

For Accordion, against Comb

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In this talk, I will discuss a phenomenon when in the nominative case, a noun phrase can show a feature mismatch, but becomes homogeneous in oblique cases. Specifically, I will discuss three cases, which, I argue, can all be treated as manifestations of this same phenomenon.

The first case concerns Russian paucal numerals (see Peshkovsky, 1922; Shvedova et al., 1980; Melčuk, 1985; Pesetsky, 2013; Lyutikova, 2016; among others). In nominative case environments (as in 1a), plural marking shows up on the demonstrative, adjectives and the noun. With a paucal numeral (between 2 and 5, as in 1b), the noun shows up in the so-called count form (see Zaliznyak 1967, 1980). But in non-nominative case environments (as in 1c), even with a paucal numeral, the noun bears plural marking.

(1)

a. et-**i** vysok-**ie** stol-**y**

this-**PL.NOM** tall-**PL.NOM** table-**PL.NOM**

'these tall tables'

b. et-**i** vysok-**ie** dv-**a** stol-**a**

this-**PL.NOM** tall-**PL.NOM** two-**CF** table-**CF**

'these two tall tables'

c. s et-**imi** vysok-**imi** dv-umja stol-**ami**

with this-**PL.INSTR** tall-**PL.INSTR** two-**INSTR** chair-**PL.INSTR**

'with these two tall chairs'

The second case concerns so-called mixed (or hybrid) gender in Russian (see Skoblikova, 1971; Graudina et al., 1976; Corbett, 1979; Asarina, 2008; Iomdin, 2008; Pesetsky, 2013; Lyutikova, 2016; Privizentseva, 2023; among others). In nominative case environments, some nouns may show a gender mismatch (2b). In non-nominative case environments, however, only matching gender features are possible (2c vs. 2d).

(2)

a. očen' interesn-**yj** nov-**yj** vrač-**∅**

very interesting-**M.SG.NOM** new-**M.SG.NOM** doctor-**SG.NOM**

'a very interesting new doctor (male or female)'

b. očen' interesn-**aja** nov-**yj** vrač-**∅**

very interesting-**F.SG.NOM** new-**M.SG.NOM** doctor-**SG.NOM**

'a very interesting new doctor (female)'

- c. s očen' interesn-**ym** nov-**ym** vrač-om
 with very interesting-**M.SG.INSTR** new-**M.SG.INSTR** doctor-SG.INSTR
 'with a very interesting new doctor (male or female)'
- d. *s očen' interesn-**oj** nov-**ym** vrač-om
 with very interesting-**F.SG.INSTR** new-**M.SG.INSTR** doctor-SG.INSTR
 Intended: 'with a very interesting new doctor (female)'

The third case concerns so-called plurals of politeness in Punjabi (Sinha, 2023; Kaur and Sinha, 2025; also, Bhatt and Davis, 2023 for Hindi-Urdu). In nominative case environments, Punjabi allows for honorific masculine plural agreement, not matching the gender of the noun (3b). In non-nominative case environments, however, this option is no longer available (3c vs. 3d).

(3)

- a. mer-**i** pyar-**i** **massi** ay-i
 my-**F.SG** lovely-**F.SG** aunt come.PST-F.SG
 'My lovely aunt came.'
- b. mer-**e** pyar-**e** **massi** ay-e
 my-**M.PL** lovely-**M.PL** aunt come.PST-M.PL
 'My lovely aunt (honorific) came.'
- c. mer-**i** pyar-**i** **massi** vekho!
 my-**F.SG.ACC** lovely-**F.SG.ACC** aunt look.IMPER
 'Look at my lovely aunt!'
- d. *mer-**iã** pyar-**iã** **massi** vekho!
 my-**M.PL.ACC** lovely-**M.PL.ACC** aunt look.IMPER
 Intended: 'Look at my lovely aunt (honorific)!'

In the talk, I will explore a possible account of these data based on an accordion, rather than a comb model of functional sequence within the nominal domain, that is, variable position of features within and across languages, as long as c-command conditions imposed by the hierarchy are preserved (see Giorgi and Pianesi, 1997; Chomsky, 2005; Martinović, 2015; for a similar model for the clausal domain). More specifically, the theory in question consists of three main assumptions: (i) a universal hierarchy of nominal features (case>number>gender) -- see Barlı (2017), among others; (ii) an accordion model for feature distribution; (iii) a treatment of nominative as lack of case feature.