obratili ?ponesenj/\*ponesenim raspravom.  
 that Aux1Pl you.CIDat Refl addressed carried.DatFSg/Pl discussion.Inst  
 ‘...that we addressed you (single female) immersed into a discussion (object-oriented).’



The reason for the unavailability of syntactic agreement is probably that the clitics are not the actual agreement triggers. They are also dependent elements, entering syntactic agreement with their antecedent, but failing to trigger agreement on any other items. In the absence of a local syntactic agreement trigger, the adjective resorts to semantic agreement.

### 3. *Generalizations: case, person and restrictivity*

In this section, I start by presenting the generalizations formulated in AA12b, in respect of hybrid nouns of the *braća* ‘brothers’ type. These generalizations present a deeper background of the surface generalizations presented in section 2, and are crucially based on only two types of agreement features: those shown in syntactic agreement, and those shown in semantic agreement. Then, I move to showing that they are fully compatible with the behavior of the honorific use of the pronoun *vi*.

AA12 formulate the following three generalizations:

**Generalization 1:** constituents that inflect for case show syntactic agreement with their agreement triggers.

**Generalization 2:** constituents that agree with expressions of different (i.e. marked) person values show semantic agreement with their agreement triggers.

**Generalization 3:** The more oblique a case form is in the obliqueness hierarchy, the likelier the form is to show semantic agreement (the relevant segment for the current discussion being: nominative < non-nominative cases).

As this paper only considers adjectives, let me present what these generalizations predict about their four uses observed: the attributive use, the appositive use and the predicative use.

In the attributive use, adjectives are typically restrictive, and only combine with nouns – never with pronouns (unless pronouns shift, taking on the semantics of nouns) – hence also never with expressions with a marked person feature.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, attributive adjectives are correctly predicted to only enter syntactic agreement with their triggers.

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<sup>7</sup> A deeper syntactic reason why restrictive adjectives do not take semantic agreement is probably the same deeper syntactic reason why they do not combine with pronouns. Restrictive adjectives are at a level lower than DP, and DP is the syntactic level at which reference is enabled, and the syntactic level at which pronouns are generated. Restrictive adjectives sit in a position where the referential (=semantic) properties of the expression are not yet fully determined, and which is also empty in the regular use of pronoun-headed expressions.

- (11) ??Dobri ti me retko zove/zoveš.  
 good.Nom you.Nom me rarely call.3Sg/2Sg  
 ‘The good you call(s) me rarely.’

The sentence in (11) is marginally acceptable under the condition that the pronoun shifts in its interpretation (from <e> to <e, t>). Note that in such a case, the finite verb may bear either a second or a third person, indicating the requirement of the restrictive adjective to agree with an expression that does not bear a marked person feature.

In the appositive use, both generalizations 2 and 3 are invoked, as appositive adjectives inflect for case and agree with bearers of marked person features.

- (12) Ti, nemaran preko svake mere, jako me retko  
 zoveš/\*zove.  
 you careless.Nom over every measure strongly me rarely  
 call. 2Sg/3Sg  
 ‘So very careless as you are, you call me quite rarely.’

Generalization 3 regulates the availability of the semantic agreement: it is unlikely in the nominative case, and expected to show in the oblique case forms. This is exactly what we find.

Similar holds for the predicative use: predicative adjectives do inflect for case, and they also do enter agreement with expressions that bear marked person features (see e.g. (9c-d)). Thus, they are correctly predicted to show both the semantic and the syntactic agreement. Generalization 3 further predicts that oblique cases are more likely to show the semantic agreement than nominative. Secondary predicates agreeing with clitics are a special case because clitics should not count as agreement triggers, and in the absence of an overt local syntactic agreement trigger – these adjectives only show semantic agreement.

The accusative case is the only form which seems to disallow a unified account of the two domains of hybrid agreement: the hybrid agreement nouns and the honorific use of the second person plural pronoun *vi*.

- (13) a. Tu gospodu sam zapamtio  
 nasmejanu/\*nasmejane.  
 that.AccFSg gentlemen.Acc Aux1Sg remembered  
 smiling.AccFSg/Pl  
 ‘I remembered those gentlemen smiling (object-oriented).’  
 b. Vas sam zapamtio nasmejanu/\*nasmejane.  
 you.Acc Aux1Sg remembered smiling.AccFSg/Pl  
 ‘I remembered you (single female) smiling (object-oriented).’

In both examples, the depictive adjective may only take the singular form – which manifests the syntactic agreement in (13a), but semantic agreement in (13b). Arsenijević and Gračanin-Yuksekić (2012) explain this by the aspectual contribution of the accusative arguments (either by an incremental relation with the respective eventuality, or as its bounding predicate, see Arsenijević & Gehrke 2009 for details). The explanation takes that the singular acts as a marked value in respect of the aspectual status of the eventuality (as it corresponds to the telic status of the event predicate). Accusative thus in principle has both types of agreement available, but to avoid losing aspectual information, it always chooses the one that yields a singular feature.

## 4. Conclusion

As a reaction to the oversimplifying views of the agreement facts in S-C, the paper has attempted to give a complete picture of the agreement of hybrid nouns and the honorifically used pronoun *vi*. This has provided a richer empirical insight, leading to the recognition of a number of factors that figure in the choice between different features available for agreement that have not been observed in the previous literature in the field. Among them are the prosodic properties of the agreeing constituent, the restrictive character of the adjectival expression entering agreement and the clitic nature of the honorific pronoun. Taking them all into consideration enables an accurate model of the hybrid agreement in S-C based on a simple theoretical inventory of only two sets of agreement features for every agreement trigger – those stemming from its morpho-syntactic specification and those from its referential properties. No third set of features is necessary to capture the empirical facts.

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## СЛАГАЊЕ ПРИДЕВА СА ЗАМЕНИЦОМ ВИ ЗА ИСКАЗИВАЊЕ ПОШТОВАЊА У СРПСКО-ХРВАТСКОМ ЈЕЗИКУ

### Резиме

Рад је заснован на одговору на Wechsler (2011), који је развијен у проширење модела представљеног у Alsina & Arsenijević (2012c). На почетку рада, разјашњавају се неке емпиријске грешке и недостаци Векслеровог рада, посебно у вези са слагањем атрибутивних придева у преноминалној и постноминалној позицији, након чега се установљена емпиријска слика користи како би се додатно усавршио модел заснован на хијерархији падежа у комбинацији са само једним скупом синтаксичких обележја (за разлику од Векслерова два). Показано је да је овај тип анализе довољан, и да је увођење трећег скупа обележја (другог скупа синтаксичких обележја) сувишно.

*Кључне речи:* заменица Ви за исказивање поштовања, хипотеза, српско-хрватски, хибридно слагање, хијерархија падежа