

**How the coordinate subject is tamed:
OT approaches to full resolution and partial agreement**
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Agreement with coordinate NPs poses a number of interesting problems for grammatical theory. In languages that preserve gender and person distinctions in plural agreeing forms, one often sees two methods for dealing with conjoined subjects in the same language. The first of these, agreement resolution, involves identifying an agreement value for the conjoined phrase that settles any conflict between conjunct values: E.g., the resolution value for conjoined Masculine Singular and Feminine Singular is Masculine (plural) in French and Neuter (plural) in Icelandic or Modern Greek. The second is partial agreement, where a predicate is made to agree with one conjunct. The two approaches are witnessed in the following examples from Modern Greek.

- a. O dromos kai i plateia itan gemati/gemata kosmo
The[MascSG] road[MascSG] and the[FemSG] square[FemSG] BE full [FemSG]/ [NeutPL] of.people.
“The road and the square are full of people.”
- b. Gematos kosmo itan o dromos kai i plateia.
Full[MascSG] of.people BE the road and the square.
“Full of people are the road and the square.”

Both agreement resolution and partial agreement have eluded explanation in many critical respects. In the case of resolution, there are interactions between the gender and grammatical number of the conjuncts that cannot be described in feature-based accounts (e.g., Dalrymple & Kaplan, 2000; Wechsler & Zlatić), and have only been captured otherwise by stipulation (Corbett, 1991). An OT analysis that balances feature markedness against a preference to select feature combinations that remain faithful to the conjuncts will be shown to provide an account that is both descriptively adequate and predictive of the observed typology of resolution. The cross-linguistic properties of partial agreement (whether agreement can be with the first or last conjunct, or with both in different word orders; whether partial agreement is compatible with anaphor binding by the conjoined subject; or whether it is compatible with other sentence elements that entail a non-distributive interpretation of the conjoined phrase) will also be shown to follow from a general approach to agreement that develops insights from feature theories (Kathol, 1999; Wechsler & Zlatić, 2003) and from OT syntax (Samek-Lodovici, 2003).

References

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